



Summary of Plan for 2020-2021

July 24, 2020

Dear Schaeffer Academy Families,

Most of you are undoubtedly anxious to know how Schaeffer Academy will operate in the coming school year which is scheduled to begin five and a half weeks from today. In response to the survey we sent you on June 26, almost all of you indicated that you plan to return to Schaeffer Academy for the 2020-2021 school-year, whether we are teaching and learning on-campus or remotely. That news was very encouraging to us, and we want to encourage you in return by sharing with you our plan for the year.

The Board of Directors and an ad-hoc committee of faculty members were a great help in the development of this plan. The faculty committee members were Mrs. Kimberly Clapp, Miss Lindsay Johnson, Mr. Jim Kluth, Mrs. Katie Lanners, and Dr. Katherine Schultz. I thank them for their service.

The governor's announcement which is scheduled for the week of July 27 as well as changes in the pandemic situation over the course of the school-year could require us to make changes to this plan. Nevertheless, this document provides a summary of our plan as it currently stands.

Resources

In developing this plan, which has been approved and adopted by our Board of Directors, we have considered information and recommendations from these and other sources:

- [Survey of Schaeffer Academy Families from June 26, 2020](#)
- [Association of Classical Christian Schools \(ACCS\)](#)
- [Association of Christian Schools International \(ACSI\)](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
- [Minnesota Department of Health \(MDH\)](#)
- [Olmsted County Public Health Services](#)

7/24/20

Objectives

This plan is the result of our attempt to simultaneously accomplish four objectives:

1. Fulfill Schaeffer Academy's Primary Purpose.

"To provide Christ-Centered and Classical Education which emphasizes Academic Excellence in the Liberal Arts" (Schaeffer Academy Statement of Purpose).

2. Mitigate, not eliminate, the risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission within our school.

"Policy makers should acknowledge that COVID-19 policies are intended to mitigate, not eliminate, risk. No single action or set of actions will completely eliminate the risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission, but implementation of several coordinated interventions can greatly reduce that risk" ([American Academy of Pediatrics Guidance for School Re-entry](#)).

3. Do what is feasible and acceptable to our unique, non-public school community.

"Schools can determine, in collaboration with state and local health officials to the extent possible, whether and how to implement these considerations while adjusting to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the local community. Implementation should be guided by what is feasible, practical, acceptable, and tailored to the needs of each community" ([Center for Disease Control Considerations for Schools](#)).

4. Remain flexible and nimble in responding to new information.

"School policies must be flexible and nimble in responding to new information, and administrators must be willing to refine approaches when specific policies are not working. It is critically important to develop strategies that can be revised and adapted depending on the level of viral transmission in the school and throughout the community and done with close communication with state and/or local public health authorities and recognizing the differences between school districts, including urban, suburban, and rural districts" ([American Academy of Pediatrics Guidance for School Re-entry](#)).

On-Campus, Distance, or Hybrid?

Having considered the resources and objectives above, Schaeffer Academy plans to offer **On-Campus** education beginning on September 2, 2020. We plan to offer this education five days per week for all students according to our [previously published calendar](#). The Board, Administration, and Faculty all support this plan.

We will switch to **Distance** education only if required to do so by the level of viral transmission within our school or by a lawful directive that clearly applies to our school. We will not automatically go to Distance education just because the Rochester Public Schools or any other school does so. Instead, we will work with Olmsted County Public Health Services and other local medical and legal experts to determine when it would be in the best interest of our students, staff, and school to do so. We will be prepared to notify parents and switch to Distance education immediately, should it become necessary.

When the State of Minnesota and the Rochester Public Schools refer to Hybrid education they usually mean that all students in a school will have some On-Campus and some Distance learning each week. We are calling this approach **Full Hybrid**, and we will be prepared to switch to this option quickly if forced to do so. However, as a school with small class enrollments and large classrooms, we believe that we can provide adequate physical distancing and viral mitigation with all of our students on campus at the same time. Therefore, we do not intend to offer this option unless we must.

Even though we hope to avoid Full Hybrid education, we will offer what we are calling the **Partial Hybrid** option. By Partial Hybrid we mean that most students will be in On-Campus learning five days a week, but some students will be in Distance learning five days a week. This Partial Hybrid option is intended to accommodate students who must isolate at home due to viral exposure or to pre-existing health conditions that put them or someone in their home at risk.

In summary: Schaeffer Academy plans to provide On-Campus education to most students and Partial Hybrid education to students who need it. However, we will be prepared to immediately switch to Distance or Full Hybrid education if viral spread within our school or lawful government authority makes it necessary.

Why On-Campus?

There are many reasons why we have decided to offer On-Campus education as much as possible during the 2020-2021 school-year. Here are some of those reasons:

- **We can fulfill our school’s primary purpose most thoroughly with On-Campus education.**
The words I wrote in a *From the Headmaster* email back on March 23 are still true today:
“As Classical Christian Educators, we are convinced that face-to-face, in-person teaching and learning, when done well, can provide certain blessings that are impossible to provide any other way.”
- **Most of our families favor a return to On-Campus education.**
The responses and comments to the June 26 Survey of Schaeffer Families gave us the strong impression that a majority of our families are in favor of having their students return to On-Campus education.
- **Medical and Government organizations support a careful return to On-Campus education.**
Here are just two quotes from medical experts and government officials encouraging a careful return to On-Campus education:
 - **“The AAP strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school.** The importance of in-person learning is well-documented, and there is already evidence of the negative impacts on children because of school closures in the spring of 2020 . . .

Although many questions remain, the preponderance of evidence indicates that children and adolescents are less likely to be symptomatic and less likely to have severe disease resulting from SARS-CoV-2 infection. In addition, children may be less likely to become infected and to spread infection. Policies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 within schools must be balanced with the known harms to children, adolescents, families, and the community by keeping children at home.”

[\(American Academy of Pediatrics Guidance for School Re-entry\)](#)

- **“Reopening of school is critical during the COVID-19 pandemic**, when many children and families are experiencing additional economic hardships, social isolation, and stressors. Schools are a critical component of communities and have tremendous impact on the health, well-being, growth, and development of students and families. Education is a fundamental determinant of health because it cultivates life skills, knowledge and reasoning, social-emotional awareness and control, and community engagement, which serve people over the course of a lifetime.”

[\(Minnesota Department of Health Planning Guide for Schools\)](#)

Precautions to Mitigate Viral Spread

We care about our students, parents, teachers, and staff. They are human beings made in the image of God ([Genesis 1:27](#)). They are also our neighbors, and we are called to love them as we love ourselves ([Luke 10:25-37](#)). In spite of the many polarizing voices making ever louder claims that it is easy to know with certainty “the only right thing to do,” it has actually become quite difficult to know how best to love one another in the midst of this pandemic. Nevertheless, indecision and inaction are not options. Therefore, we have decided that our school will seek to demonstrate love by providing On-Campus education as safely and as long as possible. To that end, we will implement the following precautions to mitigate viral spread:

- **We will require parents to check temperatures and symptoms each morning and to keep home any student with symptoms or a temperature of 100.4 or higher.** Procedures and forms will be sent to families before the first day of school.
- **We will be limiting parent and visitor access to the building.** Drop off and Pick Up procedures will look different than in the past as we will ask parents to remain outside. However, we will allow parent of Kindergarteners to enter with their students during the first week of school.
- **We will require homeroom teachers to check temperatures and symptoms at school and require symptomatic students and staff to leave campus quickly.**
- **We will stagger whole-grade use of hallways and restrooms when possible to prevent crowding in those areas.** We will also have students from some grade levels use the locker room toilets to alleviate crowding in the main hallway restrooms.

- **We will practice “cohorting”:** Students will remain in their homerooms, with all of the students from their own grade as much as possible.
- **We will not gather in large groups for lunch, chapel, assemblies, etc.** More details about lunch procedures will be sent to families before the first day of school. Information about virtual chapels and assemblies will be released throughout the school-year.
- **We will teach, require, and practice appropriate hygiene and cleaning** (additional hand washing/sanitizing, coughing into elbow, additional cleaning and disinfecting of spaces and surfaces, etc.). The faculty as well as our janitorial contractors will be doing additional cleaning and disinfecting every day.
- **We will separate student desks as much as possible and limit close-proximity activities as much as feasible. While cohorted in classrooms, student desks will be separated from 3 and 6 feet.** According to the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#): “Evidence suggests that spacing as close as 3 feet may approach the benefits of 6 feet of space, particularly if students are wearing face coverings and are asymptomatic. Schools should weigh the benefits of strict adherence to a 6-foot spacing rule between students with the potential downside if remote learning is the only alternative. Strict adherence to a specific size of student groups (e.g. 10 per classroom, 15 per classroom, etc) should be discouraged in favor of other risk mitigation strategies.”
- **We will require the use of Face Coverings as required by the governor’s [Emergency Executive Order 20-81](#) and the Minnesota Department of Health’s [2020-2021 Planning Guide for Schools](#).** In the [Survey of Schaeffer Academy Families from June 26, 2020](#), a significant majority of Schaeffer Academy families indicated a preference for allowing but not requiring face coverings. We heard you and were exploring options, but the recent Executive Order has established the only lawful approach at this time. Even under the current rule, however, some students and teachers are exempted from the requirements, and everyone may remove face coverings during certain parts of the day. Please go to the links above to review the details.
- **We will work with Olmsted County Public Health and other medical experts to respond appropriately to any suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19.**

Our plan includes extensive planning and protection for our teachers and staff as well as for our students. And, our sincere hope is that it prevents viral spread sufficiently to allow us to provide Classical Christian Education On-Campus for most or all of the 2020-2021 school-year.

Will There Be Any Joy?

After seeing the list of precautions above, some students and parents might ask if the entire On-Campus school day will consist of sitting in a single classroom doing rigorous academics and getting scolded for violating precautions. That would be a reasonable question. However, we will do whatever we can to prevent that from happening.

Here are just a few of the ways that we hope to help students enjoy their time at school even with the new (and hopefully temporary) restrictions.

- **We will create a positive environment in which students are trained to implement feasible virus mitigation strategies while continuing to further their education.** The administration, faculty, and staff will avoid fearful and perfectionistic nagging, scolding, and shaming in regard to our precautions for viral mitigation.
- **We will hold classes outside when possible.** Although the window for outdoor classes is fairly small in Minnesota, the teachers will take their classes outside when the weather and the learning activity allows. This practice is encouraged by some of the medical and government organizations listed in the resource section above.
- **We will take students to the Art Room and the Science Labs with their cohorts.** In the [Survey of Schaeffer Academy Families from June 26, 2020](#), a significant majority indicated approval of this plan. We will have to minimize shared use of supplies, and we will have to clean the spaces between cohort uses. However, we will do our best to take the relevant grades to these spaces as much as possible.
- **We will allow choral and instrumental music when appropriate physical distance and hygiene can be maintained.** In the [Survey of Schaeffer Academy Families from June 26, 2020](#), a significant majority indicated approval of this plan. Such activities were also specifically mentioned as allowable in [Emergency Executive Order 20-81](#). Other than for brief classroom liturgies, these musical activities will be done outside or in large spaces like the gym or commons. Of course, parents and students may opt out of these activities
- **We will allow inter-grade socializing in outdoor recess while maintaining physical distance as feasible. We will add outdoor recess time to the Middle and Upper School schedules so that, like the Lower School, they will have this inter-grade social time.** Again, In the [Survey of Schaeffer Academy Families from June 26, 2020](#), a significant majority indicated approval of this plan. This type of activity is also mentioned in [Emergency Executive Order 20-81](#) and by other experts and agencies.

How Can We Switch to Distance Education Immediately?

Although we are doing everything possible to safely return to On-Campus education, we will be ready to switch to Distance learning immediately, if it becomes necessary. We will be able to switch quickly because we will be using the Google Classroom platform the same way whether we have On-Campus or Distance education. As a result, each week's lesson plans and assignments will be available to students and parents no matter which approach to education is required. Based on your feedback, we have improved our Google Classroom and Zoom procedures since last year. Information about the new procedures is provided below.

How Will Distance Education Be Improved from Last Year?

In case we have to switch to Distance education at some point, we have worked to develop a consistent way of posting each week's lesson plans and assignments in Google Classroom and to minimize changes throughout the week. These changes were based on your input in the [Survey of Schaeffer Academy Families from June 26, 2020](#). Here are some of the ways in which we think we have improved our use of Google Classroom:

- The lesson plans for each grade level (Lower School) and each course title (Middle and Upper School) will utilize the same template and be posted in the "stream" on Google Classroom at midnight each Friday. Nothing else will be posted in the stream – by teachers or students. This approach will make it easy for students and parents to know where to look to see all of their responsibilities for the week. It will also allow those who so desire to use the weekend to prepare for the following week.
- After midnight on Friday, teachers will not normally be permitted to make changes to the lesson plans and assignments for the following week. To make a change, they will be required to secure administrative approval and send a personal email to each student and/or parent in the class. This approach is intended to allow students and parents to plan for the week and not feel like they might receive an additional assignment at any moment.
- Because of the two Google Classroom changes above, neither parents nor students will need to receive notifications from Google Classroom. Of course, you will be free to leave notifications on if you wish. However, we will suggest that you turn them off.
- The reason we will suggest turning off notifications is that, even though teachers will be required to post the following week's lesson plans and assignments in the "stream" by midnight on Friday, they will not be required to have every piece of material uploaded by then. Throughout the week, teachers will post the materials necessary to complete the week's assignments in the "assignment" and "materials" sections of Google Classroom. If you have not turned off your notifications, you will receive one every time a teacher uploads materials.
- Although teachers will be posting materials throughout the week (not all on Friday night), they will be required to post them no less than one full school day before the related assignment is due. And, again, the assignment and its due date would have been previously posted in the week's lesson plan.

Also, as a result of your survey responses, we have developed a Distance education schedule that increases the number of Zoom sessions each week. Most of these will be for core academic subjects, but a few will be for specials, electives, and social interaction. Additionally, teachers will have "office hours" on Zoom so that students and/or parents can Zoom in to ask questions and get answers in real-time. We will also provide pick-up packets of printed materials as long as allowable within public health directives.

If we are able to hold an On-Campus Back to School event on August 28, we plan to offer Google Classroom and Zoom training sessions for parents. We will send additional information about new Distance education procedures if it becomes necessary.

More About Hybrid

As we mentioned above, we do not intend to offer the **Full Hybrid** option unless we are forced to do so. Furthermore, if we are forced to offer this option, the specifics will depend on what is required by the government at that time. However, we expect that the rules would likely call for students to be On-Campus one or two days each week and Distance learning the remaining days of the week. Different groups of students would be on campus different days – for example one group would attend M/W and another group would attend T/TH. In this case, most of the teacher-led instruction would take place during the On-Campus days and students would work independently on the other days (since the teacher would be teaching the other group on those days).

We do, however, intend to offer the **Partial Hybrid** option throughout the year. Even when we are On-Campus, some students may be unable to join us. These students, or someone in their home, may have a medical condition that requires them to learn from home, or they may have been exposed to the virus and be quarantined for a limited time. In these situations, individual students or families will be able to use the Google Classroom resources that the teachers are posting for everyone, hopefully combined with video capture from the classroom. We are still working on the details of the video capture, and we aren't yet sure if or how this will work. Nevertheless, we hope to record the day's instruction and then post it online that evening. The Partial Hybrid students could then watch the lessons the following day. They would be one day behind their On-Campus classmates, but they would be able to keep tracking along with their class cohort consistently. Teachers will interact with these students primarily through Google Classroom and email. They will also provide "pick up packets" of any physical materials that students need (textbooks, worksheets, etc.) for weekly pickup/return. If you think that your family may need to utilize the Partial Hybrid option, please send an email to Associate Headmaster Schultz at Schultz.Katherine@schaefferacademy.org.

What About Busing?

We still do not know for sure what busing, if any, will be provided for the 2020-2021 school-year. As soon as the district makes a decision and informs us, we will let you know. However, we do know that five day a week busing will not be provided to Schaeffer Academy unless the Rochester Public Schools return to five day a week On-Campus education. If the public schools go to Full Hybrid education, then Schaeffer students would be bused the same number of days that public school students are bused (at present we suspect that will be one day per week). If the public schools go to full Distance learning, no busing will be provided to any school, including Schaeffer. Again, we do not know what the public schools will do in the fall. However, it seems likely that additional parent transportation will be required to attend Schaeffer Academy On-Campus five days a week.

Thanks for Being a Part of Schaeffer Academy

I am sure that there are many questions which have not been answered in this document. Nevertheless, we wanted to share our current plans with you as clearly, thoroughly, and succinctly as we could at this time. We will do our best to give you as much additional information as we can as soon as we can. However, please feel free to email questions at any time. You can reach Associate Headmaster Schultz at Schultz.Katherine@schaefferacademy.org. You can reach me at Phillips.Keith@schaefferacademy.org. And, you can reach the Board of Directors at boardofdirectors@schaefferacademy.org.

We are committed to providing the best Classical Christian Education that we possibly can throughout the coming school year. Thank you for partnering with us.

Sincerely,

Keith E. Phillips, Headmaster
SCHAEFFER ACADEMY