

Houston Academy Update | 7/28/2020 (please read full message)

Dear HA Family:

I wanted to reach out to our community and update you on our preparations for the school year. The Leadership Team of the school has been working extremely hard to put together a plan that will allow our students to have a meaningful learning experience this year, and we greatly appreciate all the help and support of the HA community.

First, let me reemphasize that the Covid-19 situation is fluid. Many people have asked about issues that we may face later in the year. The answer to many of these questions is, simply, "We just don't know." We have laid out what we believe to be a research-based plan to open school on time. Of course, government orders or other external circumstances may alter the best-laid plans. Please be patient with us and trust that we are doing the best we can to have a healthy and productive learning environment.

At present, we are planning on starting school, as scheduled on **Tuesday, August 18**. We are starting the **first four days of school** on the **"Yellow Plan"** – not out of safety concerns, **but in order to do a thorough orientation with our students and make sure our policies and procedures run smoothly** (temperature checking, transportation, etc.). At present, we will move back to the **"Green Plan"** on **August 24**.

Therefore, on Tuesday, August 18 (Day 1) and Thursday, August 20 (Day 3), students whose last name begins with the **letters A-J** will attend classes in person. On Wednesday, August 19 (Day 2) and Friday, August 21 (Day 4), students whose last name begins with the **letters K-Z** will attend classes in person.

You should also be aware that, in order to facilitate temperature checks and avoid traffic congestion, we will have staggered starting times as long as the pandemic persists. The Upper School and Middle School will enter the school and temperature check from 7:40 to 7:55. The Lower School will enter and temperature check from 7:55 to 8:10.

On that note, our parking lot construction will not be finished until at least four weeks into the school year. Carpool will be modified, and your Division Heads will be sending out information concerning particulars. However, until the parking lot is finished, grades 10-11 will be parking at Westgate Park next to Northcutt Field, and we will be running shuttle buses to campus. Additionally, seniors will be rotating parking spots on a daily basis.

Finally, I want to remind you that part of our plan to assure our school will stay open is that we are mandating face coverings for all HA students, faculty, and visitors. Moreover, we will be temperature checking ANYONE who wishes to set foot on campus. We will be sending two HA approved masks to you in the mail, for which you will be billed \$3, a piece. More face masks will be available for purchase, should you feel the need to buy more. However, we are also allowing students to wear N-95 masks if parents are more comfortable with that option. Furthermore, we will be making neck gaiters available for purchase. All face masks and neck gaiters must be HA branded.

We are abiding by the guidelines put forth by the American Academy of Pediatrics and we have been consulting, regularly, with the Alabama Department of Public Health. Consequently, we are still hopeful that we will start the year with students in the building, and we believe that the risk to our student body will be extraordinarily low. Again, though, understand that our plans may change.

As always, please feel free to reach out to us with any questions or concerns.

Dr. Scott D. Phillipps
Headmaster