



January 21, 2021

Dear Parents of Thornton Academy Winter Athletes:

On Wednesday evening, the Maine Principals' Association, the Maine Department of Education, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, the Maine School Superintendents Association, and the Maine School Boards Association have released an updated interpretation for the color-coded designation utilized throughout the school year. Prior to now, schools in any counties that were designated as "yellow" were not able to hold in-person after school activities. Following some deliberations among those groups, it has now been determined that schools in "yellow" counties will have local choice related to offering their sports programs. After consulting with Rene Menard, the Headmaster of Thornton Academy, we have agreed that our school will allow in-person athletic program to get underway as of Monday, January 25, 2021.

The purpose of my letter today is to provide you with some preliminary information related to the start of winter sports at Thornton Academy. I am working with members of our coaching staff and facilities management team to finalize all of the details related to opening up our programs. In addition, please anticipate that members of our coaching staff will connect with you and/or your students to provide more team-specific information.

Opening Date of Practices

Most Thornton Academy athletic programs will have their first in-person activities on Monday, January 25, 2021. All in-person practices, workouts, and meetings will be conducted at Linnell Gymnasium with the exception of ice hockey, which will take place at Biddeford Ice Arena. A practice schedule for the next several days of activity will be available from your student's coach and posted on the Thornton Academy website (www.thorntonacademy.org).

Practice Expectations

Members of our coaching staff have been trained in and will utilize specific COVID-19 protocols when conducting activities. There will be an increased attention to personal hygiene, and students will have access to hand sanitizer at all venues. In addition, there will be times during practice activities when the participants may have opportunities to take "sanitization breaks." Equipment and surfaces will be cleaned and sanitized routinely, and social distancing will be utilized wherever practical. Students should bring their own personal equipment (water bottles, towels) and should not share those items with others.

All of our coaches and other staff will be wearing masks while working with the student-athletes. As per the directive of the Maine Principals' Association that was communicated last fall, all participants are expected to wear a mask when entering the practice facility and throughout all practices and competitions.

There will be no lockers assigned to Thornton Academy student-athletes during the winter season. Our locker rooms will serve as changing areas only, and students are expected to take all personal belongings with them when they exit to the practice venue. We have marked changing spaces with green dots (six feet apart) for students to use when entering the locker area and have established maximum capacity limits for

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those facilities. Our staff will work with students to ensure that the changing process is orderly, efficient, and meets these spacing guidelines.

We are also asking all students to arrive on time for any activity held at Linnell Gymnasium and to exit the facility immediately after it is completed.

Daily Screening

All Thornton Academy student-athletes must conduct a daily health screening in order to participate. They will be asked a series of questions related to the existence of any symptoms of COVID-19. Each coach will share a Google Doc questionnaire with every student on his or her sign-up list; that questionnaire needs to be completed by 9:00am on every day that an activity is held. (Students who are working remotely but still planning to attend an after school activity should also complete the screening tool.). Any student-athlete who shows up for a workout without completing the questionnaire will be required to do so before being cleared to participate on that day.

I will be reviewing all student responses prior to noon. In the event that a student identifies the presence of one or more primary symptoms or two or more secondary symptoms, I will contact one of the school nurses, who will then review the case, and will, in turn, contact parents if there are concerns. As we have with the daily self-screening process required to attend school, we would ask that any students who do not feel well on a given day to remain home.

Paperwork

Each of your sons or daughters has signed up for a winter sport and is currently on our registration list. Thornton Academy requires the following forms to be completed in order for a student to participate:

1. Permission Slip
2. MPA Information Form
3. Risk Warning Form
4. Health History Update

In addition, please be reminded that a student must have had a physical examination within the two-year span before the first date of practice. During the sign-up phase, I notified all parents and/or students if an updated physical examination was required.

An additional requirement that we have added since the outbreak of the pandemic is the completion of the COVID-19 waiver document. Many of you completed this on-line form earlier this year. If you have not yet completed that requirement, I would ask you to access one of the previous e-mails related to that form or contact me for a copy of the waiver.

Game Schedules

The Maine Principals' Association winter season concludes on Friday, March 12. SMAA schools have worked cooperatively to develop a preliminary schedule of contests that are organized according to the Governor's mandates for indoor gatherings. We will be posting those game schedules on our website in the upcoming days. Please note that our contest schedules are subject to criteria established in the Community Sports Guidelines available at www.maine.gov. Thornton Academy will be allowed to compete in-person

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against schools in York and Cumberland Counties. In some activities (cheerleading, swimming), the competitions will be conducted virtually.

Given the current state mandate that no more than fifty individuals, including all participants, coaches, officials, and game personnel, can be in a facility at one time, there will be no spectators at Maine high school athletic events this winter. We are planning to coordinate with Thornton Academy Television to offer a schedule of live streamed events from Linnell Gymnasium via www.facebook.com/thorntonacademy.

On Thursday, December 3, I held an electronic "open house" for parents of winter student-athletes. In the event that you were unable to attend, please e-mail me at gary.stevens@thorntonacademy.org to obtain the PowerPoint. Many of the details related to return to activity are specified within the slides, and you are able to access the battery of questions asked as part of the daily screening instrument.

Thank you for your patience and understanding in these highly challenging times. Our staff is very excited about having students back on our playing venues and looks forward to providing them with what will certainly be a unique and memorable experience. If you have any specific questions, please feel free to contact me at 602-4406 during school hours.

Sincerely,

Gary Stevens
Director of Athletics & Student Activities

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