



**FAQs & Answer Guide**  
Regarding Bethesda Academy's  
COVID-19 Policies  
for the  
2020-2021 School Year

Dear Bethesda Parents:

As always, Bethesda Academy places the health and welfare of our students above all considerations. **Our theme this year, Blazers First, emphasizes our goal to provide a safe, encouraging, and meaningful/supportive environment for each Bethesda student.**

Our staff is working hard to plan and implement a comprehensive set of procedures and facility modifications that will ensure the safest possible school experience for every student, teacher, administrator, and member of the Bethesda extended "family" in our community. We agree with the guidance of the *American Academy of Pediatricians (AAP)* about the value of attending school for middle and high school students. As noted by the AAP, **"schools are fundamental to child and adolescent development and well being and provide our children and adolescents with academic instruction, social and emotional skills, safety, reliable nutrition, physical/speech and mental health therapy (experiences), and opportunities for physical activity, among other benefits."** And, especially during this period of turbulence in America, our youth need the support of positive structure and contact with reliable, positive adult role models in the teachers, support staff, and leaders of their schools.

Following the principles established by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), AAP, and numerous governmental agencies/sources, **Bethesda Academy will start the 2020-2021 school year with the goal of having students physically present in school.** This document will attempt to communicate the key elements of our plan to our Bethesda families to begin the dialogue with you to reassure you of the safety of our Blazers.

**1. Will Bethesda classes be in-person for face-to-face course instruction to begin the school year?**

Yes! However, we are delaying the first day of school until **Wednesday, August 19, 2020**. The brief delay from our typical start date ensures that the administration and faculty have ample time to implement necessary safety precautions. The delay also affords additional time for our community's COVID-19 positive case numbers to decline.

**2. I have read several news articles about Georgia schools weighing three different scenarios for reopening. What version/guidelines are applicable to Bethesda?**

Of the three reopening options, Bethesda Academy will be classified as a "Preventative Practices" school. This scenario means that we will learn in the traditional classroom setting while employing **all** possible COVID-19 safety guidelines and preventative measures.

Bethesda Academy is an independent school and is not bound to the State of Georgia's COVID-19 Task Force decisions. We have created our own task force to balance the recommendations made for a typical school setting, and the unique setting of smaller class sizes and ample room that only Bethesda can offer. The Bethesda Academy Reopening Task Force has thoroughly read Georgia's Path to Recovery Guide (see link below), and both The Center for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatricians recommendations to determine the procedures we will implement to prioritize the health and safety of our students and staff.

Georgia's Path to Recovery Guide by the Georgia Department of Education and Georgia Department of Public Health:

[https://www.georgiainsights.com/uploads/1/2/2/122221993/georgias\\_path\\_to\\_recovery\\_for\\_k-12\\_schools\\_v7-13-2020.pdf](https://www.georgiainsights.com/uploads/1/2/2/122221993/georgias_path_to_recovery_for_k-12_schools_v7-13-2020.pdf)

**3. I noticed that some colleges and universities have amended their calendars in anticipation of a potential resurgence of the virus in the winter. Has Bethesda made similar changes to our calendar?**

Aside from the one-week delay to opening discussed in Question 1, we will continue to follow the approved school calendar as planned. Amendments occurring to college and university calendars are in response to COVID-19 exposure concerns where it is necessary to limit students' departure/return from winter break due to dense residential student populations, which are not applicable to Bethesda.

**4. Are facemasks required for students and staff?**

Facemasks will be required throughout the school day. The CDC has been steadfast in its recommendation that facemasks are one of the simplest ways to reduce the spread of COVID-19, especially amongst student populations. Additionally, a recent Savannah mayoral order requires everyone over the age of 10 to wear a face covering when indoors. Despite the inherent discomfort most of us feel while wearing facemasks, we feel that they are a relatively small price to pay in exchange for having classes on campus. As a result, we plan to require all of our employees and students to wear facemasks when in class and participating in other indoor activities. A few exceptions will be made where facemasks may be removed, such as during physical education classes and eating lunch. Every student will be expected to provide their own facemask. In the event that a mask is forgotten or lost, we will provide facemasks for staff and students.

**5. Will you be taking the temperature of every student upon arrival on campus?**

Yes. Each student and staff member will be screened upon arrival to the dining hall for breakfast and/or before entering the main school building. We will use no-touch thermometers to safely accomplish screenings.

If a staff member's temperature is over 100 degrees, they will not enter the building and will immediately return home. If a student's temperature is over 100 degrees, the student will remain outside with a staff member until a parent can pick them up. We have also established a sick room in the event that isolation is determined necessary.

**6. I read that some schools are staggering start times and establishing different drop off points on campus. Do you foresee changes to drop-off and pick-up schedules?**

Yes. We will distribute detailed plans to parents and students prior to the start of school with more specifically tailored information for both drop-off and pick-up changes. However, in the morning, students will be assigned a certain door for entrance into the school building. This process will prevent students from gathering in large groups while temperature and wellness checks can take place prior to entry.

Similarly, in attempt to prevent large groups of huddled students, we will stagger student dismissal times beginning at 3:05pm. Additionally, students will be monitored while transitioning to the gym for football practice. We will be offering aftercare services but are imposing a limit on the number of students that can participate in the program. Aftercare application forms will be posted on our website in the coming weeks.

**7. What are Bethesda's plans for handwashing and hand sanitizer routines?**

Handwashing will be intentional and encouraged regularly throughout the day. Half of our classrooms are equipped with sinks and students will be directed to use them accordingly. Every classroom and common areas of the school, gym, and dining hall will have hand sanitizer stations.

**8. Have cleaning procedures been established?**

Yes. In addition to standard daily cleaning procedures, we will disinfect all classroom surface areas following class changes (every 50 minutes). A peroxide based fogger system will sanitize classrooms, offices, the gym, and the dining hall each evening.

**9. Any additional safety procedures being implemented?**

Yes! The following changes are being added and installed:

- Additional restrooms in the main building to encourage social distancing compliance.
- No-touch, sensor-based water fountains.
- Fabric furniture was replaced with furniture that can be cleaned regularly throughout the day.

**10. The CDC and the Georgia Department of Education suggest that each school enhance their air quality systems. Is Bethesda checking filters and testing air quality?**

**Yes.** We are making several key modifications to our facilities to ensure they are as safe as possible for all occupants. Specifically, we have focused on some significant modifications/additions to our HVAC (heating air-conditioning) systems in the Eckburg school building, the Dining Hall, and the Gymnasium. To recommend and manage this process, Bethesda Academy sought the services of licensed engineers in the field of Mechanical Engineering (Chatham Engineering) with proven skills in HVAC systems. Their extensive study of our systems resulted in several significant recommendations for action.

First, we have upgraded the air filters in each of these buildings/systems to provide high efficiency filtration of the systems to prevent any "flow" of the virus. These MERV-13 air filters have been placed in each unit that operates in these three key buildings.

Second, we are installing Needle Point Bi-Polar Ionization (NPBI) devices in all of our air-conditioning units. Simply stated, these NPBI units act to neutralize and block the COVID-19 virus from being able to circulate in the air flow in the building. These NPBI units conform to Underwriters' Laboratory (UL) specifications UL867 and UL 2998 to ensure they are ozone free. These devices are installed after the filters but before the cooling coil in the units.

Third, we are reprogramming our thermostats to provide an “Air Flush” for each building air flow system that effectively flushes the building’s air two hours before and two hours after the building is occupied.

Research has shown the effectiveness of these three key actions (high efficiency filters, NPBI, and Air Flush) in reducing the possibility of infection in buildings such as our school building, dining hall, and gymnasium.

#### **10. How will the desks be arranged within the classrooms?**

This year, Bethesda’s coveted small class sizes will do more than make sure your son has ample attention given to his educational needs by also allowing teachers to appropriately utilize the space in their classrooms to maintain social distancing protocols. We intend to be creative with our use of space in the school building and in other buildings on campus. Each classroom will be inspected prior to school starting by a team of staff members to ensure all space is being utilized correctly by using a designed checklist for safety in the classroom.

#### **11. What are the plans to ensure students practice social distancing in the hallways between classes?**

This year, class schedules will be created such that the student’s next destination will be along the shortest possible path from room-to-room. The idea is that, if at all possible, students will not be walking from one end of a hallway to another, which will in turn reduce interactions with students from other classes in the halls. We are actively reviewing potential schedules to incorporate staggering class changes and/or lengthening the time in between classes so that proper hallway monitoring and desk sanitizing can occur.

Teachers will receive individual guidelines explaining our expectation that they consistently monitor hallways to best foster the students’ personal distancing habits.

#### **12. What about recess and PE?**

With vigilant oversight and faculty supervision, students will be able to participate in recess. Recess is an important part of the day for students’ social-emotional health and development. We are blessed to have substantial outdoor space on campus so that all students can enjoy a break filled with fresh air.

The physical education team will use athletic protocols in accordance with those given to us by SCISA and the State of Georgia. Physical education lessons will be

designed to avoid physical contact. Equipment in the weight room will be sanitized after each student's use.

**13. How will the dining hall be used?**

We will continue to use the dining hall for daily breakfast and lunch. The large size of the dining hall coupled with a staggered lunch schedule will allow us to comfortably accommodate small groups of students while social distancing. Signs will depict the proper areas to sit and stand. All students will have assigned seating to ensure proper social distancing. Staff will continue to be hyper-vigilant in helping students establish social distancing habits throughout the day.

**14. Is there a secondary plan in place in the event that the school must temporarily suspend in-person operations? And will there be changes to virtual learning implemented in the Spring semester?**

While we are very proud of the virtual learning platforms that evolved over the course of the Spring term, we are aware that it was not a perfect system and will need to continue to evolve to gain further success digitally. We have reviewed the surveys sent to parents and faculty and are currently working on a detailed virtual learning plan to include consistent scheduling, supplies, and training for students and parents. During the first week of school, teachers will devote time to instruct their students regarding usage of the virtual platforms in the event that in-person learning is temporarily suspended. To streamline virtual classroom functions and accountability, each student will be given a Bethesda Academy email and will be required to use it.

Moving forward, we encourage families to provide a Chromebook for your son. If he currently has a PC (personal computer/laptop), we ask you to consider a Chromebook as your next purchase. We have found that Chromebooks are easier for students to navigate in regard to virtual learning platforms and allow their teachers to monitor learning goals and usage more effectively. For additional information on Chromebooks please contact our technology director, Mr. Clevan Thompson, at 912-351-4381.

**15. Will there be an Open House before school opens?**

No. Gathering in large groups is not permitted. We will send student schedules to each family via email prior to school beginning. We will also schedule a "social distancing style" meeting with seniors and their parents before classes begin.

If you are a new family and would like to schedule a visit to see your son's classrooms and transition points, please call our admissions director, Mrs. Tia Adkins at 912-351-2068.

**16. Will there be a tuition refund, discount, or credit should the school be forced to resume virtual learning?**

The enrollment contract does not allow for refunds; however, consideration may be given in regard to the lunch fee if we are required to spend a significant period of time learning from home. Although we certainly prefer to teach your sons on campus, the quality of our distance learning program has proven to be an excellent alternative if needed. Tuition fees allow us to continue providing unmatched learning experiences for your sons, regardless of whether we are in-person or teaching through the lens of a computer screen. If we must resume virtual learning, rest assured that the teachers will continue to work tirelessly to provide high quality content, in addition to being available for one-on-one teaching and personal conferences with students and parents.

**17. Do I need to inform the school if my son traveled outside the State of Georgia or outside the country?**

Yes. If your son traveled outside of Georgia within 14 days of the beginning of school (August 5-18) you are required to contact the school office.

**18. What happens if a member of the school community tests positive for COVID-19?**

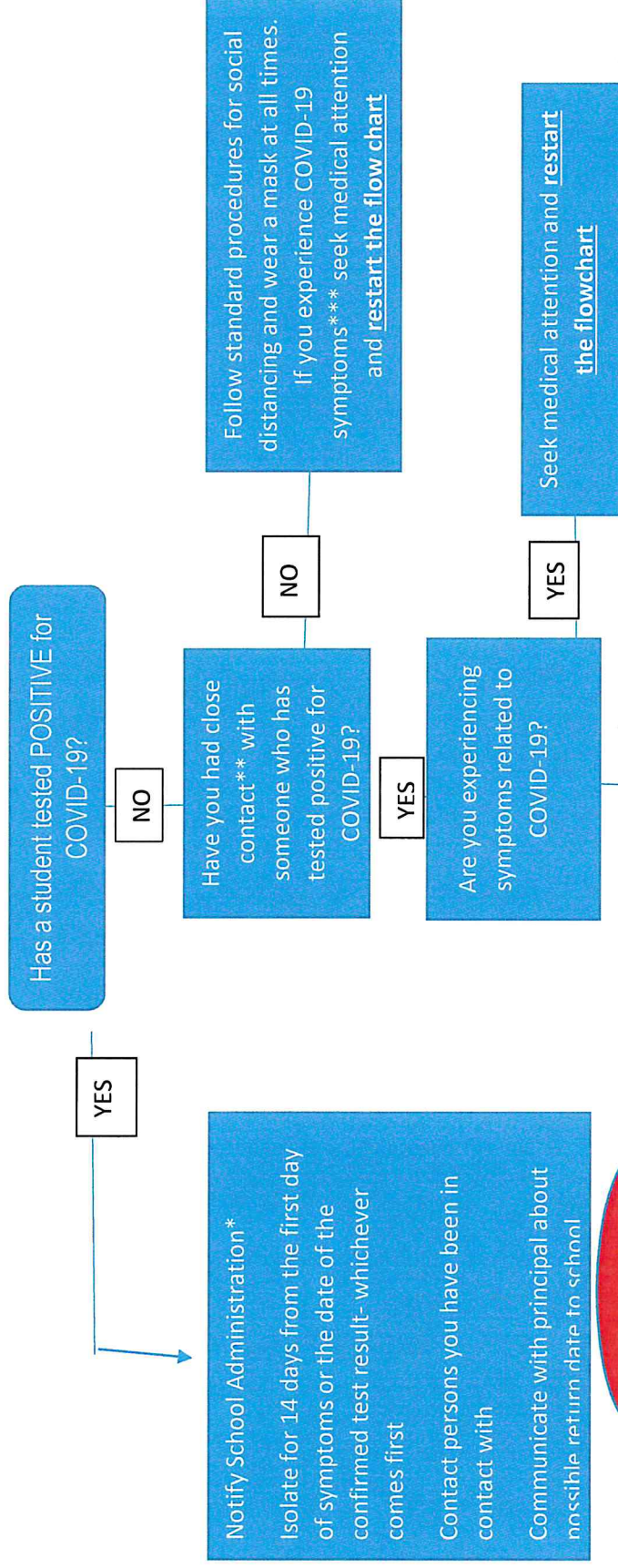
Please reference the attached chart.

***\*\*\*\*Please note: Changes can be made to this plan by the Bethesda Academy Administration as guidelines change from the State of Georgia, CDC, Chatham County, SCISA, the American Academy of Pediatrics or any other guiding entity. All changes will be communicated to our Bethesda Academy Family.\*\*\*\****

# Bethesda Academy

## COVID-19 Exposure

### Decision Flow Chart/ **STUDENTS**



\*School Administration Responsibilities:

Notify the parents and staff through written communication/email/RemWeb/text if a student/staff has tested positive and inform about next steps

Ensure PPE and Sanitation Protocols are followed

\*\*Close Contact is defined as being within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 min during the infection period

\*\*\* COVID-19 Symptoms:

Fever (over 100.1)—Chills—cough—  
shortness of breath—difficulty breathing—  
fatigue—body aches—headache—loss of  
taste/smell—sore throat—  
congestion/runny nose—  
nausea/vomiting/diarrhea