

Introduction

August 23, 2021

Dear Grace Community,

As we prepare to return to campus, our Health and Safety Task Force and Administrative Team have been reviewing and updating protocols to keep our community safe. In an effort to understand our community's resilience, we would like to understand to what extent our parents and guardians have been vaccinated. You can confidentially share this information by responding in a [survey](#). We appreciate your willingness to let us know your status as we continue to plan and structure the fall.

As I shared with you in May, we are returning to the protocols that worked so well last year. You will see some small revisions to those protocols, but for the most part we will pick up where we left off to provide maximum safety. One big change is that we are asking parents of students in Kindergarten through Grade 5 to take temperatures before departing for school in the morning. We will not ask for you to report these and we will continue to ask screening questions during arrival. We are still required by licensing to take temperatures of Preschool and Prekindergarten children upon arrival.

Please review the **Return to Campus Agreement** carefully and be prepared to respond if your child becomes ill or has the need to quarantine. Questions about these protocols should be directed to [Jen Danish](#) or [Noelle McHugh](#).

We look forward to welcoming everyone back to school very soon!

Jen Danish
Head of School

Guiding principles

- Protecting the health and safety of the entire Grace community: students, faculty, and parents
- Designing for flexibility and adaptability
- Our commitment to equity and inclusion
- Ensuring robust learning and academics, and keeping the teacher/student relationship at the center
- Preserving a caring community, and maintaining connections

Return to Campus Agreement

Community Commitments

COVID-19 has upended life as we know it in the world and certainly in our schools. At a moment like this, communities must consider their strengths and leverage them in adapting to this new normal. With the emergence of the Delta variant, vaccinated individuals are becoming sick and also susceptible to transmitting the virus to others. We hope our students ages 5-11 will soon be eligible to receive a vaccine. Students ages 3 and 4 will have to wait longer for an approved vaccine. With this in mind, we expect that each member of the Grace community agrees to norms and expectations as a greater commitment to each other and our wish to stay safe. It also requires us to recommit to what we value as a community.

What We Value

- We prioritize the health and safety of each individual in our community.
- We value connection with one another and cultivating strong relationships between students and their peers and teachers. Our students grow developmentally when they are in proximity to their peers.
- We value play as a mode for deep inquiry and we believe this is most possible to achieve in person.
- We have a personal responsibility to keep ourselves and one another safe from the virus as we bring groups back together.

Parent and Student Commitments

- Act safely and responsibly when you are outside of school: follow social distancing measures as defined by the CDC and wear a mask in public settings; do not attend large gatherings or participate in team sports or recreational activities that do not abide by appropriate safeguards for COVID-19 protection.
- Limit playdates to students in your child's cohort. Stick to outdoor activities, whenever possible, with social distancing and mask wearing.
- Make all efforts to avoid travel to areas with large COVID-19 outbreaks. Please refer to the [CDC's guidelines](#) for travel to determine what these areas are ([International Travel Guidelines](#)). If a student has traveled to one of these high transmission areas, please follow testing and quarantine guidelines. Virtual learning will not be available to travel related quarantines.
- Parents, grandparents, and caregivers will not be allowed inside the building or on the playground during school hours. This does not apply to Preschool and Prekindergarten at drop-off when parents will bring students to the playground and conduct a screening.
- All students will be screened by a Grace faculty or staff member every morning.
- Masks will be required for all participants within the school building at all times. The mask should fit comfortably and cover your child's nose and mouth. Masks with valves are not permitted.
- Children who have any symptoms of COVID-19 should not attend school. These symptoms include: a temperature of 99.5 or above, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new loss of taste or smell, chills or shaking, muscle aches, sore throat, headache, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, and congestion or runny nose. Do not give fever- or pain-reducing medication to your child before bringing them to school.

- If a Grace family member or a student tests positive, we would expect that the family would inform the school; information will be shared with the County Health Department as required by law. The Health Department will direct the school with next steps.
- Inform your child's teacher as soon as possible if your child is having a difficult time adjusting to new procedures or keeping up with schoolwork.

School Commitments

- Provide a dedicated classroom space that allows physical distancing for each student and teacher assigned to that space.
- Require proof of vaccination from all employees.
- Conduct daily cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces throughout the day.
- Maintain a backup supply of face masks for students and staff.
- Provide hand sanitizer throughout the campus.
- Minimize and manage movement in and around campus buildings to maintain at least 3 feet of distance between community members.
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality.
- Immediately separate and isolate a student or employee who develops symptoms during the school day.
- Report to the Montgomery County health department as required by law when there is a confirmed case on campus and follow their guidelines for immediate and thorough contact-tracing, for possible campus closure, and for cleaning and disinfecting.
- Monitor local and national transmission rates, cases, and trends daily and re-evaluate protocols and procedures as necessary in accordance with CDC guidelines.

Community COVID-19 testing requirements

Grace is committed to providing the safest possible environment for our students and staff. Data show that regular surveillance testing adds an important layer of mitigation by identifying asymptomatic cases. Therefore, through the end of October and subject to extension, Grace is asking all families to provide a weekly (PCR) covid test result.

To make testing more convenient, we have contracted with [Virant Diagnostics](#) to provide weekly on-site (PCR) covid testing. Locally based in Wheaton, MD, Virant will provide PCR tests to test students and staff, and same day lab results which will be shared with families through a secure web portal. Testing fees will be submitted directly through your insurance.

Virant Registration: If your student was registered in the 2020-2021 school year, there is no need to re-register. Newly enrolled students who plan to participate will need to register online. Virant has provided us with a [registration video](#) to help guide you through the process. Registration takes about 5 minutes. You will be asked to select an appointment date for your student. You will also need to grant consent to the lab to share results with Grace. *Please Note:* Registration is not complete until you see a page that says “*Appointment Confirmed.*”

Virant Testing: Virant uses a nasal swab technique that collects material from just inside a patient's nose. It is far less invasive than other testing methods. Registered students will be tested during morning arrival on Wednesdays in either the MPR (Kindergarten-Grade 5) or the main hallway (Preschool and Prekindergarten).

Insurance: Virant will bill your insurance directly. If your insurance company pays only a portion of the contracted fee (\$150), Virant will not bill you for your copay or coinsurance amount. If you have a high deductible and/or your deductible has not yet been met, contacting your insurance company in advance is advised since they might bill you for the testing. In this instance, it might make more sense financially to continue surveillance testing through county or state facilities. If you don't have insurance but would like to participate in the Virant program, please contact Noelle McHugh at nmchugh@geds.org.

Health, Safety, and Procedures

Arrival screening

Each morning, we ask that parents take their child's temperature at home before departing for school. If they have a temperature of 99.5 or higher, they must remain at home. Upon arrival at school, students will be screened with a series of questions and asked if there are any COVID symptoms which include:

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

Anyone arriving with one of these symptoms will be sent home with instructions to see their healthcare provider. Return to school is dependent on diagnosis. For information about return, see [Maryland guidelines and decision chart](#).

Arrival procedures

Preschool and Prekindergarten:

- Drop-off for all students will be between 8:15 and 8:30 am.

- Parents wearing a mask will walk their child wearing a mask to the playground (around the north end of the building).
- Parents will use hand sanitizer at the outdoor station prior to greeting a staff member for screening.
- A staff member will observe the parent taking the child's temperature with the family's thermometer. *Please Note:* MD Child Care Licensing requires that a parent provide the thermometer and take the child's temperature. (Staff members will provide a thermometer if necessary).
- The staff member will ask additional screening questions and record information.
- If a student fails the screening questions or presents with a temperature of 99.5 or above, the parent will take the child home with a recommendation to see a healthcare provider. Please be in touch with [Noelle McHugh](#) to discuss a return to school plan.
- If cleared to attend, the student will enter the classroom.

Kindergarten-Grade 5:

- Drop-off for all students will be between 8:15-8:30 am.
- Students will arrive wearing a mask.
- A staff member wearing a mask will greet the family in the carpool line and ask screening questions while the student is in the car.
- If a student fails the screening questions, the parent will take the child home with a recommendation to see a healthcare provider. Please be in touch with [Noelle McHugh](#) to discuss a return to school plan.
- If cleared to attend, the student will enter the building and proceed directly to the classroom.

Lunch and Snacks: Preschool-Grade 5

- Students will bring their own snacks and filled water bottles from home.
- Students will enjoy snack and lunch outside whenever possible.
- Preschool and Prekindergarten students will still be served milk provided by the school during snack.
- Masks will not be required during snack but ample physical distancing will be maintained.
- Students will eat lunch in their classrooms. These eating times will be silent while masks are removed.

Nap: Preschool and Prekindergarten

All full-day Preschool and Prekindergarten students will take a nap. Per state regulations for safe napping, children will be unmasked and spaced more than six feet away from one another.

Illness and Symptoms during the day

If a child becomes ill or symptomatic during the day, a staff member will text Ms. McHugh. If the student presents with any COVID-19 symptom (listed above), the child will be isolated from the

other students and staff. The family will be contacted and expected to pick up the student within the hour.

Dismissal procedures

Pick-up for all students will be between 3:10-3:30 pm. Dismissal procedures differ depending on grade:

Preschool and Prekindergarten

- Parents/guardians will park and walk around the north end of the building to the playground (while maintaining social distance and wearing a mask) to pick up their children from the Preschool door that opens to the early childhood playground.

Kindergarten-Grade 5

- Staff will call students as cars arrive and make sure they safely enter vehicles.

Campus Space Use

Building and Campus Access

For everyone's safety, only staff and enrolled students will be allowed on the playground and inside the building. Exceptions to the rule are Preschool and Prekindergarten parents during arrival or dismissal and essential visitors (contract repairs) who will be masked and screened upon arrival. Deliveries and mail will be left outside at the main door.

Oeness Family School

Oeness Family School High School students may be on campus in their classrooms on the north end. Oeness has similar screening, health, and safety procedures to Grace. Grace administrators keep very close daily contact with Oeness administrators and teachers.

Building ventilation and classroom measures

Grace's HVAC system has newly installed filtration. Each classroom is outfitted with a Medify air purifier that cleans air every 35 minutes. All classroom windows will be opened regularly for fresh air circulation and each class group will have an overflow space to use throughout the day (see below for more information).

All Grace classrooms have been reconfigured by teachers so that each student has desk or table space that is at least 3 feet apart from any other student.

Daily Cleaning and Disinfecting:

Housekeeping staff will be onsite every day that our students are. Cleaning staff will use an electrostatic disinfectant sprayer during the day on high-touch areas, including classroom

surfaces, bathrooms, and shared equipment and spaces. All door handles have been outfitted with self-sanitizing covers. Disinfectant spray and microfiber cloths will be stored in all classrooms for spot cleaning.

Operational Status and Closure

There exists a very real possibility that we may have to shift unexpectedly to fully remote learning due to a rising caseload amongst our students, staff, or community; to exposure in a single or multiple classrooms; to state or community mandates and limits on gathering numbers; or to a staff shortage.

To do all we can to keep on-campus instruction running, we will need full cooperation from our families and employees. Every family should be willing to abide by our Community Commitments and Parent and Student Commitments.

We will use email and our text messaging system to communicate all necessary closures to families.

[Maryland State Guidelines and Protocols.](#)