



## **John Bapst Memorial High School Reopening Framework**

### **Current State of John Bapst Reopening**

John Bapst is planning to reopen for in-person, on-campus classes on August 25, 2020 for new students and on August 26, 2020 for all students, both new and returning.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, a safe reopening requires awareness of and adherence to clear protocols. One purpose of our plan is to signal through new rules and procedures how seriously John Bapst takes the health and safety of its teachers, staff, students, and families. From observing business and school reopenings in the US and around the world, we know that some employees and some school families are likely to feel that the risks involved in returning to school – whether because of a personal or family health issue or a wider concern about Covid-19 and its transmission – outweigh the benefits of returning to school. We are inviting teachers to return to in-person teaching in classrooms while at the same time offering them the choice to teach from home on the school's distance learning platform. Similarly, as long as they are not at risk themselves and are prepared to follow all of the health protocols we have developed, we invite students to return to campus, while at the same time offering access to classes online should students choose to learn from home.

### **Resources and Criteria for Reopening**

Throughout the process of researching and writing this plan, John Bapst has used helpful and commonly accepted criteria from the US Centers for Disease Control, the Maine CDC, the Maine Association of School Nurses, the Maine Principals' Association, the Maine Department of Education, the Academy of American Pediatrics, the Independent Schools Association of Northern New England, the National Association of Independent Schools, the Association of Boarding Schools, and other states' guidance and other schools' reopening plans, and even information from countries where the return to the classroom happened this spring. It is important to note that the Maine CDC and the Independent Schools Association of Northern New England have both sent updated guidelines with the past 2 days and the national CDC is planning to release updated guidelines next week. Our plan will evolve and reflect adherence to these guidelines.

Especially helpful has been the relationship we established with Northern Light Healthcare System's Work Health group. Their doctors and other professionals met with us several times and walked the campus, offering advice and perspective on many areas of school life.

Because the task of reopening is complex and the challenges at times overwhelming, our hope in this document is to set forth the draft of a plan that begins with goals and values and moves our school community in the direction of a successful reopening. We know that medical understanding of the Covid-19 virus and its offshoots is evolving. More importantly, we know that the staff and families of John Bapst give us our strength as a community and give our diverse students a place to belong. We believe deeply in the importance of the student-teacher connection and in the integrity



of academic learning. Moreover, the school's outstanding academic program is balanced by arts, athletic, and extracurricular programs that round out student growth.

John Bapst's whole-student philosophy of education thus makes clear that physical health and safety comes first. Our teachers in particular emphasized in our reopening discussions the paramount importance of safe entrances, classrooms, hallways, eating areas, and other spaces. Their voices have been instrumental, and so we say without hesitation that what follows prioritizes teacher and student well-being.

### **A Common Set of Steps for Student/Staff Health and Safety**

In June the Maine Department of Education published a long list of questions schools should take into consideration in making their reopening plans. The state classified the questions according to physical health and safety; mental and emotional health; academics and distance learning; and health services, food services, and transportation. About six weeks later the DOE then provided clear, specific requirements for safety, all of which will be adopted by John Bapst in one form or another:

- Symptom screening before entering school for staff and students
- A requirement that anyone who has *any* symptoms consistent with possible Covid-19 stay at home and get a medical diagnosis
- Wearing a mask or other facial covering in school at all times except meals, with masks provided by families and a back-up supply available at school
- Physical distancing in school and in all John Bapst-sponsored programs using the widely accepted six-foot separation rule of thumb
- Modeling and practicing hand hygiene
- Designation of medical isolation spaces, in our case for both day and boarding student populations
- Adequate fresh-air ventilation
- Reducing the number of people normally inside the school at any one time

John Bapst's approach to the details of reopening led to the creation of eight faculty-staff subcommittees and to online meetings in which feedback was sought from parents and students.

### **Preparing Physical Spaces**

Over the course of the summer John Bapst has taken or will have taken a number of steps on campus to support a safe reopening from a physical facilities point of view. Among these are:

- Hand sanitizer dispensers throughout the school
- Signage for one-way hallways and stairs
- Repairs to the foyer doors to increase the number of entrances to the school
- Plexiglass protection for employees in certain office areas



- Reduction in the number of student desks per classroom (maximum 16-17)
- Designation of a second nursing station to be used only for Covid-related situations in which the student or staff member needs to be examined away from the current nurses' office

### **Hybrid Academic Model with Block Scheduling**

The school is moving to a two-day block schedule rotation in which half of the classes meet on the first day and half on the second. The new schedule:

- Reduces the number of passing times during the day
- Doubles the number of potential open campus periods
- Gives teachers at most three teaching periods each day
- Gives students at most four classes on a given day
- Provides extended time for lunch

Most significantly, John Bapst is adopting a hybrid model in which only *half of the students are physically in the classroom on any given day*, reducing the on-campus student population at the beginning of the 2020-21 school year from approximately 500 to 250. This would alternate so that all students would be able to attend classes physically. Students would be invited to attend for two days, then be asked to remain home and attend online for two days (while the other half of the student body attends classes physically). This will make social distancing easier and reduce crowding. The specific protocol for dividing the student body is still under development.

Supporting the hybrid model is the adoption of Schoology, a learning management platform that teachers will use in conjunction with Zoom or other technologies in communicating with all students (those in school and those at home on alternate days) and in teaching in person and remotely at the same time. Note that in the event the Covid-19 situation worsens, John Bapst will be well situated to move to an all-distance learning format.

### **Athletics**

Summer Conditioning will be entering Phase 2 of the MPA guidelines this week. During this phase, workouts will still be conditioning based, but sport specific, in pods up to 50 athletes. Individual equipment will be introduced in small part, and fall sports coaches will host their workouts at different times and days during the week. No competitions of any kinds will be allowed. These workouts will be held at Dorothea Dix. These workouts will not begin any earlier than Tuesday, 7/28/20. Please be reminded no summer workouts are mandatory and are simply an opportunity to improve physical conditioning, individual skills, and knowledge of each sport at this point.

**NOTE:** *Student-athletes will still need to provide an informed consent document to their coach (if you have not done so already), and you will still need to pre-screen daily. Each athlete will be required to wear a mask when leaving and arriving and until physical distancing is possible. Attendance will be recorded and each participant should bring their own water.*



*More details will be released over the weekend through your individual coaches and the athletic department. If you do not play a fall sport, please feel free to join a fall sport pod to continue to work on conditioning. This is not a commitment to join the team in the fall, simply a chance to continue to re-socialize and get in shape. Please reach out to the athletic director if you have a desire to work with a particular fall sports team and you have not made contact with a coach yet."*

We are waiting as long as possible to make a final determination about plans for fall sports. In the event major changes are made, the school is committed to facilitating appropriate sports and fitness opportunities, whether under the umbrella of the MPA or as an individual school. It appears to us that sports like golf, cross-country, tennis, and perhaps others could be played safely and that the sports most at risk are those featuring close contact with other players (football, hockey, basketball, field hockey, soccer, cheering) and/or in problematic settings (swimming).

### **Food Service**

Beginning in March 2020, the John Bapst boarding program made changes to breakfast and dinner service that will continue in the fall. These include:

- Maximum four students to a table
- Elimination of self-service at buffets
- More pre-packaged options for takeaway or consumption in the dining hall

The school's lunch program has been a topic of discussion of a reopening subcommittee. With only half of the student body on campus each day for lunch, it will be easier to distribute previously ordered, packaged lunches to students. It has become clear that classrooms are *not* the ideal place for lunch to be consumed, as this is the one time during the day when masks must come off and the dangers of a classroom full of "bio-burn" are highest.

### **Busing**

School buses are particularly difficult places to practice social distancing. A couple of major points to keep in mind.

- We encourage families to consider transporting students, rather than using the bus. This improves social distancing en route to school.
- We are continuing to work with sending schools to coordinate bus service for those who need it.
- We will continue to operate our bus runs from Veazie and Blue Hill.

### **What If a Student or Staff Member Tests Positive for Covid-19?**

Protocols for these situations are being developed at the state level as well as regionally. We are still working on our own protocol. Our own practice will be informed by public health officials and aligned with best practices in the region.



## **What's Next?**

We will continue to review guidelines from the national, regional, and state level and will update our plans accordingly. We will be sending a survey to our local families to assess their feelings about a return to in-person schooling. That data will assist us as we schedule and plan for the upcoming year. We will continue to send weekly updates as we move closer to the actual start of school.

## **Conclusion – with an Emphasis on Understanding Risk**

We have always put the health and safety of our students as a top priority. The pandemic has also added focus to the health and safety of our adults. Older adults who are relatives of students and staff, who are staff themselves, and people with underlying medical conditions are all at particular risk. We value all the members of our community and their extended families. Our love of school and the life of the school must be balanced with our concern for all the members of our community.

Based on the current Covid-19 incidence in the Greater Bangor area, we believe safe reopening is possible. In this part of the state, case numbers and hospitalizations continue to be low, and the CDC's school capacity and readiness markers suggest that a safe reopening is possible.

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