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## INTRODUCTION TO SCHOOL YEAR 2021/22

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This document is intended to outline the strategies Thornton Academy has developed in preparation for reintegrating back to full-time in-person classroom instruction for all students. Our plans are in accordance with the State of Maine's updated guidance which provides a roadmap to follow as we navigate the 2021-2022 school year. As always, all decisions are being made in alignment with the most up-to-date guidance from the Maine CDC, Maine Department of Education (MDOE), the Office of the Governor and our school physician.

### ⇒ **Our Commitment to Safety**

As we continue to adjust to the evolving guidance related to the COVID-19 global pandemic, we remain as committed as ever to ensuring the safety, health, and well-being of our students, families, faculty, and staff. Keeping our learning community as safe as possible is always our primary concern.

We intend to continue following best-practice recommendations and mandates from relevant health and education experts when determining the best course of action for TA. These sources include our school physician, the Maine CDC, Maine Department of Education (MDOE), and Office of the Governor. All decisions are being made in accordance with their guidance and with the best interest of our students and community at the center.

We will also continue to assess the many factors that impact the experience of students, families, and faculty. We have done our best to create strategies that are attuned to the academic and emotional needs of students and families, and honor the ongoing feedback we receive from our community. When possible, we want to minimize the effect of this pandemic on our students' learning experience.



## STUDENT HANDBOOKS

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Each new school year, both our Upper School (grades 9-12) and middle school (grades 6-8) publish an updated student handbook. Below you will find links to the 2021/22 handbooks, with COVID-19 specific addendums. Additionally, we have included an updated version of our Communicable Disease Policy with specific COVID-19 addendums below.

- [Upper School Student Handbook \(including COVID-19 Addendum\)](#)
- [TAMS 2021/22 Student Handbook](#)

### ⇒ **Communicable Disease Policy**

It is the purpose of the Communicable Disease Policy to prevent and control the transmission of communicable diseases and to promote health and wellness within the Thornton Academy community. The term communicable disease shall mean an infectious or contagious disease spread from person to person, animal to person, or as defined by the law.

The health risk to immuno-depressed students and staff shall be determined and documented by their personal physician. The health risk to others in the school environment from the presence of a student or staff member with a communicable disease shall be determined on a case-by-case basis by the person's personal physician, a physician chosen by the school, or public health officials. [Read the full policy here.](#)

## ACADEMICS & THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

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We are excited to invite all students back to campus for in-person instruction 5 days per week. We will be returning to our previous bell schedule, with the school day beginning @ 8:30 and ending @ 2:45. See the [Upper School Bell Schedule](#) or [TAMS Bell Schedule](#) for details, as well as our [2021/22 school calendar](#).

We understand a return to campus full time will require an adjustment for all students, especially those who were not able to attend in-person instruction during the 20/21 school year. Thornton Academy faculty are prepared to support students and know there will be both an academic and social/emotional transition period. Administration and teaching faculty have designed the teaching blocks at the Upper School to dedicate time to remediation of academic skills and extra support for students becoming reacquainted with study skills and other important independent learning strategies. At TAMS, specialists and teachers will be ready to provide support in the classroom. They will focus on rebuilding routines and establishing comprehensive social/emotional supports within the instructional practice and faculty/staff professional development this school year.

For more information specific to a student's needs around returning to campus, parents/guardians are encouraged to reach out to their child's school counselor (see contact information below).

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## HEALTH SERVICES

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Thornton Academy decisions related to health protocols are being made in alignment with the most up-to-date guidance from the Maine CDC, Department of Education, Office of the Governor, and the Thornton Academy school physician. Any amendments to the following protocols will correlate with this evolving guidance.

### ⇒ **Daily Self-Screen**

Parents/guardians are asked to conduct a self-screening with their student before leaving for school. The following questions must be asked daily; if the answer to any question is yes, the student must stay home.

*Am I experiencing:*

- fever of 100.4°F or more
- uncontrolled cough
- shortness of breath or difficulty breathing (not exercise induced asthma)
- new loss of taste or smell
- chills
- sore throat
- rigors (a sudden feeling of cold with shivering accompanied by a rise in temperature)
- 2 or more of the following:
  - new headache
  - muscle aches
  - runny nose/congestion
  - nausea/vomiting/diarrhea

Any student who becomes unwell while at school must immediately go to the nurse's office.

### ⇒ **Reporting Absences**

Due to COVID-19 related policies, parents/guardians are no longer able to call and report their child's absence from school (for either illness or non-illness related absences). We ask that you notify the school about absences via the Absent Student Reporting Form for [TAMS](#) or the [Upper School](#). A school nurse will contact the parent/guardian to follow up and determine when a student is able to return to school. The Absent Student Reporting Form can also be found on the [My TA website](#).

**NOTE (for Upper School & TAMS students):** Tardies and dismissals must also be reported via the Attendance Student Reporting Form (see links above).

### ⇒ **Return-to-School Expectations**

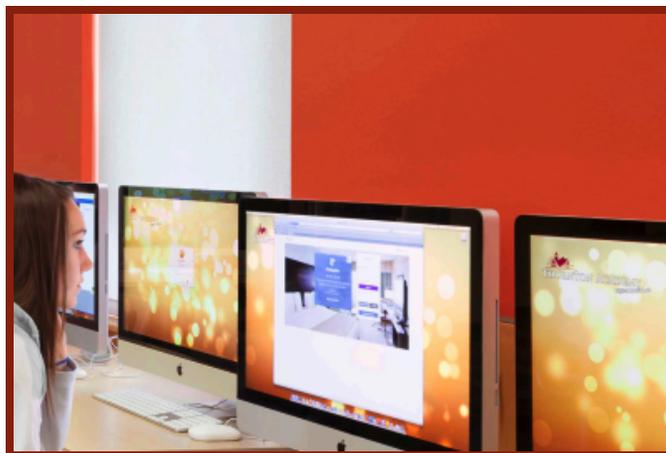
Thornton Academy will adhere to the most up-to-date recommendations from the Maine CDC and our school physicians regarding a student's return to school after experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. A member of our school nursing team will support students/families in understanding the expectations. Some important notes related to return-to-school expectations:

- All positive COVID-19 student cases **MUST** be reported to the school nurse. Additionally, all close contact identifications (ex. a family member in the home tests positive for COVID-19) must be reported to the school nurse.
- A student who tests positive for COVID-19 must quarantine and meet guidelines related to being symptom-free before returning to school and school activities. This applies to both fully vaccinated and unvaccinated students.
- Students who are not symptomatic do not need to quarantine when identified as a close contact; a PCR COVID-19 test is recommended 5 days after potential exposure to a person who tested positive for COVID-19.
- Thornton Academy requires the use of a PCR COVID-19 test (in most situations) when policy indicates the need for a negative COVID-19 test result. At this time, the school will not accept home test results.
  - The school will accept a negative rapid antigen test result when a student has been symptomatic. The student must also be fever-free for 24-hours with no fever-reducing medications and have resolving symptoms to return to school.

**For additional questions related to health services, please contact our nursing team at: [health@thorntonacademy.org](mailto:health@thorntonacademy.org).**

### ⇒ **Vaccination Record**

Parents are encouraged to provide the school nurse's office with a copy of their child's COVID-19 vaccination record to keep on file in a student's confidential health record. Although not required, the school's receipt of this documentation may impact the requirements of the COVID response process should a student be identified as a close contact. Questions: please contact [health@thorntonacademy.org](mailto:health@thorntonacademy.org).



## OPERATIONAL ADJUSTMENTS

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### ⇒ **Absent Student Reporting Form**

Due to COVID-19 related policies, parents/guardians are no longer able to call and report their child's absence from school (for either illness or non-illness related reasons). Parents/guardians are asked to use the [TAMS](#) or [Upper School](#) online Absent Student Reporting Form to notify the school when their child will be absent.

### ⇒ **Athletics**

To ensure a safe return to athletics after a positive COVID-19 diagnosis, the Thornton Academy athletic department, in conjunction with the school's physician, has developed a return to play protocol. Questions regarding return to play can be directed to: [health@thorntonacademy.org](mailto:health@thorntonacademy.org).

### ⇒ **Bus Protocols**

Students must complete the daily self-screen before entering the bus. Masks/face coverings must be worn by all students on the bus. All students must wash their hands or use sanitizing gel upon entering and exiting the bus. Please refer to the applicable bus transportation department for any additional safety measures.

### ⇒ **Daily Self-Screen**

See above under "[Health Services](#)."

### ⇒ **Increased Air Purification Measures**

Thornton Academy has taken several steps toward enhancing air purifications systems throughout campus. Each classroom, educational space, lounge, and office area was measured and air flow requirements were calculated based on three feet of social distance at full capacity. All measured mechanical systems exceed the official cubic feet per minute recommendation. Additionally, all mechanical systems were inspected to ensure proper flow and fresh air turnover, and medical grade HEPA air filters were installed. TA will continue to monitor using 24-hour

devices which continuously measure CO2 levels, humidity, temperature, fine particulates, and volatile organic compounds.

### ⇒ **Lunch Procedure**

Several mitigation efforts have been established to create the safest approach to providing lunch to students.

- FLIK Dining Services will continue to adhere to best practice guidance to support a safe dining experience for the school community.
- Students will be required to wear masks while in the food service area, near the registers and while waiting in lines. Masks may be removed once seated. Students will be required to put their masks back on when moving about and/or leaving their seats.
- Students at the Upper School will have the option of choosing seating during lunch in the cafeteria, the atrium, or outside under a tent in the quad. In later fall, additional indoor seating will be available as an option for students.
- Students at TAMS will be spaced out in both classrooms and in the dining commons during lunch.

### ⇒ **Social Distancing**

The Maine CDC no longer requires social distancing measures in schools. They do, however, suggest continued use of social distancing when possible as an effective mitigation measure to reduce virus transmission. Thornton Academy has created class sizes which provide 3-foot distancing in most indoor instructional spaces and encourages students and staff to maintain social distancing when possible.

- Elevators will be limited to a maximum of two (2) people per ride.

### ⇒ **TA Release**

Thornton Academy is allowing all Upper School grades, freshmen through seniors, to apply for TA Release. Students granted TA Release MUST leave campus during the duration of the block. To request TA Release, please complete [this form](#).



## SAFETY MEASURES

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### ⇒ **Cleaning Protocols**

Thornton Academy will continue to clean student spaces daily, adhering to current CDC guidelines. Particular attention will be paid to high-touch surfaces including restrooms and locker rooms, stairway handrails, doorknobs and handles in rooms and hallways, light switches, vending machines, elevator call and operating buttons, and the nurse's offices.

### ⇒ **Handwashing**

Hand sanitizing stations and signage have been installed throughout campus in an effort to remind students of the importance of hand hygiene. Students are expected to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (or use sanitizer if washing is not possible) in the following circumstances:

- Entering and exiting classrooms
- After using the restroom
- Before and after eating
- Before donning or removing a face mask
- Before and after use of shared equipment
- Upon entering and exiting a school bus or TA vehicle

When using hand sanitizer, it should be applied to all surfaces of the hands and in enough quantity that it takes 20 seconds of rubbing hands together for the sanitizer to dry.

## ⇒ **Masks/Face Covering Requirements**

All students will be required to wear a mask/face covering when indoors on Thornton Academy's campus. Masks/face coverings must be worn at all times indoors, with the exception of established breaks or when eating.

- Students will need to provide their own mask/face covering; however, the school will have extra masks available in the event that a student forgets or loses their face covering. A mask/face covering must cover a person's nose and mouth.
- Reusable masks/face coverings should be washed by families daily.
- Masks/face coverings should be replaced when soiled or wet. If the mask/face covering becomes soiled, remove and safely discard disposable masks, or store reusable face coverings in a sealed container or plastic bag for laundering. It is important to perform hand hygiene after changing a soiled mask/face covering.
- Mask breaks will be available for individual students and groups as needed throughout the school day.
- Per CDC recommendations, gaiters are not considered an acceptable face-covering option and masks with one-way valves or vents that allow air to be exhaled through a hole in the material are also prohibited.
- The Maine Department of Education advises that face coverings should cover the nose and mouth, and fit snugly against the sides of the face. Cloth face coverings should have multiple layers of cloth.

The following videos from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) may be helpful when learning about the use and care of face coverings/masks:

- [How to make cloth face coverings](#)
- [How to safely wear and remove face coverings](#)
- [How to wash cloth face coverings](#)

With prior approval, face shields may be an alternative for students/staff with medical, behavioral, or other challenges who are unable to wear face coverings. Face shields worn in place of a face covering must extend below the chin and back to the ears. **For additional questions related to your student's individual needs, please contact our nursing team at [health@thorntonacademy.org](mailto:health@thorntonacademy.org).**

## ⇒ **Personal Hygiene**

Students are expected to practice the following proper infection control measures:

- If coughing or sneezing, students must cover their mouth and nose with a tissue or the inside of their elbow, and immediately discard the tissue.
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose, mouth, and mask/face covering.
- Refrain from hugs and handshakes.

The following resource from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) may be helpful when learning proper hygiene with the control of infectious disease: [Coughing and sneezing hygiene](#)

## ⇒ **Travel**

Students who travel outside of Maine during the school year must follow the Governor's Executive Orders related to travel.

## ⇒ **Visiting Campus**

In an effort to maximize the safety of our school buildings, the school will require that all parents/guardians and guests refrain from entering all school buildings without a scheduled appointment.

- If you do have an appointment with an administrator or a member of the faculty, please check in at the Upper School in the main building using the main entrance (near the flagpole) and through the main entrance at TAMS.
- All parents/guardians or guests must follow all of Thornton Academy's safety protocols, including wearing a face covering and using hand sanitizer upon entering the building.
- The reception clerk (Upper School) or administrative assistant (TAMS) will check you in and direct you to an appropriate waiting area until the person you are meeting with is able to join you.
- In an effort to reduce increased guest traffic in our buildings, parents are asked to help their child(ren) check for school essentials daily prior to leaving home (lunch or lunch money, athletic or other equipment, iPad/charger, or other class materials.) School essentials will be accepted and delivered to students on a limited basis. Non-urgent student deliveries will not be accepted.