

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

*It was pride that changed angels into devils;
it is humility that makes us as angels.
~ St. Augustine*

August 21, 2021

Dear Austin Prep Parents, Students, and Staff,

St. Augustine also said “there is something about humility that strangely exalts the heart.” I chose these teachings about humility from Augustine to acknowledge up front that the guidelines we are implementing to reopen Austin Prep for the 2021-2022 are not perfect. No plan is. Humility is an awareness there is much you don’t know and in the spirit of humility, I’m sharing Austin Prep’s Reopening Plan 2.0, which also has been shared with the Department of Public Health.

The reopening guidelines, first and foremost, align with the mission of Austin Prep and mission is the basis of our covenant. A covenant is always about what we give. A contract is often about what we get. In our commitment to *unitas* and *caritas*, the reopening plan focuses on the good of the whole – placing covenant before contract. In that generosity of a covenantal spirit, the entire Austin Prep community – students, staff, parents, and alumni – was self-sacrificing in some way over the last 18 months. Our community was flexible, resilient, patient, determined, understanding, buoyant, and generous – virtues that bolster the foundation upon which Austin Prep is built. We begin the 2021-2022 academic year with a renewed commitment to that generosity of spirit.

Placing mission first advances two uncompromising aspirations: First, the guidelines keep health and safety paramount. Secondly, the guidelines provide the strongest opportunity to keep Austin Prep operating in person, to sustain the continuity of instruction and the vibrancy of the “unwritten curriculum” (which I define as what remains after all else is forgotten – the sum total of experiences, friendships, memories, relationships that students form in school, many of which last a lifetime).

As we did last year, we will routinely evaluate the guidelines and update them accordingly. Our approach is undergirded in sound educational practice: September is a month to establish structure and routines that support student growth. Students need time to adapt and become accustomed to the guidelines, rules, routines, and expectations

that arrive with a new school year. Around October 1st, we can begin to make adjustments as needed.

As we collect vaccination information from students and staff and reach a level supported by the epidemiologists from [Fusion Cell](#) who have been advising us since the beginning of the public health emergency, we will reevaluate our protocols.

Masks

- Masks are required for everyone while indoors (classrooms, hallways, common areas, etc.). This requirement includes indoor athletic events.
- Masks are required on all transportation provided by Austin Prep.
- Masks may be removed in the dining hall while eating lunch.
- Teachers who are fully vaccinated and can maintain at least 6 feet of distance, at their discretion, may remove their masks while teaching. In the event there is a unique circumstance or medical need, accommodations can be made through the Academic Office.
- Masks are not required outdoors. Teachers are encouraged to bring their classes outdoors as their lesson planning permits.

In-Person Instruction for All Students

- Students learn best in person. To that end, remote learning is not an option for the 2021-2022 academic year.
- In the event Austin Prep is shutdown as a result of a government order or public health situation, we will transition to remote learning for all students as we demonstrated when the pandemic began.

Daily Wellness Check

- All students and staff are required to review the symptom checklist on a daily basis.
- Those who are not feeling well are required to stay home until they are symptom free.

Social Distancing

- Students and staff should maintain appropriate distancing, ideally a minimum of 3 feet.
- We have maintained appropriate desk spacing and reduced capacity in classrooms.
- We have added a fourth lunch period to reduce density in the dining hall.

Enhanced Cleaning and Hygiene

- Austin Prep will continue to implement enhanced cleaning protocols on campus.

- Touchless hand sanitizing dispensers are located throughout campus, including at dining hall serving stations.
- Students and staff are reminded to sustain the healthy practice of routinely washing their hands for at least 20 seconds, especially before eating.

Dining Hall

- All dining hall operations and procedures are in compliance with the requirements of the Reading Department of Public Health.
- We will resume self-service in the dining hall.
- Students and staff are required to wear masks while moving about the dining hall, including waiting in line for food or drinks.
- Masks may be removed only while eating.

Quarantining and Covid-19 Exposure

- Per current public health guidelines, fully vaccinated individuals who are exposed to an individual with confirmed Covid-19 do not have to quarantine as long as they remain symptom free.
- Vaccinated individuals who are experiencing Covid-19 symptoms cannot return until they have produced a negative Covid test and are symptom free.
- Unvaccinated individuals will be required to quarantine for 7 days from the date of exposure and produce a negative Covid-19 test that was administered on day 5 or later. (Quarantined individuals may return on day 8 provided there is a negative test result).
- Covid-19 positive individuals (both vaccinated and unvaccinated) must quarantine for a minimum of 10 days.

Contact Tracing

- Austin Prep will continue to conduct contact tracing in cooperation with public health authorities and quarantine students and staff as needed.
- Austin Prep will once again utilize the contact tracing app, [Trace Innovations](#). All students and staff are required to activate and keep the app running during the school day.
- Failure to comply with this requirement is considered a major violation of community expectations pursuant to the student code of conduct and the employee handbook.

Covid-19 Vaccinations

- There is no vaccination requirement at this time.
- Students and staff are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated for Covid-19.

Vaccination Records

- All students and staff who have been vaccinated are requested to submit a copy of their vaccination record to the Health Office. Information will follow from the Health Office on how to submit the documentation.
- **Those who do not have a vaccination record on file in the Health Office will be categorized as unvaccinated for quarantine purposes and other Covid-19 related decisions.**

As always, we'll keep you updated on important health related developments as the year progresses. If you have any questions about our protocols and guidelines, please be in touch with our school nurses, Kim Esakof and Bianca Pasciuto, in the Health Office at healthoffice@austinprep.org.

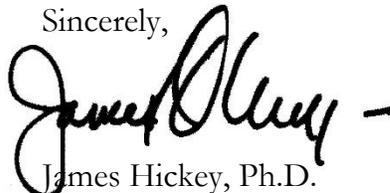
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It appears that Covid-19 is going to be with us for a while and we are learning to live with this current – and pray, God-willing, temporary – endemic health crisis. I'm grateful to everyone – students, parents, faculty, and staff – for their incredible cooperation, flexibility, and patience. With energy, enthusiasm, and an unyielding commitment to mission, we're ready to begin a new academic year. We're all in this together.

I'm looking forward to students and staff returning to campus and resuming some degree of “normal” life in school. We will do all we can to make it as “normal” as possible and, as we've demonstrated throughout the pandemic, we'll continue to maximize the student experience.

I'll be in touch again shortly with a general update on the 2021-2022 academic year. In the meantime, if I can be helpful, don't hesitate to reach out directly to me at jhickey@austinprep.org. Enjoy the remaining days of summer!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Hickey -". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line at the end.

James Hickey, Ph.D.
Head of School