

Dear Bethel Parents,

In our effort to communicate regularly with you, we wanted to reach out to give an update of our progress toward opening in the fall. The following is the result of the school board meeting on July 13<sup>th</sup>. The environment in which we live continues to change daily and thus some things have changed since our last communication, and we want to make sure that you are informed on the current position. This document is intended to address K-8 with a separate document to follow for the pre-school approach to opening.

As with everything, we frame our approach to reopening in alignment with Bethel Lutheran Ministries and our purpose to fulfill our mission, which is:

We, as believers and disciples of Jesus Christ and members of His Body here at Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church and School, in response to His Commissions to make disciples of all peoples and in awareness of our unique, collective gifts, clearly see the mission before us to worship - to grow - to serve.

Bethel Lutheran School offers a Christian education for the whole child. Students in the school find identity, purpose, and power for their lives by living in God's grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. The education is well rounded and provides *spiritual instruction, intellectual achievement, social interaction, emotional development, physical education, and aesthetic experiences*.

Again, this plan was created in a rapidly changing environment. It does not constitute a contract or guarantee that each item will be fulfilled as currently written. The school board retains the right to make necessary changes at any time.

**Our approach to opening has been framed by many documents including:**

- ISBE/IDPH - *Starting the 2020 – 2021 School Year*, June 23, 2020
- American Academy of Pediatrics – *COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry*, 6/25/202
- DCFS - *RESTORE ILLINOIS LICENSED DAY CARE GUIDANCE*, June 24, 2020

**Background Information**

- Policies should be practical, feasible, and appropriate for children's and adolescents' developmental stage.
- COVID-19 appears to behave differently in children and adolescents than other common respiratory viruses, such as influenza, on which much of the current guidance regarding school closures is based.
- Although children and adolescents play a major role in amplifying influenza outbreaks, to date, this does not appear to be the case with COVID-19.
- Evidence indicates that children and adolescents are less likely to be symptomatic and less likely to have severe disease resulting from COVID-19 infection.
- Children may be less likely to become infected and to spread infection.
- Children should wear face coverings when harms (e.g., increasing hand-mouth/nose contact) do not outweigh benefits (e.g., potential COVID-19 risk reduction).

- COVID-19 policies are intended to mitigate, not eliminate, risk.
- No single action or set of actions will eliminate the risk of COVID-19 transmission, but implementation of several coordinated interventions can greatly reduce that risk.

### **Opening Approach for 2020-2021 School Year**

- We will be open every weekday with full classroom attendance
- A waiver will be required to allow attendance of your student
- School start and end times will remain the same
- Partial attendance/enrollment will not be facilitated at this time
- Use of Masks on school grounds for students and staff
  - Masks are not required in the classrooms once students are seated
  - Requests may be made to wear masks inside classrooms for things like (but not limited to) 1-on-1 or group instruction/activities
  - Masks are required to be worn in all indoor common areas
  - All masks should be clearly labeled with students' name
- Temperature
  - All staff will have temperature taken upon entry daily
  - Self-certification for students will be part of the waiver to be signed by parents before students attend school
  - Teachers will take the temperature of every student upon entry to the classroom
  - Late arrivals will be checked at the office before entry
  - Anyone (students and teachers) displaying a fever of 100.4 or above must stay home
  - Anyone (students and teachers) that develops a fever of 100.4 or above will be sent home immediately
  - Anyone (students and teachers) who has exhibited a fever cannot return until a minimum of 24 hours fever free without use of fever-reducing medication
- We retain the right to evaluate all situations on a case-by-case basis and send or ask students to remain home when deemed necessary
- With full attendance, distancing of desks of 6 feet apart will not be possible, and therefore desks will be placed as far apart as feasibility possible
- We will be practicing “podding,” which means keeping the classes as separate as possible throughout the day. Teachers will go to the classroom rather than students moving from room to room.
- Fall sports will likely be postponed as opposed to cancelled (we will be reviewing this position with other Lutheran schools)
- For elementary school, we will create one-way hallways to reduce close contact
  - This includes, but is not limited to, placing physical guides, such as tape, on floors or sidewalks to create one-way routes
- Lockers will be assigned by leveraging podding by class
- Playgrounds
  - Enforcing physical distancing in an outside playground is not reasonable
  - Emphasis will be placed on podding students and limiting the size of groups participating in playground time
  - Playground equipment will be scheduled and rotated between the classes
- Meals/Cafeteria

- Classes will use cafeteria on a rotational basis with podding enforced. On any given day, some students will be in cafeteria and some will be in their classrooms.
- Utilize outdoor spaces when possible.
- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after eating.
- Chapel
  - Bethel Ministries allows 125 people within the sanctuary at one time for religious services
  - We are exploring these options for Chapel Service:
    - Two services per week to allow all students to attend chapel
    - Classes will attend chapel in the sanctuary on a rotational basis (with)
      - Livestreaming of chapel into the other classrooms
- With the exception of religious gatherings, we will follow the numeric attendance guidelines of the current phase
  - Exception will be made for parents dropping off or picking up students before and after school
  - Parents must wear masks while in the building
  - Parents may not enter classrooms, with limited exceptions
- The class of any student/teacher diagnosed with COVID will be closed for a minimum of 2 days so that direct/intensive cleaning of room can take place
- Cleanings of classrooms twice per day - before students come and after students leave
- Periodic cleaning of classrooms throughout day with ionizer or parents volunteering to come in and wipe surfaces
- Periodic handwashing breaks
- Hand sanitizer inside and outside of classrooms
- Increased airflow in building

#### **Items still being reviewed / developed**

- Guidelines for drop-off and pick-up
- Closing procedures
- Before and Aftercare – we need to share an update with our current providers and determine what is possible
- Facilitation of art and music classes

#### **Distance learning**

Bethel Lutheran School is making significant upgrades to our technology infrastructure and software should the need for distance learning arise again. There are different scenarios during which distance learning could occur:

- COVID or infectious disease, closing either one or more classrooms or the entire school
- Snow days or inclement weather
- Extended illness of student

As the situation and circumstances continue to evolve, we will make updates to these and other items as needed to meet the needs of our students, teachers, and parents. These updates could happen at any

time before or during the school year. Any changes will be communicated to ensure you understand how this continues to evolve.