



*July 28, 2020*

Dear Parents:

We have been meeting frequently this summer as an administrative team in order to prepare to open School in September. On June 25, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education published a document titled, “Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance”. This has been especially useful to us as we plan for the fall and the word “Initial” in its title serves as a prominent reminder that this is still a fluid situation and so our planning remains contingent upon revised or even changed guidance which we will inevitably receive in the coming weeks.

*We have focused our planning in the following areas:*

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

We list this first, as the health and safety of our students, families, faculty, and staff remain our priority. In accordance with the guidance, all students, faculty, staff, and visitors will be required to wear masks/face coverings. We are asking students, faculty, and staff to provide their own masks/face coverings, but we will have a supply available in the event that anyone should need one. We will have an ample supply of hand sanitizer and wipes in all classrooms and throughout the campus. We will be encouraging frequent hand washing whenever possible. Our maintenance staff and cleaning service, AM PM Cleaning, will be disinfecting the facilities throughout each day and evening. In accordance with the guidelines, we will designate the small faculty room adjacent to the Front Office and across from the Health Office as an isolation space for any student who becomes ill during the school day and needs to wait for a parent to pick him up. All of the remaining rubrics below also fall under this initial heading of Health and Safety.

## **PHYSICAL DISTANCING: CLASSROOMS**

We have engaged our architect and past parent, Mr. Rob Olson, to assist us with arranging classrooms and other spaces in our entire facility to allow for a minimum of three feet of spacing between individuals. In the next few weeks, we will be removing all of the rectangular tables from classrooms that have them and replacing these with over 300 tablet desks which either have been held in storage or we have purchased this summer. We will also move larger class sections into larger classrooms. We have some contingency planning around making use of non-academic spaces in the West Campus Center but have not arrived at any final decisions in that regard.

## **PHYSICAL DISTANCING: NON-CLASSROOM SPACES**

We will be removing the tables from Ward Hall in order to make room for desks and furniture which will allow for six-foot physical distancing and will not have students facing each other when they are eating lunch. Our dining service company, Sage Dining, will be planning lunch service based on guidelines from the Needham Board of Health. We will provide more information on that as they develop their plan. We will also be using the McCulloch Room and some rooms in the West Campus Center (Martin Hall, the Wrestling Room) in order to distance students at lunch time and have them gathering in cohorts by class. We will also be looking at spaces where students will be allowed to gather at other times by class/cohort and these will ideally align with their lunch locations.

Most of the chairs in the Library will be sent to storage in order to encourage social distancing there. We will also establish maximum occupancy rules for any large space on campus.

In order to reduce the number of times computer keyboards and mice are touched, we will be asking students to bring their own computer device/laptop to School. We have ordered several new printers which will be available to students in the Library and in other locations around the Academic Building. We have asked faculty to make use of digital rather than print resources, handouts, etc. whenever possible this year.

## **SCHEDULE**

We have been discussing some scheduling options to reduce crowding in the hallways. Some of these are problematic because of the nature of our students' course programs, as well as teachers' course assignments, which often straddle grade levels. At this point we are looking at a bell schedule which would release grades 7, 8 and 9 into the hallways between classes, and then a few minutes later 10, 11 and 12. This will mean the loss of a few minutes of class time for some students, unfortunately.

## **GATHERING**

We are studying how to make the best use of our spaces to allow for distancing when we are gathered other than in our classes. For example, we are planning to use Ward Hall for Chapel and some of the larger spaces in the West Campus Center for Class Meetings, etc. At this point, we are planning to hold Corporate Chapel, School Masses and Assemblies (which we will need to keep to a minimum) outside, weather permitting. We will also be encouraging students and faculty to make use of our ample outdoor spaces for lunch, meetings, and classes whenever possible, weather permitting. At this point, we do not anticipate using St. Bartholomew's Church both because of distancing requirements, as well as our concern over cross-contamination in a facility frequented by a vulnerable population.

## **DISTANCE LEARNING**

We received almost universal praise and gratitude for the incredible efforts of our faculty in the spring to make our Distance Learning Program, in the words of one parent, “the industry standard”. We have frequently heard the words “talent” and “dedication” describing our faculty’s contributions to making this Program a success.

In May, we asked our Department Heads to dialogue with their Department Members in continuing to plan for distance learning, which would make room for a hybrid approach to teaching and learning. “Hybrid” now means many different things when describing a school’s approach to distance learning; for us, at this point, it refers to a situation in which some students and faculty are present in a classroom and others are accessing the class from home. While clearly related to and similar to distance learning, the hybrid model has some particular exigencies, e.g. the possible placement of a camera in the classroom for the benefit of those at home.

There are also other versions/definitions of the hybrid model of teaching and learning. One of these involves cycling students, usually by grade level, through a rotation of on-campus and at-home distance learning on certain days of the week. This model would be employed if there is a need to distance students even more than we are already planning. At this point, our goal is to have everyone who wants to be here on campus every day. I raise this other scenario as one which we might need to consider as the situation develops in the coming weeks.

We are grateful for the dedication and expertise of many of our colleagues who have devoted many hours planning for our Reopening, especially Jen Joyce, David Cornish, Jack Doherty, Michael Deschenes, Ed Donovan, Paul Rossini, Jim Sullivan, and Eric Ludwig.

Please expect two very important upcoming emails from the School. The first will be some additional, specific information from our Director of Health Services, Jen Joyce, R.N., regarding our health protocols for students and families. The second will be a very brief survey asking your views and plans regarding the School’s Reopening.

We will send out further information about this, as well as any updated guidance from the state, in mid-August. We will also have a Reopening of School page on our website and will alert you when it is available.

We ask that our Lord continue to bless you and your families this summer and always. Please do not hesitate to reach out to any of us with questions, comments, or concerns.

Sincerely,

**William L. Burke III**  
*Headmaster*

**Michael P. Nerbonne**  
*Assistant Headmaster*  
*Dean of Studies*

**Brendan W. Sullivan**  
*Dean of Students*