

OFFICE OF THE HEADMASTER

*Pray as though everything depended on God.
Work as though everything depended on you.
~ St. Augustine*

July 30, 2020

Dear Austin Prep Parents,

In my last communication to you on July 21, I indicated we would be in touch the week of August 10 with Austin Prep's Reopening Plan for the 2020-2021 academic year. While that timeline remains on track to release the full plan, there is some information and updates that I would like to share now to let you know.

We received the final report from our public health consulting firm earlier this week. With their recommendations, we have begun the process to "finalize" the reopening plan. It will continue to evolve, even after school reopens, as we adapt to rapidly changing conditions, new scientific findings, and recommendations from public health and medical experts. With utmost respect and deference to scientific research and expert wisdom, no one has *experience* operating schools in a global pandemic like we are now experiencing. (If you were alive during the last global pandemic which occurred in 1918, you will be at least 102 years old in November.)

I recognize there are many questions and fleeting moments of apprehension surrounding the reopening of school. I have them, too. Our goal is to put together a comprehensive plan that will enable us to open school with reduced risk. Part of that deliberate effort is to not release the plan before it's "finalized." I know other schools have released either partial or full plans. Every school, however, has its own unique culture and community. When we release our plan, we want to share a plan that is thorough, sensible, and flexible – one that keeps health and safety first and one that will answer more questions than it creates. In my judgment as I begin my sixteenth year as a head of school, releasing a plan prematurely is unwise. I appreciate your patience.

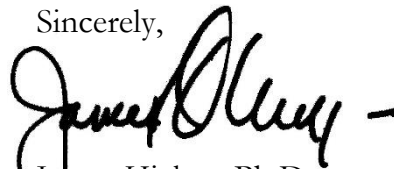
Here are some dates and information that I can share.

- We continue to prepare for a full return to campus.
- We are *exploring* hybrid options. I hope you can appreciate that we don't want to overpromise and under deliver. Before sharing information about hybrid possibilities, we need to confirm what is feasible.
- Faculty and staff will report on August 24 for a week of professional development and training on reopening plan procedures.
- Beginning August 31, students will report to campus at various times on an intermittent, modified schedule for orientation and the start of classes. (New student orientation previously scheduled for August 27 and 28 has been moved to the week of August 31). In the same way that faculty and staff will participate in an orientation around new procedures, students will as well. Daily life in school will not be what it was and students will need similar "professional development" to become familiar with new routines and expectations.
- Approved face coverings will be required in addition to many other safety measures.
- Daily temperature checks will be required for all staff and students.
- Occupancy in the dining hall has been reduced and we are adding one additional lunch period. Our previous self-serve model will be significantly altered.
- Student schedules will be released the week of August 17. Please appreciate how many variables have been added to developing the master schedule this year – variables such as new social distancing classroom occupancies, staffing assignments, medical accommodations, and an additional lunch period being added – all while striving to fulfill student customized course requests. Deadlines for summer assignments will be extended.
- For students who may need medical accommodations, we will be in touch next week.
- We have scheduled a webinar for parents to provide an overview of the reopening plan on **Thursday, August 13 at 1:00 p.m.**

All dates are tentative and subject to last minute changes based on evolving conditions of the public health crisis.

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The days ahead will be full of curveballs and despite our best efforts to develop a thorough and comprehensive plan, the plan undoubtedly will require recalibration to respond to emerging conditions. If there is one constant in all of this, it is the need to be flexible. I'm grateful to you for your continued patience.

Sincerely,

James Hickey, Ph.D.
Headmaster