



***2020-2021 Phased School Reopening
Health and Safety Plan***

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Introduction

Introduction

Since March 2020, when Waldron Mercy Academy transitioned to distance learning, the COVID-19 pandemic has touched every aspect of our lives, and its impact on our world is expected to continue to unfold into the foreseeable future. Yet, despite the challenges that have arisen during the pandemic, WMA has pushed forward. Our mission has served as a guiding force in planning and decision making, while prioritizing the health and safety of our students, staff and families.

The summer of 2020 has been like no other. Summer professional development for our faculty has been more comprehensive than ever, focusing on distance learning tools and best practices. Since the school year ended in June, WMA employees and key volunteers have worked diligently to develop the following reopening plan for the 2020-21 school year. This document establishes the framework we will use to reopen WMA in September 2020 and delineates specific policies and protocols for safe school operation in accordance with guidelines published by healthcare authorities as well as our federal, state and local government. Prior to the start of school our staff will review these protocols and procedures and the associated detailed implementation plans.

Reopening Planning Process

In June, a reopening Task Force was recruited by WMA to help evaluate prevailing healthcare guidelines and instructional and operational needs in the upcoming school year. The Task Force consists of members of WMA's staff, members of WMA's Board of Trustees (BOT), current parents, and parents of alumni, who bring expertise in the areas of medicine, healthcare policy, law, and education.

The Task Force was divided among six committees: (1) Health & Safety, (2) Facilities, (3) Curriculum, (4) Finance and Operations, (5) Specials & Extra-curricular, (6) Technology (7) Student Support, (8) Communications, (9) Parent Support.

Health & Safety	<p>Ann Marie Braca, Principal Lori McLaughlin, BOT, Attorney Sr. Karen Schneider, RSM, MD, and MPH, with a concentration in International and Disaster medicine. Sr. Karen is a pediatric disaster planner at Johns Hopkins. Dr. Mark Mikkelson, PENN critical care physician and epidemiologist, and one of the leads of their COVID-19 task force Dr. Jacquelyn Aveta, CHOP pediatrician, part of a larger</p>
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	<p>physician group discussing this topic for school systems across the country</p> <p>Dr. Kate Avitable, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, University of Pennsylvania, CHOP Cardiologist and Pulmonary Hypertension specialist</p> <p>Dr. Nina O'Connor, Chief Medical Officer of Penn Medicine at Home</p> <p>Joe Santoro, Physician Assistant Paoli Hospital</p> <p>Anthony Creato, Physician Assistant at St Christopher's Hospital for Children</p> <p>Candace Flowers - WMA school nurse</p> <p>Bill Lane - WMA security officer; head of WMA Safety Committee</p>
Facilities	<p>Mark Murray, WMA Director of Finance and Operations</p> <p>Joan Barone, BOT, former WMA Director of Finance and Operations</p> <p>Jimmy O'Donnell, Plant Operations</p> <p>Tim Kelly, Plant Operations</p>
Curriculum	<p>Ann Marie Braca, Principal</p> <p>Theresa Gannon, Vice Principal</p> <p>Curtis Cockenber, BOT, retired reading specialist, WMA alum</p> <p>Maria Leuzzi, WMA PreK teacher</p> <p>Catherine Rissover, WMA 2nd grade teacher</p> <p>Bonnie Guarini, WMA 4th grade teacher</p> <p>Katie DeSanto, WMA 8th grade teacher and parent</p>
Finance & Operations	<p>Mark Murray, WMA Director of Finance and Operations</p> <p>Beth D'Eramo, BOT, former WMA Director of Finance and Operations</p> <p>Klair Fitzpatrick, Attorney & partner in the labor and employment group - Morgan, Lewis & Bockius, parent</p> <p>Nancy Cahill, WMA Business Manager</p>
Specials & Extra-Curricular:	<p>Kristen Romano, Director of Student Services and Support</p> <p>Patty Papatheodore, WMA art teacher</p> <p>Michael Borton, WMA music and STEM teacher</p> <p>Adam Dickman, WMA Athletic Director and phys ed Teacher</p>
Technology	<p>Barb Scott, WMA Director of Innovation</p> <p>Caili Fogarty, WMA Advancement Office</p>
Student Support	<p>Theresa Gannon, Vice Principal</p> <p>Kristen Romano, Director of Student Services and Support</p> <p>Dolly Johnson, BOT</p> <p>Gina Venezia, WMA support teacher</p> <p>Grace Zorn, WMA guidance counselor</p>

Communications	Carolyn Leonard, WMA Communications Coordinator Karen McGinley, WMA Advancement Office Fran Gallagher, WMA Admin Assistant
Parent Support	Suzanne Gallagher, WMA Admissions office, parent Marcia Penn, BOT, past parent Courtney McLaughlin, WMA parent and 2nd grade teacher Nancy McKinley, WMA parent and preschool classroom assistant Jane Meconi, WMA parent and Parent Association President
Consultants	Jim McGovern, Chairperson, Waldron Mercy Board of Trustees, current and alum parent, and alum Jennifer Babia-Espiritu, nurse anesthetist for St Christopher's Sandy Evans, WMA preschool teacher Dr. Eileen Everly, CHOP Pediatrician Meg Kinson, WMA 4th grade teacher and parent Kirstin Patragnoni-Sauter, Family Nurse Practitioner Carrie Santoro, Physician Assistant Jennifer Tioseco, CHOP Neonatologist

The Health & Safety committee played a primary role in developing the plan. During the month of July, the Health & Safety Committee reviewed guidelines from the CDC, PA Department of Health, and American Academy of Pediatrics. These guidelines were relied upon to create a reopening plan specific to WMA's student body and staff, facilities, and resources. Once the Health & Safety Plan was reviewed by the entire task force and deemed to be final, it was used by the remaining Task Force committees to develop implementation plans specific to their areas of operation. The plan defined here is a result of that combined effort.

As we enter the 2020-2021 school year, WMA's Pandemic Response Team (PRT) will oversee implementation of the plan's policies and protocols as well as monitor any changes to healthcare or government guidelines that may affect the plan. PRT members are those task force participants highlighted above. In addition, all of the above named task force participants will continue to act as consultants to the PRT.

Guiding Principles

In our mission statement, we acknowledge Waldron Mercy Academy as a diverse, faith community rooted in the gospel values of mercy and justice. As we all know, one of the best attributes of WMA is that our students do not all come from the same neighborhood or similar backgrounds. Our students come from neighborhoods throughout Greater Philadelphia and represent a diversity of ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds and religious beliefs. Accordingly, the Task Force was committed to developing a plan that would allow for safe, in-person instruction when school reopens. The Task Force was also committed to creating a reopening plan, policies and procedures that would conform to prevailing guidelines from healthcare authorities and the government.

To balance these two objectives, policies and procedures in the Plan were guided by the following core principles:

1. The health and safety of WMA's students, staff, and families will be the first consideration in all decisions;
2. WMA will continue to fulfill its mission to provide a Mercy-centered education.
3. In-person instruction and interaction among teachers and students remains our goal, as both are vital to the educational development and emotional wellbeing of our students.

Operating Scenarios

The Task Force recognizes that the pandemic continues to evolve and to impact our lives. While a goal of the plan is in-person instruction, there is a real possibility that we will need to shift to distance learning at some point during the school year. Consequently, WMA has concurrently established plans for fully distance learning and hybrid in-school/distance learning in circumstances where students cannot be physically present in school. These circumstances may include:

- A shift in government guidelines reducing the number of students allowed in the building at one time. If we have to reduce the capacity of the school, a hybrid schedule, where there is a combination of simultaneous in-person and distance learning, will be implemented.
- Pandemic-related quarantines that may result in individual students or complete cohorts having to be home for a certain period of time.
- Pandemic-related full-school shutdowns. In the case of a full-school shutdown, WMA will resume distance learning from home for the entire student body.

Separately, some of our families may proactively decide to keep their child(ren) at home full-time or part-time for health considerations related to COVID-19. For families opting for in-home learning, WMA is committed to providing distance learning for students.

In light of the above, WMA is developing the following school-wide operational scenarios. For the 2020-2021 school year, we will simultaneously provide all three learning options and allow parents to choose the option they prefer until health conditions, CDC regulations, or governmental orders dictate otherwise. Most importantly, WMA intends to open in September able to provide in-person learning for all students.

1. In-person learning for all students with face coverings, increased hygiene and physical distancing to the extent feasible, as detailed in this document.
2. Hybrid with half the students (split alphabetically by family) in-person on Monday and Wednesday and half on Tuesday and Thursdays with alternating Friday attendance. Distance learning on the non-in-person days.
3. All distance learning. The school building is closed.

Since distance learning will be offered throughout the year, WMA will continue to develop this type of learning. We will continue to apply best practices based on educational research and sound pedagogy. Over the summer, WMA has invested in distance learning resources and our teachers have completed professional development specific to distance learning to prepare.

In the situations where distance learning is required, WMA will provide the following:

- Computer/iPad access for students in PK, K, and grades 1-8.
- The use of Seesaw and Google Classroom to centralize materials, lessons, instruction, assessments, feedback, and communications.
- Direct instruction on a daily basis. Instruction will be a combination of synchronous/asynchronous.
- Live-stream instruction by teachers directly from the classroom if other children remain in school. Students at home will be able to view the classroom instruction from home.
- Materials that are age and grade appropriate.
- Timely assessment and feedback.
- Regular communication with parents/guardians.

WMA-Family Partnership

As a private, Catholic elementary school, WMA relies on our families in many ways to be partners in providing a Mercy-based education for students. This partnership will be more crucial than ever before as we enter this new school year. We will likely continue to see new challenges arise, but we are committed to working together to find solutions along the way that will allow our students to have a successful year.

We know that this school year will bring unique challenges for the students, faculty and families. We encourage parents/guardians to talk with your children before the start of the school year to prepare them for the different learning environment they will encounter in September. WMA remains committed to work with any students/families to assist with the transition and help with any difficulties.

Since the health and safety of all is contingent upon this partnership operating knowledgeably and successfully, we will ask all families to sign an informed consent and participate fully in the health and safety protocols that are outlined in this plan.

General Building Principles and PPE

During the school day, all individuals, including staff, students, and any vendors or visitors, will be masked with a properly fitting surgical or cloth mask that completely covers the nose and mouth. Mask breaks will be planned into the school day.

Individuals will be encouraged to remain physically distant and will utilize one way or bi-directional “split” hallways and stairwells.

Each student and staff member must bring a water bottle since drinking fountains will be turned off. Staff members can assist students to safely refill water bottles as needed.

Hand sanitizer will be available at entrances, in hallways, in classrooms, and in other high traffic areas throughout the school. Students and staff who are allergic or sensitive to hand sanitizer

will have access to a sink to wash their hands with soap and water in place of using these products.

Signage will be placed in each classroom and throughout the building to remind the school community about symptoms of COVID-19 and measures to prevent transmission including masks, hand hygiene, and physical distancing. Reminders will also be provided daily through our morning announcements. Health education videos will be created and sent to parents and staff prior to the start of school. Examples of videos will include hand washing best practices, proper use of a mask, and physical distancing practices.

Visitors and vendors will be limited to before or after school hours as much as possible. Visitors and vendors will enter and exit through a designated door, be recorded in a daily log, will be asked health screening questions prior to entry, and will be required to wear masks at all times while on the school campus.

All on campus events and programs may be delayed, adjusted, or offered virtually upon being reviewed for feasibility in consideration of the new guidelines and protocols.

A plexiglass barrier will be installed at the front desk. If students are working at desks less than six feet apart, desk shields will be used to create physical barriers on each desk.

The elevator will not be used unless required to accommodate a physical disability for a student or staff member or to transport materials. A maximum of 2 people will be allowed in the elevator at a time, to be distanced as indicated by floor markings.

When possible, non-essential furniture, materials, or equipment will be removed and stored elsewhere to create additional space for physical distancing of desks.

Health Monitoring

All staff and students will be required to complete a health self-assessment before leaving for school each day, including taking their temperature, to determine whether that person can enter the building that day.

Developmentally appropriate approaches will be used to remind students each day to practice physical distancing, wash hands, wear masks, and stay home when sick.

A dedicated room will be established as the room where students with potential symptoms of COVID-19 can be isolated. This room will be large enough for several students to sit six feet apart and separate from the nurse's office. While in the sick room, the symptomatic student must wear a mask at all times and must maintain 6 feet distance from others, including staff, to the greatest extent possible. After the student has been picked up, contaminated supplies and

surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected by an adult staff member using products that meet EPA disinfectant criteria, followed by hand hygiene using hand sanitizer for 20 seconds. When possible, cleaning and disinfecting should be performed, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Education guidelines, after waiting at least 24 hours.

Students and staff sent home from school with possible COVID-19 symptoms must be evaluated by a health care provider to determine whether COVID-19 testing is indicated prior to returning to school. Documentation from the health care provider must be provided to school prior to returning, with a decision for a safe return to school to be determined by Waldron Mercy Academy nurse, Candace Flowers.

If a student has a confirmed case of COVID-19 (or has exposure to a household contact who tests positive for COVID-19)

- The student's parent should contact his or her primary practitioner to be evaluated.
- Parents should notify Waldron Mercy COVID-19 officials (Ann Marie Braca at principal@waldronmercy.org; Candace Flowers at cbflowers@waldronmercy.org) of COVID-19 cases or possible exposures. WMA officials will notify and partner with health officials from the Montgomery County Office of Public Health.
- According to the CDC, community exposure is defined as when an individual has had close contact (< 6 feet) for ≥ 15 minutes with a person who has COVID-19 symptoms or tests positive.
- Waldron Mercy Academy will partner with local health officials to assist the school with risk assessment, isolation, and quarantine recommendations; while determining next steps, we will:
 - Discourage the cohort from gathering until next steps have been determined
 - After waiting at least 24 hours, clean and disinfect potentially contaminated areas prior to reuse
- Communicate to staff and families when a case has been confirmed, without using a name or identifying information of the person with COVID-19 testing, and require 14-day quarantine, including daily temperature and symptom assessment, among high-risk exposures. This process includes assessment and consideration of dismissal of the cohort related to the case, using the health official's guidance.
- The student who has a high-risk exposure due to a household contact who tests positive will be required to quarantine for 14 days from the point that either the individual no longer has exposure to a COVID positive household member or all sick household members are considered no longer contagious according to CDC criteria
- The student who tests positive can return to in-person participation after the following conditions have been met:
 - 1 day with no fever (without use of fever-reducing medications) and
 - Symptoms improved and
 - 10 days since symptoms first appeared (or 10 days since the date of the first positive RT-PCR test for SARS-CoV-2 RNA among those who test positive who never develop symptoms).

If a staff member has a confirmed case of COVID-19 (or has exposure to a household contact who tests positive for COVID-19)

- Staff member should contact her or his primary practitioner to be evaluated.
- Staff member should notify Waldron Mercy COVID-19 officials (Ann Marie Braca at principal@waldronmercy.org; Candace Flowers at cbflowers@waldronmercy.org) of COVID-19 cases or possible exposures. WMA officials will notify and partner with health officials from the Montgomery County Office of Public Health.
- According to the CDC, community exposure is defined as when an individual has had close contact (< 6 feet) for ≥ 15 minutes with a person who has COVID-19 symptoms or tests positive.
- Waldron Mercy Academy will partner with local health officials to assist the school with risk assessment, isolation, and quarantine recommendations; while determining next steps, we will:
 - Discourage the cohort from gathering until next steps have been determined
 - After waiting at least 24 hours, clean and disinfect potentially contaminated areas prior to reuse
- Communicate to staff and families when a case has been confirmed, without using a name or identifying information of the person with COVID-19 testing, and require 14-day quarantine, including daily temperature and symptom assessment, among high-risk exposures. This process includes assessment and consideration of dismissal of the cohort related to the case, using the health official's guidance.
- The staff member who has a high-risk exposure due to a household contact who tests positive will be required to quarantine for 14 days from the point that either the individual no longer has exposure to a COVID positive household member or all sick household members are considered no longer contagious according to CDC criteria
- The staff member who tests positive can return to in-person participation after the following conditions have been met:
 - 1 day with no fever (without use of fever-reducing medications) and
 - Symptoms improved and
 - 10 days since symptoms first appeared (or 10 days since the date of the first positive RT-PCR test for SARS-CoV-2 RNA among those who test positive who never develop symptoms).

If a student or staff member has symptoms, and a medical provider determines that the symptoms are consistent with COVID-19 but does not recommend testing:

- Consider the individual to be positive for COVID; follow guidelines for confirmed case.

If a student or staff member has symptoms, but a medical provider determines that the symptoms are due to a non-COVID cause or illness:

- Student or staff member may not return to school until symptoms resolve and the individual is afebrile (fever free) without medication for 24 hours.

- Documentation from a medical provider must be provided, including clearance to return to school.

If a student or staff member has symptoms, but then tests negative for COVID-19:

- Student or staff member may not return to school until symptoms resolve and the individual is afebrile (fever free) without medication for 24 hours.
- Documentation from a medical provider must be provided, including clearance to return to school.

If a student or staff member is exposed and asymptomatic:

- Student or staff member may not return to school for 14 days from last exposure if he or she remains asymptomatic; if a student or staff member develops symptoms, use the above steps depending on evaluation and determination by a medical provider.

In all cases, if a positive case of COVID19 is diagnosed contact tracing will be implemented with the assistance of the Montgomery County Office of Public Health and/or the CDC/PA DOH.

Facilities Cleaning and Ventilation

All air handlers will be upgraded to include MERV 11 air filters which remove a higher percentage of contaminants in the air and increase indoor air quality.

All touchpoints within the school building will be disinfected nightly using vital oxide. Vital oxide has been approved by the EPA for use against COVID-19 and kills 99.999% of viruses.

High touch surfaces (e.g., railings, playground equipment, door knobs, remotes, light switches, bathrooms) will be cleaned frequently during the school day.

As weather allows, classroom windows will be left open to increase air exchange. As weather and curriculum allows, teachers may take classes outside for certain lessons.

If cohorts travel to other classrooms, tables/desks and chairs in those classrooms must be wiped down between classes by staff. Each classroom will be stocked with the appropriate cleaning supplies.

Any shared classroom toys must be frequently cleaned; any toys that cannot be easily cleaned with antiseptic wipes must be removed from the classroom.

Each classroom will designate a “dirty” bin for toys and materials that require cleaning. Toys and materials in the “dirty” bin may not be used until properly wiped down.

Classrooms and Cohorts

Students will be placed in homeroom cohorts and will remain in that grouping whenever possible all day. Whenever possible teachers will move to the cohorts rather than students moving to the teacher.

Students will be marked as attending school whether attending in person or attending virtually. Only when children cannot or do not participate in any of the distance learning will they be marked absent.

Desks should be placed as far apart as classroom space will allow, with a spacing of 6 feet to the maximum extent possible. Desks should all face the same direction, and rows should be staggered. If six feet of physical distance between students is not possible, in addition to the masks all students will be wearing, desk shields will be placed on desks to further decrease transmission risk.

Children will move in cohorts throughout the building, and the movement of cohorts should be staggered to minimize the total number of students and staff in the hall at any given time.

Schedules will allow students and staff to easily shift between in-school and distance learning as necessary. This may necessitate a change to a five day schedule which will still include specials such as art, music, gym, Spanish.

When possible, specialist teachers will go into the students' classroom. If a specialist's classroom is used (i.e. science lab), desks/tables and chairs will be cleaned by staff between classes.

Classrooms should eliminate, when possible, the use of shared materials. Each child should have dedicated writing instruments, books, and art supplies. Devices such as iPads and chromebooks will be assigned to specific students. If students must travel to another room for specialized instruction such as learning support, the student should bring his or her own materials whenever possible.

Classrooms should set up clearly labeled areas where students can store personal items to keep them separate from the belongings of other students.

Group singing will be discouraged until a safe process has been established that meets all Health and Safety guidelines and is reviewed by that task force.

Field trips will not occur in 2020 and will not take place in 2021 until public health conditions improve.

No outside food will be brought in by anyone for sharing.

Recess and Lunch

Lunch and recess play an important part in the day of both students and staff, and for the 2020-2021 school year we want to maintain as much of a sense of normalcy as possible.

For lunch, students will still be offered the option to purchase lunch and drinks from our cafeteria, although to minimize movement, snacks will not be offered. If students choose to order lunch from our cafeteria, individual meals (boxed lunches) will be delivered to student classrooms.

Students will eat lunch with their cohort and will maintain a six foot distance from others to allow removal of masks for eating and drinking. To accomplish this students will remain in classrooms or, if physical distancing of six feet is not possible in a classroom, students will move safely to a location where six foot distancing can be maintained, such as in the gym or outdoors.

Students may not share food items, utensils, or drinks with others. Students will wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after lunch. Trash items will be handled carefully and desks will be wiped down at the end of lunch.

Recess will continue the principles of physical distancing, cohorting, and masking when physical distancing is not possible. High touch surfaces on playground equipment such as handlebars and ladders will be wiped down before recess and in between cohorts. Students will wash or sanitize their hands before and after going to recess. While outside at recess, students may remove masks if it is possible to maintain six feet of distance between students. Teachers will determine whether masks may be removed and will provide individual storage for masks that are removed. If recess must occur indoors, masks will be worn at all times.

Extracurriculars and Mercy After Care

Clubs and other extracurricular activities will begin in October. Some activities will be offered virtually, and others will be adapted in response to physical distancing requirements. In-person clubs and student groups that would bring together students from different cohorts cannot be offered until public health conditions improve. If possible, virtual alternatives may be offered so that students can continue to participate.

Sports will be offered at the discretion of the Principal and the Athletic Director, taking into account WMA's health and safety guidelines, local health guidelines, collaboration with athletic leagues, and consideration of the specific risks posed by each sport (indoor versus outdoor,

amount of physical contact). WMA is awaiting further guidance regarding interscholastic competition this fall and will update families as soon as more is known.

Waldron Mercy Academy's after-school program, Mercy After Care, will be available once WMA has developed plans and staffing to keep students separated by cohort. All policies and implementation plans developed for use during the school day must be followed with this program. When the program does open, it will be offered through pre-registration only in order to assure compliance with all health and safety guidelines and to guarantee appropriate staffing.

Communication

All COVID-19 communications updates will be done through Option C Parent Alert emails and will also be added to our website as applicable. Urgent mass communication may come through text or voicemail. Please be sure to check and/or update your communication preferences on your Parent Portal.

If your child is believed to be sick, you will receive a direct phone call.

Parents will continue to receive regular communications and updates from your child's teacher regarding their education via email and through the teacher website(s).

Transportation

Transportation for WMA students is provided either by parents, a parent-contracted transportation service, or by the public school district of the student's residence. Each school district will have its own Pennsylvania Department of Education approved plan for transportation where they define their maximum occupancy, seating requirements, and mask regulations in school buses. Families driving their own children or using private transportation will commit to a consistent daily arrival and pickup time coordinated with WMA to facilitate physical distancing among students and staff.

Upon arrival in the morning, students will enter the building through designated doors depending upon how they arrive as a way to promote physical distancing. Car line lanes will be separated with the innermost lane used for students who need help exiting the vehicle and the outermost lane used for students who can exit the vehicle unassisted.

References

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<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>

4. American Association of Pediatrics. Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry. Available at:
<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

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<https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/emergencyplanning/COVID-19/SchoolReopeningGuidance/ReopeningPreKto12/PublicHealthGuidance/Pages/default.aspx>

6. Montgomery County Guidance for Reopening for Pre-K to 12 Schools. Updated July 17, 2020. Available at:
<https://www.montcopa.org/DocumentCenter/View/28390/Montco-School-Guidance-Final>

Health and Safety Plan Governing Body Affirmation Statement

The Board of Directors/Trustees for Waldron Mercy Academy reviewed and approved the Phased School Reopening Health and Safety Plan on (INSERT DATE: MONTH, DAY, YEAR).

The plan was approved by a vote of:

Yes: 17

No: 0

Affirmed on August 5, 2020 by:



Jim McGovern
WMA Board President