

Teacher Town Hall Q&A

Learning

How do we manage behaviors with online students while teaching in the classroom?

Teachers should set-up two screens so that they have a good view of the kids learning at home. As for management strategies, the same tools that teachers use for in-person learning can be used with remote learners. In cases where students at home are not complying with class rules and expectations, parents and guardians should be involved, and it's not unreasonable to require supervision at home if the teacher has behavior issues.

Is there a way to project the students at home on a board in the classroom? This will allow teachers not to have to hold a device, see the kids at home better, see their questions, see raised hands, and the students at home can see the entire room?

Yes, by using the camera/sound bar unit and Google Meet or Zoom, with the grid view on the computer that is connected to or casting to the projector, you can see the students at home, and the students at home can see the students in the classroom.

Will our work hours, lunch, and planning periods be respected? It's going to take an inordinate number of hours to plan for both in-person and virtual learning experiences, address the individual needs of students in up to three locations (two classroom of classes are split and at home), and provide feedback. I'm concerned that the hours necessary will interrupt our home lives and ability to be with and care for our own families.

Time for lunch and planning are set by the school principal. All teachers should have a planning period and lunch each day so if that is not happening on a daily basis, teachers should contact their principal.

This academic year will be stressful and challenging. It is important for teachers and administration to communicate regarding mental health needs. Teachers have a long history of maintaining a work-life balance. Some planning that has occurred in the past might not happen as teachers need to prioritize their own health and well-being, as well as the health of their family members.

If COVID numbers in Maryland spike significantly once school opens, will remote learning be mandated for all students?

It is possible that schools will need to shift to remote learning. COVID numbers are monitored daily so communities facing particularly high positivity rates could force schools to move to remote learning for all teachers and students.

Teacher Town Hall Q&A

How will curriculum be adjusted for online learners?

Students choosing to learn online will receive ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies and Religion synchronously. Each school is setting up their own schedule of times that each grade will meet. Online learners will be expected to do work independently and submit assignments as a follow-up to the classwork.

How will we be deciding who teaches remotely and who teaches in person?

There are several factors that go into the decision as to whether a teacher can work remotely. It involves a discussion with the Principal, the teacher, and the Human Resource representative to review the factors and make a determination.

How will how we ended last year affect how we begin teaching this year?

At the end of the year, each teacher was given a checklist of standards specific to the subject they taught for the year. The teacher indicated whether the standard was taught in person or online and indicated areas that they would recommend that the subsequent teacher review with students before moving on. Teachers should begin to review these checklists when they return to give them a better idea of where to start.

What are protocols for parent meetings/conferences?

Parent meetings and annual fall parent/teacher conferences are to be held virtually until further notice.

How will grading will be handled for the virtual learner?

All grading that takes place in person will also be expected of the virtual learner. Each school will set up their system of how the work of the virtual learner is to be sent to the teacher for assessment.

How will we address the students who did not engage in remote learning last spring?

Our parents and guardians made a choice this fall that their child will either attend school in person or virtually. Each school has informed parents what the commitment to virtual learning will look like for their school. Teachers and counselors checking in with students on their social/emotional well-being will be important for all of our students.

Teacher Town Hall Q&A

Who will be consulted to develop services for students receiving speech/language, reading, and other services?

All schools will continue to have Student Assistance Teams (SAT) that will meet on at least a monthly basis to evaluate the learning services plans of students with learning differences. Schools will work with county and private services to arrange mutually convenient times for services to be delivered virtually.

When will we receive guidance regarding instructional requirements and minutes for subjects?

Part of the AOB planning document describes the instructional minute guide for schools to use. Teachers will use the end of the year curriculum checklists and the AOB current curriculum guide to prepare and deliver lessons.

Social Distancing, Facilities & Operations

What changes to the school day will be made to accommodate the added responsibilities that teachers will have?

Flexibility is going to be key as the new protocols for social distancing, handwashing, and use of the Ascendo cameras will take time for all to adjust. Schedules and times may need to be re-adjusted as each school's plan is put into action.

What types of support is being provided to teachers and students who are having difficulty with the changes? Do we have a system in place to support student stress and anxiety as we deal with a rollercoaster of transitioning?

Kennedy Krieger has offered to provide a workshop for teachers and staff on Tuesday and Wednesday of in-service week. Schools are encouraged to have a teacher's lounge where staff will have a chance to relax during their planning period. In addition, each Archdiocesan employee is entitled to use the AOB EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

For students, the school counselors have been preparing for months on how to deal with the stress and anxiety students may be experiencing. They have created lessons for the first weeks of school.

Teacher Town Hall Q&A

What is the plan for those of us who use tables and not desks?

During the walkthroughs with the Associates, discussions took place with the administration as to how many students could safely sit at each table. Some administrators decided to use desks instead, while others went with the tables with limited number of students (depending on the size).

How does instruction work when you teach students both in person and virtually?

In accordance with Domain 1 of The Danielson Framework—Lesson Planning— teachers will need to think of how and what they are going to teach the students during synchronous instruction before the students follow up with independent work.

What is the justification for going through all of the hoops and implementing so many new procedures for a student to be in person?

In working with our CDC technical advisors, they have stated the mental well-being of students as a primary concern for getting schools open.

Will Specials (Art, Music, P.E., etc.) classes be held and how?

Each school is handling their special classes in a different way. While some Specials teachers are creating pre-recorded videos for students and monitoring other non- Specials classrooms, others are rotating from class to class. In some schools, the decision has been made not to have certain specials the first trimester.

What will recess look like?

Each school has a plan on how to socially-distance students at recess. The task force has recommended that equipment not be shared. If a cohort should choose to share a ball, then a detailed plan on how the equipment is to be cleaned needs to be submitted to the Associate Superintendent.

Air system and filters. How will they be cleaned and how often?

On the walk-throughs at each school, the Associate Superintendents discussed what type of filters are used, when they were last cleaned and what is the best way to increase the air flow from outside by opening windows, dampers, etc. with maintenance personnel.

Teacher Town Hall Q&A

Who is responsible for cleaning and disinfecting?

Each school has a cleaning protocol in place. Some schools were disinfected and protected with a long-lasting process while others will be disinfected every evening. All schools were provided cases of approved disinfectants.

Was the 90 day disinfectant and protectant product approved by the EPA?

Yes, it has been approved for use in schools by the EPA. The product is a mechanical kill of germs and viruses instead of a chemical kill.

How will preschool work space be set up?

Each school is unique in how the workspace has been set up. Some preschools are using desks, some yoga mats, while others are using tables.

How will social distancing negligence be addressed in the school hallways?

All schools will take time the first weeks of school to educate all students on the science of the virus and explain the new protocols put into place and why. Students will need constant reminders of the new protocols until they become routine.

Are we taking the temperatures of every student?

The AOB will send out a health questionnaire every morning for each student for the parents to fill out. Parents are being asked to take the temperature of their child and report if it is over 100.4° F. While it is not recommended by the AOB re-opening task force, some schools will be taking the temperature of each of their students. Teachers should not take the temperatures of students in their classes unless it is part of the school-wide protocol.

Will there be freedom of movement/removal of masks for students in Kindergarten?

Movement is an important part of any student's day. Brain breaks, movement breaks and mask breaks should be part of the routine no matter the age of the student. However; movement should be limited to the student's identified space in the classroom. The identified and consistent space for each student will help with contact tracing if needed.

Teacher Town Hall Q&A

Who will make the decision for the school to open due to inclement weather?

Dr. Hargens will work with area officials throughout the state to make the decision whether or not the AOB Catholic Schools will be on delayed arrival, early dismissal or closed for each county.

Will students be allowed to bring water bottles from home?

Yes. Water fountains cannot be used unless they have been retrofitted for bottle refilling.

The majority of Specials (Art, Music, P.E., etc.) teachers interact with the entire student body. What will be done to limit their exposure?

During the schools' facility walk-throughs, the Associate Superintendents and the principals discussed the interactions of Specials teachers in the course of instructing the student body. Each school will create their own schedule for Specials and will determine which ones will be taught the first trimester and how frequently. Specials teachers (as well as staff) may be assigned to help support classroom teachers with breaks and recess duty depending on the school's needs.

Due to new protocols, will dismissal times be allowed to start earlier.

It depends upon the school and the protocols they have put in place. It is realistic to think that arrival time and dismissal times will take significantly longer in schools where more students are in person than those with fewer students. The principal and the staff will determine and adjust what dismissal will look like at their school.

What are the protocols to be implemented when a member of the school community gets sick.

See COVID 19 Decision charts located in school's plans for details. A coordinated discussion including the Superintendent, the Chancellor, the Principal, Head of Risk Management and the Associate Superintendent, in consultation with the county health department, will take place immediately after receiving notification about a positive test result to implement the response protocols.

Can we wear scrubs or dress down?

The Principal of each school establishes a professional dress code and determines whether it can be relaxed or not.

Teacher Town Hall Q&A

Is testing for COVID-19 readily available for staff?

No. Anyone that has been exposed to someone with a positive test result will be asked to follow up with their private health care professional.

What products have the AOB secured for cleaning?

All schools received cases of Envirocleanse to be used in their building. Schools also received supplies of re-usable adult face masks.

What should a teacher do if they are not confident with their school's protocol?

Teachers are encouraged to reach out to their Administration to discuss their concerns and understand what protocols and procedures were put into place this summer to help mitigate risks.

Will the school day be extended?

No, not at this time.

Teachers are expected to eat in the classroom with their students. There will be no time to socialize with co-workers, which is an important part of our mental health. Suggestions?

All faculty and staff need to take care of themselves. Continue to socially distance (at least 6 feet) with colleagues whenever possible and always remember to wear your mask! Continue to support each other with notes of support and encouragement. Be patient and flexible with one another. The vaccine is on the horizon!

Who is going to clean the recess equipment after everyone uses it?

The AOB recommendation is that no recess or PE equipment is shared amongst students. If a school decides to allow a cohort to share recess equipment, then a detailed cleaning protocol needs to be submitted to the Associate Superintendent.

Teacher Town Hall Q&A

How can indoor recess happen?

Again, the students are to be kept in the space assigned to them. Encouraging students to read, draw, play cards individually, bring in games from home will help to keep them engaged.

When you consider lunch and removal of masks when students are less than 6 feet away, how is this possible?

We encourage all students to be as distant from each other at lunch as possible. If desks are less than 6 feet apart, then we have recommended that there be 2 shifts at lunchtime. One group can go to the bathroom and wash their hands and return to their seats (with masks on), while the first group is eating with their masks off.

Is there an approximate number given as to how many students would be “safe” in a classroom during in-person learning?

No, there is no universally-applicable number in grades K-12. The number of students allowed in a given room is dependent upon the amount of usable space in each room. This is one of the reasons why the classrooms have so many of our teaching tools that have been either taken home or put in storage for this year. A smaller teacher footprint in the classroom allows for more usable student distancing space to accommodate the number of students wishing to return in person to the classroom.

Can K-2 classrooms have the use of classroom libraries for students?

Unfortunately not. What we are encouraging teachers to do is to select stories for each student to be used by that student for a few weeks. At the end of the time, the books should be collected, allowed to sit for at least 72 hours and then wiped down to be redistributed.

Will PPE be provided to teachers?

All schools do have a supply of adult masks that can be used. Some schools have also purchased face shields to be used in addition to the required masks.

Teacher Town Hall Q&A

How are schools expected to conduct any type of emergency and safety drills this year?

Schools will be expected to hold all of their emergency drills and safety drills this year, but further instructions regarding procedures to ensure social distancing will be forthcoming in the next few weeks. All drills this year may look different and will concentrate on the students knowing and understanding what to do in each situation, but speed and efficacy in conducting the school-wide drill will not hold as much importance this year.

Students are required to stay in their space the majority of the day. It seems to go against everything we normally do. How is this conducive to teaching?

Keeping our students and staff safe is a priority and necessitates all of the protocols to mitigate any risk of exposure. While these protocols are not conducive to the teaching strategies usually advanced, we need to remember that we are not taking steps backwards in instruction but are actually stepping aside and educating kids in a different way that is necessary until there is a vaccine.

Emerging Opportunities & Communications

Many counties are opting for distance-learning, given the relative lack of knowledge with regards to how children spread the virus. In bucking the public schools and choosing to reopen, is the AOB simply hoping to siphon off those children whose parents want in-person education?

Not at all. Our first priority is ensuring the safe return to in-person instruction for our current students. We are able to open for in-person instruction due to our enrollment size. Adding a significant number of new students would not allow us to safely reopen.

Since the AOB, as a whole, provided excellent education to the students when school buildings closed in March, the AOB should have taken this summer as an opportunity to market our value to the community. Is there a plan to promote our virtual learning excellence and the benefits of Catholic education in these times as a better and more safe at-home learning option?

The seamless transition to remote learning was highlighted in the spring, as well in the beginning of the summer. Once the decision was made to open for in-person instruction, the marketing strategy shifted to highlighting the new safety measures in place at our schools and how we are able to safely reopen for in-person instruction.

Teacher Town Hall Q&A

Have you considered a soft opening to see how this will transition as well as possible half day schedules to give students needed time to decompress and get accustomed to their new school routines?

All scenarios for returning to the classroom were evaluated by the Planning Ahead Task Force.

What opportunities have been identified at this point?

The Summer Learning Program - Our successful implementation of virtual learning in the spring created an opportunity for students to participate in a virtual summer learning program to help stave off typical summer learning loss experienced by students. The program was very successful and the feedback from parents and students overwhelmingly positive. We will expand the program and offer it again next summer.

Virtual admissions events – Traditional methods for recruitment, such as in-person open houses, tours, and shadow days are not able to be held due to COVID-19. As a result, we have identified several opportunities for prospective families to learn more about our schools virtually. Some of these methods include virtual tours, virtual fairs/open houses held via Zoom, virtual Q & A sessions with current parents and students, virtual shadow days, etc.

This Committee should not even exist. Why are you using a pandemic to market your schools?

The committee is not using the pandemic to market schools. The committee has been tasked with identifying new opportunities to advance our schools given the changing educational landscape.

How do you plan to maintain the families that are joining an AOB school due to the quality of learning?

The Director of Enrollment Management for the Archdiocese works closely with all Catholic schools on retention strategies and will continue to do so.

It has been voiced in the past that teacher turnover is supposedly a concern of many in the AOB, from parents to the higher-ups. Why then does it seem prudent to choose to reopen in such a manner when many faculty members are likely to seek employment elsewhere (or retire, etc.) due to concerns of contracting the virus?

The Archdiocese's reopening plan and decision to open for in-person instruction was developed using guidance and resources from state and local officials, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). It was developed by the Planning Ahead Task Force for Catholic Schools, which included healthcare professionals, counselors, educators, school leaders, parents, and experts in various applicable fields.

Teacher Town Hall Q&A

I would just suggest that the AOBs decision to reopen in the face of numerous other school systems beginning virtually, was this an opportunity mentioned above? While there is a definite benefit to working parents, what is the real advantage to our students returning to a restrictive learning environment?

The health and safety of our students, as well as their social and emotional well-being is important. While our implementation of distance learning was successful for most, some students really struggled. They crave human interaction and feel they learn more effectively in-person.

Why are we even talking about marketing and positioning when faculty members are concerned for their health and safety as well as that of their students and colleagues. This seems tasteless and opportunistic.

The marketing messaging has been focused on highlighting the safety initiatives that our schools have put in place to protect faculty and staff. It is important for all to see what is being done in our schools to ensure a safe opening.

How do justify in-person learning via an AOB update in counties that are increasing numbers, adding/resuming restrictions, or even in a state that has mask mandates while in open/public areas?

The positivity rates in the jurisdictions of the Archdiocese of Baltimore continue to decline. [As of 8/21, all jurisdictions are below a 5% positivity rate.](#)

What is the purpose of this committee? Where is there more information in the reopening plan about these issues? What teachers and staff are part of this committee? When and how will we receive updates about these opportunities? Will these opportunities be balanced against the importance of safety and well-being of our population?

The Strategic Communications and Emerging Opportunities Committee provided updates on the work of the Planning Ahead Task Force via newsletter communications, as well as drafted the reopening guidance for the AOB Catholic schools. Additional tasks included: recommending and prioritizing opportunities for the Department of Catholic Schools to consider; developing recruitment and retention strategies; and exploring virtual recruitment opportunities.

The committee consisted of admissions, marketing and advancement staff from Catholic high schools and elementary schools, as well as current school parents.

Teacher Town Hall Q&A

I would like more details about what this committee covers, particularly about what it and AOB sees as "opportunities" in this situation.

Opportunities identified over the summer include the Summer Learning Program and Virtual Admissions.

The Summer Learning Program - Our successful implementation of virtual learning in the spring, created an opportunity for students to participate in a virtual summer learning program to help stave off typical summer learning loss experienced by students. The program was very successful and the feedback from parents and students overwhelmingly positive. We will expand the program and offer it again next summer.

Virtual recruitment opportunities have also been identified and implemented. This is especially important for high school admissions, as shadow days, in-person open houses and tours will not be possible this fall.

It appears that the AOB is using the pandemic as an opportunity to increase enrollment and market itself. It appears that the AOB is primarily interested in the bottom line and pleasing parents. It appears that the AOB does not value the teachers who have decided their lives to these schools. How do you respond to this claim? Why weren't teachers involved in the decision to re-open? Why aren't you listening to them now?

The AOB is not using the pandemic as an opportunity to increase enrollment. Our first priority is ensuring the safe return to in-person instruction for our current students, faculty and staff. We are able to open for in-person instruction due to our enrollment size. Adding a significant number of new students would not allow us to safely reopen. The AOB does value the health and safety of all members of the Catholic school community. The planning Ahead Task Force has been working diligently over the summer to ensure a safe return to the classroom. The committees of the Planning Ahead Task Force included teachers and administrators who assisted in the development of the reopening plan. Teachers were also invited to join the Health and Safety Committee for facility walkthroughs, as well as encouraged to share input to the Planning Ahead Task Force via a feedback link in the task force newsletters.

Teacher Town Hall Q&A

Has the archdiocese considered the possibility of keeping a full-time remote learning option even after the danger of the pandemic has passed? Students who require home and hospital instruction must withdraw from their Catholic school and enroll in the public-school system to access this resource. In my experience the public schools are often not very welcoming to students in an already fragile situation. In addition, these students miss out on the spiritual formation we offer. In a crisis situation this support could make a tremendous difference for the student.

Thank you for the suggestion and input. This is definitely something we are looking in to.

If school changes to virtual, will parents be permitted to remove their students from school and receive a refund for the remainder of the year? Will parents be required to sign a waiver for filming in the classroom along with the risk of being present during a pandemic?

Parents will continue to follow the tuition refund policy of their school. Required waivers and forms will be distributed by the school administration or made available in School Admin.

Your initial survey only had 700 responses from a system that serves 25,000 students. More than one third of responses came from 3 schools. Why was this lack of response (because of bad link in a PDF doc) not addressed early on in the process to ensure more feedback?

Principals were asked to share the survey/feedback link with their school communities. We do not have control over who chose to respond. We received significantly more responses after the second newsletter was distributed.

Will teachers and staff be able to add suggestions and concerns?

Faculty and staff are always welcome to share suggestions and concerns with the Department of Catholic Schools.

These submissions have been edited for length and clarity.