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## **The On-Campus Reopening of Franklin Academy in September 2020**

"Creating a community-focused boarding school..." as our mission statement identifies as our goal, has faced obvious challenges amid the current global crisis. The strong bonds created within this community during the start of the 2019-2020 school year have moved to a virtual platform since we departed campus in March. Through it all, our students have shown resiliency and engagement, our parents have offered support and encouragement, and our faculty and staff have demonstrated enormous commitment and creativity.

The State of Connecticut has provided a model for managing the COVID-19 crisis. As unhappy as we were about our shutdown, all evidence suggests that this was the correct decision. Connecticut's measured reopening plan and low infection rate now allow us to consider ways to resume safely on-campus living and learning.

This report results from the hard work of the Franklin Academy COVID-19 Reopen Taskforce made up of members of the Administration, Health Services, and existing Safety Committee and other volunteers\*. This group diligently read and reviewed updated information throughout the summer.

Independent boarding schools fall under safety guidelines for colleges and universities due to their residential living experience. Since there are dramatic differences in providing care to young adolescents living away from home, this Committee carefully reviewed the State's guidelines and plans for the safe operation of public schools, and CDC guidelines and evolving information about best practices.

### **Sources of Guidance**

State of Connecticut Guidelines for Public Schools  
Report of the Higher Education Subcommittee, Reopen Connecticut  
Current CDC Guidelines  
Input from Medical Director  
Input from Local Health Department (Chatham District)

*\*Particular thanks are offered to Samantha Camolli, Chelsea Lazos, Kayla Crouch, Kristen Humiston, Jen Dziekan, Amber LaCasse, and MaryAnn Tosca-Conte for their dedication and effort towards this task. \**



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**Gating Conditions:**

The Committee quickly recognized that specific conditions would need to be in place for the school to consider reopening for on-campus learning. These “gating conditions” are:

- The prevalence of the disease in the State and local area must be low enough to resume campus operations safely
- The State of Connecticut has lifted, adjusted, or removed any school closure or Executive order, allowing schools to reopen physically
- The school has been able to procure sufficient masks and other needed PPE equipment for the students and staff
- Availability of affordable COVID-19 testing for students and faculty prior to opening and on an established schedule

**Safety Principles**

All current guidelines inform us that the following safety principles are essential to keeping our community safe from infection. Therefore, decisions and program modifications outlined in this report are based on these five basic safety guidelines:

1. Consistent use of face coverings
2. Social distancing
3. Frequent handwashing
4. Creating cohorts of students and faculty into living and educational groups
5. Isolating on campus by minimizing travel off-campus, visitors to campus



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**Summary of the setting:**

Franklin Academy is an independent, non-profit, boarding and day high school that serves students with unique learning profiles. The school is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) and a member of the National Association of Independent School (NAIS). Our Mission is: "Franklin Academy creates a community-focused, team-based, boarding and day school where students with unique learning styles develop and strengthen academic and social competencies vital to the pursuit of college goals, professional aspirations, and fulfilling lives."

Franklin Academy serves approximately 80 students in 9 buildings on a 70+ acre campus in East Haddam, Connecticut. Currently, we serve only four day students. Some of our educators and staff reside on campus, while others live within a 20-minute drive of campus. The majority of students come from homes on the Eastern Seaboard, while the remainder of students come from across the country, with two students currently from Hong Kong and Ecuador.

We created an educational program to meet the specific needs of this group of students, including academic instruction and the development and direct support of their social and emotional competencies, executive functioning, and self-advocacy. Class size is small, usually ranging from six-to-eight students per class.

Our main dormitory is a three-story building that houses approximately 60 total students. Each floor has about **22 single occupancy rooms** with one shared bathroom and one single-use bathroom. Our seniors live in four smaller satellite dorms on campus, with seventeen single and six large double-occupancy rooms. Our dining hall has two dining rooms on either side of the foodservice area.

The school maintains a Health Center to dispense student medication and monitor student health. It is staffed during the hours of 7:30 am-10:30 pm every day of the week by Registered Nurses and some Health Assistants who cover weekend shifts. The ProHealth Physicians, Pediatric & Adolescent Medical Group of Middletown, serves as Medical Director for this facility.



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**Keeping FA Healthy is Everyone's Responsibility!**

**Expectations for Students**

<b>Wearing a mask</b>	Students must wear multi-layer, close-fitting face masks while at school. <u>Exceptions</u> for this mandate are: showering, washing faces, brushing teeth, in the Health Center taking medication, eating in their designated dining area, in their dorm room with the door closed, or during a faculty-designated outdoor mask break.
<b>Participating in daily health check-in</b>	Students will participate in a daily review of their physical health, including temperature checks.
<b>Practicing social distancing</b>	Students will maintain six-feet social distancing at all times and will refrain from physical contact.
<b>Frequent handwashing and sanitizing</b>	Specific times for handwashing will be identified, and students will be expected to use hand sanitizer when entering and leaving a classroom.
<b>Meeting daily hygiene expectations</b>	Students will maintain regular self-care for ensuring clean bodies and clothing.
<b>Quarantining in room if ill</b>	Students will be asked to remain in their rooms when not feeling well and participate in further assessment with the nursing staff.
<b>Remain on campus</b>	Students are asked to remain on campus to reduce contagion risk to the community. Leaving campus may require a re-entry plan including, but not limited to, testing and a period of quarantine.

**Expectations for Employees**

<b>Wearing a mask</b>	Employees must wear multi-layer, close-fitting, face masks while at school. Exceptions are: eating in their designated dining area or during a designated, outdoor mask break.
<b>Performing daily health check</b>	Employees will engage in self-directed screening before coming to work and participate in temperature screening upon arrival.
<b>Quarantining at home if ill</b>	Employees will remain home with any COVID or non-COVID related symptoms and report health concerns to the Director of Operations.
<b>Practicing social distancing</b>	Employees will maintain six-feet social distancing at all times and refrain from all physical contact.
<b>Frequent handwashing and sanitizing</b>	Employees will wash hands frequently throughout the day and hand sanitize when moving from one activity to another.
<b>Making choices that minimize risks of community contagion</b>	Employees are asked to avoid any activities that do not meet current safety and contagion guidelines and refrain from travel to high-contagion areas or situations.



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**Franklin Academy will provide:**

- Masks for all community members
- Medical-grade PPE (masks, face shields, gloves, and gowns) for Health Center staff who engage in health assessments of students
- Virtual orientation for students to educate and discuss health expectations for returning to campus
- Comprehensive infection-prevention education for all staff
- Disinfecting supplies for classroom and offices including solution, toweling, gloves, and hand sanitizer
- Intensified campus cleaning

**Calendar:**

Weekly Schedule – The daily and weekly schedule has been altered to ensure staggered arrivals at meals and classes for different cohorts. Class times are shortened to limit extended exposure and allow for disinfection between class groups.

Annual Calendar – The annual calendar has been modified to limit travel to and from campus. The school will begin re-populating on September 10<sup>th</sup>, and a fall semester will run through November 20<sup>th</sup>. Following a break for Thanksgiving, Intersession classes will be held virtually in December, and students will return to campus in January for Spring Semester.

**Working, Learning, and Dining in Cohorts:**

Students will be placed and housed into academic cohorts that best suit their needs. Any “cross-cohort” activity or learning experience will be conducted with either 6-foot social distancing or virtually. Cohort groups will eat together, assigned a separate dining space and designated time for meals.

**Social Distancing:**

**Academic Buildings**

- Classes will be assigned to alternative spaces or class size reduced to ensure six-foot social distancing.
- Bathrooms in all academic buildings will be designated as single occupancy.



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- Separate entrances and exits to all buildings (one way in, a different way out) will be established to minimize proximity.

**Dormitories**

- Shared dormitory bathrooms will be limited to no more than two students (one in the shower area and one at the toilet/sink).
- Separate entrances and exits to all dorms (one way in, a different way out) will be established to minimize proximity.
- Students and staff will be required to maintain six-foot social distancing in common areas.
- Students will not be permitted to have other students in their rooms.

**Dining Hall**

- Separate mealtimes for cohorts will be staggered for all meals (breakfast, lunch, & dinner).
- Cohort groups will eat together in designated spaces.
- Menus will be pre-posted for selections before meal periods.
- Utensils will be prepackaged.
- Daily grab/go options will be available.
- Dining hall traffic patterns will be identified and marked for maximum social distancing.
- Outdoor dining will be used whenever possible.
- Separate entrances and exits (one way in, a different way out) will be established to minimize proximity.

**Health Center**

- The Health Center will admit students individually for dispensing medications.
- An outdoor path will be marked for social distancing.
- A plastic partition will be installed at the main desk for medication distribution.
- Medical assessments will be conducted only at an established appointment time, except in emergencies.
- A separate entrance and exit will be established to minimize proximity.

**Community Spaces**

- The school will designate separate entrances and exits to all buildings (one way in, a different way out) to minimize proximity.
- Students and staff will be required to maintain six-foot social distancing.
- Building occupancy will be limited based on social distancing requirements.
- Time limits for use of common areas will be established to reduce exposure



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**Visitors to Campus**

Visitation to campus is discouraged as this poses a health risk to the entire community.

Persons visiting the Admission Department will be directed to call the Admissions office to announce their arrival and be greeted by an Admissions Director or Assistant. Tours and meetings will take place out of doors.

Parents who have come to campus should make prior arrangements with their parent contact professional and should call from their car to be greeted. Any visitation with students will take place out-of-doors or in the designated dining area for that student at non-mealtimes.

All visitors will be asked to complete a health screening questionnaire and have their temperature taken.

Delivery persons will be expected to wear masks when leaving their vehicles. All packages will be left out of doors upon delivery.

**The Opening of School**

1. Faculty must provide evidence of a negative COVID-19 test one-week before student arrival.
2. Students traveling from states other than Connecticut may be subject to new travel restrictions put in place by the State Government. Please check this website for updated information as it may change daily: <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/Travel>.
3. All students and their families are encouraged to quarantine for two weeks prior to arrival on campus. All students must arrive on campus with documentation of a negative COVID-19 test.
4. All students and staff will be tested again within 7-14 days, and at intervals that follow current guidelines.
5. Cohort groups will arrive on campus separately, one day at a time, one group at a time.
6. Parents will not be permitted to enter the dormitory to reduce the risk of contagion.
7. All registration and check-in procedures will follow the safety guidelines outlined in this document, including wearing masks and following social distancing requirements.
8. The majority of required forms will have been previously submitted electronically to reduce physical contact.



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**Establishing A Quarantine Area**

The school will establish a quarantine area to house all students who have a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19. This area will be monitored by the Health Center staff who will be responsible for meeting the health and dietary needs of any students with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19. This area will be physically separated from other areas in which students or staff may inhabit. Access to this area will be limited to health care staff only who will follow all appropriate medical safety regulations and practices.

**Managing Illness**

- When a student reports feeling ill, the student will quarantine in their room until a nurse assesses for COVID-19 symptoms.
- In the absence of a fever or other COVID-19 symptoms, students will remain in their room to rest and work virtually to continue their academics. Meals and snacks will be delivered to the student and have in-person and virtual visits with the nursing staff.

**Managing Illness with Confirmed Fever or Other COVID Screening Symptoms**

- Students who have a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 will be moved to the designated quarantine area for recovery.
- Students always have the option to recover at home, if travel is feasible.
- Other students in this affected member's cohort may be asked to quarantine on their floor and engage in virtual learning for two weeks or until test results are available.
- Health Center staff will monitor the health of any students with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.
- A student with a worsening condition will be transported to the hospital after consultation with our Medical Director and parents.
- Students will remain in quarantine until testing results are available
  - Negative test: The student will remain in the room for another 24 hours and until no symptoms are present.





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- Positive test: The student will remain in quarantine until all of the listed conditions are met:
  1. The student is fever-free for 72 hours
  2. The student shows signs that the symptoms are improving
  3. There is a period of at least ten days since the onset of symptoms
  4. There is confirmation of a negative COVID-19 test result

<b>Criteria for Shutdown</b>
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- The school will monitor the Governor’s report on the rate of infection in the State and local areas and respond accordingly to those dictates for containment. The school will offer regular communication to parents about this information.
- A protocol will be established for the rate of infection of students/staff and the level of staff absenteeism that the school can tolerate and continue functioning effectively and safely.
- If stay-at-home orders are resumed, the school will arrange transport to empty the campus and return to virtual learning within five days.