



## **St. Helen School Health & Safety Operating Plan 2021-2022 School Year** **Revised and Effective August 24, 2021**

Welcome back to St. Helen School! We are eagerly preparing for the 2021-2022 Academic School year and we are excited to open again to in-person instruction. My gratitude to our SHS community and all of you for doing a phenomenal job in following COVID19 guidelines so that our 2020-2021 school year could operate as safely as possible. Thank you for your cooperation and patience as even now, current COVID19 guidance continues to evolve this summer, especially for our school aged children.

We are updating our Health & Safety Operating Plan for 2021-2022 based on our SHS information to date, the experience of families, faculty and staff, as well as guidance from the Archdiocese, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other public health authorities. While our core principles that govern the reopening plan remain the same this year (below), we will continue to review emerging guidance and make updates as necessary. In future versions, we will note updates in [blue](#).

**Be assured that safety remains our highest priority, and we are committed to delivering a high quality education. This continues to be an ever-evolving situation and we appreciate your flexibility and patience.**

- **Our SHS Health & Safety Committee has an email ([health@sthelenchicago.org](mailto:health@sthelenchicago.org)) for inquiries and suggestions**
- **COVID19 symptoms, positive test results, potential exposure or urgent items should still come to Principal Vance or the main office immediately**

We understand that many parents, families and students over age 12 have been able to receive their vaccinations and enjoy summer activities as the City of Chicago is in Phase 5. As the school year begins, thank you in advance for your cooperation to

ensure SHS remains open and safe for our students, faculty and staff. Please have a safe and healthy end to summer break and I look forward to seeing you all soon.

Sincerely,  
Principal Vance  
SHS Health & Safety Committee

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## Summary: Updates since 2020-2021 Academic Year

- SHS will return to full-time in-person learning for all enrolled students! We will not be offering long term remote learning at St Helen school this year.
- Many students, faculty and staff are vaccinated as of summer 2021. Most of our students, who are younger than age 12, are not yet vaccinated. Our SHS Health & Safety plan is for the safety of our entire community.
  - Per current guidance, all students, faculty and staff should plan to wear a mask indoors, regardless of vaccination status. Wearing masks indoors provides flexibility to continue to remove restrictions while allowing us to assess the Delta variant.
  - Masks will not be required outdoors.
- Physical distancing in school will be at least 3 feet, including desks, lunch, etc. Physical distancing will not be required outdoors.
- We will no longer require cohorts. The following may resume: special classes, before care, after care, clubs, athletics, music, computer labs, sharing of materials (art room!). Appropriate sanitization/cleaning will occur between uses based on the activity.
- Bathroom capacity restrictions can be lifted. Hallway/traffic flow patterns can be lifted.
- In person fundraisers may return. In person parent-teacher conferences may return. This will be assessed and planned as we get closer to the date.
- If eligible, please consider getting vaccinated - both for COVID19 and flu. As information regarding vaccinations for ages 2-12 and boosters for ages 12 and up become available, we will share more information.
- Infection protocols will remain consistent to 2020-2021. There is no longer a need to quarantine a full class or school; unvaccinated individuals coming into close contact with a COVID19 positive individual must quarantine. Given the

overall success of our SHS community in managing COVID19 guidelines in 2020-2021, we will only activate an emergency eLearning plan in the case of a classwide or /school-wide outbreak.

- Morning arrival will be 7:45am-8:00am for grades 1-8 and 8:00am-8:15am for Kindergarten and PreK/Preschool. We will continue to use the gym side doors off the parking lot for morning arrival.
  - Morning arrival temperature checks will no longer be required, unless a student has symptoms. The office will be able to take temperatures and wellness checks as needed.
  - Aides will be at the doors to ensure masks are secure and help students to their classrooms, hold doors, etc.
- Parents will still not be allowed into the building on a regular basis. Adults, regardless of vaccination status, please wear a mask at pickup and drop off to protect the majority of our students who are not yet vaccinated - even though adults remain outside the building, pickup can get congested outside.
- What can you do to prepare for the first day of school:
  - Talk to your children about health & safety
  - Practice washing hands
  - Practice wearing a mask
  - Practice independence in the use of a water bottle, going to the bathroom and adjusting clothing, putting on shoes and coat.
  - Please consider travel advisories and gathering guidance, particularly in the 10 days leading up to our first day of school. In 2020, many families were very careful as in-person school was a top family priority - thank you!

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## Introduction and Background

I am happy to present our operating plan for 5-day in person instruction during these challenging times. We aim to operate St. Helen School in the safest way possible. I recognize many of us have concerns as the school prepares to reopen and as we continue to learn more about how to keep our community safe, St. Helen will continue to adapt the plan according to guidelines from medical and educational experts. I ask each of us to commit to supporting St. Helen School as a united community so that we can keep ourselves and each other safe and also remain healthy as the academic year

progresses. I recognize that the new procedures will take some getting used to, and I welcome your help following the reopening plan and procedures.

As we open St. Helen School for the 2021-2022 academic year, I offer the following as guiding principles for our St. Helen family. If we follow the guidelines, we have the ability to foster a healthy in-person learning environment, and will then begin to envision our future together after the pandemic:

1. The safety and well-being of students and school employees is our primary concern. We will do what we must so that everyone in our school feels safe and undeterred.
2. Everything possible is being done to reopen school buildings and provide a faith-filled education.
3. The progress of the COVID-19 pandemic in Illinois remains unpredictable, and there remains the potential that students and personnel will need to sporadically quarantine and that school buildings may be closed again if a significant rise in cases were to occur.
4. Faithful citizenship is key – we expect our families to take personal responsibility for the common good as well as their own safety.

Our St. Helen reopening plan is based upon:

1. The State of Illinois and City of Chicago guidance and phased reopening plan throughout the spring, summer, and now into the fall and winter months
2. The Archdiocese school reopening plan, now called Operating with Trust, which continues to be updated to align with the most recent medical guidance
3. Feedback, insight and research from the St. Helen Academic committee, St. Helen Health and Safety Committee, faculty and staff, parents of SHS students, questions asked throughout this process, publications and research cited by the State of Illinois Board of Education, the CDC, the IDPH, and Archdiocese of Chicago.

If we experience a significant number of new cases, we will consider additional virtual learning periods for the safety of our school communities. For this reason, we once again urge all families to observe public health guidelines.

## What is the SHS Health & Safety Committee?

In 2020, the Archdiocese encouraged each school to form a Health & Safety Committee to develop localized guidance for operating during the COVID19 pandemic:

1. The Health & Safety Committee includes: three parents, a faculty member, an aide, the buildings operations manager, Assistant Principal Kathleen Johnson and Principal Dana Vance.
  - a. Relative expertise: Parental expertise on the committee includes: pediatric medicine, emergency medicine, federal public health policy.
2. The H&S Committee will meet weekly or more frequently as necessary to help triage inquiries and make recommendations based on emerging guidance, questions, and suggestions.
3. To balance privacy and transparency, as well as to foster dialogue and inquiry, we now have an email address that will be monitored by the committee. ***If you have questions, need clarification, or have suggestions for the H&S committee, please email [health@sthelenchicago.org](mailto:health@sthelenchicago.org).*** Alternatively, you may always email me as the Principal directly.
  - a. Note:
    - i. The H&S Committee will treat information as private and anonymous.
    - ii. The H&S Committee will NOT respond to emails, either personally or from the email box. Instead, the emails will help us understand common questions and concerns; inform the H&S Committee agenda, which could in turn update a policy or procedure. Depending on the topic, I will communicate directly with individuals and/or in school-wide emails.
      1. This will also aid me in being able to better manage all the inquiries and get information to families in an efficient and timely manner.
    - iii. The email will be checked regularly.
4. The H&S Committee may defer topics to the SHS Academic Committee or the Archdiocese.
5. **For urgent matters such as potential COVID19 exposure or a positive test result, contact tracing, suspected illness, or other illness, please contact me as the Principal directly – this ensures procedure expediency as well as privacy (see “Infection Protocols” below).**

## What you can do to help us continue to stay healthy and open for in-person learning?

- We understand that everyone has COVID19 fatigue. Please continue to practice vigilance and recommit to good habits.
- Wash your hands.
- Follow national, state and city guidelines, particularly for travel, indoor and outdoor gatherings.
- Please consider getting the COVID19 vaccine if you are eligible.
- Please consider staying up to date with annual flu vaccines for all ages as well.
- Consult the Chicago Travel Emergency Order (updated on Tuesdays) for countries and states that require [10-day](#) quarantine after returning to Chicago or for negative tests for the unvaccinated.

## Opportunities to continue to talk to your children about health and safety

- Talk to your child about wearing a mask and practice, particularly with ensuring the mask fits well over the nose and mouth. Try different masks if one type does not seem to work well for your child. A mask should fit snugly around the face, cover the nose and mouth, without gaps around the mask.
- Wear a mask to set an example for your child.
- Talk to your child to help them understand drop off and pick up procedures. They will be helped out of the car by a parent volunteer, St. Helen's teacher or aide - parents will not be allowed into the building.
- Continue to talk to your children about their day, their experiences, their questions.

## Cold, Flu, Allergy Season - Similar Symptoms to COVID19

- The start of school and fall season often mean seasonal allergies, colds, viruses. Unfortunately, with the COVID19 pandemic and with many symptoms similar across these conditions, we all need to proceed with the highest level of caution.
- If your child has any symptoms of illness, we do need your help in coming to pick up your child promptly when we call and to talk to your doctor (please see section

on “Infection Protocols”). We understand that many of these symptoms are normal for less severe or routine illnesses and we do need to proceed with heightened caution.

- Please consider getting an annual flu vaccine, for both parents and students.
- We will include vaccination guidance for our students ages 2-12 once that becomes available. We will include COVID19 booster guidance once that is nationally available.

## School Health & Safety Operations

### Coming to School - Morning Arrival Procedures

- Morning arrival times will be by grade, using the side gym doors:
  - 7:45-8:00am -- Grades 1-8 enter through the side gym doors off the parking lot
  - 8:00-8:15am -- Kindergarten and PreK arrival through the side gym doors off the parking lot
- Please use the drop off time of your OLDEST child if you have multiple children.
- Drivers: please stay in your cars so we can keep traffic moving. Aides will support arrival.
  - *For the first two weeks of school, we will also have parent volunteers join the aides to help all students navigate to their new classrooms.*
- Children must exit cars on the passenger side of the car.
  
- Car / traffic pattern
  - Please continue to use the west alley from Walton to Augusta, turn right on Augusta and follow the traffic line into the parking lot turning right. Exit the parking lot turning left back to Walton.
  - Continue to park around the corner and walk if you like--that is helpful to have fewer cars in the car line.
  - Please do not double park. We recommend that parents not use Western, as it creates a backup in front of Joey’s G’s; please loop around and use Walton to the western alley to Augusta.
  - Please do not use the parking spots closest to the gym - this will be a lane for drop off.



- If you are late to school, please go to the front main door and ring the bell for entrance.
- You may also park around the corner and walk up to your assigned door. Please wear a mask, regardless of vaccination status.

## School attire / masks

- Please refer to the St. Helen handbook for uniform guidelines and purchasing information.
- For health reasons, students should wear a clean set of clothes each day - in the past, jumpers, sweatshirts etc. are often worn multiple times throughout the week before laundering.
- All faculty, staff and students, regardless of vaccination status, should wear a mask indoors. Masks will not be required outdoors for recess. Masks will be able to be removed for lunch/snack. An exception would be that masks are required at drop off and pickup.
- Please wear a clean mask every day. Please pack 1-2 extra masks in a brown paper bag in your child's backpack.
  - Disposable masks should be thrown away each day. Cloth masks can be laundered each day.
  - Masks should not have distracting patterns or imagery.
- As we approach colder weather, please ensure your child has a hat, gloves or mittens, boots, snow pants. Please practice to ensure your children can put on their gear by themselves, much like bathroom breaks.
  - You are welcome to leave items at school in your student's locker/cubbie.
  - Cold weather means natural nose/mouth condensation and your child may wish to change their mask through the day.

## Classrooms and classes

- Students (vaccinated and unvaccinated) must wear their masks in the building at all times.
  - Students will be allowed to remove their mask for snack and lunch, and only when 3 feet apart.
- Students may have a closed water bottle with them at all times - water fountains will only be accessible for refilling bottles, not for drinking.

- Students will be allowed to share materials. Teachers will communicate on any additional needed classroom supplies once school starts.
- Snack happens in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade. For this year, we are asking each child to bring their own snack each day. We will not have a rotating snack schedule. Snacks must still comply with school guidelines (on the Documents Center page) and recognize class allergies. If teachers in older grades allow snacks at the beginning of the year, the teacher will communicate this with the class. Any snack that comes into the classroom must follow school guidelines (please note: the snack list is being updated)
- Preschool students have the option to go home at 12:30pm. Please let the office know by Wednesday August 19 if you would like to pick up your child at 12:30pm. Preschoolers nap in the afternoon, so if you pick up your child at 12:30pm they can nap at home. Noon dismissal will not be an option this year. Please decide between 12:30pm or end of the day (2:30-2:45 dismissal). (Our reasoning is we need to develop a process that accommodates physical distancing during naps, need to wear a mask during nap, use of personal items, and cot cleaning and storage.) You may change from 12:30 dismissal to end of the day dismissal at the beginning of each month. If you choose this option you will still be charged full tuition rates.

## Facility Cleaning / Air Circulation

- The school will be thoroughly cleaned every night before students and faculty return the next day by an outside cleaning service.
- In house cleaning staff will be cleaning bathrooms and high touch surfaces at regular intervals throughout the school day.
- Open windows are ideal and we will open windows as weather allows. Our airflow and ventilation is up to date for current guidelines.

## Faith Instruction

- School masses and preparation for sacraments can resume. Each class will still have religion class as usual. Teachers incorporate faith into their classroom practices each day.
- Classes will attend mass at St. Helen's Church. St. Helen's Church is big enough for physical distancing, students can do the readings and petitions, and we can

live stream or tape the liturgy for the rest of the school to watch in their classrooms.

## Outside Time

- We will continue to try to go outside as much as possible, as in previous years.
- Teachers in all grade levels are planning their schedules to allow for several outside breaks, for both movement and instruction. It is important especially in the first months of being back to school for students to be outside, where they can remove their masks safely and still socially distance. We have identified many spaces around St. Helen's that can be used for outside instruction, as well as for movement and play.
- Please send weather appropriate attire as the weather changes.

## Lunch

- We are fortunate enough at SHS to have several large spaces to physically distance for lunch. Students will be spaced at least 3 feet apart and be able to remove their masks. These areas will be sanitized in between lunch periods.
- If your student orders hot lunch, hot lunch will be available in the lunch room.
- As a reminder, the classrooms and building do not have refrigerator space for individual lunches. If you prefer an insulated bag and ice pack, please plan accordingly.
- Students will not be allowed to use the microwave to heat up food this year.
- Lunches delivered from outside restaurants are not allowed--please do not order food to be delivered to the office for your student to pick up.

## Bathroom Use

- On the first day of school, teachers will walk the students through the nearest bathroom use and procedures.
- SHS has sanitizer for use after the restroom and before re-entering the classroom. Soap is standard.
- Help your child practice washing their hands for 20 seconds at home so they are used to that when we return to school.
- We will no longer have bathroom capacity limitations in 2021-2022.

## School Dismissal

- Students will exit the building as follows, accompanied by their teacher:

2:35pm - 2:50pm	Front gym doors	Grades 6-7-8
2:35pm - 2:50pm	Courtyard doors	Grades 1-2
2:35pm - 2:50pm	Front main doors	Grades 4-5
2:55pm - 3:15pm	Front main doors	Kindergarten PreK/Preschool

- You can greet your child outside their assigned door. The faculty and staff will walk the class outside to meet you.
- **Do not double park on Augusta.**
- If you have an older child and a younger (K, PreK/Preschool) child, the older child will be able to get your younger child from his/her room and exit from the oldest child's dismissal door/time.
- Please wear a mask at pickup, as many in our community are not yet vaccinated.

## Before Care / After Care / Clubs

- Before school care and after school care will begin on Monday, August 30th.
- Drop off for before care will be the main entrance / front doors.
- Pick up from after care will be from the main entrance / front doors.
- Information on clubs will be sent home in September.

## Other Items of Note for Parents and Families

- Parents cannot be allowed in the building. If your child has forgotten something at home, you must leave it outside and we will deliver it to them.
- Tardies/late arrivals:
  - Please arrive ontime for school. It is very important that students arrive at their designated arrival time so that we can get every child into the classroom safely and get our learning day started.

➤ Appointments:

- If you have a scheduled well-visit for your child (eg, annual checkup, dental/orthodontics) that cannot be scheduled for after school, please let the office know in advance (per the SHS handbook, regular procedures) and then call the office when you have arrived outside the front doors. Parents should remain in the car. The student should exit the car and staff will open the door and process their entrance, including temperature and wellness check.
- Every effort should be made to schedule these visits outside of school hours to eliminate the need to enter or exit the building multiple times.

## School Events / Volunteers

- We all look forward to school wide events and gatherings! They are also a critical source of support for the school. We will be able to have certain gatherings and fundraisers this year. We will consider each event on a case by case basis as the academic year progresses and we can assess COVID19 risk. More information will be distributed in weekly newsletters.
- 2021-2022 school wide events could include:
  - School Book Fair and Grandparents Day
  - Family Potluck, Chili/Mac'n'Cheese Cook Off
  - Christmas Fair
  - StepStep5K
  - Carnival
- In 2021-2022, volunteers may be allowed on a case by case basis. We will evaluate these opportunities as they arise.

## Travel for Students

- We understand there may be travel throughout the year. It is important to note that your vaccination status does not protect unvaccinated individuals, notably many of our students. In addition, we are learning about the current delta variant, which could change our operating procedures if it continues to spread, including by vaccinated individuals.
- If a student travels to a country or state that is on the Chicago Emergency Travel Order list (if it is listed on the date of return, not the date you depart), an

unvaccinated student should quarantine after returning to Chicago or produce a negative COVID19 test before returning to in-person learning.

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## COVID19 Infection Protocols

([see Archdiocese plan](#), which continues to apply. We are now adding policies that are more specific for our St. Helen community, which are noted with parentheses (SHS))

### Guidelines can be confusing - Call Principal Vance or the Office With Any Doubt

- (SHS) Our best chance for maintaining in-person learning and remaining healthy is to follow the guidance and understand that guidance evolves weekly, if not daily. Since this can be complicated and hard to discern, we encourage families to contact me as the Principal about any potential exposure or test result, even negative, as it allows us to act expediently and seek additional clinical and public health guidance to determine course of action.
- If the symptoms occur during the school day, your child will be immediately sent to the office and you will be contacted to pick your child up from school. **Please help us keep our students healthy: answer your phone right away, pick up your child promptly, and consider having a backup plan if you are going to be unavailable for a period of time.**
- If your child does not have COVID-19, but has another illness, you should keep your child home until the illness' symptoms disappear. Your school will require you to provide a negative COVID-19 test and/or a doctor's note before your child can return to school.

### Symptoms of COVID19 and If a Student is COVID19 Positive

- (SHS) If your child is positive for COVID19, please immediately notify me as the Principal.

- (Archdiocese) If your child shows symptoms of COVID-19, you should contact your doctor. Your doctor may ask that your child participate in a COVID-19 test. You should alert Principal Vance and not send your child to school.
- Symptoms of COVID-19 - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has identified several symptoms of COVID-19, including high fever (above 100.4°F), sore throat, coughing, nausea, headache, muscle aches, loss of taste or smell, runny nose, fatigue, diarrhea and difficulty breathing.
- (SHS) For transparency, here is what happens when I as the Principal receive a call:
  - I do three things simultaneously:
    - (1) Call the Archdiocese COVID19 Nurse Hotline -- who in turn provides the following guidance for me to work with you/families/faculty:
      - Contact tracing begins – the nurse guides us to identify who may have come in contact in the preceding days including sports teams, classmates, families, others - this gets pooled into public health data to determine any outbreak points that can be addressed
      - Determination of quarantine, length of quarantine and reasoning for the quarantine length
    - (2) Fill out a form for tracking that includes all that data
    - (3) Call my Archdiocese Regional Director

## Notification Process of Potential Exposure

- **NOTIFICATION OF POSITIVE COVID19 CASE** -- With a positive COVID19 case, I will communicate via email in this order immediately:
  - Notification of faculty and staff
  - Notification of the class of a positive COVID19 case
  - Notification of whole school that we have a positive case
  - Note: the individual will not be identified. We cannot share that information.

- (SHS) As a family, I hope you are able to decide how to proceed with the information that we are able to provide.

## If COVID19 Test is Negative

- If your child tests negative for COVID19:
  - (Archdiocese) If your child does not have COVID-19, but has another illness, you should keep your child home until the illness' symptoms disappear. Your school will require you to provide a negative COVID-19 test and/or a doctor's note before your child can return to school.
  - (SHS) if your child or a family member is potentially exposed to someone positive for COVID19, and your family unit subsequently tests negative, following testing guidelines, I as the Principal will work with you on returning to school.

## Vaccinated Faculty, Staff and Students

- **(SHS) For vaccinated students and faculty:**
  - Given the current delta variant is being transmitted from vaccinated individuals to unvaccinated, the same protocols apply. If you come into contact with someone who is COVID19 positive, please notify me so that we can work together to take immediate actions to reduce risk.
- Student vaccination is encouraged, if eligible, but not required
- When we shift to a mask optional policy for vaccinated individuals, proof of vaccinations will:
  - Allow individuals to remove masks
  - Prevent an unmasked individual from pivoting to remote learning on exposure
- SHS will develop a process to collect proof of vaccination in the coming weeks.
- Proof of vaccination will be securely stored with the student's medical record, along with other vaccination records. This information will be treated as protected and confidential.



- It is assumed an individual is not vaccinated without proof of vaccination on file.

## Contact Tracing

- (SHS) As part of contact tracing recommended by CDC and public health departments, your family may be contacted to determine any potential exposure and prevent further spread. I appreciate your cooperation with these processes.
  - (SHS) It is important to note that the timing of getting a COVID19 test after potential exposure is critical to the accuracy of the test - otherwise, there is a risk of a false negative (meaning you do in fact have COVID19 but the viral load is not high enough to result accurately).
- Please notify Principal Vance if:
  - Contact with an individual who has tested positive COVID19, within the 48 hours prior to the symptom onset or from the date that the individual had their lab test taken (not the date of receiving the test result).
  - Contact could include being at someone's house, inside or outside, at a sports practice, inside or outside, wearing a mask or not wearing a mask, at a restaurant, inside or outside.

## Quarantining

- In 2021-2022, based on success following CDC guidelines as well as updated CDC guidelines, there is no longer a need to quarantine an entire class or school.
  - Only non-vaccinated individuals regular within 3 feet of a positive individual must quarantine.
  - Students/faculty.staff who are masked and maintain 3 feet of physical distancing from the positive individual do not need to quarantine.

- Vaccinated students/faculty/staff do not need to quarantine if they are asymptomatic.
  - Unvaccinated students/faculty/staff who are close contacts to positive household members or caretakers, including siblings, must quarantine.
- The Archdiocese Nurse Hotline will work with Principal Vance to determine the course of action, depending on positivity, last day in the building, contact tracing and other critical information.
  - (SHS) If your child is in quarantine, we will work with you and your student's teacher on an academic plan.
  - We will work with you to identify the appropriate quarantine and testing guideline to follow: If a student or faculty tests positive for COVID-19 or does not seek medical attention, students must isolate and not return to school until they have met CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation. This includes:
    1. Three or more days without a high fever;
    2. A reduction of other COVID symptoms by at least 75 percent; and
    3. At least 14 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
  - Should any employee have COVID-19 symptoms or test positive for COVID-19, we will follow the same protocols used for students. If your child's teacher becomes sick and is unable to work, your school will provide a substitute teacher.
  - If a student in your child's class tests positive for COVID-19, we will make all parents aware that a student has tested positive for COVID-19. All students in the cohort will be monitored closely for COVID-19 symptoms. Students will be allowed to complete work virtually while the cohort is away from school.

**Thank you SHS Community for helping us ensure we have as safe an environment as possible.**

General resources and sources that inform the St. Helen Reopening Plan:

[Archdiocese Reopening With Trust](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Resources on COVID19](#)

[City of Chicago guidance for COVID19](#)

Thank you for your support and flexibility as we continue to operate in-person learning and plan and adjust for the health and safety of our students, faculty, staff, and families.