South Merrimack Christian Academy
Student Health and Safety Guidelines for 2020/21

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”
– II Timothy 1:7

South Merrimack Christian Academy is preparing for a great school year. As you are aware, there are some challenges that are ahead of us. With the Back to School survey and the NH COVID-19 guidance considered and prayed over, the SMCA leadership accepts the great weight of responsibility to get this right. The stakes are too high and the consequences for failure unacceptable to allow anything to occur without prayer and planning.

It has been our goal to develop a simple, yet balanced and effective plan to keep our students and teachers safe during this school year. No plan is perfect. All plans should and this one will be revisited time and time again. Parents have entrusted their GREATEST treasure, their children, to South Merrimack Christian Academy, and our team of compassionate professionals will work tirelessly to continue to maintain your confidence and good faith.

The following guidance is an overview of the most critical actions that SMCA will initiate and maintain during this upcoming school year.

KEY: No children experiencing illness will be allowed onto the school campus. Parents will be required to do temp checks on their children prior to coming to school. All parents must create a “Care Plan” in anticipation of any and all illnesses that will occur during the school year.

Also, all teachers and staff will be required to stay home if they have any fever, and will be required to do temp checks as well.

CLEANING & FACILITY PROTOCOLS

Proactive:

NH Guidance – NH has determined that it is important to continue routine cleaning and disinfection. To develop a schedule for cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting surfaces and objects that are frequently touched and to make sure that all personnel are familiar with the disinfection plan and processes.

SMCA Plan – SMCA and primarily MVBC (Merrimack Valley Baptist Church) is committed to replacing or updating key systems of the physical plant that have a direct bearing on individuals using the school campus.

Namely there are three systems that will receive important attention:

1. We are actively pursuing upgrades to our HVAC filtration system with state of the art ionic purifiers that will greatly reduce harmful particles in our facility.
2. We are in the process of replacing or upgrading the water coolers in the Preschool, Elementary, and Secondary wings with “touchless” Bottle Fillers.
3. The school has purchased new equipment that produces a salt-based purifying mist that will be used in our facility during the school year.

COVID-19 “POSITIVE” CLEANING PROTOCOLS

Reactive:

**NH Guidance** – NH has determined that if COVID-19 is confirmed in a child or a staff member:

1. Close off areas used by the person who is sick. If possible, move the children remaining in the classroom to another environment until cleaning protocols can be implemented.
2. Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the areas.
3. Clean and disinfect all areas used by the person who is sick, such as classrooms, offices, bathrooms, and common areas.
4. If more than seven days have passed since the person who is sick visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary.

**SMCA Plan** – It is the intention of the school leadership to follow this protocol.

FACEMASK GUIDANCE

**NH Guidance** – NH has determined that the wearing of facemasks on the school campus is recommended but not mandatory when physical distancing can be maintained. This holds true for students, teachers, and staff of the school. NH has recommended the usage of facemasks in the following scenarios:

- Entering and leaving the school building
- Arriving and leaving a classroom
- Boarding and exiting the school bus
- Traveling in hallways, and transiting classes or to the restroom

**SMCA Plan** – SMCA will implement and maintain the “Restaurant” model of facemask usage. Facemasks will primarily be worn while transiting during the school day and will allow the student to remain UNMASKED during actual class periods. This means that a student will only wear a facemask when they arrive at school and leave at the end of the day, when they leave and return to class, and when they report to the school office.

**NOTE:** Teachers who choose or need to wear a facemask in class, may wear a clear face shield in order to aid in comprehension for students with hearing impairment.

80/20

The school will implement a “stationary student, round robin teacher framework.” Students will remain, for the most part, in one primary class during the school day while teachers will be moving from one class to the next.
For over 80% of the day, students will be able to complete their tasks MASK-FREE while they are in their classroom-learning environment. This represents the most critically important portion of the educational day. 

*It is also true that any and all students will be allowed to wear a facemask all day if they want to or need to. This is a decision that the respective parents and individuals are free to choose to do.*

Please know that the administration/staff/teacher will endeavor to support the enforcement of facemask use at all times if requested by parents.

**CLASSROOM SETUP & SOCIAL DISTANCING**

**NH Guidance** – NH has determined that individual chairs/desks should be arranged so that, where possible, students are spaced at least three feet apart with a goal of attempting to get chairs/desks six feet apart and that all desks should face the same direction. Also, classrooms should be grouped/cohorted together to the extent possible so that students and teachers in one classroom/group avoid crossover.

**SMCA Plan** – According to the best sources, social distancing is one of the best ways to minimize the possibility of exposure to infection. Since SMCA will be implementing a “stationary student, round robin teacher” framework, this will greatly reduce the student traffic in our hallways thereby reducing the possibility of exposure to contamination. 

*It is our goal that classrooms will be setup with six feet of distance between desks.* Whenever possible, the teachers will be encouraged to hold class outdoors, especially during the temperate fall months.

Primarily, lunch will occur in the classroom, but on a rotating basis take place in the lunchroom once or twice a week.

*The school’s hot lunch caterer is committed to delivering individually wrapped hot meals to the school and our Lunch Volunteers distributing these lunches to the respective classrooms for lunch.*

**CONFIRMED COVID-19 INDIVIDUAL PROCEDURES**

The process for responding to a confirmed COVID-19 positive individual is as follows:

1. Students who have been exposed to an individual with a **test-confirmed case of COVID-19 will be required to stay home for 14 days** OR may return to school after they have received a negative test result and are symptom free.
2. Exposure is defined as anyone who was **within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting for 48 hours before the person began feeling sick.** (The 14-day period is defined as beginning with date of exposure.) The affected individual and others who are quarantined will **continue their education through remote learning.**
REMOTE LEARNING

NH Guidance – NH has determined that schools should have an adequate plan for remote learning for students not able to attend on campus classes due to being in a high risk category or during mandatory quarantine periods.

SMCA Plan – It is the school’s plan to offer remote learning to students who have health conditions that place them at higher risk as well as any student who has had close contact with someone who is suspected to be a confirmed case of infection.

Guidelines for Google Classroom participation:

1. Every student will be required to participate visually with their respective teacher during the remote classroom environment.
2. All students will be required to meet every time-sensitive assignment for their respective teacher.
3. All students will be expected to participate in each class on time and ready to interact in the remote classroom environment.

NOTE: Specific guidance concerning remote learning for the Preschool & Elementary divisions will be given before the start of school.

COMMUNICATION

NH Guidance – NH has determined that an effective communication plan prioritizes both the message and how the message is shared. The plan should seek to create efficiencies in communication-making information easy to access and understandable for students, families, staff, and the broader community who will be at differing levels of understanding about COVID-19.

SMCA Plan – The school will communicate on a regular basis its ongoing efforts to keep students and employees safe. The school will ALWAYS confidentially report any suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 in the school community.

NOTE: Communication about any person suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 while at school will remain confidential, but will be coordinated with the Division of Public Health Services (DPHS) because details about the specific situation will impact public health recommendations and further actions that the school should take to protect students and staff from further spread of COVID-19.

GENERAL UPDATES

Competitive Sports: SMCA has received no recent updated guidance from the state of New Hampshire concerning competitive sports for the upcoming school year. The school is tentatively planning to have a competitive sports season if it can be accomplished in a reasonably safe manner. Updated information will be given when it is received.

Music Class: All music classes will be modified into Music Appreciation classes and depending on the duration of the modified mitigation season, it most likely will impact musical concerts for the year.
**Art Class:** All art classes will be offered in a modified format. The art teacher will participate in the round robin teaching process. Art supplies will not be shared among students and cleanup/sanitizing will occur after every class use.

**Massachusetts Shuttle:** The school is planning to offer this service for the upcoming year.

**NH Guidance** – Parents/guardians should be screening their children for symptoms of COVID-19 or risk factors for exposure before allowing them to ride the bus. Schools should consider assigned seating on buses. Students should wear a cloth face covering at all times while boarding, riding, and exiting the bus.

**SMCA Plan** – The Mass Shuttle mitigation procedures are as follows:

1. Since SMCA is requiring all parents to do temp checks for their children every morning, **we will not require it for entrance onto the shuttle**. Once again, **if your child is running a fever or experiencing illness, they will not be allowed into the school.**
2. All passengers, including the driver, **will wear their facemask for the duration of the transit to and from the school.**
3. The shuttle driver will be **responsible to assign seats**, focusing on keeping family units to together.
4. The shuttle driver will be responsible to **sanitize the vehicle before and after each ride.**

These guidelines (information) are not exhaustive, but serve as **an accurate overview of the plan** that South Merrimack Christian Academy is preparing for our upcoming school year. During the balance of this summer **our team will be fine tuning and expanding on these guidelines** to anticipate issues and to develop contingency plans to address them. This document will most likely generate questions or concerns, please feel free to communicate with Ken Amador, Administrator of SMCA, with your thoughts.

Please be in prayer that the **Lord will place His hedge of protection around our school** and bless our efforts to **keep our school community safe** during this turbulent season. Thank you.

“**Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”**
–1 Peter 5:7

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Disclaimer: South Merrimack Christian Academy reserves the right to modify this guidance based on requirements set by the state of New Hampshire and updated health information and conditions during the school year.