

March 14, 2020

**Re: Suspension of On-Campus Classes Effective Immediately**

Dear John Bapst International Parents and Students,

**At this time we are announcing that all on-campus classes at John Bapst have been suspended until at least Monday, April 27.** This letter is intended to address issues that are specific to international students and their families.

Our decision to close is based on input from the Maine Center for Disease Control and many other agencies and sources. I want to say a special thank-you to the many international parents who have contacted us with good advice and supportive words.

This past week, the school began to prepare teachers for online teaching, and the school will still hold a scheduled staff in-service on Tuesday, March 17 to train teachers. A combination of direct online teaching and other distance learning approaches will begin on Wednesday, March 18 according to a schedule that Associate Head of School Dave Armistead sent out today.

We are receiving many questions at this time. In addition to the answers printed below, I am hosting two meetings for international students (both on campus and in homestays) and homestay parents tomorrow. **The first will be on Sunday, March 15 at 9 a.m. in the school auditorium; the second will be at 5 p.m. in the church dining hall that we use for all boarding dinners. All international students must attend one of these meetings.** Of course, I welcome your questions as well.

- **What Does It Mean that Campus Is Closed? Will the School Be Open for Meals, Exercise, Music, etc.?** The school will make a commitment to students, to the degree we are able, to provide meals, opportunities for exercise, and enough attention to activities to allow student health and student growth to continue during this period. We have to avoid large gatherings, but a fitness routine, basketball game, guitar lesson, or chess match might well be able to continue. Unless the school is subject to a strict quarantine, students will be allowed to leave their dorms for on-campus activities or for something like a music lesson downtown. The campus will not be open to large groups or to day students.
- **Advice on Travel:** Many families are choosing to bring their students home at this time. The school supports your decision. We provide free rides to the Bangor airport (BGR) and Bangor Concord Bus terminal. We know that tickets can be hard to come by and that students may be leaving at different times over the coming days and weeks.
- **Packing before Students Leave:** Students who plan to return home must completely pack their personal belongings ahead of time before departure. We have empty packing boxes for students. The school will store these until the student returns, or, in the case of seniors, will send these to the student's college or university in August.

- **Will 100 Broadway Stay Open for Mail and Packages?** Yes – continue to use 100 Broadway for all student mail and package deliveries.
- **If My Student Comes Home Now, Will I Receive Any Refund?** Limited refunds for meals will be offered. Since teaching and learning continue and since the costs of maintaining dormitories and paying house parents and custodians do not change, refunds will not be made for expenses in these areas. More details will follow.
- **What If School Reopens This Year?** If we are able to reopen school this year, international students will be welcome to return to their previous housing *or* continue to complete their coursework online.
- **Continuity of Teaching and Learning:** Academic quality is central to the John Bapst experience, and it is our intention that every student’s learning continue through the shutdown, although in a modified, flexible form. We understand that the situation is not ideal and that it affects the school courses (English, science, art, etc.) differently.
- **How Long Will Online Classes Continue?** Online learning will finish on June 5, unless we are able to reopen school earlier. If Maine schools are able to reopen in late April or May, we will start up classes as soon as we are allowed to. Otherwise, school will reopen in August 2020 for the start of the next school year.
- **What about Final Exams, AP Exams, Graduation, and Transcript?** John Bapst teachers will modify evaluation to allow students to demonstrate what they know. Please do not worry at this time about tests or final exams. Our teachers are subject matter experts and are quite flexible. If students are not able to take AP exams, their colleges *will* accept transcripts with grades in AP classes. However, students can receive credit – available from some colleges and universities – only by taking the exams. At this point, we expect that the AP exams will be rescheduled by the College Board for later in May.
- **Questions about Student Visas:** Please follow the policies and announcements on the websites of American embassy or consulate applicable to your country. Students who have already been attending high school in the US should have no problem getting a visa renewal or a new visa from their university. A John Bapst transcript is advised to bring to a visa appointment to show the continuity of the student status in an American school when a student is not physically in the US. We understand that there are many detailed questions in this area and that visa appointments are currently delayed in some countries. Like you, we hope that new visa appointments will be opened up as life returns to normal in Asia, Europe, and elsewhere in the world.
- **Can a Homestay Student Move on to Campus, or Can a Campus Student Find Housing Off Campus with a John Bapst Family?** Each of these involves special situations, so there is no single answer. The school is asking its homestay families to continue to provide services. In certain cases as students return home, there may be new spaces opening on campus for someone who is now in a homestay. Like other boarding schools, we are also asking local families if they have space for an international student at this time. Please direct any questions about homestays to Homestay Coordinator Angela Kearns ([akearns@johnbapst.org](mailto:akearns@johnbapst.org)).
- **Continuity of Extra-Curricular Programs:** For Maine high schools, the Maine Principals’ Association announced that the anticipated first day for spring sports practices will be Monday, April 27. As a general rule, other extra-curricular programs (any school program that does not

involve receiving academic credit, where MPA-sanctioned or a John Bapst club or other activity) are suspended until April 27.

- **AP Exams:** The College Board has begun to publish guidance about the Advanced Placement tests scheduled for early May. We understand that schools will be given the choice to request delayed testing, and because AP's are such an important part of our program and the results so important to college admissions, we anticipate requesting the delay and giving exams later in May.
- **Major School Activities Scheduled for Later in the School Year:** Many have asked if John Bapst will be able to hold such important activities as the Spring Concert, Prom, Class Night, Graduation, and Project Graduation this school year, whether on schedule or with a modified date. It is too early to know at this time.
- **What Quality of Healthcare Is Available in the Bangor Area?** Bangor is the medical center for all of northern and eastern Maine. There are specialists in all areas and two large hospitals. Of course, a doctor or hospital can confirm a COVID-19 case through screening and testing, but hospitals are likely to admit patients only if they are considered to have a serious case. If a student or staff member of John Bapst were to get the virus, he or she would be separated from the rest of the population in a school property set aside only for the sick. In such a case, all campus residents would stay on campus for the 14-day period.

Fortunately, at this time there are no COVID-19 cases in the Bangor area and no cases in the John Bapst School community. We are doing what we can to maintain healthy, safety, and good education. Thank you so much for your support.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Repel MacKay". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Head of School