



THE AVERY COONLEY SCHOOL Home & School Association

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Regarding 2020-2021 School Year Reopening

This is a compiled list of questions sent to The Avery Coonley School Home and School Association with responses from our Administrative Team. This information is current as of August 5, 2020, but answers may change if conditions change.

If masks are contemplated, can students wear face shields in lieu of masks? And what accommodations are being considered for students with asthma or environmental allergies?

All ACS employees will wear a face mask while in shared spaces on campus. Students must always wear face masks when indoors on the campus. If students are unable to maintain six feet of social distancing outside, they must wear a mask outside as well. Face masks must cover the individual's face and mouth; masks should fit snugly but comfortably, and be easy to apply and remove independently. Masks may be disposable or fabric and must be fastened securely with ear loops or ties. Any face mask that contains a valve undermines the protection for which they are intended and is therefore unacceptable. Face shields do not provide the same protection as masks and are not a substitute. The CDC states that masks should NOT be worn by children under the age of 2 or anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. *Please see the [ACS Health and Safety Plan](#) and the [ACS Return to Learn Plan](#) for more details.*

If families are going to be required to provide their own masks for their students, will guidance be issued as to what types of masks are appropriate/acceptable? And what happens if they forget their masks or have a mask that isn't appropriate?

Face masks must cover the individual's face and mouth; masks should fit snugly but comfortably, and be easy to apply and remove independently. Masks may be disposable or fabric and must be fastened securely with ear loops or ties. Any face mask that contains a valve undermines the protection for which they are intended and is therefore unacceptable. Students should bring two clean masks daily to school. At the start of the year, parents are asked to provide two additional masks as back-ups, which will be kept in the classroom in the child's personal bin. Students must also bring two plastic zip-top sandwich bags with the student's name on each bag. One bag should be labeled "clean," and the other

bag should be labeled “used” to help students organize their masks. If a student forgets a mask, a disposable one will be provided.

Irrespective of school opening and State recommended guidelines if a family is anxious about in-person learning in a classroom setting for specific reasons, how and when should they contact the school to make alternative arrangements?

Virtual attendance is an educational accommodation put in place for students who are unable to attend in person. Those families considering virtual attendance should contact the school administration to express their need for this accommodation no later than August 14th. For K-8 students, PowerSchool is the platform where both virtual and on-campus students will go to launch all digital activities. In Middle School, class agendas with links to outside sources will be posted here daily. The agenda may include links to Zoom, OneNote, Google Classroom, Screencastify, Flipgrid, or other digital resources.

The SEL Department has done an excellent job with their weekly emails and providing websites to help parents navigate this time. Could they put together a list of helpful advice, articles, and activities that parents could do over the summer to prepare kids for in-person interactions to start again? For example, tips and tricks to practice wearing masks at home this summer, or for getting the kids comfortable being back in class in person?

The SEL Department will continue to provide assistance to our parents and students to help the kids gear up for their return and to address their emotional and social needs. We’ve included this “How to Help Your Child Adapt to Wearing a Mask” information in the [*ACS Return to Learn Plan as well.*](#)

To help prepare students for wearing masks daily, we ask that each student practice wearing a mask for an extended period prior to the start of school. Parents or guardians may want to make this a family activity and have everyone wear them to help each student adjust to wearing them. Parents and guardians also should discuss how to properly put on a mask and take one off. Some masks clearly indicate the inside and outside; however, with some cloth masks, it can be challenging to identify the inside from the outside. It is important that students understand this so that when they take their masks off, they can put their masks back on correctly. Having some indicator for the inside of the mask vs. the outside such as a small stitch with some thread or a small button, may be helpful. Please do what will work best for your student.

How to Help Your Child Adapt to Wearing a Mask



Explain WHY

Use easy-to-understand language and positive phrasing.



For example, "Many people are sick right now. Wearing a mask will protect you from germs."

Practice Makes Perfect

Shape the behavior by breaking it down into smaller steps. Then practice & reinforce each step.

1. Holding the mask.
2. Putting it against his or her face.
3. Securing the elastic.



Let's Pretend

Integrate masks into your favorite pretend play schemes.

Encourage your child to dress up as a doctor, nurse, or veterinarian.



Take a Picture

Ask family members or friends to take pictures of themselves wearing masks.

You can even arrange a virtual get together so everyone can show off their masks.



Get Creative

Allow your child to decorate their mask using crayons or markers.

If you are planning to make a DIY cloth mask, allow him/her to pick the fabric color or pattern.



Stuffed Animals & Dolls Need Masks Too

Put a mask on your child's favorite stuffed animal or doll as a reminder that we are all in this together!



Start with Familiar Clothing

Choose clothing that your child already wears and turn it into a mask.

Some ideas include: a scarf, balaclava or bandana



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KIDS WEARING MASKS CLIPART BY: BUNNY ON A CLOUD

How will masks be worn or contemplated for PE Class?

Whenever possible, physical education classes will be held outdoors on the field. Students will not change into PE uniforms. Students will have the opportunity to take off their masks when they are 10 feet apart and instructed to do so by the PE faculty.

Are there going to be modifications to the music curriculum and or other specials?

Yes. Students will continue to wear masks while maintaining 10-foot social distancing guidelines. The school will make adjustments based on the guidelines. Mrs. Surdynski, Mr. Pawelek, and Mr. Westbrook are working with the National Associations to determine the best strategies.

Will extra-curricular activities, such as team sports, chess, choir, or debate, be included in the Fall?

Extracurricular activities that can continue in a virtual environment such as debate and chess will continue to do so. However, certain extracurricular activities are not well-suited to an online environment and will not continue this year. Additionally, there will not be any of the usual after school team sports.

Phase 4 allows for gatherings up to 50 people indoors, up to 100 outdoors. How will ACS manage capacity issues with 370ish students and approximately 70ish faculty and staff?

Phase 4 of Illinois' plan allows for 50 people or less in one space. Examples of one space may include one classroom or areas of a hallway. Capacity restrictions do not apply to an entire school building. Each group of 50 or fewer individuals must remain 30 feet apart. This applies to outdoor spaces as well. ACS has clearly defined spaces, with 30 feet between each outdoor space. If individuals are 6 feet apart at all times while outdoors, face coverings do not need to be worn.

What is the contingency plan if a disproportionate number of teachers are adversely affected by COVID and will require extended absences?

Groups K-8 will have an embedded substitute to assist with the daily needs of the grade level. Responsibilities for the aides include sanitizing the bathroom after use, cleaning materials, monitoring students, assisting with reinforcement activities, transporting students to and from locations, clerical work, recess duty, and aftercare duty from dismissal to 4:00 PM. For EC/JK, Kristen Stanton is the EC aide, and Julie Doyle is the JK aide.

Embedded subs (teaching assistants) will assume teacher responsibilities if one of the teachers is absent. If additional help is needed in the classroom due to the day's circumstances, Lisa Wiltz, Gwen Cooper, Kara Dosen, and Anna Lenhardt are the alternates/back-ups for classroom support.

Are parents/students going to be allowed on campus this summer? Can we bring kids to the ACS Playground this Summer?

For the safety of students, faculty, and staff, campus access is limited. No parents will be allowed inside the buildings or on campus other than to pick up or drop off students in the car line. The new

playground is currently under construction, so it is not a safe environment right now. We are hoping that it will be completed and up and running for the new school year.

Will the room parents do in-person summer all-class playdates before school starts? Will this be decided at Room Parents' discretion, or will ACS have a policy to follow?

Room parents are encouraged to arrange for virtual all-class activities and are not required to plan an in-person gathering this summer.

Most of my friend's schools gave the option to have either e-learning or in-person attendance. Do we have the same choice if I am not comfortable sending my symptom-free kid to school?

The school has a plan in place to offer virtual attendance for students who need to be absent from school due to illness or potential exposure. Please see the section in the [ACS Return to Learn Plan](#) on virtual attendance for more information.

Will families who have traveled out of state be asked to self-isolate for 2 weeks prior to the start of school? Particularly if they are coming from a COVID "hotspot"?

In accordance with the DuPage County guidelines, we ask that you stay home from work or school for 14 days and avoid contact with others. Please monitor your health during this time and be observant of the presence of a fever, cough, or difficulty breathing.

Given that MS kids are bringing their tablets back and forth each day, will the same be expected of LS students?

Groups K-8 will have individual tablets for classroom use. Groups 5-8 will transport them from home to school daily, while K-4 will keep their tablets in the classroom (unless the school must transition to distance learning). In Groups K-4, charging of the computers will take place during lunch and at the end of the school day. In Groups 5-8, charging cords will run to each student area; cords will be taped to the floor.

How will these safety improvements and precautions be funded? Will families expect tuition increases in future years? Is the COVID fund only for families in need?

Safety improvements and precautions are funded by the operating reserves. We have no plans to increase tuition because of the COVID-19 challenges. Our plan for next year is to have a minimal tuition increase, most likely between 1% and 4%. The COVID Emergency Assistance Fund will provide financial tuition assistance to ensure that every ACS student will be able to return for the 2020/2021 school year, despite financial hardship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

What is the school's plan for when there is a confirmed COVID case or exposure within a cohort? I assume families will be notified by the nurse, as they have been in the past for flu, strep, etc. But what else, if anything, will happen? Will the entire class (including teachers?) be asked to stay off-campus for

2 weeks? What happens when a student or family member discovers an exposure that happened outside of school?

Please see the Health Section of the [ACS Return to Learn Plan](#) for more details about various scenarios.

Many families have more than 1 child at the school. If there is an exposure in only 1 child's group/cohort, will the other child(ren) in the family also be required to stay home?

Exposure levels vary and will also depend on whether the case of COVID is confirmed or suspected. The school nurse will be in contact with the DuPage Department of Public Health and follow their recommendations. Out of an abundance of safety, in most cases the sibling will be required to stay home.

If a child has a medically necessary mask-wearing exception, will the parents of other kids in that cohort be told before school starts?

No students currently have a mask-wearing exception. If that occurs, notification will be sent to cohort families. The CDC states that masks should NOT be worn by children under the age of 2 or anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.

If there is outside instruction, will students be required to wear masks appropriately and fully, despite social distancing?

While outdoors, if a faculty member or supervisor feels the students are appropriately distanced, they can give students the option of taking off their masks. Masks may not be placed on the ground. They must be on lanyards or placed in something appropriate.

What is the cleaning protocol of classrooms and bathrooms? Will an outside agency undertake those responsibilities, and what is the protocol to test and/or verify contractors to ensure safety? Will teachers and staff (other than janitorial) be asked in any way to take on these responsibilities as part of their plan or teaching time? How will they be compensated?

Please see the "Disinfect" section of the [ACS Health and Safety Plan](#) for details about cleaning protocols.

What is the process for teachers, potentially rotating through classrooms, who report symptoms or test positive for Covid-19? How will that information be communicated to families? Also, what is the process for reporting student symptoms and positives to families whose students are exposed for more than 15 minutes, ideally 6 feet apart?

The Avery Coonley School community will be notified of any confirmed case (tested or medical evaluation) of COVID-19 by the nurse by email. Confidentiality will be maintained. Please see the Health Section of the [ACS Return To Learn Plan](#) for more details.

A question about cohorts: kids are worried they will only be with half their classmates. Parents can't tell them anything yet about how this is going to work. How will cohorts work? What's the size of the cohort? Will kids be split across their grade level?

Students will be grouped in cohorts at each grade level. Groups are no greater than 18/classroom in Lower School and no greater than 36/space in Middle School. The main priority for all classes is relationship building. Creating a community and striving to interact, collaborate, and connect as a class will ultimately support a smooth transition to distance learning should we need to move into a distance-learning format.

How should we prepare our kids at home before the start of school for this new protocol?

In addition to working with your child on mask-wearing, practicing thorough handwashing, and proper respiratory hygiene, we are creating a video to help demonstrate the new drop-off and pick-up procedures. We hope that parents will watch the video with their children and discuss the process. It will also show the changes to the physical spaces within the school so that children will know what to expect.

Will there be field trips? We assume there won't be, but just clarifying.

At this time all off-campus field trips for 2020-2021 have been postponed or cancelled.

Regarding mental health...will there be COVID-specific conversations with groups? I'm very concerned about the students' mental health.

Our SEL Department and our staff will work with students in age-appropriate ways. Conversations with the younger students will look different than those with the older students, but we will be open, direct, and empathetic in addressing the pandemic and COVID-19 effects on students and the community.

What protections are in place for teachers and staff? We are concerned for their safety as well as our kids.

The plan was designed to protect students, teachers, and staff. For more detailed information please see the [ACS Return to Learn Plan](#).

How will parents meet with admin/teachers? Zoom?

Parents can schedule appointments with admin or teachers by phone or Zoom.

Will there be orchestra?

Orchestra will not be offered at the beginning of the school year; however, we will reevaluate later in the school year.

How are the arts being incorporated into school? It's one of our favorite aspects of ACS.

The arts and the specials will be taught within the home classrooms this year. The teachers will “push in” to the classrooms.

Will there be Kindergarten/8th group buddies? Perhaps this can be done via zoom or letter writing?

We certainly hope to find creative ways for our 8th and Kindergarten Groups to continue this special component of our program.

Are there additional items that parents should purchase outside of the original School supply list? Or no longer need to purchase? For example, if there isn't PE inside, do we still need separate PE shoes?

Students will be required to bring a refillable water bottle, sunscreen, insect repellent, and weather-appropriate clothing. Please see the “Student” section of the [ACS Return to Learn Plan](#) for more details. Parents or guardians are encouraged to apply sunscreen before students arrive at school. Teachers will communicate with parents if specific classes have changes to required supply items.