

# Tidewater Academy

## Plan to Reopen

2020-2021



In accordance with recommendations and requirements as stipulated by the Virginia Council for Private Education (VCPE), Tidewater Academy has developed a Re-opening Plan with thoughtful consideration of our mission “to provide an engaging curriculum, encourage good citizenship and service to others, and empower students to be leaders in their communities.”

The 2020-21 school year operation will include modifications designed to ensure the safety and health of all students, faculty, and staff. Within those parameters, Tidewater Academy will aim to create a productive and nurturing learning environment.

This document presents a comprehensive approach to re-opening school with all faculty, staff, and students in attendance on-campus. Special accommodations will be provided for at-risk students and faculty who must remain in a distance-learning format.

## **PLANNING TO RE-OPEN**

### **COVID-19 Team:**

Lisa Francis, Head of School

Gail Ford-Westbrook, Director of Lower School

Kelley Conaway, Director of College and Career Readiness

Walter Westbrook, Director of Transportation, Athletics and Facilities

Journie Ketchum, Business Manager

Emily Pittman, Director of Admissions/Financial Aid and Assistant Director of College and Career Readiness

Jeanette Francis, Director of Development

Tina Price, Director of PreSchool

### **Local Health Department:**

Sussex County Health Department

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Sussex, VA 23884

434-246-8611

Virginia Department of Health

111 South Street, First Floor

Farmville, VA 23901

(434) 392-3984

# **1) Maintaining Healthy Environments**

## **Plan for daily health screening questions of staff and students:**

- Before students, faculty, or staff enter the school building or immediately within the school building during inclement weather such as rain or extreme cold, a body temperature will be taken. In order to enter the building freely, a person's body temperature must measure below 100.4° F. If the temperature is 100.4° F or higher, the student, faculty or staff member must return home and not return until he or she is without fever for 24 hours.
- Students with an acceptable body temperature will be asked, or the parents of younger students will verify, if they have any of the following symptoms – Cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell. They will also be required to confirm if they have traveled or been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the past fourteen (14) days.
- Any student with a temperature of 100.4° F or higher at any time during the day, will be directed to the sick room if they have ridden the bus or have driven themselves to school. A parent or guardian will be called to come to school and pick up the student. He or she must not return to school until fever-free for 24 hours. For students who are dropped off at school by a parent or grandparent, those students will have their temperature taken while still in the car. If that student has a temperature of 100.4° F or higher, he or she will be sent home with parent and/or grandparent.
- If any person with a fever also has another symptom of COVID-19, the school may require a negative COVID-19 test and/or physician's approval before the person may return to school. If the school is notified of a positive COVID-19 case, the protocol for case identification will go into effect.
- Faculty and staff will be asked to self-monitor for symptoms – a new fever ( 100.4° F or higher), cough, shortness of breath, chills, or a sore throat. After a temperature check, they will answer affirmatively that they have self-monitored and are symptom-free.

## **Hygiene practices:**

- Create cleaning and disinfecting protocols that include frequently touched surfaces; transport vehicles; schedules for increased cleaning; routine cleaning and disinfecting; and ensuring adequate cleaning supplies and correct use/storage.
- When an area, such as a desk or table, will be vacated by one person and subsequently occupied by another person, that space will be disinfected.
- The school will maintain routine cleaning and disinfecting that includes cleaning bathroom facilities and mopping floors.
- All cleaning and disinfecting supplies will be kept locked in the custodian's closet.

**Additional hand sanitizer/washing stations:**

- Tidewater Academy will purchase several hand sanitizer stations that will be placed throughout the school facilities.
- Faculty, staff, and students will be encouraged to wash hands thoroughly at the sinks available in the bathrooms.
- Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing to the extent possible (e.g., dedicated student supplies, lab equipment, computers, etc.)
- Equipment, such as computers, will be disinfected after use.

**Ventilation system will operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air:**

The ventilation will be inspected, and filters changed on a timely basis to help ensure virus-free air exchange.

**Water systems and features are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown:**

Tidewater Academy's campus and its proximity to houses and commercial spaces, water system safety has not been compromised during the shutdown.

**2. Plan for Health Monitoring**

Students, faculty, and staff, will be monitored before entering the school building each day.

Parents will be **discouraged** from entering the school building at arrival or dismissal times and must submit to the same health screening if required to enter the building. Any visitor entering the school building must first register in the office where a temperature check will be administered and other screening information obtained. **Cloth masks are required.**

**Body temperatures** of all members of the school's community and visitors will be measured and must be below 100.4° F. Faculty and staff will be asked the following questions as they enter the building, and each student will be asked the following questions:

- Have you traveled within the past fourteen (14) days?
- Have you been exposed to anyone with a positive diagnosis of COVID-19 within the past fourteen (14) days?
- Have you had in the past 24 hours any of the following symptoms:
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  - Fever (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - CDC considers a person to have a fever when he or she has a measured temperature of is 100.4° F or greater, feels warm to the touch, or gives a history of feeling feverish)
  - Chills
  - Muscle pain
  - Sore throat
  - New loss of taste or smell
  - Gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or loss of appetite

If more than ten (10) Tidewater Academy community members report to school with a fever and/or other symptoms associated with COVID-19, the COVID-19 Team will meet on the same day and provide guidance for testing requirements.

Families will be **required** to notify the school if there is likelihood that someone in their family has been exposed to COVID-19. Close contact is defined by the CDC as, “any individual within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 2 days before the person became sick.”

### **Communications for Stakeholders:**

- Orientation and training for staff and students specific to new COVID-19 mitigation strategies
- An in-person orientation and training session will be conducted before school begins for faculty and staff. This session may also be recorded and/or live-streamed via Zoom for any at-risk faculty and staff. The goal of this session will be a reiteration of the objective to fulfill Tidewater Academy’s mission and strive to keep the Tidewater Academy community healthy while also helping in the public health initiative to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The symptoms of COVID-19 will be presented, and faculty/staff will be instructed to monitor students carefully for signs of illness as well as self-monitor for symptoms. New protocols covering daily procedures for entering the building and cleaning strategies will be presented, and paper copies of new protocols will be distributed.
- Ongoing communication with staff, parents, and students of new policies
- Tidewater Academy’s website, Remind, social media accounts, and School Reach system will provide opportunities to communicate new protocols for returning to school. A letter from the Head of School, traditionally mailed to families before school begins, will also serve as an opportune venue for disseminating information related to operating school within the COVID-19 pandemic concerns. Parents will receive a copy of the COVID-19 Plan. Parents will sign and return an acknowledgement form indicating that they have read and understood the COVID-19 Plan.

### **Communicating an Outbreak or Positive Cases at the School**

Given the small size of Tidewater Academy's community, any information related to positive cases may quickly spread among faculty and students. The goal may therefore, involve a mitigating influence to reduce undue concern. If and when the school is notified of a positive case for COVID-19, the person or persons will be given instruction not to return to the school campus for fourteen (14) days. He or she must be symptom-free and present a physician's release for return to school.

Tidewater Academy's COVID-19 Team will meet to consider the potential risk to the school's community. Attention will be focused on reducing any further spreading of the virus without creating a panic atmosphere and **protecting the privacy** of those infected individual(s). Communication will involve a letter and/or instant alert message to the school's community.

If a member of Tidewater Academy's community tests positive for COVID-19, the COVID-19 Team will meet and determine which individuals and/or groups need to be quarantined for fourteen (14) days before returning to school. During this time, individuals will have access to virtual instruction and be required to participate when they have recovered.

### **Participate in Community Response Efforts**

Tidewater officials will remain in contact with the local health department and participate in whatever is deemed appropriate in reducing the spread of COVID-19. Every effort will be made to notify local officials of COVID-19 cases within the school's community.

### **Student Health Services**

- In anticipation of the need for increased focus on health concerns during the pandemic, Tidewater Academy is renovating a room near the Upper School Office to serve as a “sick room” for anyone in the school’s community who displays symptoms associated with COVID-19. There will also be a sick room in the Lower School.
- All staff members will be provided with gloves, masks, face shields, and cleaning supplies for their classrooms.
- All health services will be provided concurrent to the extra focus placed on reducing the spread of COVID-19. This includes careful monitoring of students for symptoms and potential illness and/or injury. Protocols for notifying parents and emergency personnel as needed will continue unchanged.

### **Mental Health Services**

The Head of School will monitor all referrals for mental health concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the stress and anxiety experienced by student populations as well as faculty and staff.

The goal will be to reduce interference in daily instruction while also promoting a healthy and safe environment for the entire Tidewater Academy community. Special attention will be given to minimizing the focus on pandemic-related issues and the potential for bullying and/or social isolation. It is the goal of Tidewater Academy to reduce stress related to the pandemic by carrying out the educational mission within the “new-normal” parameters.

If a member of the school’s community is known to have COVID-19, every effort will be made to protect the privacy of the individual and his or her family members in accordance with HIPAA laws that prohibit the disclosure of a case-positive individual’s identity. Dissemination of risk potential will be conducted with special emphasis on reducing the stress level for all involved.

### **3. Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread of COVID-19**

#### **Education/Training Plan for Staff, Students, and Families**

##### **Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette:**

In accordance with CDC guidelines, the school community will be trained in the following protocols to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Wash hands often, for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Hand sanitizers will be provided at several stations within the school and within each classroom. Instruction will be given to cover all surfaces of hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Emphasis will be placed on avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Covering the mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing or using the inside of the elbow will be required.

##### **Use of Cloth Face Coverings:**

- In areas where close contact of less than six (6) feet may be unavoidable (hallways and bathrooms, for example), faculty, staff, and students will be required, to use face coverings.
- Students, faculty, and staff, whose medical status puts them in a high-risk category for COVID-19, may choose to wear a face covering at any time while on the school's campus.

##### **Staying Home When Sick:**

- Pursuant to current Tidewater Academy guidelines for individuals who are sick, anyone with a fever (100.4° F or greater) is required to remain at home until he or she has not had a fever for 24 hours **without taking medicine specifically for lowering fever.**
- Students, faculty, and staff will be encouraged to remain home if he or she does not have a fever but does have two or more symptoms associated with COVID-19.

##### **Maintain Adequate Supplies to Promote Health Hygiene:**

Tidewater Academy has supplies that are specifically directed toward reducing the spread of COVID-19.

- Ongoing disinfecting and cleaning procedures will continue.
- Hand sanitizer stations will be positioned in the school, and hand sanitizer will be available in each classroom.
- Other supplies, such as disinfectant wipes, will also be supplied for use throughout the school.
- Water fountains have been replaced with water filling stations.

### **Signs and Messaging to Promote Healthy Hygiene:**

- On the front entrances of each office a door sign will be placed indicating that anyone entering the school building must first register in the office where a temperature check will be administered, and other screening information obtained. **Masks will be required.**
- Within the school building, signs will be placed in hallways and bulletin boards to promote awareness of ways to reduce risk.
- Signs in the bathrooms will promote thorough handwashing.
- In each classroom, there will be reminders to wash hands/use hand sanitizer and practice social distancing.
- After school begins, floor markings will help promote accurate social distancing of six (6) feet.

### **Requirements for the Classroom and Beyond the Classroom:**

- To reduce the movement among students, all teachers will rotate to assigned classes. Students will not change classes.
- Modify layouts of classrooms, communal areas and buses to ensure social distancing is maintained.
- All classrooms will have desks placed six (6) feet apart, and students at all grade levels will have their own desks for the year.
- All books and other materials will be kept at the desk, thereby eliminating the need for lockers. In the Middle and Upper schools, teachers will change classes with minimal need for students to change locations.
- One person at a time will be allowed in the bathroom. Once a student enters, the door is locked. If another student arrives to the bathroom, social distancing stickers will be placed for them to wait until it is their turn.
- Faculty, staff, and students will be required to use a face covering when entering spaces where social distancing presents a challenge.
- Other areas such as the gymnasium will have limited usage when school re-opens. If a need to use these areas becomes imperative, tape markers or other temporary markers will provide social distancing indicators.
- Physical education courses will be re-aligned to allow for physical activity within requisite social distancing requirements. For example, physical education classes may include lesson plans geared toward individual activities that require minimal equipment.
- Recess periods for younger students in the Lower School will include more structured and organized physical activities. These activities will also include some free play time, especially for the youngest students for whom constant social distancing would prove difficult and unduly stressful.
- All students will be encouraged to use appropriate hygiene when sneezing or coughing, encouraged not to touch their faces, and wash hands or use hand sanitizer when returning from physical education classes or the playground.

### **Requirements for Lunch:**

- Approximately 40 percent of all students order lunch. Orders will be placed in homerooms first thing in the morning.
- To meet social distancing requirements, students will eat in their classrooms at all grade levels. Extra trash cans and cleaning supplies will be provided in classrooms.
- Students will not be allowed to use the vending machines.
- Students will have water filling stations around school to use.
- Students will not be able to use microwaves.

### **Requirements for Gatherings:**

- Limit size of gatherings consistent with Executive Orders and impose strict physical distancing during gatherings.
- The small student population of Tidewater Academy means that the size of gatherings can be met in all facets of the school's operation. The only exception is school-wide assemblies, which will be suspended during the 2020-21 school year or until restriction is lifted on groups during Phase IV. Information will be disseminated within classrooms.

### **Requirements for Athletics:**

- Follow relevant Virginia Phase [I] for Schools and CDC guidance for recreational sports, school-related sports and other recreational activities.
- Tidewater Academy will conform to all requirements for Virginia Colonial Conference (VCC) athletic competition to include the Virginia Phases [I], [II], and subsequent Phases for Schools as well as CDC guidance.

### **4) Transportation**

- Transportation Employees will be trained on cleaning processes of buses, social distancing protocols for students and wearing of PPE equipment
- Transportation Employees will be supplied with proper PPE equipment.
- Transportation Employees will take the temperature of all students who are to get on the bus. The Transportation Employee will also fill out the health questionnaire for each child before they are allowed to get on the bus.
- Transportation Employees will disinfect the bus after every run has been completed.
- Parents will be required to wait at the bus stop until the child is cleared to get on the bus.
- If one student in a car has a temperature of 100.4° F or higher, and the vehicle that they are in has multiple children, all children in the vehicle will be sent home.

- Social Distancing protocols, in accordance with guidance from the CDC, will be implemented on each bus.
- Assigned seating will be used on each bus.

## **5) Maintaining Health Operations**

### **Implement Protections for Staff and Students who are at Higher Risk for Severe Illness from COVID-19:**

Faculty, staff, and students at higher risk for complications from COVID-19 will be given greater flexibility in returning to the school campus with increased health risk superseding any adjustment or inconvenience. These individuals will have the option of remaining at home for virtual instruction without penalty. Faculty members at higher risk may choose from a range of options that include limiting their physical proximity to students while at school, to remaining at home and delivering lessons virtually. Once a risk factor is identified, the individual will be invited to meet with the Head of School and/or the COVID-19 Team to create a plan to lower the risk factors during the pandemic.

### **Plans for Gatherings, Field Trips, Volunteer Restrictions consistent with any Executive Order in Place:**

- Gatherings on campus will be limited to the required number of participants and social distance guidelines.
- Field trips will be suspended
- Volunteers must follow the same protocols as faculty, staff, and students before entering the building.

### **Sick Leave Policies and Practices that Enable Faculty, Staff, and Students to Stay Home or Self-Isolate when they are Sick or have been Exposed to COVID-19:**

- Once identified as sick or at risk due to exposure, an individualized plan will be implemented based on the person's needs. Greater decision-making in these instances will be given to the person and his or her physician. The Head of School and COVID-19 Team will seek to create opportunities for individuals to continue their participation in the school's community based on whatever limits are required.
- If sick and unable to work, no member of the faculty/staff, or student will be penalized in any way due to COVID-19. Every effort will be made to re-integrate individuals, either on-campus or at home, once recovered from the virus.

## **Absentee Monitoring**

Student absences are documented in Chalk (Tidewater Academy's online record system). Chalk allows for multiple daily attendance reports. Any repeat days of student absence will be investigated with sensitivity to confidentiality and HIPAA laws. A message will be sent to notify parents that their son or daughter has been designated absent. When a student or faculty member returns within two (2) days, regular monitoring for COVID-19 will occur. However, if a student or faculty/staff member is absent for three (3) or more days, a physician's release clearing the person for entering school will be required.

## **Train Back-up Staff to Ensure Continuity of Operations:**

- Substitute teachers will receive training in the technology implemented to allow for virtual instruction if a faculty member is COVID-19-positive and cannot return to work during an isolation period.
- The faculty will use the systems in place. Google Classroom ZOOM meetings will facilitate virtual instruction for students affected by COVID-19 who must remain home.

## **6) Protecting Vulnerable Individuals (e.g. 65+, underlying health conditions)**

### **Policy Options to Support Those at a Higher Risk for Severe Illness to Limit their Exposure Risk (e.g. telework, modified job duties, virtual learning opportunities)**

- Once a person is identified as high risk for complications resulting from contracting COVID-19, a personal plan will be created within the objective of sustaining normal school operation. A range of modifications to include teaching and learning from home or greater isolation at school will be considered.

### **Flexible sick leave policies and practices that enable faculty, staff, and students to stay home or self-isolate when they are sick or have been exposed**

- The policies regarding absenteeism for faculty, staff, and students will be suspended once a person is COVID-positive or been exposed to a COVID-positive person. Appropriate investigation will occur to determine the risk level. Once a determination has been made, the number of days absent for sick leave and student attendance will be suspended.

### **Policies for return to class/work after COVID-19 illness**

- After fourteen days of isolation, full recovery from COVID-19, and a physician's release, faculty, staff, and students may return to the school's campus and resume activities without restriction. Every effort will be made to minimize attention and undue scrutiny of the individual(s) in order to facilitate a normal routine for all involved.

## **7) Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick**

### **Separate and Isolate Those Who Present Symptoms**

- Students who present symptoms will be immediately taken to the sick room and then COVID-19 safety processes will be followed.

### **Facilitate Safe Transportation of Those Students/Faculty/Staff that are Sick to Home or Healthcare Facility**

- Safe transportation home or to a healthcare facility will follow present guidelines in place. However, due to the greater risk presented by COVID-19, a person potentially infected will be strictly isolated from the rest of the school population.
- Once a person is identified as sick and isolated in the sick room, a decision will be made by the Head of School and/or COVID-19 team, whether the person can safely drive home (faculty/staff or student driver). A parent or guardian will be contacted and required to come to school and pick up their student.
- In the event that a member of the faculty/staff cannot drive safely, his or her emergency contact will be notified to come and drive him or her home or to a healthcare facility.
- If the person is experiencing an emergency situation, the local EMT will be contacted to transport the person to a hospital or designated healthcare facility.

### **Cleaning and Disinfecting Procedures of Areas used by Sick Individuals.**

- The sick room and any other areas used by a sick individual will be thoroughly disinfected.

## **8) Closing School, if Necessary, Due to Severe Conditions**

### **Conditions that will Trigger a Reduction in Face-to-Face Classes**

- If the school experiences a confirmed localized outbreak, during which it is determined that a substantial number of the school's community have become sick or exposed to COVID-19, the school will temporarily close and will implement virtual instruction. Once the isolation period is complete, in-person instruction will resume
- If a smaller confirmed outbreak occurs among a select group, such as a grade level or the pre-kindergarten class, more limited isolation with virtual instruction will allow for continuing operation in-school for individuals not at risk.

### **Conditions that will Trigger a Complete School Closure**

- Complete school closure will only occur upon the Executive Order of the Governor, the Virginia Counsel of Public Education, or the recommendation and/or requirement of the Health Care Department.
- Once such a recommendation has been made, the COVID-19 Team, the Head of School, and the Board of Directors will determine the virtual instruction implementation and timeline needed to ensure the health and safety of the school's community.