



FRIENDS' CENTRAL SCHOOL

Path to Reopening

2020-2021

We have spent the last weeks and months engaged in intensive planning for fall. We remain committed to returning to Friends' Central's campuses in September and are endeavoring to understand the safest ways to make this possible.

We wanted to share our current thinking with families, and we have decided to ask for your thoughts in some key areas. Your thoughts will inform our work as we continue crafting a comprehensive set of guidelines and practices for our return.

We want to reiterate that we are committed to your children's education, to their wellbeing, and to our community. Together, we will navigate this unprecedented health challenge, supported by our mutual respect and care for one another and for our beloved school. We are grateful to medical experts who are guiding us in this process.

Please read this document carefully and complete the Parent and Guardian Survey on page 10 by July 17, 2020.

Lower School families are encouraged to read a related upcoming communication from Lower School Principal Melody Acinapura before completing the survey.

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Statement of Current Understanding

The COVID-19 pandemic presents the most serious public health crisis the world has experienced in generations. While we face enormous uncertainty, key assumptions in our planning are that a vaccine will not be widely available for several months and cases are currently increasing nationwide. This means that FCS needs to be able to respond quickly to circumstances in our own school community, as well as to conditions in our area.

We believe opening our campuses is in the best interests of our students' learning and social/emotional wellness, and we are resolved to take all reasonable steps to realize this goal. We recognize that all scenarios under consideration will require community-wide protocols and learning models that are uncharted in the 175-year history of Friends' Central School. Our commitment to your children, their education, and the wellbeing of our entire community will be at the center of all planning.

Planning is guided by our mission and vision, external drivers, and our assessment of risk. Our highest priority, as always, is the safety of our students and employees. Safety cannot be, and has never been, an absolute. In the context of this global pandemic, safety means managing and minimizing risk to the best of our ability. If Montgomery County schools are permitted to open campuses without the availability of a vaccine, and we believe we can do so while mitigating risk to an acceptable level, we will open our campuses.

As fall draws closer, our understanding of the risks our community faces will determine our learning model for September. Whether we begin on campus or not, our status will be reassessed frequently and may well change over the course of the fall. This is why FCS must begin the year ready to move seamlessly between learning models designed to fit possible circumstances and external factors.



Five Principles Guide Our Planning

Our commitment to Friends' Central's mission, vision, and guiding testimonies

The prioritization of student and employee health, safety, and wellbeing over other principles

An acknowledgement that face-to-face learning must be prioritized over distance learning whenever it is safe to do so

A resolve that hygiene and health-related policies are and will continue to be research-based, clearly communicated, effectively implemented, and diligently enforced

A plan to promote practices and policies to reduce risk of virus transmission and support our capacity to be responsive and agile when facing changing health circumstances

Health and Safety Pillars

**A shared commitment
to our Community
Compact**

**Physical distancing,
reducing density, and
excellent ventilation**

**Health screening and
preventative hygiene**

**Increased cleaning,
sanitizing, and
disinfecting of the
physical plant**

**Communications,
coordination of
efforts, training to
our “new normal”**

**Quick and adept
response to new
public and community
health information as
it emerges**

Possible Calendar Revision

We are asking families to be aware that, if we lose significant classroom time, we may extend our school year to June 18, with Commencement on June 19, 2021. Please do not make plans that cannot be changed for the week of June 14-18.



A Community Compact for the Friends' Central School Community

As we approach the fall of 2020, it is important that we – faculty, staff, students, and families – embrace and commit to a shared sense of responsibilities and rights as community members. Beginning with the notion that a healthy community is composed of individuals who co-exist in a state of mutual respect and care is fundamental to our founding testimonies.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we understand that many in our community may feel increased concern about their health and wellbeing and that this concern reasonably leads to a desire for a different kind of vigilance. All students, teachers, and staff members have the right to feel safe at school and understand the need of others to feel safe, as well. And we must support their safety. At the same time, we acknowledge that community members may be exposed to COVID-19 during work or school, and we are committed to making every reasonable effort to prevent this from happening and to reduce community impact should it happen.

It is essential that we stay faithful to ourselves, our school community, and the community at large. This means that our interactions with friends, strangers, students, and adults, on campus and off, should be aware, respectful, and courteous. This means embracing and complying with the rules and policies created to keep our community safe and healthy. It also means awareness of each person around us and the people around them, and so on. While any one of us may have a higher risk tolerance, or live in what we consider a low-risk household, joining together in community means that we all need to adjust our behavior, even when it is inconvenient or feels like someone else's burden.

Our community's health will be maximized if we accept and share the burden of care and wellness together. To fulfill our shared commitment to one another, we ask that you read, acknowledge, and adhere to the following:

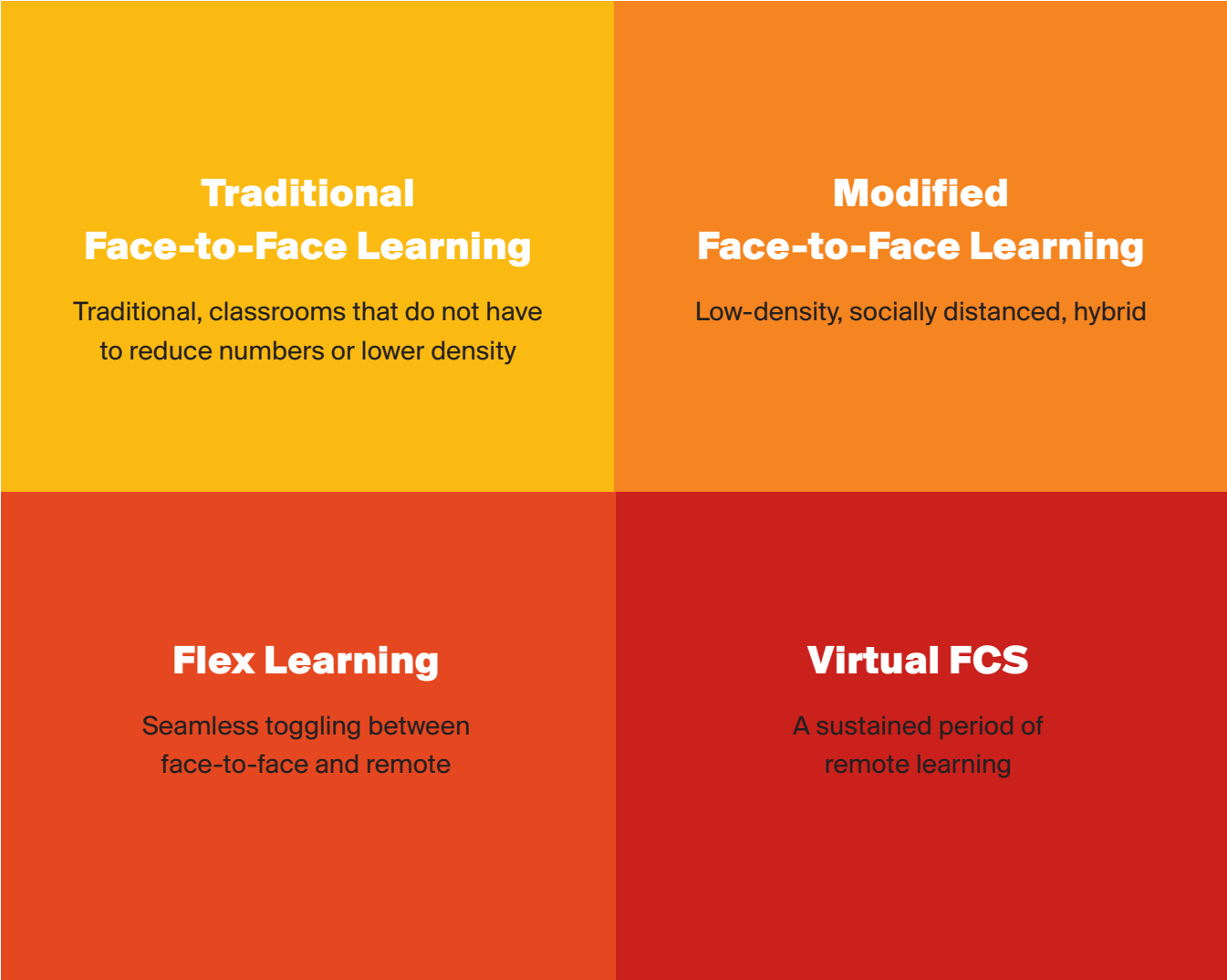
-  All students, faculty, and staff will come to campus prepared to wear a mask and other protective gear throughout the day as necessary, will wash or sanitize hands frequently, and will follow social distancing policies.
-  If testing is readily available for asymptomatic people, a negative test result within 72 hours of returning to campus for the new school year will be required.

- All students, faculty, and staff will complete a wellness check every morning before school hours. This check will involve using an app (which we will share later this month) and downloading the results before coming to school. Results will be reviewed by our school nurses.
- If a member of a Friends' Central household is exposed to COVID-19, it is our expectation that the exposed household member will self-quarantine for 14 days, or as required by current public guidelines, and will notify FCS school nurses. Students who must self-isolate will be educated remotely, and accommodations will be made for faculty to teach remotely.
- If any member of a Friends' Central household contracts COVID-19, the household will follow medical guidance and will notify FCS school nurses. No member of this household will return to campus until 10 days have passed since the latest onset of symptoms of any member of their household and they have provided FCS nurses with written medical clearance prior to their return.
- If any student, faculty or staff member contracts COVID-19, the School will work with county health officials to determine the areas that need to be cleaned and sanitized, and which members of the community need to remain home for a period of time. In this case, virtual learning will proceed for affected students.
- All students, faculty, and staff will receive training so that each can adhere to newly established community norms and contribute to a healthy environment when interacting with one another, in and outside of classrooms.
- Visitors to campus will be limited, and a stringent Visitor Policy will be in place. All visitors invited to campus will be treated with respect and required to follow required safety protocols which will be distributed to them ahead of their visit.
- It is our expectation that all FCS household members who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 will seek medical attention, and if there is concern for COVID-19 infection, will isolate accordingly as stated above.
- Once we return in the fall, members of Friends' Central households will agree to be mindful of health guidelines and observe safe practices when traveling.
- Members of Friends' Central households will agree to maintain social distance and safety standards outside of school.

Just a few months ago, this Community Compact would have been unimaginable, and yet here we are, constructing our “new normal” for the coming fall. It is our fervent expectation that this Community Compact is an expression of common sense that everyone will abide by.

Four Potential Models for Learning

As we approach fall, our selection of a learning model will stem from the School’s determination of risk. If risk is minimal or low, we look forward to returning to face-to-face learning. In the case of low risk, we will implement modified face-to-face learning. Should risk fluctuate for some or all of our community, we will be ready to toggle seamlessly between face-to-face and remote learning and working. This Flex learning will occur should we need to close School or a portion of the School for a short period of time, or if some members of our community need to learn or work remotely for health reasons. And, in the case of high risk, we will close our campuses and return to virtual learning across all grades. It is important to note that whatever learning model we implement for the start of School in September 2020 may change based on increasing or decreasing risk. Though it is very difficult, we must ask families to remain flexible and patient.



Risk	Determinants of Risk
<p>Minimal</p>	<p>Risk Level is minimal, allowing FCS to open all programs without limits.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaccine is available, and our school population has been vaccinated or • The risk of infection is so low that public health authorities determine that COVID-19 is no longer a public health threat
<p>Low</p>	<p>Risk Level is low, giving us the confidence to open our modified face-to-face model.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCS is confident that it has taken all reasonable steps to maximize safety for students, faculty, and staff • Low rates of transmission in the geographic area as determined by public health officials • Local infection rates remain confined and traceable • Face-to-face learning in a low density, socially distant fashion is allowed by state and local authorities • The Friends' Central public health committee concurs with state and local authorities
<p>Fluctuating</p>	<p>Risk Level is fluctuating, meaning that our learning model must toggle seamlessly between face-to-face and virtual for some or all of the community.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State and local public health authorities support school open and then identify a rapidly changing, but not enduring, infection risk • Local infection rates remain confined and traceable • One or more infections occur within our community, resulting in a need for contact tracing and periods of closure for sanitizing • School is open, but members of our community are in isolation and must receive their education from home, even if campus is open
<p>High</p>	<p>Risk Level is high, indicating a need for campus closures and 100% virtual learning.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State and local public health authorities mandate school closures • Guidance from public health authorities indicates a high risk of infection • Infection rates in our area are indicating a surge in infections • There is a high level of medical uncertainty • Friends' Central determines that it may not be able to mitigate risk adequately for students and or faculty and staff

Learning Model	Safety Precautions and Implications
Traditional Face-to-Face Learning	<p>Because the risk level is minimal, we have confidence, supported by external indicators, that we can open at full density and usage with all programs offered without limitation.</p>
Modified Face-to-Face Learning	<p>Risk Level is low; School is implementing low density, social distance programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All indoor learning spaces are well ventilated • Outdoor pavilions and tents increase the School's safe teaching areas • In grades 9-12, students remain socially distanced • All students in grades N-8 will be in consistent small pods • Dining service on both campuses suspended, with spaces repurposed for learning • Campus access limited • School Store online only • Extended Day in limited groups
Flex Learning	<p>Risk Level is fluctuating, requiring a seamless toggling between face-to-face and remote.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All mitigation described by modified face-to-face continues • Remote learning for community members who must be isolated • Webcams installed in classrooms to serve home learners
Virtual FCS	<p>Risk Level is high. All learning is remote.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New devices for all Lower School students • Canvas (new learning management system) adopted for grades 6-12 • Revised Virtual FCS schedule • Online structures to support community • Continued emphasis on student emotional and social wellbeing

Parent & Guardian Survey

Thank you to all the families who completed the survey. Your input is invaluable. If you have any questions, please contact communications@friendscentral.org.

