



Holy Cross Academy Frequently Asked Questions



In addition to the reopening plan that was shared with parents in June and updated in late July, I realize that it will be helpful to provide additional details and answers that parents have regarding the school year ahead. We enter a school year unlike any other and thank you for partnering with us to provide your child(ren) and outstanding Catholic education in the coming year. We know that we will remain strong as a faith community and will weather the challenges this unique year is presenting.

While this document is long, I realize it needs to be a living document with information being updated as appropriate and more details shared with parents. I have attempted to chunk the information by topic for easier reference. This year, we enter a hopefully temporary “new normal” in schools and look forward to working with you in the coming year.

HCA's Reopening Plan

Why is HCA's reopening plan different from some other Diocesan schools as well as the approach of local public schools?

HCA's reopening plan was created to offer the best Catholic education possible to meet the needs of our school community during this difficult time.

In creating our reopening plan, we considered our specific student population, faculty and staff, transportation challenges, and physical plant when determining the reopening plan that is right for HCA. Our plan allows us to maintain strict social distancing guidelines while meeting the needs of all our school families.

Local public schools, due to their challenges related to transportation and adhering to strict social distancing, have elected for all instruction to take place online for the first semester.

Where did Holy Cross Academy receive its guidelines that it used to create our reopening plan?

Holy Cross Academy has used the most recent guidelines published by the Center for Disease Control as well as the Rappahannock Area Health District. We are blessed because our local health department, RAHD, has been very supportive and has offered feedback that was incorporated into our reopening plan. We also are following best practices from Recover, Redesign, Restart as well as other resources designed to help schools finalize their plans.

Holy Cross Academy's plan was approved by the Diocese of Arlington. Our reopening plan was also submitted to the Virginia Council of Private Education for review.

What is enrollment for the coming year?

Our enrollment is changing daily as we work with new families through the admissions process. We are excited to have a handful of former HCA students returning to us in the coming year. In addition to families relocating from the area, we have had some families withdraw to pursue homeschooling for the coming year. Most of these families have expressed a desire to return to HCA next year or earlier if a solution to the pandemic presents itself. We pray that these families continue to watch our school live streamed masses to remain connected to our school community.

How many students are learning online?

We currently have 60 students who are electing for online only instruction to start the year. These families will have the option to transition to in person instruction for their child when/if the family feels it is the appropriate time to return.

Religious and Prayer Life

Will Mass still be held at school each week?

Due to our adherence to strict social distancing restrictions, we plan to continue offering Mass live streamed from school to our students both on campus and those learning from home. Students in grades 3-8 will be able to receive Communion from our priests who will visit each classroom.

Will religion class still be part of the school day?

Religion remains a core class for students in every grade at HCA. Helping our students to walk in the footsteps of Christ is central to our Mission at Holy Cross Academy.

Will St. Mary's priests still be involved in supporting students' faith formation?

We are blessed by the commitment of our parish priests to support the faith formation of our students. Our five parish priests will again be supporting our teachers with their delivery of the religion curriculum. Each grade level has a priest that works with them through the year. Our priests' participation in class will be a mix of live, in-class instruction and recorded or streamed content. Priest assignments for the year are: Fr. Mosimann grades 2 and 8, Fr. Koehr pre-K and grade 7, Fr. Sina kindergarten and grade 4, Fr. Folmar grades 1 and 5, and Fr. Kelly grades 3 and 6.

COVID-19 Related Policies and Procedures

Who does the Rappahannock Area Health District recommend not participate in live instruction at this time?

Children and staff with underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for severe cases of COVID-19 disease and should participate in distance only learning options. Underlying medical conditions include:

Severe Asthma, chronic kidney disease, chronic lung disease, Diabetes, hemoglobin disorders, immunocompromised individuals, liver disease, autoimmune disease or cancer treatment, serious heart conditions, or Body Mass Index of 40+.

What are the most common symptoms of COVID-19 that I need to watch for in my family and loved ones?

Fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.

What if my child is sent home due to COVID-19 symptoms or an elevated temperature?

Students or staff who are either sent home or are absent from school with COVID-19-like symptoms will be required to provide a note from a licensed independent healthcare provider (to include a physician, physician's assistant, or nurse practitioner), indicating that said provider deems the individual is cleared to attend school.

What if a child exhibits COVID-19 symptoms or a fever during the school day?

When a student/faculty member becomes symptomatic, the person will be isolated. Students are required to be picked up within one hour of parent contact and will leave school pending the results of COVID-19 testing. A risk assessment will be conducted in collaboration with RAHD staff to determine risk to students and faculty per CDC guidelines.

What if someone in our school community is COVID-19 symptomatic or tests positive for COVID-19?

In the event that a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, HCA will follow all directions from the Rappahannock Area Health Department related to contact tracing, quarantining and potential classroom or facility closure. The RAHD has been incredibly receptive in helping to support schools in its region.

Social Distancing

Is Holy Cross Academy following CDC guidelines regarding social distancing?

HCA's reopening plan and procedures allow students to be separated by at least six feet of social distancing throughout the day. Assuring social distancing was a determining factor in HCA adopting our maroon/gray day approach to live instruction.

How is seating going to be arranged in the classroom?

By separating students into maroon and gray groups, we are able to maintain strict social distancing guidelines throughout the day. Students will be spaced at least six feet from their peers throughout the school day.

How is HCA preventing our students from sharing spaces?

Rather than students moving to shared spaces like specials classes or middle school classrooms, teachers will change classrooms to meet with their students.

If there are times when students must share classroom spaces, desks and commonly touched items will be sanitized between uses.

How will "traffic" flow in the hallways?

Students will be required to wear masks in the hallways. Students will be required to stay on the right side of the hallway and keep their hands off the walls. Keeping students on their right allows us to maximize social distancing in the hallways throughout the day.

Will students share materials throughout the school day?

We are avoiding shared materials in the classroom this year to reduce the threat of spreading germs. Items that would commonly be shared (like dry erase markers and scissors) will now be required for students to have their own for personal use.

If an item must be shared, it will be sanitized between student uses.

Can classes be held outside?

Teachers may hold classes outside as long as it doesn't interfere with their instruction and students can maintain strict social distancing. We welcome opportunities for our students to be in the fresh air and enjoying our beautiful campus.

Personal Protective Equipment

Are masks required for students?

Wearing masks to the greatest extent possible during the school day increases safety for everyone on campus. Holy Cross Academy is requiring students to have a clean face mask with them each day at school. Students will not be admitted into the building without their face mask secured.

Students will be required to wear masks at the following times/situations: when entering and exiting the building and walking through the hallways of the school, when in the restroom, main office, or other areas used by various groups of students during the day, when they are out of their seat in the classroom, and when asked by a teacher, aide, or volunteer to put on their mask.

Students will have the option of taking down their mask when they are alone at their desk and isolated from others by at least six feet. Students will take down their mask when they eat lunch or a snack in the classroom while socially distanced from their peers.

HCA is currently researching best practices for schools regarding mask use during recess and the potential use of playground equipment.

What type of face mask is required?

Masks worn in school must be clean, dry face coverings over the nose and mouth. Fabric masks must be laundered prior to being worn for the next school day. If possible, students should have at least one back up mask in their backpack. If a student loses their mask during the day, a disposable replacement will be given to them.

Is there a dress code for face masks?

Students will be given the option to wear a face mask with a design or logo as long it is school appropriate and not a distraction to others. Pittsburgh Steelers masks are preferred (by Dr. Fry) but definitely not required 🏈.

May students wear face shields at school?

Students are welcomed to wear a face shield in addition to a face mask at any point during the school day.

Because a face shield does not offer the same level of protection as a face mask, students may not substitute a face shield when closer than six feet from others on campus.

Daily Health Screenings

How will health screening be completed each day?

Before leaving home for school, parents are required to complete a health screening form as well as take and record their child's temperature. Students will also have their temperature checked before they enter the school building and the parent drives away from the building.

What if my child has a temperature of 100.4+ in their morning temperature check?

No one registering a temperature above 100.4 will be permitted to enter the building for the day. If a child needs medication to bring a fever under 100.4, they are not permitted to attend school. If your child has a temperature above 100.4, contact your health care provider and follow their strict guidance before returning your child to school.

I'm not sure if my child is well enough to attend school. What do I do?

The best way to prevent the spread of germs on campus this year will be to have faculty, staff, and students who are not feeling well stay home. It will be important to monitor specifically the symptoms of COVID-19 and contact your health care provider for an appointment. Janet Richardson and Jill Wolf, HCA's school nurses, can be a great resource for advice and feedback. They are carefully monitoring COVID-19 trends in our area and are working closely with the Rappahock Area Health Department. Please reach out to Mrs. Richardson or Mrs. Wolf at the school 540-286-1600 if you have questions or concerns about your family's health.

School Cleanliness and Sanitation

How is HCA preventing the spread of germs in the restroom?

All our restrooms are having touchless faucets, soap dispensers, and paper towel holders installed this summer. We are also installing motion activated faucets in restrooms. Students are required to have their mask on the entire time they are in the restroom and there should be no more than two students in the restroom at a time. We will reinforce with students the importance of properly washing their hands and will have signage to remind them how to do this properly.

How can students keep their hands clean during the day?

In addition to opportunities for students to wash their hands during the day, each classroom has had a touchless hand sanitizer station installed.

How are restrooms being sanitized during the school day?

Common surfaces including those in all restrooms are being sanitized throughout the school day to reduce the potential transmission of germs.

What measures are HCA taking to ensure air purity?

The filters on classroom HVAC units have already been upgraded to a higher Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value as recommended by our Health District. Classroom windows will be open to the greatest extent possible to allow additional fresh air into the classrooms to improve air quality.

How are classrooms and other spaces sanitized each night?

Between uses by different groups of students, desks and common surfaces will be sanitized each evening by cleansers proven by the EPA to kill COVID-19.

Will drinking fountains be available for student use?

Due to the potential spread of germs at our drinking fountains, the drinking stations will be disabled. Students may use the touchless bottle filler that is attached to our drinking fountains. Children who do not have a water bottle may get a disposable cup for water.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

How will students enter the building each day?

All students will enter the building from our front entrance. Doors will be propped open so that students are not touching these surfaces. Students arriving for morning Aviat Care will proceed directly to Fr. Brisson Hall. For students arriving after 7:45 a.m, grades K-4 will enter on far left set of doors and proceed to their classrooms. Grades 5-8 will enter into the building from the far right set of doors and proceed to their classrooms.

How will students dismiss each day?

Doors will be propped open so students are not touching these shared surfaces. We will begin our dismissal procedures earlier this year to allow more time to dismiss students while maintaining social distancing guidelines. We will also stagger the dismissal of grade levels of students to prevent students from crossing paths with other grades outside the school. 8th grade students will again assist us in dismissal procedures as “safeties.” Grades K-3 will dismiss through the kindergarten doors and make their way to their vehicle. 4th and 5th grade students will exit through the main doors to our school – each on the same side that they used to enter the building. Middle school students will exit through the recess school doors and make their way to their vehicles. Students waiting outside for their parents will be socially distanced from their peers.

Lunch and Recess

Where will students eat lunch?

Because we want to avoid students sharing spaces, students will eat lunch in their classroom each day. Students will of course remove their masks to eat, but will remain socially distanced throughout the lunch period.

Will students have recess each day?

Students will have at least one opportunity for recess during the school day. Grade levels of students will be assigned to either the baseball field, soccer field, or blacktop area. In the event of inclement weather, students will enjoy indoor recess in the classroom. HCA will follow CDC guidelines by keeping student groups to 50 or less during recess periods.

Will Holy Cross Academy still sell lunch each day?

Our kitchen will still offer lunch for sale each day. Teachers will take student orders at the start of the day. All prepared lunches will be boxed up and delivered to students in their classrooms during lunch.

When are the students' lunch times?

Lunch times this year will be as follows: 11:40 – 12:00 kindergarten and grade 1, 12:00 – 12:20 grades 2 and 3, 12:20 – 12:40 grades 4 and 5, and 12:40 – 1:00 middle school.

When will students have recess?

Recess times will be as follows: 11:20 – 11:40 for kindergarten and grade 1, 11:40 – 12:00 for grades 1 and 2, 12:00 – 12:20 for grades 4 & 5, and 1:00 – 1:17 for middle school.

Weather permitting, teachers may plan additional recess times with their students before or after their scheduled times.

Aviat Care

How will morning Aviat Care work?

Students arriving between 7:00 a.m. and 7:45 a.m. will be directed into Fr. Brisson Hall where they will sit socially distanced with their grade peers until they are picked up by their classroom/homeroom teacher to proceed to the classroom and begin instruction.

Where will students be for afternoon Aviat Care?

Students staying for afternoon Aviat Care will proceed to Fr. Brisson Hall at dismissal. Desks and common surfaces used for distance learning from school will be disinfected prior to the start of Aviat Care.

Aviat Care will use the outdoor areas as well as Fr. Brisson Hall, keeping students socially distanced throughout the afternoon.

100% Online Learners

When will my child be expected to be online for their live or recorded content from teachers?

Your child's teacher will communicate the times that you can expect your child to participate in streaming video content from the classroom.

How will instruction be delivered to students participating in the 100% online option?

Students participating in 100% online instruction will receive synchronous instruction in some subjects each day from their classroom teachers. Students will participate in a live stream feed of instruction from the classroom. Students should have access to link to the instruction in case they are not able to be online live with their classmates.

What are the rules for students participating in Zoom calls with their teachers and/or classmates during the school day?

Students participating in synchronous learning with their teacher will be required to follow the guidelines to maximize their learning:

Be logged into the appropriate site and ready for instruction to begin at the appointed time.

Students will be dressed in Holy Cross Academy attire during synchronous calls with their teacher so that they feel more a part of their classroom.

Students will refrain from eating during these lessons.

Students will participate in calls seated in a well-lit, common area of their home (not in a bedroom or restroom).

Ask questions and participate using the chat feature or through other methods requested by your teacher.

Will due dates for work be assigned to 100% distance learners?

In order for students to be most successful in their online learning, it is important for them to stick to a regular schedule and routine. Students learning from home will be required to keep up with their studies and will be held to deadlines for submitting classwork, homework, projects, and assessments. If necessary, partial credit or no credit can be awarded to work that is late or not completed by online learners.

How is my child educated in the event that they are forced to quarantine due to illness or a positive COVID-19 test by a family member?

Students who are quarantined for any reason may transition to online only instruction for the time that they must be out of school. This will allow students to continue their learning while waiting to be cleared for return to school.

Can 100% online learners begin attending class in person?

Yes. If a family that is enrolled in 100% online learning feels that they are ready for their child(ren) to return to school in person, they are welcomed to do so. We ask that the parents reach out to the classroom teacher to coordinate an in person start date as well as to determine whether gray or maroon days will offer the best educational setting for their child.

We have six students that began the year 100% online who will be rejoining live instruction next week and we have a few others who have already returned to classroom.

Distance Learning from Campus

How will students who are participating in distance learning on campus be supervised?

Students in like grade levels will be grouped together (K + 1st), (2nd and 3rd), (4th and 5th), and middle school. The younger students will use the library, art room, and music room. Middle school students will be supervised in Fr. Brisson Hall.

How many students are participating in distance learning from campus?

A total of 85 students are currently scheduled to participate in distance learning from campus. This total is divided nearly equally between the gray and maroon days.

Do students socially distancing from school need to bring a device?

We recommend students bring a Chromebook, laptop or tablet with them on their distance learning from school days. Students can use their device to access and complete school assignments, visit online textbooks and curricular resources, and to complete work in their specials classes.

What should my child bring with them on their distance learning from campus days?

Each day students are distance learning from campus, they need to bring their books and materials to complete their assignments, a book or magazine to enjoy, and a device (see above). Students need to refrain from bringing toys or items that could be a distraction to other learners.

Will students distance learning from campus have lunch and recess?

Students distance learning on campus will have lunch with their classmates and at least one recess per day. Students will be required to stay socially distanced during lunch and recess.

Will students have structure to their day?

The teacher or classroom aide who is working with each group will keep students on the same page with their peers throughout the school day. Students will be encouraged to work on the same subjects at the same time as their peers so they can be assisted in their assignments.

Technology

Will my child need a Chromebook on campus each day this year?

Students in grades 6-8 are expected to bring their charged device with them each day to use as needed in their classes.

Students who will be distance learning from campus will need to bring a device to help them complete any online assignments from their in-classroom learning the previous day.

Can Holy Cross Academy handle potential increased bandwidth of more devices in use on campus this year?

While technology is never perfect, HCA added many new wireless access points in the early summer. Additional access points were added in the hallways between classrooms and two new access points were added to Fr. Brisson Hall.

How will technology class be delivered?

To prevent students from sharing devices during the school day, students will complete their technology class on their distance learning day.

Parent Involvement

Will parents still be invited to be involved as volunteers?

We will still depend on the help of parents to help support our efforts on campus. Prior to volunteers making their way back to help in the classroom, they will need to complete a questionnaire about potential COVID-19 symptoms as well as pass a temperature screening. Volunteers will need to wear a mask while they are supervising students and must maintain social distancing.

What is the Ident-A-Kid System in use in the front office?

We are always looking at how to make our campus safer. HCA purchased the Ident-A-Kid system last year thanks to a generous donation from Frank and Nona Mauro. Ident-A-Kid is the visitor management system that we use on campus to ensure the identity of visitors to campus. When visitors sign in, the software immediately checks the scanned identification against the sex offender registry. Local police are immediately notified if someone tries to sign in who should not be with children.

We ask parents to please have their driver's license with them when they enter the office to sign out your child(ren). Visitors sanitize their hands before and after using the Ident-A-Kid designated computer so that we do not spread germs.

How do I become part of Holy Cross Academy's PTO?

Every parent or guardian of a Holy Cross Academy student is automatically part of our Parent Teacher Organization. The PTO encourages participation in planning and hosting a number of wonderful events for our school community throughout the year. If you would like to learn more about getting involved with the PTO please contact Wendy Roche, PTO President, at hokieswb@hotmail.com.

Miscellaneous Questions

Will after school sports teams be offered?

Sports teams for the fall have been cancelled. We will continue to work with the Diocese and our athletic conference on decisions regarding future athletic seasons.

How will attendance be counted each day?

We are seeking guidance from the Diocese on the most appropriate way to take attendance for students in the coming year, particularly for students participating in the hybrid model and our 100% online learners.

What physical plant improvements were made on campus over the summer?

The roof of the gym, early elementary wing, and middle school were replaced over the summer. New wireless access points were added throughout campus. The hallways, restrooms of the building and Fr. Brisson Hall were painted and new base trim installed. Bulletin boards were inserted outside of each elementary classroom. Venting to outside was added for our nurses office and two adult restrooms. Paper towel and soap dispensers as well as restroom sinks were all updated with touchless devices. Touchless hand sanitizer stations were also added to each classroom. Last, but certainly not least, our conference room is being transformed into our own school chapel!

What happens if Governor Northam requires all schools in the state to close?

In the event that in person instruction is banned in the Commonwealth, Holy Cross Academy would return to an online only model for all students. We will use Schoology, an online education platform, which is able to link to PowerSchool as well as Google tools used by our teachers.

When will HCA return to all students in the classroom five days a week?

Our goal is to have all our students back on campus for live instruction. Given the current social distancing guidelines, our physical plant, and enrollment, we are using the best plan for our school community.

We continue to work closely with the Rappahanock Area Health District and monitor the latest data from the Center for Disease Control to update best practices for keeping everyone on campus safe. We have already made updates to our morning screening procedures and recess options for students based on updates from these groups. We will further adapt our approach as it is appropriate.