

## Message from the Superintendent

July 17, 2020

“Keep Calm, Stay Safe.”

Opening schools during a pandemic has never been done before so everyone should be prepared for significant changes this year. We can do this! But social distancing, maintaining consistent small groups, staying home when sick or symptomatic, frequently washing your hands, frequently disinfecting surfaces, wearing facemasks or cloth coverings, and prohibiting visitors will all be required. We should be glad school is opening but expect it to look very different this year, expect that schools may close for a period of time, and expect distance learning to continue in some fashion.

The guiding values for our reopening plans are safe and healthy students and staff, attention to social and emotional learning, teaching priority academic content, and joyful learning in community. A number of committees are working throughout the summer to prepare our reopening plans and reporting to the School's Reopening Executive Committee. These committees are focused on:

- Physical plant improvements
- Nursing and prevention
- Transportation
- Teaching and learning
- Human resources and staffing needs
- Before and after school programs

While we don't yet have all of the information right now about school reopening, you can expect school scheduling to change in several ways:

- Families may choose the distance learning option but students will be required to maintain the same level of coursework as in-person learning
- Significantly limited public transportation will be available and we will be extending the distance from school for which students will be eligible for a bus
- Students and staff will be wearing cloth face masks while in school and on the bus
- All schools will have adjusted start times and end times
- Students will remain in small, stable groups throughout the school day and for the duration of the school year
- Students will not be changing classes and instead will remain in the same location each day
- School meals will be delivered to classrooms
- Students will be expected to clean their own desks and school supplies frequently
- Specials subjects may be integrated into the core classes
- Chorus and instrumental classes will be cancelled
- Classroom instruction will include a combination of in-person and virtual learning even when in full in-person learning
- Distance learning will be a requirement for all students about once every month next year (see the statewide school calendar)
- Athletics will probably be cancelled this fall and clubs will probably be virtual

As the superintendent and head of schools I am the person with single-point accountability for this plan, so all parents and caregivers should feel like they have a direct line to my office. Please contact me through this email address, [reopening@paulcuffee.org](mailto:reopening@paulcuffee.org) or by calling the lower school at 453-2626, for all matters related to the School's reopening plans.

The best thing parents and caregivers can do right now is to secure a back-up plan for child care. There are two reasons for this. First, there is a very strong possibility that schools could close soon after reopening for an extended period of time. Second, we will be setting strict policies about parents not sending children to school when sick or symptomatic. If showing symptoms at school, parents will need to have their children picked up within one hour. Parents will be required to complete a self-attestation form every school day prior to sending children to school. This is a series of questions related to COVID-19 symptoms. It is required that parents answer these questions every day. Children showing any symptoms may not return to school until receiving a COVID-19 test, or other medical documentation. Having a back-up plan to the back-up plan would be very good advice for all parents and caregivers this school year.

If you do not wish to send your child to school in the fall, then we need to know this definitively. Parents will be able to make decisions about in-person and distance learning for their children as the school year continues. If you choose distance learning you should know it's a commitment for a period of time, most likely anywhere between 4-8 weeks after which time you may continue to choose distance learning or to send your child to school. If you plan to send your child to school in the fall and later change your mind we will still be able to provide a distance learning program for you. Distance learning will look different than it did last year, requiring more time, more work, perhaps more adult assistance for the younger learners, and using a schedule consistent with the in-person school day. **Please complete the attached forms which will help us in our planning for in-person and distance learning.**

The greatest challenge the School faces is providing transportation and we need everyone's help in order to accomplish this. Under the new health guidelines, we can only transport 22 students per bus. For the lower and middle schools this means a maximum of 264 out of our 563 students may be bussed to and from school. In order to accomplish this, we will only be able to provide transportation for students who have no other options to get to school. We know that many families will be able to drive their children to school if it coincides with their work schedules so we are planning to offer before and after school child care, up to an hour prior to school opening and an hour after school closes. In addition to early drop off and late pick up, we are exploring the possibility of walking buses to locations within walking distance to the school. We are looking for volunteers to assist with the effort so please contact Ms. Maria Palmgren, executive assistant to the head of school, if you would like to be included in this planning. **Please complete the attached forms which will help us in our planning for transportation.**

As you know, the COVID-19 situation is changing all the time. If you'd like, you can visit the Rhode Island Department of Education's [website](#) for the latest statewide information. In the meantime, anticipate updates from Paul Cuffee School as we prepare for school opening August 31.

Best wishes to you, your children, and your families as we all get through these challenging times by keeping calm and staying safe.

Yours truly,

Christopher Haskins

**THIS FORM MUST BE RETURNED TO SCHOOL FOR EVERY STUDENT NO LATER THAN JULY 31**

Send forms to [reopening@paulcuffee.org](mailto:reopening@paulcuffee.org)

\*\*\* To submit your responses through Google Forms, please visit:  
[tinyurl.com/Survey-for-Reopening](https://tinyurl.com/Survey-for-Reopening) \*\*\*

Please list each child separately and indicate your decision for in-person learning or distance learning this fall. Parents and caregivers of students in grades K-8 should also indicate if you will require school bus transportation.

Name of student (please list each separately)	Entering grade	Check box if in-person learning	Check box if distance learning	AM transportation required	PM transportation required