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Dear Winston Community,

Greetings and I do hope that you and your family are healthy and contending with the uncertainties of our changing community environment. I begin with a few notes regarding the upcoming 2020-2021 school year; what I am sharing herein are Winston's plans and goals at the present time. However, due to the evolving and often confusingly abrupt nature of changes in the Covid-19 environment, our plans and our goals are indeed subject to change as we move closer to the opening of school on Tuesday, September 8.

The New Jersey Department of Education updated guidelines have reinforced our belief that we are prepared to open safely and appropriately for in-person instruction. Winston has placed a premium on the health and safety of students and staff and has established appropriate avenues by which in-person instruction can safely resume. In response to the newly published and updated NJ State guidelines, I have the following comments:

- Winston will maintain a regional and local focus on making determinations as to when to close, suspend or resume in-person classes. This means that we will be in constant contact with our local department of health in evaluating current trends in our local community as well as receiving guidance on how to respond to all types of circumstances including potential outbreak of Covid-19 at our school. Knowing and recognizing the importance of "regional Covid-19 risk levels" on a daily basis is an essential part of our reopening plan.
- Our commitment to reopen in person requires strict and uniform physical distancing whereby students will be placed in classrooms or in outside areas while maintaining at all times a minimum of 6 feet distancing between one another; and this rule also applies to all adults on campus.
- Our reopening plan requires the use of face coverings by every student and staff member, as well as visitors, on our campus.
- Our commitment requires that we at Winston will clean and disinfect persistently and appropriately and maintain strict hygiene protocols throughout the school day, and after school hours. Frequent and proper hand-washing by everyone, for instance, will become a schoolwide norm.

Consistent with the NJ Department of Education guidelines, and the Governors' Executive Order 175, Winston has already worked steadfastly towards creating optimal structures and schedules for providing educational services and has sought consciously to minimize the potential risks to students and staff for transmission of infection. The CDC guidelines are to be used as a supplement for State and local health and safety laws, rules and regulations. Our Winston School PLAN for opening school remains intact:

- We will have students at school, IN-PERSON, on Monday through Thursday for full school days, and we will do a full school "remote learning day" on each Friday. Please note the specific procedures and times for: primary, lower and middle school student arrivals and dismissals; HW Center; car-pools. The division heads have sent specific instructions and information on these important pieces. Questions? contact your division head.
- There will be remote "orientation days" for parents and students that are scheduled for Wed., September 2 and Thursday, September 3.
- We have specific procedures and protocols in place for maintaining physical distancing inside and outside the school building.
- We are requiring all students and staff, and visitors to campus to wear face coverings at all times.

- We are observing daily screening of students, staff and visitors via specific protocols and rules for entry to the school buildings; we are, for instance, doing daily temperature checks of students, staff and visitors along with a daily Covid-19 questionnaire for all parents, and we will be stating explicitly what we expect parents to do with their children prior to coming to school.
- We will be fully and smartly cleaning and sanitizing the school facilities persistently and properly—with a particular focus on the Friday through Sunday “off days” when students and staff are not in the buildings.
- We will need to be ready at a moment’s notice to move to a fully remote learning platform; hence, the all-school Friday “remote learning days” will be preparation for this possibility.
- We see the need for a fully remote learning day each Friday so that: we can appropriately clean and sanitize the school buildings and individual classrooms; and we can incorporate various school programs that will not be possible to have during in-person instruction, such as the many areas of the “arts” and larger group activities, among other activities.

If returning to campus presents a challenge for you and your child, we would appreciate knowing of your decision to “go remote” no later than Friday, August 28 so we can discuss the remote option in further detail and plan wisely for meeting the needs of your child. Please contact your division head as to your decision. The Winston School is committed to re-opening “in-person,” and at the same time our school will consistently and boldly provide a fully remote learning option for students—at all times and on each school day.

As I noted previously, and a fact that was particularly reinforced during our successful five week, in-person, summer academic program: our goal is to have our staff lead and direct our children towards becoming “champions” of best practices and best behaviors within the realities of our public health crisis. And, undoubtedly, we want parents to feel that Winston knows what it is doing and has a firm plan in place. We do already have classroom and program configurations that ensure lower student density in our main school building and in our Annex building, and we have classroom protocols in place that are flexible and reasonable. We have established specific policies for students and staff vis a vis hygiene protocols with full accessibility to hand-washing stations. We have also developed a regularized and responsible system of cleaning and sanitizing all areas of the school. It is noteworthy that we successfully initiated these protocols and procedures during our five week morning summer academic program in which we had 20-25 students on campus daily, in-person, along with staff. I mention this summer program success because we found that students were responsible and fully compliant in meeting the requirements that we set out for them; and staff felt comfortable and eager to teach productively and fully. We fortunately did not have any incidents or reported outbreaks.

The school is now finalizing a special Covid-19 edition of the Parent and Student Handbook, and within this handbook there will be a comprehensive listing of our school’s formal policies, procedures and protocols; and we will be listing, for instance, the specific actions that will be required of parents and their children, and staff prior to coming to campus each morning. During the student and parent orientations on Wed., September 2 and Thursday, September 3, the division heads will further update you on the specifics of the daily and weekly schedules and other campus details as we work to maximize physical distancing and plan our programs and academic structures for the school year—primarily focusing on the fall term. During these orientations—that will be held remotely and by division—there will plenty of time to ask questions.

It is clear to us at Winston that bringing students back at school for in-person instruction is extremely important. It is also essential for us to provide children and staff with the structure for mitigating the risks of infection and contagion. The schedule of classes is being created with the following in mind: if we need to move to a fully remote platform, the schedule remains the same as if we were “in person.”

The American Academy of Pediatrics has stated that “the harm to children from not having in-person education outweighs the risk.” We agree. However, as the Academy further states: “Schools need to take the risk of spread seriously, for children and staff members, even as they resume classroom instruction.” Ongoing communication will be essential in the weeks and months ahead; and to this end, we are making a firm commitment to all members of our community. It is also a time for our individual and group alignment with our core Winston

values of responsibility, courage, citizenship, honesty, respect, imagination and caring. In these difficult and changing times, I accentuate our values of caring and honesty alongside clear and comprehensive communication.

We at Winston cannot single-handedly guarantee a 100% Covid-free environment. The health and wellness of our community is a shared responsibility. It is imperative that all members of our community—students, parents, guardians, faculty and staff—enter into the 2020-2021 academic year with the intent to comply fully with the State and local and school guidelines—while at school and while at home. I thank you in advance for your support, your flexibility and your patience as we launch into a new school year.

Sincerely,

Peter S. Lewis, Head of School

[Frequently asked questions and answers HERE](#)

*Please continue to send me via e-mail ([plewis@winstonschool.org](mailto:plewis@winstonschool.org)) your questions since the following compilation of questions comes from the many conversations I have had over the past month with parents, students and staff. They are helpful, pertinent and illuminating.*