



VASJ Reopening Plan FAQ

Q: Aren't all Cuyahoga County high schools going "all virtual" for the first semester? Is VASJ acting alone?

No. While CMSD (Cleveland Metropolitan School District) public schools have elected to go with remote learning only — no in-school instruction — for the first nine weeks of school, other public, private and parochial schools are following a variety of approaches. Upon reviewing parent surveys, along with school reopening guidance from federal and state health officials and the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, VASJ has developed a "hybrid" schedule — some days in class, some days remote — while giving parents the option to choose if they wish their student to stay at home every day.

Q: What objective criteria can families use to decide whether community transmission of COVID-19 is at a safe enough level to have my student return to school?

This is a family choice, and we as school officials are not in a position to advise as to the "tipping point" at which parents should feel comfortable having their students leave home for school or anywhere else. No hard-and-fast rules have been set for an "acceptable" level of community spread. In making their own decision, we urge all parents to carefully (and continually) monitor news reports, guidance from the State of Ohio and the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). There are several websites a family can visit when making a determination on this issue. The American Academy of Pediatrics, the CDC, the Cuyahoga County Board of Health and University Hospitals are just some of the sites that have information and guidelines.

Q: What new protocols have been put in place at VASJ in response to COVID-19?

Numerous alerts and newsletter statements have been distributed that outline these protocols. In addition, please consult the [VASJ reopening plan](#) for more detailed information about the safety protocols that have been/are being implemented. Please call the school if you have any questions. In addition to establishing a hybrid schedule of learning, some of the most important changes your student will experience when he or she is in the building include:

- Classroom desks will be placed at an acceptable distance from one another. This is made possible by the reduced population in the building on any given day.
- All classroom desks will be cleaned after each class in which they are used.
- Everyone in the building will be required to wear an approved mask throughout the day.
- Stairwells will be one way in order to avoid any "cross traffic."
- Hallways will be marked with one-way arrows to avoid crowding.
- "Temperature stations" will be in place at both the front and back entrances of the school.
- Cafeteria protocols have been changed (see our reopening plan).



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Q: Can students choose to attend school 100% remotely? Can they opt for that later even if they start the year on the in-person hybrid schedule?

Yes. Students can switch to remote learning at any time if they feel uncomfortable. However, once they choose remote, they must stay remote for the remainder of the quarter.

Q: Is the school ready for everyone to go remote if conditions warrant?

For any reason, if VASJ goes to 100% remote learning, we will be ready. Teachers have received and will continue to receive professional development to best meet their students' needs.

Q: What is the point of being present in the school at any time while the pandemic persists?

As a Catholic school, we believe that parents have the right to choose the method of education they feel best suits their child. In addition, we feel that a student's social and emotional needs are just as important as their academic needs. While their academic needs can be met with the technology that is available, their social and emotional needs are much more difficult, if not impossible, to meet. This is primarily why groups of doctors, most notably the American Academy of Pediatrics, are strongly urging for students to be present in school, at least part time, provided safety measures like social distancing and masks are utilized.

Q: How does a hybrid schedule actually reduce and minimize risk?

The simple answer is this: more social distance. Although VASJ is fortunate to have an exceptionally large school building, having all of our students in the building every day would not enable the level of distancing recommended by health officials. By reducing the number of students by more than half on any given day, those distancing guidelines can be followed in the classrooms and elsewhere throughout the building. For more detailed information on how social distancing will look at VASJ, please consult [our reopening plan](#).

Q: Will the school be providing daily temperature level checks for all entering the building?

Yes. Temperature checks will take place at both front and back entrances of the school building.

Q: Is COVID-19 testing being provided on-site for staff and students? Will all staff and students be required to "pass" a test before being permitted to attend school?

No. The guidance provided by the Ohio Department of Health for reopening schools does not include a recommendation for on-site testing at schools.

Q: Will there be a cleaning staff constantly working to sanitize throughout the entire day, every day?

Yes. In addition to the cleaning protocols of the past, we have hired an additional "porter" who will monitor and address sanitary conditions constantly throughout the day.



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Q: Will COVID-19 compliance officers enforce safety guidelines?

All instructors and other school personnel will enforce the new rules, just as they do all the school rules in place during “normal” times. We are expanding the daily presence of our school nurse, who will instruct all personnel on best hygiene practices for dealing with COVID-19. Also, an isolation room will be set up for anyone experiencing symptoms. As for students who “break the rules,” they will be disciplined — up to and including suspension or expulsion — just as they would with any failure to comply with the rules governing student conduct.

Q: What is the plan to identify students with symptoms?

Parents are required to perform a daily health check of their child prior to him or her coming to school. If the child is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, he or she must STAY HOME from school and the parent must notify VASJ. For up-to-date information about COVID-19 symptoms and an interactive symptom checker/self-assessment tool, parents and guardians should visit www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html.

At school, students’ temperatures will be taken upon entering the building. Anyone with a fever or experiencing any other symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., cough, sore throat, loss of smell or taste, etc.) will be isolated and parents will be called to have their student come home.

In the case of a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case, the school will call the local health department to report the matter and obtain guidance. Any student who has a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 may not return to school until such student meets the CDC’s criteria for returning to school. Others who may have been potentially exposed will be notified in accordance with the directives or advice of the local health department.

Pursuant to Ohio Department of Health guidelines, families, caregivers and staff shall, as soon as possible, notify the school if (i) they have been exposed to COVID-19, (ii) they, or any members of their households, have been diagnosed with or presumed to have COVID-19, or (iii) they are quarantined. Students with known exposure to someone with diagnosed or presumed COVID-19 must self-quarantine at home for 14 days or as otherwise advised or instructed by the local health department. Students who travel to a location with known community spread may choose to self-quarantine at home for 14 days.

If a student is quarantined, he or she will continue his or her education by signing in to class each day from home.



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Q: What is the plan to identify faculty and staff with symptoms?

All faculty and staff are required to perform a daily health check prior to coming to school. If they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, they are prohibited from entering school property and are required to notify VASJ.

If a faculty or staff member feels sick or is experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms while in the school, he or she is to immediately notify school personnel and follow appropriate procedures.

In addition, faculty and staff members are required to notify the school if any of the following are true:

- They have tested positive for or are presumed by health care professionals or health authorities to have COVID-19.
- They have had close contact with an individual infected with COVID-19 within the last 14 days.
- They have had close contact with an individual suspected of being infected with COVID-19, including individuals exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, within the last 14 days.
- They are currently experiencing or have, within the last 14 days, experienced any COVID-19 symptoms (e.g., fever, cough, sore throat, loss of smell or taste, etc.)
- They have traveled to an area that is under a Level 2, 3, or 4 travel advisory by the U.S. State Department.

Faculty and staff with known exposure to someone diagnosed with COVID-19 must self-quarantine at home for 14 days. The person quarantining should stay home for 14 days after his or her last contact with the person who has COVID-19.

If a faculty or staff member has a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, he or she may not return to VASJ until he or she meets the CDC's criteria for returning to school. Others who may have been potentially exposed will be notified in accordance with the directives or advice of the local health department.

Q: Will hand sanitizer, masks and face shields be provided for all entering the school?

We encourage all students to comply with directives from the state, which include wearing an approved mask upon leaving home. We know, however, that sometimes people forget. Therefore, we will provide masks for those who fail to bring them. Face masks should cover the nose, mouth and chin of the student and be made of cloth. Face shields are not acceptable absent special approved circumstances. We also encourage students to be equipped with hand sanitizer, but we have set up hand-sanitizing dispensers throughout the building. Hand sanitizer also will be available in every classroom. Drinking fountains have been disabled except for spots that allow for refilling water bottles.



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Q: Will students change classrooms throughout the day?

Yes. We will continue the traditional 44-minute class periods and 8 periods per day. However, to limit the interaction in the hallways, we have taken the following steps:

- The hybrid model we created will translate into less than 50% of the student body in the building on any given day.
- Students will be “housed” by grade in separate wings of the building. For example, all freshmen will be in one wing of the building and all of their classes will be located in that wing. As a result, when they change classes, they will not interact with any other grades. There will be no more than 50-55 students in the hallway at any time during class change.
- Teachers will be in the halls to monitor student travel and help to ensure social distancing during class changes.

Q: How do the Catholic values of the school remain in a “distance learning” environment?

VASJ always will be grounded in the faith values of the Catholic Church, Ursuline Core Values and Characteristics of Marianist Education. It is of special note that one of the Ursuline Core Values is “Embracing Change” and one of the Characteristics of Marianist Education is “Educate for Adaptation and Change.” Certainly, these principles are being called upon during these extraordinary times. One thing that will never change, however, is the spiritual foundation of our school.

The hybrid model keeps students in the building environment part of the time every week. However, even when students are at home — and for families who opt for five-day distance learning — the lessons they learn will continue to be taught from the faith perspective that makes Catholic education exceptional and unique. Further, please know that in all of our planning, maintaining the essential character of our school has been an uppermost consideration. Specific spiritual programs, exercises and activities will be adapted to the “new normal” we face until the time comes when we can once again return to the day-to-day interaction that we all prefer. We pray for your guidance and patience during this interim period and invite and encourage you to share your thoughts as we move forward.

Q: Are faculty and staff being asked to quarantine at least two weeks prior to the first day of school?

Our building has essentially been closed since March 20. The small handful of staff members who have been in the building this summer have maintained social distancing guidelines and worn masks throughout the building.



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Q: Will lockers assignments be spread at least six feet apart?

Yes. VASJ will make every effort to space lockers out as much as possible. No students will be allowed to share a locker, and there will be a minimum of one unused locker between lockers that are used.

Q: Given the health risks, is reopening our schools at any level the “Catholic” thing to do?

The Church has long held that parents are the primary educators of their children. Catholic schools educate in partnership with parents and guardians, which is why we are providing options. As a diocesan-owned high school sponsored by the Ursuline Sisters and the Society of Mary, VASJ believes:

- Every person is a gift from God and that all of our students, their families, our educators and school community deserve to be treated as the sacred gifts they are.
- Inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, we are called to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.
- The circumstances of individual families within our school community vary widely, so we must plan with the needs of each family in mind.
- We are governed by the concept of “subsidiarity” — an organizing principle that decentralizes authority within organizations to respect the insights of each individual entity. We sometimes act in unison and other times act separately when it is in the best interest of those we serve.
- The diocese operates schools of choice, and no students are compelled to attend Catholic schools. The partnership between school and family is paramount, and we do not believe — or wish — any parents to send their children to our schools where they do not believe all possible precautions have been taken to to meet their expectations.

Dr. Frank W. O’Linn, Secretary for Education and Superintendent of Schools for the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, states:

“Since the start of this pandemic, our goal at the Diocese of Cleveland has been to support each school in the diocese, whether diocesan-owned, parish school, independent, or religious order schools, with the best possible information, resources and action steps to create and share their own plan for the 2020-21 school year.”

It is with all this in mind that VASJ has created a plan that we believe to be the most responsible and nimble for our families’ needs.

For the most up-to-date information regarding the 2020-21 school year, please visit our COVID-19 Resource Center at vasj.com/covid-19-updates.