



# Trinity Christian School

*Academic Excellence • Christ Centered • Family Focused*

## **Health & Safety Plan UPDATE July 31, 2020**

Note: COVID-19 information is very fluid. The following is subject to change via new guidelines and current data at any time. Please understand we are trying to be nimble with all details that are given. As we have seen, this is an ever-changing and evolving situation that we will continue to monitor and do what is in the best interest of our students. We humbly ask for your continued prayers and understanding as we work through this together.

The board continues to examine, discuss and study what is in the best interests of our students, staff and families. Based on continued prayer, resources regarding information about COVID and continued research, the board has made the following updates/changes to our policy for re-opening in the fall. One thing that will remain of high importance is that we will continue to prepare for students to be in school five days a week for in-person learning.

### **New School start date: August 24**

- In order to give more training to teachers and be better prepared to start the school year, we are adding two in-service days for professional development and remote training for our teachers and staff, Aug. 20 and 21. Our first day of school will now officially be Aug. 24.
- Jump-Start Night will still occur on the scheduled date; however, we are making preparations for this to be a staggered event to prevent having too many people congregating all together throughout the building at one time. We will create time slots based on family last names in the coming weeks between 4 p.m.-8 p.m., Aug. 18.

### **Facial Coverings:**

After further review of AAP, IDPH and ISBE guidelines, discussions with multiple individuals in school leadership, feedback from parents and staff members and updates on current litigation against other private schools, the board feels that it is in the best interest of everyone's health and wellness to update the facial covering requirements.

**The TCS Board has made the decision to endeavor to comply with ISBE and the IDPH requirements on masking for the following reasons.** (This is based on conditions at the current time, and may change as these guidelines are changed.)

### **1) Spiritual:**

- The Word indicates that we are to be concerned (and adapt our behavior) for the "weaker" brother. In this case, the concern is to protect the vulnerable. In our circle of contacts, there are people who are higher risk for this disease, and we do not want to be a person who brings them harm.

- We are to be in submission to the governmental authorities, **except when it is contrary to God's Word**. We do not see which biblical principle is being violated by wearing a mask during the current pandemic.

## **2) Medical:**

- There has been a slight uptick in the percentage of positive cases locally, and a significant increase in some surrounding states, and certainly in southern states. We have been fortunate that we can now handle the number of cases locally that are being affected. Clearly, data does show that masking does decrease the spread of disease, especially if used properly. We need to do our part, personally and as a school, to help limit the spread of this virus to the vulnerable.
- Certainly the masking is inconvenient and uncomfortable and can slightly increase the work of breathing. However, despite some claims, there is no medical evidence that wearing a mask increases infections, impairs immunity, or has long term harmful effects.

## **3) Legal:**

- We have a recent opinion on school reopening from the Christian Legal Association. It advises us to comply with the appropriate governmental agencies as well as obtain a waiver (which we are doing).
- There is clear liability to the school if we do not comply with the standard for schools and there is a negative event. Our stewardship responsibility as a board does not allow us to put the school at risk, even if individually we would make a different decision.
- In our area, some Christian schools have notified the Governor that they intend to make masks optional. They are now being taken to court by the state, with a court date of Aug. 4, to have a restraining order to make them require the wearing of masks. For this issue, the position of defying the state puts the school at risk. It appears that the Governor is taking this issue seriously and not allowing divergence, and intends to enforce it with legal means.
- A recent Supreme Court case (which may serve as precedent) was decided to allow the state to limit the size of church services. The Court did not intervene on the side of the churches to restrain the state on restrictions intended to counter the pandemic.

Due to the above factors, we will endeavor to comply with the IDPH and ISBE guidelines. In addition, we need to apply these measures in a manner that is developmentally feasible. We will be looking at creative and safe ways throughout the day to give kids “mask breaks,” such as more times outside, creating areas of social distancing, PE outdoor class, lunch and more. Again, this whole area is in flux and we will adjust as the situation changes, with the goals of 1) safety of the TCS family, 2) promoting an effective learning environment, and 3) fulfilling our mission of making disciples of Christ, no matter what the current situation.

## **Sports:**

Currently IESA (Illinois Elementary Sports Association) has suspended school sports for the fall seasons. Trinity Christian School will not host girls' volleyball or soccer this fall. At this time, they are labeled medium-risk-level sports by IHSA, which does not allow them to compete or play games. With the inability to play games or to even have other schools to play against, we have decided to follow IESA guidelines and cancel our fall seasons. As school begins and, if possible to do safely, we will consider running some camps/training to take the place of these two sports seasons. Also, there has been discussion of having these two sports have a shortened season in the spring. Basketball for boys and girls has not yet been decided and we will wait for further guidance from IESA/IHSA.

## **BASK: Before and After School "K"are**

- We plan to continue our before and after school care program. Students will be required to wear masks during this time (unless outdoors).
- The gym and the outdoors will be utilized to provide more space for social distancing as well
- Students must provide own snacks and water bottles
- Games and equipment will be sanitized on a daily basis

## **Distance Learning Option: "TCS Go"**

- TCS Go would be an option for parents who have concerns about returning back to school for in-person learning. Teachers will provide direct instruction and support through a combination of educational resources, personalized 1:1 and/or group Zoom sessions. Students will connect with the classroom virtually during educational activities and Chapel.
- Why TCS GO?
  - Same mission. Same teachers. Same curriculum.
  - To provide asynchronous and synchronous learning to our families
  - To keep families connected to the TCS Community
  - To continue our mission to provide quality Christian education that will equip children to use their faith to impact the world around them
- More details on this opportunity are being compiled and will be shared soon

We will continue to provide updates, as needed. We appreciate the support and prayers of the whole TCS community as we look to open up in a few weeks.

TCS Board of Directors