



Plans for the 2020-2021 School Year



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Fall 2020 Re-Opening Process

Campus is scheduled to open on *September 8* unless DC officials declare schools to remain closed.

With the constant monitoring by River's internal re-opening task force, along with guidance from the city, legal and medical advisors, and association leadership, we have been able to execute the physical campus modifications needed to support students safely returning to campus in the fall of 2020.

YES



DC officials allow for on-campus, in-person schooling.

YES



As a family, you have determined that you are comfortable with your child(ren) returning to River's physical campus.

YES



ON CAMPUS, IN-PERSON LEARNING

Your child(ren) will begin the 20-21 academic year on campus with the expectation that specific health & safety procedures will be required. In the event that local authorities close schools or initiate a stay-at-home-order, students will transition to the Distance Learning platform.

NO



NO



DISTANCE LEARNING

Thoughtful blend of age-appropriate live, some recorded and self-guided instruction, focusing on language, literacy, cognition, social studies, mathematics, scientific thinking and social development.

We have been working throughout the summer to solve the complex puzzle of how best to begin the 2020-2021 school year as we adjust to frequently changing recommendations and regulations. Thank you for responding to our surveys. *We now know over 90% of our parents want in-person learning, as long as health and safety conditions allow it.*

We also know that young children benefit from in-person instruction, as well as from the familiar routines of the school day. Although school will look different from past years, we are committed to providing the best possible academic program as we meet the social-emotional needs of our students—for those families who select this learning option for their children. Our comprehensive scenario planning for fall includes:



On-Campus Education

Distance Learning Program for Full School Year for those families with specific health concerns for a child or family member



Short-term Distance Learning Program (e.g., perhaps for a few weeks for a single classroom, or for several students in a classroom if quarantining protocols require it.)

Longer-term Closure School Wide (e.g., in the event of another city mandated closure)



On Campus, In-Person Education



At this stage, we are carefully moving forward with an On Campus, In-Person Model, for parents that select that learning program option, based on constant monitoring and guidance from the city, from legal and medical advisors, and from the leadership of respected national and regional educational and independent school associations.

We are fully committed to delivering a safe, joyful, on-campus learning experience for the students whose families select the **in-person learning model** for the 2020-2021 school year. It will be critical for all families to commit and adhere to the health & safety protocols we establish for risk-mitigating behavior inside and outside of school to ensure the safest environment possible for the children and our faculty and staff. ***Please review the separate Health & Safety Protocols section within this plan for details.***

River leadership will closely monitor:

- Community compliance outlined in River's Social Compact
- Multiple classroom cohorts having confirmed cases or evidence of community spread between one classroom and another
- Metrics in DC and surrounding counties, including: new cases reported; testing positivity rate; effective reproduction number (i.e., average number of new infections caused by each infected person); and cases per 100,000 in the population





On Campus, In-Person Education



The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated increased levels of diligence, resiliency, adaptability and patience. We aim to be transparent, responsive, and, above all, mindful of the children's safety and well-being. Please bear with us should we need to quickly adjust schedules or temporarily close the campus during the school year.

Risk Acknowledgement

As we plan and look forward to the return to campus, it is important to state that there will be risk associated with attending school this year due to the pandemic. The River School will stringently implement all health and safety measures advised by the CDC, DC Health and our medical advisors to mitigate exposure risk—but we cannot eliminate risk entirely. River will implement prudent and reasonable health and safety protocols designed to reduce the spread of COVID-19 on campus for the 2020-21 school year, and they will be updated in response to new information.* Despite all that we will do to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 at school, there are inherent risks associated with returning to campus. Those families who opt for in-person learning for the 2020-2021 school year acknowledge and voluntarily assume these risks, including the possibility of testing positive for COVID-19.



**Everything in this plan is subject to change quickly as conditions may change beyond The River School's control. Please keep this in mind as you review.*

On Campus, In-Person Education



A Note on Community Responsibility

At River, we pride ourselves on our caring, connected community and our commitment to maintaining a safe environment for our faculty, staff and children. With the COVID-19 pandemic, we have all been called upon to reaffirm our community values and commitment to everyone's physical and emotional well-being, extending beyond the directives within our Social Compact. We need to keep interactions with one another respectful. We need to be sensitive and mindful of individual experiences and concerns. And, we need to be able to trust one another.

Social Compact

Every River parent and faculty/staff member is required to sign and adhere to a **Social Compact**, available through the [Community Handbook](#), the formal acknowledgement and agreement that each of us will conduct ourselves during this pandemic in a way that respects basic safety principles and values the health and safety of River's community. Signatures are collected through the Magnus Health Portal.



In order for in-person learning to be successful at River, we all need to act responsibly for the sake of the community. The small size of our community and the commitment of River families reassure us that adhering to the expectations and common goals within the Social Contract is truly possible. If we don't follow it, in-person learning will not be safe. If we do a robust, live academic program is possible.

On Campus, In-Person Education



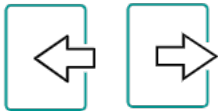
Currently our **On Campus, In-Person Plan Highlights** include:



Limited number of students per class (12) with consistent faculty members



Increased outdoor time (e.g., playground, PE, yoga)



Use of **multiple entrances and exits** to allow for increased social distancing



Enrichment Classes will be hosted virtually this fall

Work Sampling System



Regardless of program selection, River uses **The Work Sampling System** as the developmental framework for our curriculum to foster growth and follow each child's progress. It is a dynamic approach to teaching and assessment intended both to inform and reflect best practices.

The **Work Sampling System** charts your child's progress in the following areas:



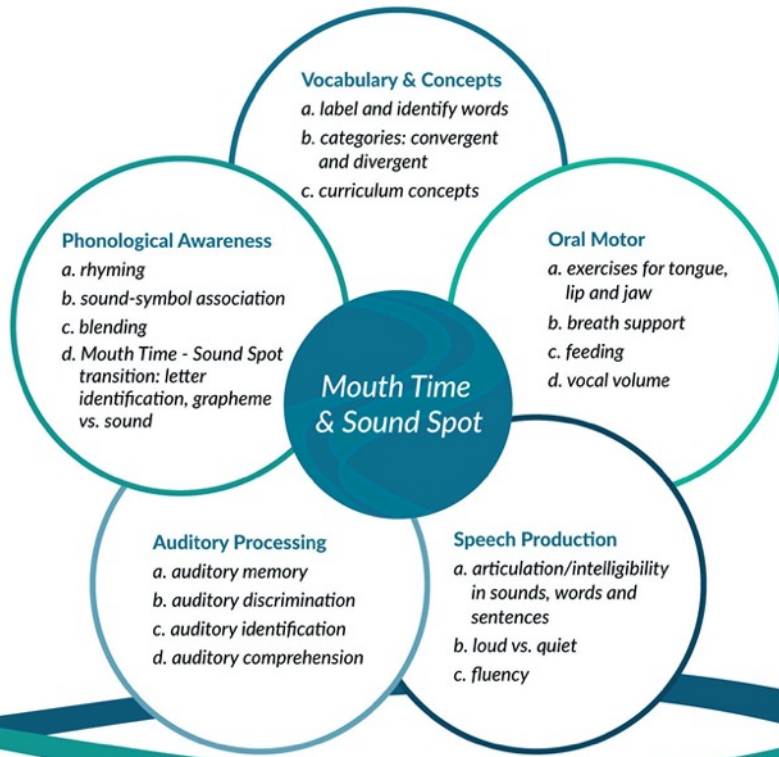
Preschool Toddlers
18 months – 2 years



Preschool (3 years) -
Grade 3



A SAMPLE OF GOALS BY PARAMETER



Mouth Time and Sound Spot are unique, research-based programs developed by River, proven to strengthen early reading skills.

Mouth Time is used with children from the age of 18 months to approximately 4-5 years of age. Developmentally, very young children are not ready to comprehend English graphemes. The arbitrary symbols that comprise the English alphabet are too abstract for very young children to interpret as speech sounds. Mouth Time takes a variety of these abstract graphemes and turns them into concrete mouth shapes.

Sound Spot is the leap to English letters that children make once they have participated in the Mouth Time program. When children are developmentally ready to process English graphemes, the concrete Mouth Time symbols are used as a bridge. This usually occurs when the children are between 4 and 5 years old. For example, at this time, the concrete symbols are paired with the grapheme (letter) it represents.



With both in-person and Distance Learning models, we will utilize a **thematic approach** to engage children in the learning process.

Themes provide a dynamic, child-centered and cohesive context for learning. They inspire vocabulary development, experimentation, problem solving, and the ability to make connections between different academic areas. Every assessment is guided by a set of values about learning and instruction, and how children should be treated in order to enhance their growth and development.





Distance Learning Program



River's **new Distance Learning Program** will be based on faculty and parent feedback on and lessons learned from our spring efforts, as well as current best practices in early childhood education provided by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) and other groups.



AISGW
The Association of Independent
Schools of Greater Washington

Our planning team and faculty will systematically and creatively find ways to deliver instruction.



Our 2020-2021 Distance Learning Program will feature **increased structure and clear goals**, and it will also require flexibility and a willingness to try new things. These requirements apply to the teaching team, the students and the parents.



For those families who opted for Distance Learning for the 2020-2021 school year, a **dedicated teaching team** will be assigned to your children, ensuring the academic progress of each child and providing opportunities for interaction with other River children.



The following pages spell out **the key highlights** of the Distance Learning Program.



River's Distance Learning Program
Preschool Program
18 months – 3 years



Virtual Platforms



- * Track student progress
- * Provide feedback
- * Parent communications

- * Daily live sessions
- * Individual student meetings, as needed

Parent/Family Communication



Dedicated Teaching Team: Master's Level Educator & Speech Pathologist



Weekly Office Hours

Individualized Family Support

Live Activities



Independent Activities



- ✓ Daily Morning Meeting and Closing Circle
- ✓ Small-group Literacy Instruction
- ✓ **Arts & Sciences Classes**



Academic Developmental Domains

- ✓ Daily Notes/Weekly Plans
- ✓ Pre-recorded Read-alouds
- ✓ Pre-recorded Extension Activities inc. Pre-recorded **Arts & Sciences**
- ✓ Office Hours

Robust DL Learning Kits:

- ✓ Age-appropriate Sensory Materials
- ✓ Manipulatives
- ✓ Books
- ✓ And More!





River's Distance Learning Program

PreK-Grade 3



Virtual Platforms



- * Track student progress
- * Provide feedback
- * Parent communications

- * Daily live sessions
- * Individual student meetings

Parent/Family Communication



Dedicated Teaching Team: Master's Level Educator & Speech Pathologist



Weekly Office Hours

Individualized Family Support

Live Activities



Independent Activities



- ✓ Daily Morning Meeting and Closing Circle
- ✓ Small-group Literacy/Writing Instruction
- ✓ Small-group Math Instruction
- ✓ **Arts & Sciences Classes**



Academic
Developmental
Domains

- ✓ Daily Notes/Weekly Plans
- ✓ Pre-recorded Read-alouds
- ✓ Pre-recorded Extension Activities inc. Pre-recorded **Arts & Sciences**
- ✓ Office Hours

Robust DL Learning Kits:

- ✓ Age-appropriate Sensory Materials
- ✓ Manipulatives
- ✓ Books
- ✓ And More!



Distance Learning Program



Thoughtful blend of **age-appropriate live, some recorded and self-guided instruction**, focusing on:

- © Language
- © Literacy
- © Cognition
- © Social studies
- © Mathematics
- © Scientific Thinking
- © Social Development



Live Morning Meetings to start off each day and **Closing Circle Times** with social-emotional focus ((.))



Live social-emotional check-ins and coaching sessions for students, regularly scheduled and as needed ((.))



Read-aloud sessions with special guest readers ((.))



Live Arts & Sciences age-specific classes using a studio approach and quarterly rotation, providing a deeper dive into that particular 'specials' class ((.))

Distance Learning Program



Links to **videos** and **mini-lessons**



Opportunities to maintain **crucial connections** between teaching teams and child, and among the students



Age-level **learning benchmarks** that parents can follow in tandem with teacher feedback



Consistent schedule, with weekly plans or Daily Notes, including multimedia approach (videos, theme-based materials, inquiry-based projects and hands-on activities)



Robust Learning Kits including manipulatives, consumables and workbooks/worksheets in Elementary Program



Dedicated **Regroup & Refresh Day** each school week for parents and students to recharge, refocus and revisit some assignments if needed



Health & Safety Protocols



The River School follows guidelines from the [CDC](#), [DC Health](#) and independent school associations. All River families, faculty and staff are expected to adhere to the health and safety protocols in this document. Additionally, River's Social Compact (see page 7) outlines responsibilities and precautions outside of school.

DC | **HEALTH**



We strongly believe all children, regardless of their age, need to feel safe and connected in order to learn best. Faculty will spend a great deal of time in the first weeks of school helping the children adjust to a new normal. We will integrate the practices we've established for health and wellness into our lessons and routines. The social-emotional aspect of our program is now more important than ever. Special care will be taken so the children feel connected socially to their cohort and to their teachers and so they can learn to recognize and express their own emotions and develop positive and empathetic relationships.



River's registered nurse, Alexandra "Alex" Abed, will oversee health protocols and their implementation, including helping with daily student and staff health screenings.





Health & Safety Highlights



Dedicated space for **nurse's office** (separate areas for well and sick visits)



Strict protocols for **hand hygiene**



Parent attestations of student's health using a daily illness symptom check in the Magnus Health App



Firm policies regarding vaccinations, illness and submission of **health forms**



Restriction of non-essential visitors and adults



Staggered morning arrival and afternoon dismissals to limit the number of children entering and exiting the building at one time



Training for all faculty and staff on new risk mitigation protocols



Documented protocols for quarantine and return to school for community members who **travel to high-risk areas**, display coronavirus-related symptoms, test positive for coronavirus or report exposure to a positive case of coronavirus



Health-Related Procedures



Families will be required to maintain all health standards, vaccination requirements (including the flu vaccine), communications about illnesses, and adherence to confidentiality standards in order for on-campus learning to be successful and sustainable.



Families must complete a **health screening every day through Magnus Health**, the secure, HIPAA-compliant portal. All students should have a current physical on file. You will receive information about how to navigate the online health screening through the Magnus Health App. No child or faculty/staff member can enter our buildings without completing their daily health questionnaire. ***There will be no exceptions.***



Families will be required to **keep student(s) home from school** if any COVID-related symptoms are noted, including fever, cough (not due to baseline conditions), shortness of breath, headache, nausea, diarrhea, nasal congestion, loss of smell, muscle ache and/or fatigue.



See also the **Quarantine Protocols and Return to Campus** sections of this document.



Health-Related Procedures



We have dedicated space on the third floor for a nurse's office (with a separate "sick room" for anyone who might become ill during the school day). If a child becomes ill, parents will be asked to come pick them up within one hour. To limit trips to the nurse's office, please do not bring your child to school if they are feeling unwell, even if they are not experiencing a fever or other COVID-19 symptoms.

Everyday Preventive Actions



Wash your hands frequently



Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.



Stay home when you are **sick** (similarly, keep sick children at home).



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Wear a mask when you go out in public (*see separate Mask section*).



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



[Visit the CDC site](https://www.cdc.gov) for more tips.



Face Masks



- All River faculty and staff will wear **clear face masks** throughout the school day and while in the building.
- **Children 2-3 years old** will be asked to wear a face mask when entering or exiting the building, or walking through shared spaces, such as hallways throughout the school day.
- **Children 3 years old and older** will be asked to wear face masks throughout the day with appropriate breaks given during designated times (e.g., during snack and/or lunch) and at the discretion of the teachers.

- Any **adults arriving on campus** will also be required to wear an appropriate face mask while on site, even outdoors to walk a child up to the building. River will restrict non-essential visitors from campus until conditions allow for more adults on campus.
- [View River's Mask Tip Sheet!](#)
- For more information, view the [DC Mayor's mask order and details on exceptions.](#)



Cohorting/Daily Routines



- ✚ One of the health and safety measures recommended by the CDC and DC Health is that we keep children in the **same small cohorts** throughout the day and avoid mixing these cohorts for activities. This limits the exposure of children to others and ensures effective contact tracing should a child or teacher become ill.
- ✚ **Cohorting** benefits include:
 - ◎ The **reduction of contact** with shared surfaces
 - ◎ The ability to conduct **more targeted testing**
 - ◎ More **efficient contact tracing** in the event of a positive case
 - ◎ **Minimizing number** of people who must be **quarantined**
- ✚ In order to maintain this safety precaution, **River is unable to offer Before Care and After Care services this fall**. We will revisit this decision if DC Health changes it's guidance in Phase 3 of its reopening plan as we know this might be challenging for families.
- ✚ Children will remain in the classroom throughout most of the day with **additional outdoor time** built into the schedules.



Cohorting/Daily Routines



Arrival and departure times will be staggered to create sufficient social distance on our sidewalks.



Using a studio approach, **Arts & Sciences classes** will rotate on a quarterly basis, providing a deeper concentration of subject matter and streamlining the interactions among cohorts and adults.



Playdates with children outside the class cohorts: Though we cannot prevent families from organizing safe and socially-distanced playdates with small groups of friends outside of school, they are of concern given the potential ripple effects of contract tracing if one class needs to quarantine. Please consider this when planning your children's interactions.



Carpools: We understand the need for some families to create a carpool to and from school, but we recommend that you avoid them to the extent possible.



Enhanced Cleaning and Sanitization of Campus

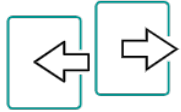


- Use of **electrostatic cleaning machine** throughout the school day, including playgrounds
- **Increased frequency of daily cleaning and disinfecting** in shared areas and high touch surfaces (e.g., bathrooms, handrails, doorknobs)
- **Nurse's office cleaned and disinfected** regularly and as needed
- **Bathrooms cleaned and disinfected** every 2 hours and as needed

- **Upgraded HVAC filters and installation of air purification system** featuring bi-polar ionization technology to increase indoor air quality and ventilation
- **Open windows in classrooms** to allow for fresh air and cross ventilation
- **Rigorous nightly cleaning** of facilities with disinfectants products that are on the EPA list as effective against COVID-19



Morning Arrivals and Afternoon Dismissals



We will use multiple doors at the front of the building for morning arrivals and afternoon departures.



For children in the **2-morning and 3-morning classes**, parents/caregivers do have the option to park their cars and deliver their children to the front classroom to the left of the main entrance. A dedicated River staff member will meet you in this classroom and will escort the children to their classroom. **For those who do walk**, you should plan on a quick goodbye at the drop-off point in front of the school.



Morning arrival will begin at 8:00 am to allow for a longer drop-off timeframe and will end at 8:45 am. Families will be allowed a wider window of time to allow for staggered arrivals and a steady, safe flow of children into the building.



We know this will be an **adjustment for many families**, but it is a strict requirement for River to be able to open and remain in-person this fall.





We strongly encourage ***all families*** to use the carpool line instead of walking up to the building, in order to limit foot traffic and volume of people. River staff will help direct the children to their classrooms.




Quarantining Considerations Before School Starts



-  **DC Quarantine Requirement:** Effective July 27, DC requires anyone engaging in [non-essential travel to or from a hotspot](#) to self-quarantine for 14 days when they come to the District. The mayor's order affects both DC residents who travel to hotspots for non-essential reasons, and hotspot residents who come to DC for non-essential reasons.

-  **Before the School Year Starts:** To safeguard our community, household members of students who plan to access in-person learning are being asked to refrain from high-exposure activities two weeks prior to school beginning. This policy applies to the student, their parents, and any other individuals dwelling in the same household as the student. River faculty and staff followed the same policy prior to their return to work date. High-exposure activities include:
 - All cruise ship travel
 - Participation in any team or individual athletics that are not abiding by appropriate safeguards for COVID-19 prevention (as set forth by the CDC and DC Health)
 - Attendance at large social gatherings of any sort where strict adherence to social distancing requirements is not observed

-  Those who do not or cannot avoid such activities listed above must refrain from sending their child to campus until two weeks (14 calendar days) have passed since that activity. We also suggest you consider testing for COVID upon your return.



Quarantining During the School Year



- **River staff members** will be required to go home once symptoms present and should remain in quarantine for a minimum of 72 hours.
- If a **River student** displays/verbalizes symptoms, they will be escorted to the sick room in the nurse's office on the third floor. Parents/guardians will be called to pick up the child (preferably within an hour) and keep them for a minimum of 72 hours.
- If the **symptoms persist past 72 hours**, a treating health care provider visit is required with consideration for COVID-19 testing.
- **If tested**, the River staff member or student must **remain at home** while waiting for the results.
- If the COVID-19 test is positive, **the school community is notified**.
- Positive tests may require **the entire class cohort** to quarantine while investigation and contact tracing take place, per guidelines issued by DC Health.



Return to Campus Protocols



River staff and students with COVID-19 symptoms may return to campus:

- Upon receipt of a negative COVID-19 test result; **and/or**
- They obtain a treating health care provider's note indicating they do not have COVID-19 or are cleared to return



River staff and students who test positive for COVID-19 may return to campus:

- When at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared; **and**
- At least 24 hours have passed with no symptoms



River staff and students with direct exposure to someone who tested positive for COVID-19 may return to campus:

- 14 days from the last date of exposure to COVID-19, presuming they do not develop symptoms or test positive for COVID-19



Questions? We're Here for You!



With the uncertain course of this virus, we might have to create new or different policies quickly. We understand that, at times, the changing information about COVID-19 can be frustrating and creates additional stress. Members of River's Administrative Team are here to help and support your family through this.



Nancy Mellon
Founder & Head of School



Meredith Ouellette
Assistant Head of School



Sharlene Ottley
Director Early Childhood
Research & Practice



Marie Wright
Director Educational Programs



Megan Campbell
Director Admission



Chris Lopez
Business Manager