



## Washington Academy Return to School Update-August 18, 2020

### **HYBRID MODEL-ACADEMIC PLAN**

#### **WEEK 1:**

Washington Academy is planning to reopen for in-person, on-campus classes on September 8, 2020 for new Cohort #1 students and on September 9, 2020 for **all** Cohort #1 students, both new and returning. WA will reopen for in-person, on-campus classes on September 10, 2020 for new students Cohort #2 and on September 11, 2020 for **all** Cohort #2 students, both new and returning.

Cohort #1=students with last names, A-L

Cohort #2=students with last names, M-Z

Cohort #2=**All** residential students (domestic and international), A-Z

Cohort #2=Siblings in same household with different last names

September 8	Cohort #1	A-L NEW students and FRESHMEN
September 9	Cohort #1	A-L ALL students
September 10	Cohort #2	M-Z NEW students and FRESHMEN
September 11	Cohort #2	M-Z ALL students

#### **Regular school calendar:**

Cohort #1-In-Person classes on Mondays and Tuesdays

Cohort #1-On-Line classes on Thursdays and Fridays

Cohort #2-In-Person classes on Thursdays and Fridays

Cohort #2-On-Line classes on Mondays and Tuesdays

#### **Wednesday Schedule:**

Cohort #1 and #2-Remote check-in with teachers, class support, deep cleaning day.

No in-person on-campus classes

### **BUSING**

School buses are particularly difficult places to practice social distancing. A couple of major points to keep in mind.

- We encourage families to consider transporting students, rather than using the bus. This improves social distancing en route to school.
- We are continuing to work with sending schools to coordinate bus service for those who need it.

## **BELL SCHEDULE**

7:30 - 7:50 Students arrive, pick up breakfast and eat in Cafe or SH, then go to their period one classroom.

7:50 - 8:15 Breakfast/Morning Announcements

8:15 - 9:35 Period 1 Class

### **No Locker Break**

9:40 - 11:00 Period 2 Class

11:05 - 1:00 Period 3 Class

*11:05-11:15/11:15-11:45 Lunch A/11:45-1:00*

*11:05-12:20/12:20-12:50 Lunch B/12:50-1:00*

1:00 ...Dismissal

## **ATHLETICS**

The Maine Principals Association will be announcing their Phase 4 plan on August 24. Practices have started with daily health screening and temperature checks. Masks and social distancing are also required. Students are asked to bring their own water.

We are waiting as long as possible to make a final determination about plans for fall sports. In the event major changes are made, the school is committed to facilitating appropriate sports and fitness opportunities, whether under the umbrella of the MPA or as an individual school. It appears to us that sports like golf, cross-country, tennis, and perhaps others could be played safely and that the sports most at risk are those featuring close contact with other players (football, hockey, basketball, field hockey, soccer, cheering) and/or in problematic settings (swimming).

## **FOOD SERVICE**

The school's lunch program has been a topic of discussion of a reopening subcommittee. With only half of the student body on campus each day for lunch, it will be easier to distribute previously ordered, packaged lunches to students. It has become clear that classrooms are **not** the ideal place for lunch to be consumed, as this is the one time during the day when masks must come off.

WA will implement two lunch periods that will occur during third block. Students will be assigned to eat their lunch in the Café, the Study Hall room, or the Library.

Breakfast will be available on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Students can grab a breakfast meal and eat in the Café or the Study Hall room. **Students will not be eating in their classroom.**

## **STUDENT/STAFF HEALTH & SAFETY**

In June the Maine Department of Education published a long list of questions schools should take into consideration in making their reopening plans. The state classified the questions according to physical health and safety; mental and emotional health; academics and distance learning; and health services, food services, and transportation. About six weeks later the DOE then provided clear, specific requirements for safety, all of which will be adopted by Washington Academy in one form or another:

- Symptom screening before entering school for staff and students
- A requirement that anyone who has *any* symptoms consistent with possible Covid-19 stay at home and get a medical diagnosis
- Wearing a mask or other facial covering in school at all times except meals, with masks provided by families and a back-up supply available at school
- Physical distancing in school and in all Washington Academy-sponsored programs using the widely accepted three to six-foot separation rule of thumb
- Modeling and practicing hand hygiene
- Designation of medical isolation spaces, in our case for both day and boarding student populations
- Adequate fresh-air ventilation
- Reducing the number of people normally inside the school at any one time

### **Preparing Physical Spaces**

Over the course of the summer Washington Academy has taken a number of steps on campus to support a safe reopening from a physical facilities point of view. Among these are:

- Hand sanitizer dispensers throughout the school
- Signage for hallway and stairways traffic
- Plexiglass protection for employees in certain office areas
- Reduction in the number of student desks per classroom to adhere to 3-feet social distancing in classroom settings for students, and with six-foot compliance for teachers
- Designation of a second nursing station in Cates Dorm to be used only for Covid-related situations in which the student or staff member needs to be examined away from the current nurses' office

Washington Academy's approach to the details of reopening led to the creation of faculty-staff subcommittees and to online meetings in which feedback was sought from parents and students. During the Covid-19 pandemic, a safe reopening requires awareness of and adherence to clear protocols. One purpose of our plan is to signal through new rules and procedures how seriously Washington Academy takes the health and safety of its teachers, staff, students, and families. From observing business and school re-openings in the US and around the world, we know that some employees and some school families are likely to feel that the risks involved in returning to school, whether because of a personal or family health issue or a wider concern about Covid-19 and its transmission, outweigh the benefits of returning to school. We have invited teachers to return to in-person teaching in classrooms while at the same time offered them the choice to teach from home on the school's distance learning platform. Similarly, as long as they are not at risk themselves and are prepared to follow all of the health protocols we have developed, we invited students to return to campus, while at the same time offered access to classes online should students choose to learn from home.

## **Resources and Criteria for Reopening**

Throughout the process of researching and writing this plan, Washington Academy has used helpful and commonly accepted criteria from the US Centers for Disease Control, the Maine CDC, the Maine Association of School Nurses, the Maine Principals' Association, the Maine Department of Education, the Academy of American Pediatrics, the Independent schools Association of Northern New England, the National Association of Independent Schools, the Association of Boarding Schools, and other states' guidance and other schools' reopening plans, and even information from countries where the return to the classroom happened this spring. It is important to note that the Maine CDC and the Independent Schools Association of Northern New England have both sent updated guidelines recently and the national CDC is planning to release updated guidelines as they evolve. Our plan will also evolve and reflect adherence to these guidelines.

Because the task of reopening is complex and the challenges at times overwhelming, our hope in this document is to set forth updated information on our plan that begins with goals and values and moves our school community in the direction of a successful reopening. We know that medical understanding of the Covid-19 virus and its offshoots is evolving. More importantly, we know that the staff and families of Washington Academy give us our strength as a community and give our diverse students a place to belong. We believe deeply in the importance of the student-teacher connection and in the integrity of academic learning. Moreover, the school's outstanding academic program is balanced by arts, athletic, and extracurricular programs that round out student growth.

Washington Academy's whole-student philosophy of education thus makes clear that physical health and safety comes first. Our teachers in particular emphasized in our reopening discussions the paramount importance of safe entrances, classrooms, hallways, eating areas, and other spaces. Their voices have been instrumental, and so we say without hesitation that what follows prioritizes teacher and student well-being.

### **What's Next?**

We will continue to review guidelines from the national, regional, and state level and will update our plans accordingly.

### **Conclusion – with an Emphasis on Understanding Risk**

We have always put the health and safety of our students as a top priority. The pandemic has also added focus to the health and safety of our adults. Older adults who are relatives of students and staff, who are staff themselves, and people with underlying medical conditions are all at particular risk. We value all the members of our community and their extended families. Our love of school and the life of the school must be balanced with our concern for all the members of our community.

Based on the current Covid-19 incidence in the our region, we believe safe reopening is possible. In this part of the state, case numbers and hospitalizations continue to be low, and the CDC's school capacity and readiness markers suggest that a safe reopening is possible.

Judson McBrine  
Head of School

Tim Reynolds  
Associate Head of School