



# TRINITY SCHOOL

AT MEADOW VIEW

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### GENERAL INFORMATION

#### **What have you used to guide your decision-making process?**

In addition to complying with local and state requirements for reopening, Trinity School has tried to make all of our decisions with two aims in mind. First, we want to keep your children, as well as the faculty and staff, safe. And, second, we are doing what we can to keep the school open so that we can practice in-person learning with as many students as possible throughout the year.

Of course, it is impossible to guarantee that no one will contract COVID-19 during the school year. There is some risk inherent in returning to in-person learning. But we decided that the best way to accomplish these aims was to limit exposure to the virus and to minimize the impact should someone in our school community test positive. In the latter case, the extent to which we will have to quarantine students at home will depend upon the quality and consistency of our safety measures.

Throughout the summer, we have been consulting with local teams of health care professionals as well as examining research on the transmission of the virus. We have also been consulting with a number of other educational professionals at both the high school and college level who are preparing for their own return to in-person learning.

#### **What are you doing to best assure the safety of the students and others in the Trinity School community?**

We have found that it is most helpful to focus on minimizing the “viral load” of our indoor spaces. While we will be regularly cleaning surfaces and taking other precautions, a good way to think about the transmission of this virus is to consider an analogy to secondhand smoke. While virus particles in the air are tasteless, odorless, can’t be seen, and do not behave exactly the same way as smoke, the similarities are close enough to help make sense of the situation. It explains, for instance, why there is such a difference in transmission rates in indoor and outdoor venues. A room with a high “viral load” would be

like a very smoky room. We understand intuitively that how much we are exposed to secondhand smoke in such an environment has three components: how close we are to the source of the smoke, how long people have been smoking, and whether or not there is any air circulation.

Just as there are three ways to mitigate secondhand smoke, there are three ways to manage the viral load of a room.

- The first and most important is to limit the amount of the virus that an individual can contribute to the viral load. This is a primary reason for wearing a mask. Even relatively inefficient masks reduce the viral load a person might contribute by over 90% and cloth masks and commercial-grade single use masks reduce the output of the virus into the air by over 98%.
- The second way to manage the impact of the viral load upon any one person is to keep six feet social distancing. This way no one is exposed to a high-density pocket within the room.
- Finally, we will be doing everything we can to assure clean, well-circulated air.

**What if I want my child to stay home? What distance-learning support will you provide while he or she is not in class but other students are?**

Trinity School will be providing distance-learning support as necessary, but this will look different depending upon which of three situations we are in:

- Most students from a particular section are able to learn in person but some have to be at home.
- All students in a particular section have to be at home.
- All students in the school have to be at home.

If you want your child to stay at home to start the school year, please let us know as soon as possible. (For more information, see the section below on distance learning.)

**Will parents be required to sign a waiver to attend school this year?**

We want to make sure that every family who sends their children to Trinity School is adequately informed of and comfortable with the precautions we are taking, what we are asking of parents as they partner with us at this time, and what rules we will have in place for students. To that end, we will be asking parents to sign a basic “assumption of risk” document that indicates that you have read all the guidelines and understand that there is some risk involved in in-person learning.

We anticipate releasing this once our final procedures are in place and everyone has gotten a chance to see all of the specifics.

**When will we see more precise information?**

While we are offering a large amount of information in this FAQ, there are things we are still fine tuning. For example, we will offer more precise plans and

guidelines for pick-up and drop-off on each campus and for communications regarding illnesses.

We expect our next communication, in about two weeks, to be most complete. If you have specific questions or concerns that are not answered here, please feel free to contact us at any time.

### **Will the principles, rules, and guidelines you are publishing be in place for the whole 2020-21 school year?**

Like everyone, we are hopeful that a reduction in cases, the availability of a vaccination, or other factors might allow us to return safely to greater normalcy. For example, a much lower infection rate in our geographical communities would make it less likely that a contagious individual would be in a room, making it safer for us to consider less restrictive practices. For now, we are intentionally starting with a particularly cautious approach and multiple layers of protection for our students.

We are also aware that some of the plans we have for what life will be like on a daily basis on campus will need to be adjusted after we have more experience. We have tried to use as much foresight as possible, but the reality is that once we are back at school, we will discover things that need to be tweaked. This will be similar to adjustments we made in our distance-learning plans after we launched them last spring.

## **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**

### **Why require masks during class? Isn't social distancing perhaps even with face shields adequate?**

Social distancing, even without masks, *does* help protect against exposure to a high concentration of the virus by keeping people apart and avoiding some of the effects of others' sneezes, coughs, or sharply exhaled breath. Face shields add a layer of protection by diverting some of the viral particles downward where they may be less dangerous. However, because of the way in which masks reduce the viral load of the room, they are much more effective in keeping us safe and keeping school open.

### **What about students with special health problems or other exceptions?**

In rare cases, we understand that some are not able to wear a mask. With a doctor's note explaining the underlying health condition that would prevent your child from wearing a mask, he or she would be allowed to substitute a mask with a face shield.

### **Some of Trinity's protocols are not, strictly speaking, required by state or local regulations. Why go above and beyond what is required?**

Of course, like you, what we have been hearing about health and safety has continued to evolve over the last six months. One of the most significant of those changes has been the growing consensus that the virus can be transmitted through aerosolized particles, in other words, that the virus is "airborne." A [recent article in the Atlantic](#) corresponds to advice we have been getting from health care professionals and research for several weeks.

Given everything we have been studying, our additional protocols seem to be the most prudent place to start the year.

## **What types of masks will you allow?**

Your child will be able to wear either a reusable multi-layered cloth mask or a commercial-grade single use mask. In addition to the mask provided by Trinity, all masks should conform to the following guidelines:

- cover the nose and mouth and come over the chin,
- fit snugly on the face,
- be made of multi-layered plain colored or simply patterned materials,
- not have any simulated faces, printing, or other messaging,
- not be a bandana or gaiter style.

## **What about the mental health and comfort of students? Isn't wearing a mask all day and being separated from their friends going to wear on them?**

We understand that wearing masks and maintaining social distancing will be hard for students. We are therefore building in additional breaks and allowing students to be outside as much as possible. This will include outside instruction time at the discretion of the teacher as space and weather allow. Any time students are outside and over six feet apart, the masks can be removed.

## **AIR AND VENTILATION SAFETY MEASURES**

### **What are you doing to maximize indoor air quality at both of our campuses?**

All of our classrooms at St. Philips and Meadow View have windows that can be opened. We will keep windows and doors open as much as reasonably possible.

We will follow CDC guidelines for our HVAC system which will include upgrading filters and cleaning units more often.

We have also purchased air purifiers with HEPA filters for all classrooms.

## **DAY-TO-DAY LIFE AT SCHOOL**

### **What about sports and other extracurricular activities?**

Sports and extracurricular activities are a very important part of many of our students' lives, but we are also aware that retaining a sport or activity in this time may not be possible. Our priority is keeping the school open for in-person learning, and we want to balance the value of sports and other extracurricular activities with the reality of our situation.

We are presently undergoing a similar process of study and conversation about our sports programs as we have been for our academic programs. Final decisions on Trinity fall sports will be made by September 1, and there will be no sports workouts before then. It is worth noting that the Virginia High Schools League's most recent guidelines, developed with the Virginia Department of Health, include 10-foot distances between all athletes, whether they are active inside or outside.

Based on this guideline, alone, it would be impossible to play a game of volleyball or soccer,

and a cross country meet could only be held with significantly staggered start times. Moreover, VISAA has cancelled all fall sports' championships. Even if practice fields and facilities were available, safely transporting students to these could be a hurdle.

We will be looking for creative ways, with student input, to keep physically active during free time on our campuses. We will also be looking for student input on new Quest events and clubs that could operate with social distancing or video gatherings.

### **How are you going to handle music and drama?**

Because of the greater viral load contributed to a room by singing, playing a recorder, or speaking dramatically, both of these courses will need to be adapted. Music and drama will operate with a temporary curriculum and pedagogy that focus on other aspects of these subjects but still allow students to create beauty and learn about these arts.

### **Will there be a receptionist at the St. Philips campus?**

Yes. St. Philips has a receptionist area by the front doors of the school area, and it will be staffed during the school day.

### **What will happen with students at the St. Philips campus who need access to medications?**

All of the storage of medical supplies and support offered at the Meadow View front desk will be duplicated for the St. Philips campus.

## **BRIEF OUTLINE OF POSSIBLE DISTANCE-LEARNING SCENARIOS**

### **What is distance learning going to look like if I keep my child at home while others are learning in person?**

When one or more students in a class have to stay home while the rest of the section will be able to learn in person, these students' primary means of engagement will be watching their classes remotely.

### **What will happen if an entire class needs to quarantine?**

If an entire section needs to quarantine while the rest of the school remains open for in-person learning, these students' teachers will use their regularly scheduled course time to work with the section via Zoom or other distance-learning instruments.

### **What happens if my child's teacher needs to stay home?**

If a faculty member needs to stay home, but is well enough to teach, he or she will use Zoom and the video capacity in the classroom to work with the students. Another faculty member or designated monitor will sit with the students in person.

If the teacher is not able to teach, we will cover these classes with our other faculty or substitute teachers.

## **If the entire school is forced to close down for a period of time, how will distance learning be different this year than last?**

We have been planning for the possibility that the whole school may be required to move into distance learning at some point. Should that happen, we will have an improved program in place that builds upon last year's model but takes into account your feedback as well as that of your children.

New or improved features will include:

- an updated schedule
- clear criteria for conventional grading in a distance-learning environment
- more face-time between your child and his or her teachers
- additional time built in for information-heavy courses like mathematics and sciences
- new uses for both Google Classroom and Zoom, such as more opportunities to work with small groups
- access to improved technology for faculty.

## **What do we need to do at home to prepare for distance learning?**

In order to accomplish all of the above in a distance-learning environment, it will be more critical this year that each of your children has access to a computer, tablet, or other device that is capable of Zoom meetings. If you do not have a device and will be unable to acquire one for each child, please let the school know.

If Wi-Fi was an issue in your home last year, you might consider upgrading or being prepared to do so.

## **What would be the tipping point for returning to all-school distance learning?**

Aside from state or local orders, we are not planning on establishing any fixed criteria for when we would move to an entirely distance-learning program. Rather, we will make the judgment based upon practical considerations such as the number of faculty available, the number of students who are able to be in person, and the tested effectiveness of our hybrid model (where some students are at home and others are in person).

## **RESPONSE IN CASE OF A POSITIVE COVID-19 TEST IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

### **What will happen if a student, teacher, or staff member tests positive for COVID-19?**

If someone in the school community tests positive for COVID-19, we would work from established "contact protocols" in conjunction with the local health department to determine whether others should be quarantined as a result.

Contact is currently defined by the Centers for Disease Control as "anyone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 48 hours before the person began feeling sick until the time the patient was isolated." Below are links to the most recent Virginia Department of Health and Fairfax County guidelines for quarantining:

## [When Is It Safe to Be Around Others?](#)

## [When to Isolate and When to Quarantine?](#)

While it is not clear yet exactly how the health departments or medical professionals will interpret our classroom environment, we are hopeful that our distancing protocols, adherence to the mask recommendations, and efforts at reducing the viral load of our classrooms and other indoor spaces may result in fewer quarantine mandates.

## **WHAT PARENTS CAN DO AT HOME TO PARTNER WITH US FOR THE SAFETY OF THE WHOLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

### **What health checks should we be performing and what symptoms should I use to judge whether or not to keep my child at home?**

While the school will perform some form of daily health check before each school day starts, we are also asking parents to be responsible for at-home daily health checks. The Centers for Disease Control have produced a helpful guide to performing an at-home health check. You can access that [here](#).

### **Are there additional supplies that we will need to purchase?**

In addition to masks and other normal supplies, please send your child to school with a personal box of tissues and drinks or a refillable water bottle clearly labeled with your child's name.

### **What about having our children tested for COVID-19 before the school year starts?**

We are not requiring parents to test their children before returning to school. Such testing would be particularly helpful if we were a boarding school that would be isolating students within our campus once we start. Because all of our students will continue to have lives off campus, pre-testing would only be useful if it was combined with ongoing testing. Instead, we ask families to be attentive to daily symptom checks.

### **Anything else we can do?**

- Instruct your children in standard health and safety measures, including the reasons why social distancing and mask wearing are useful.
- Consider ways to make carpooling with non-family members as safe as possible. For example, consider keeping the same group of students in the carpool as much as possible, wearing masks inside the vehicle, and/or keeping windows open as weather allows.
- Keep your children home for recommended quarantine periods, with distance-learning support from the school, if someone they have had close contact with, including family members they live with, tests positive or demonstrates symptoms consistent with the early stages of infection.
- If your family has other Trinity students over, encourage gatherings outside rather than inside whenever possible, as well as appropriate social distancing and use of masks.