

PREK - 8TH GR. HEALTH & SAFETY GUIDELINES

For the 2021-2022 COVID-19 School Year for Immanuel Lutheran School,
Bay City, MI

This document will serve as the health and safety guidance for Immanuel Lutheran School for the 2021-2022 school year. This guidance is based upon our belief that all students deserve equal access to in-person learning and is guided by our increased national and local data and research, and increased vaccination rates. Preschool and the Learning Center programs that operate in licensed facilities are required to adhere to LARA regulations. The guidance provided in this document may be updated at any time if revisions are made to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) guidance for schools. Note: PreK - 8th schools may develop and adopt policies that are stricter than LARA and MDHHS guidelines.

To support Immanuel Lutheran School during the school year, the administration will provide general parameters and guidance concerning quarantine and isolation activities for positive COVID-19 cases and close contacts, testing, and other health and safety related issues. Our primary goal is to ensure a safe and responsible approach to full in-person learning, while providing Immanuel Lutheran School with the tools it needs to navigate and appropriately prepare for the school year.

We are attempting to communicate our health and safety policies and practices to our school community early and often. We will maintain open communication with the Bay County Health Department and will monitor any changes in federal and state guidance, vaccine updates and other critical information required to make informed decisions to prioritize the safety of students and staff at Immanuel Lutheran School (ILS).

School remains one of the safest places for students, teachers, and school staff with regard to mitigating COVID-19 exposure. Our goal is to give all students the opportunity for safe, in-person learning, five days a week. ILS is not required to provide distance learning for students/families. ILS will determine if/how services and educational programming will be provided if a student must remain home for short periods of time due to illness, isolation, or quarantine.

Vaccination

- Vaccination against COVID-19 is not required but strongly encouraged for employees and eligible students.
- The expectation of length of quarantine differs for vaccinated (no quarantine) vs. unvaccinated (14 days) individuals. Therefore, an employee or student may be required to provide proof of vaccination status to determine appropriate quarantine if they are in close contact with a positive case of COVID-19.
- The CDC and MDHHS state that one way to protect the health of children is to ensure that all eligible populations in a household are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE's)

- The CDC recommends that all non-vaccinated people wear masks to reduce exposure to COVID-19.
- At this time and given current health conditions, ILS will not require the use of masks at school/school events, but ILS will allow individuals (students and staff) to wear masks, if they choose. This guidance could change in response to local health data over the course of the school year.
- Students that have a cough should wear a face mask until the cough is past. This will keep the germs to a minimum.
- ILS may put in place additional safety policies, above and beyond what is stated in this policy, including requiring the use of facial coverings for certain populations and/or in certain scenarios. If ILS would implement universal use of masking policies, we must make exceptions for the following categories of people: children under the age of 2 years, people with disabilities who cannot wear masks, or who cannot safely wear masks because of disabilities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Hygiene

- ILS will continue to utilize the CDC Guidance for cleaning, disinfection, and hand hygiene.

Spacing, Movement, and Access

- Outdoor learning experiences and dining are encouraged whenever possible.
- The use of physical barriers, such as plexiglass shields, is no longer recommended, per the CDC.
- Teachers should maintain seating charts with assigned student seats as much as possible to assist with contact tracing when necessary.
- Students and staff may travel between classrooms.
- School visitors may enter the school building. Students should be dropped off at the correct entrances in the morning, but parents/guardians are welcome to come into the building after school to pick up their child(ren), speak with the teacher(s), and visit with other parents. Parents may come into the school office at any time.
- Visitors, other than parents, must come to the school office and sign in. Logs will document the date, contact information, and arrival/departure times.

Screening Students and Staff

- Parents/guardians should monitor their children for symptoms of infectious illness every day through home-based symptom screening. This approach relies on students and their caregivers to identify when the student might have symptoms of infectious illness.
- Students who are sick or displaying symptoms of infectious illness should not attend school and should seek medical care when necessary. Students with a common cold and cough should wear a mask to school to keep the germs from spreading.
- Staff members should monitor their health for symptoms of infectious illness every day.
- Staff who are displaying symptoms of infectious illness should remain home and seek medical attention when necessary.
- ILS will post symptom identification signage at the entrance(s) of the building.

Testing Protocols

- At this time, no school-based testing protocols are recommended.

Responding to Positive COVID-19 Cases and Close Contacts

- ILS will continue to follow Bay County Health Department's quarantine recommendations.
- ILS will communicate to parents/guardians and staff that they will notify school administration immediately of any possible case of COVID-19. Families will be notified of the presence of any laboratory positive or clinically diagnosed cases of COVID-19 in the classroom and/or school to encourage closer observation for any symptoms at home.

Gatherings and Extracurricular Activities

- ILS will maintain spacing between individuals during indoor dining.
- Field trips may resume.
- Off-site and overnight retreats are allowed. Administration must be notified in advance.
- Before and after school care programs must follow LARA guidelines and requirements.

Athletics

- At this time, there are no COVID-19 related restrictions or requirements for athletics.
- Updated guidance from MHSAA will be followed by ILS.

Student Transportation

- While ILS is not requiring masks at school/school events, the use of facial coverings is required by federal order on school buses and other forms of public transportation in the United States. ILS requests that students wear masks while being transported in personal vehicles on field trips.
- There are no capacity restrictions for school transportation for the 2021-2022 school year.
- It is recommended that household members sit together in the same seat (area) when possible.

Mental & Social-Emotional Health

- ILS will foster an environment of Christian charity and respect for others' decisions regarding vaccination status and use of masks.
- School personnel will continue to monitor the mental, social, academic, emotional, and spiritual well-being of all students and staff, providing intervention, assistance, and support when needed.

The administration of Immanuel Lutheran School is grateful for the diligent adherence to the safety requirements and recommendations by students, families, and school staff members that allowed for in-person learning to take place here at Immanuel during the 2020-2021 school year. We are looking forward to continuing our commitment to in-person learning with our students, which we firmly believe is the most effective means of walking together on our journey as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ.