



Mount Alvernia High School

Planning for the 2020-2021 School Year and Reopening

DRAFT // July 14, 2020



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Dear Mount Alvernia High School Community.

On Friday, March 13, 2020, Mount Alvernia High School held its last day of in person classes for the 2019-2020 school year. We immediately shifted the following Monday to distance learning, also known as online learning. For the forty-five school days of the remaining school year lessons were delivered online. Many spring events shifted to virtual events. Some treasured traditions had to be canceled. When we left the building that day, we hoped it would be for a short amount of time. In the weeks to come the Commonwealth of Massachusetts ordered all schools to close for the year.

Our community responded incredibly to the situation. When adjustments were needed, we made changes. The faculty and staff of Mount Alvernia High School provided for its students a quality Mount Alvernia education. Lessons were shifted, curriculum planning maps utilized and collaboration continued. Our students rose to the occasion. Pride seems not strong enough a word to describe the feeling on the last day of school looking back at what we accomplished together.

Reopening this fall will present unique challenges no one has ever encountered. We are well poised as a small school to respond to the state guidelines in a way that speaks to our mission and minimizes additional disruptions to student learning. This is not to say it will be an easy task, but we feel we are up for the challenge.

At this writing, Massachusetts is in Phase 3 of its reopening plan. Numbers of cases of COVID-19 in this state continue to decline. The information in this document speaks to this fact. We understand that information could change and result in needing to pivot our planning.

Our plans have been shared with faculty and staff and a volunteer stakeholder group of parents and community members. They have been written consulting the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) guidelines as well as our own Mount Alvernia High School experts - our faculty and staff. We welcome your questions and input as we continue to plan for an unprecedented school year. An additional document similar to this one will be sent by August 1st with any additional guidelines as well as our hybrid and distance learning plans.

We are looking forward to welcoming back our students this fall. Until then, we wish continued health to all our families and hope the summer months provide a time of relaxation and rest.

All the best,

Nicole Pascarelli O'Brien '97
Interim Head of School

Draft: July 14, 2020

Mount Alvernia High School

Planning for the 2020-2021 School Year and Reopening

Overview

Our goal is to reopen Mount Alvernia High School this fall with in person learning for as many students as possible based on current data. We understand students need to return to a structured and familiar environment. We also understand that in addition to academics, we need to focus on the mental health and social-emotional wellbeing of all members of our community. Collectively we have lived through a traumatic experience and have largely remained isolated and without structured routines. Building back to where we were will take time. We are committed to working with our students and families to support this fall's return to Mount Alvernia High School.

The health and safety of our whole community is our priority. To this end, we will be limiting events and visitors to the buildings as much as we can. As health guidelines and data are updated, we will continue to revisit and revise as necessary.

We ask families to partner with us to continue conversations with your daughter about the importance of social distancing, hygiene and mask wearing to help keep everyone healthy.

Opening Days

Students will be divided into two groups for their first day of school. The first day of school for students in Grades 7, 8, 9 is Thursday, September 10th. The first day of school for students in Grades 10, 11, 12 is Friday, September 11, 2020. For both groups, students will have individual pictures taken and do not need to be in uniform. Please consult with the Student Handbook for dress code guidelines. All students will report Monday, September 14th.

Students will have an assembly to review health and safety protocols and building changes. They will go through a shortened schedule to meet with all their teachers, review expectations, receive syllabi and be introduced to each classroom setup. The day will conclude with another assembly with a question and answer session. For each group this will be a full day of school. Prior to the first week, an email with reminders will be sent.

We will replace our traditional Back to School Night with a video for families that walks through the changes and protocols we have put into place for the year. We will set up Google Meetings to "meet" each teacher.

Physical Changes

Physical changes have been made to the Mount Alvernia High School buildings to respond to the guidelines established by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

Classrooms

All seating will face the same way. Each classroom will be measured and markings on the floor will designate the recommended social distancing space.

Art Room

The Art Room will be set in a specifically socially distanced way. Each Art student will have her own supplies. There will be no sharing of supplies this year.

Dining Room

We will not be serving “hot” lunch for the foreseeable future. Pizza Fridays will continue. The Dining Room will be used as classroom space to accommodate classes that cannot be socially distanced in their assigned classrooms. Non-perishable foods (cereal, granola bars, snacks, etc) will still be available for purchase. Students are strongly encouraged to not share food.

Gym

The Gym will be used for gathering space before homeroom and for lunch. Tables will be set up in the Gym.

Stage

The stage will be used as needed for classroom space to accommodate classes that cannot be socially distanced in their assigned classrooms.

Lockers

Assigned lockers will be spaced out where available to prevent students from gathering too closely together.

Bathrooms

- Main doors to bathrooms will be pinned back so that students are able to see how many people are in the bathroom before entering and allow for social distancing.
- Motion sensor soap dispensers and paper towel dispensers will be added to all bathrooms.
- Tampon dispensers will be added to all bathrooms to prevent unnecessary travel to the Wellness Center.

Hallways

When able, doors will be propped open to avoid contact.

Main Office

The main office space will be re-designed to maximize social distancing. Several changes will be made.

- Attendance books will be relocated to outside the main office.
- Photocopiers in designated spaces will be utilized when needed to avoid extra people in the front office.
- Punch cards may be purchased before school, during snack and lunch in the Gym.
- Administrative mailboxes will be moved out of the Main Office.
- Notes to the office should be placed in homeroom binders.

Wellness Center

Construction in the Wellness Center will designate an isolation room for any students who are sick and need to go home. A separate door will be used to access this space. It includes a bed and a monitor to speak to the nurse.

The Wellness Center door will be converted to a “barn door-” closed bottom, open top. Students may enter after their temperature is checked by the School Nurse.

Cleaning

Time will be built into the end of each class for students to wipe down their space with cleaner. Each night professional cleaning will happen in the buildings using recommended cleaners.

Mount Alvernia High School COVID-19 Policy

If any member of the Mount Alvernia community is **confirmed** to have tested positive for the Covid-19 virus while in school, we will shut the school down immediately. Cleaners will be called to decontaminate the building. The school will be closed for a minimum of two weeks and with the suggestion of a voluntary home quarantine for all.

If a person living with a member of the Mount Alvernia community tests positive for the Covid-19 virus, the community member will be asked to stay at home quarantined for two weeks. Mount Alvernia community includes students, faculty/staff and Sisters living in the convent.

If a member of the Mount Alvernia community travels to a “high” or “very high” risk state or country (as defined by the World Health Organization), they will be asked to voluntarily quarantine for two weeks upon their return.

Concerns about Returning to School

Our goal is to reopen this fall. We understand there may be students who themselves or their families, may have health related issues that put them at greater risk. Mount Alvernia High School will work with students and families to make necessary accommodations. Please notify the School Nurse immediately with any concerns about returning to school so that plans may be made.

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Guidelines

*The following section details the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in italics and Mount Alvernia High School's response in **bold**.*

Further DESE guidelines regarding the following areas are expected and will be responded to by Mount Alvernia High School when they become available:

- Fall reopening checklist, including operations, teaching and learning, student supports, training, and communications needs.
- Process for handling a COVID-19 positive case in the school community, including when a school or classroom would need to shut down.
- Facilities and operations, including entry and exit procedures, cleaning and ventilation, procurement, food distribution, and signage.
- Transportation, including bus scheduling options, addressing bus capacity, and alternative modes of transportation, and operational considerations.
- Athletics, extracurriculars, and electives.
- Key policies, including academic calendar considerations.

**From Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
“Initial Fall School Reopening Guidelines”
Published June 25, 2020**

Masks/face coverings

As the primary route of transmission for COVID-19 is respiratory, masks or face coverings are among the most critical components of risk reduction. Masks/face coverings protect the general public against COVID-19 infection, with a recent retrospective study estimating near 80% effectiveness in reducing COVID-19 transmission, especially when worn prior to symptom onset.

Students in grade 2 and above are required to wear a mask/face covering that covers their nose and mouth.

Mount Alvernia High School students will be required to bring to school and wear all day their own mask/face covering for the entirety of their time on campus (including but not limited to before school, after school and any school sanctioned clubs or activities). If a student does not have a mask/face covering, disposable masks will be available in the Wellness Center.

Adults, including educators and staff, are required to wear masks/face coverings.

All Mount Alvernia High School faculty and will be required to bring to school and wear all day a mask/face covering. If a faculty/staff member does not have a mask/face covering, disposable masks will be available in the Wellness Center. Every member of the faculty and staff will also receive a face shield.

Exceptions to mask/face covering requirements must be made for those for whom it is not possible due to medical conditions, disability impact, or other health or safety factors.

Any student, faculty or staff member with medical conditions, disability impact, or other health or safety factors should contact the School Nurse prior to their first entry of the school building.

Mask breaks should occur throughout the day. Breaks should occur when students can be six feet apart and ideally outside or at least with the windows open.

Utilizing our existing schedule with Break and Lunch times set for all students, Mount Alvernia will continue to explore and be flexible with class transitions and mask breaks.

Masks/face coverings should be provided by the student/family, but extra disposable face masks should be made available by the school for students who need them. Reusable masks/face coverings provided by families should be washed by families daily.

Mount Alvernia High School students will be required to bring to school and wear all day their own mask/face covering for the entirety of their time on campus (including but not limited to before school, after school and any school sanctioned clubs or activities). If a student does not have a mask/face covering, disposable masks will be available in the Wellness Center.

Masks/face coverings are required to be worn by everyone on the bus during school bus transportation.

Any student taking public transportation should wear their mask for the duration of their travel to and from the school.

Transparent face coverings provide the opportunity for more visual cues and should be especially considered as an alternative for younger students, students who are deaf and hard of hearing, and their teachers.

Students have the option to wear a face shield in lieu of a mask or face covering.

Physical distancing

Physical distancing is another important practice that helps mitigate transmission of the virus. While the U.S. federal CDC has recommended maintaining a physical distance of six feet between individuals, the World Health Organization's guidance states approximately three feet. There is no precise threshold for safety; indeed, studies suggest that physical distancing of three feet or more leads to reduced transmission, with additional distance providing additional protection.

A minimum physical distance of three feet has been established when combined with the other measures outlined in this list of safety requirements. Because of the reduced susceptibility in children and lower apparent rates of transmission, establishing a minimum physical distance of three feet is informed by evidence and balances the lower risk of COVID-19 transmission and the overarching benefits of in-person school.

Distancing requirements: As reviewed and advised by the Massachusetts COVID-19 Command Center Medical Advisory Group, schools should aim for a physical distance of six feet when feasible, and three feet is the minimum distance allowed. Schools should seek to maximize physical distance among individuals within their physical and operational constraints.

Classroom and facility configuration: To the extent possible, aim for desks to be spaced six feet apart (but no fewer than three feet apart) and facing the same direction. Again, schools should seek to maximize physical distance between desks within their physical and operational constraints.

All Mount Alvernia classrooms will be measured and configured to socially distance students. In some cases, a teacher's class may be relocated to allow for space guidelines.

Alternative spaces in the school (e.g., cafeteria, library, and auditorium) should be repurposed to increase the amount of available space to accommodate the maximum distance possible. In these larger spaces, establishing consistent cohorts/classes with separation between the cohorts/classes provides another option to maximize these spaces safely.

Mount Alvernia High School's Dining Room and stage space in the Gym will be converted as needed to classroom space to accommodate classes that cannot be held in a traditional classroom due to size.

Student groups

To minimize the number of students who would potentially be exposed in the event of a COVID-19 event, to the extent feasible, elementary schools should aim to keep students in the same group throughout the day and middle and high schools are encouraged to minimize mixing student groups to the extent feasible. Our initial requirements and related guidance are as follows:

Cohorts: Schools should divide students into small groups that remain with each other throughout the day, with smaller cohort sizes preferred. Schools should look for ways to isolate cohorts of students and prevent inter-group contact to the extent feasible.

Mount Alvernia High School is uniquely positioned as a small school to allow for travel to classrooms. Rugs have been removed in main hallways and the hallway floors marked to ease direction for travel.

Capacity: There are no required maximums on cohort or group sizes, so long as schools adhere to the physical distancing requirements above.

Mount Alvernia High School's average class size ranges from 12-16 students. This allows the school to create socially distant classrooms.

Screening upon entry

Checking for symptoms each morning by families and caregivers is critical and will serve as the primary screening mechanism for COVID-19 symptoms. Schools should provide information to families in their primary language to support them in conducting this symptom check and families should not send their children to school if they exhibit COVID-19 symptoms.

Screening procedures are not required at the point of entry to the school. However, school staff (as well as bus drivers) should observe students throughout the day and refer students who may be symptomatic to the school healthcare point of contact. As noted in previous guidance,

temperature checks are not recommended as screening for all students due to the high likelihood of potential false positive and false negative results.

Mount Alvernia High School's Illness Policy

Mount Alvernia High School asks that you not send your daughter to school if she is sick; especially with any symptoms noted below.

Please assess your daughter each morning as to how she is feeling and consider checking their temperature if you have any concerns.

Symptoms include:

- Fever above 100 degrees or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Any student who develops a fever while in school will be dismissed home for further medical evaluation. Parents/guardians will be immediately contacted by the school nurse and we ask that you promptly arrange for their dismissal from school.

Any student dismissed from school with a fever is required to provide the school nurse with a medical note for their safe return to school.

- Students will stay home if they have tested positive for Covid-19.
- Students will stay home for a 14 day period of time if they have had any close contact with a person with Covid-19.

Close contact is defined as being with this person for 15 minutes or more and being closer than a distance of 6 feet from them.

Any student who has been diagnosed with Covid-19 or has had an exposure to Covid-19 is required to provide the school nurse with a medical note for their safe return to school.

Hand hygiene: Handwashing and hand sanitizing

Handwashing removes pathogens from the surface of the hands. While handwashing with soap and water is the best option, alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropanol) may be utilized when hand washing is not available.

Students and staff are required to exercise hand hygiene (hand washing or sanitizing) upon arrival to school, before eating, before putting on and taking off masks, and before dismissal.

Handwashing: When handwashing, individuals should use soap and water to wash all surfaces of their hands for at least 20 seconds, wait for visible lather, rinse thoroughly, and dry with an individual disposable towel.

Mount Alvernia High School has installed touchless soap dispensers in all bathrooms.

Hand sanitizing: If handwashing is not feasible, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropanol content can be used. Hand sanitizer should be applied to all surfaces of the hands and in sufficient quantity that it takes 20 seconds of rubbing hands together for the sanitizer to dry. Hand sanitizer should be placed at key locations (e.g., building entrances, cafeteria, classrooms).

Mount Alvernia High School will be installing touchless hand sanitizer dispensers in all classrooms and already has hand sanitizer stations in “high traffic” areas (gym, lobby, Dining Room, Wellness Center, Main Office, etc).

COVID-19 related isolation space

In order to minimize transmission of COVID-19, schools must ensure they have an isolated space available for students displaying COVID-19 symptoms. Our initial requirements and related guidance are as follows:

Schools are required to designate a COVID-19 related isolation space that is separate from the nurse’s office or other space where routine medical care is provided. A student who shows COVID-19 symptoms during the school day should be moved to the specific room pre-designated for medical-related isolation until they can be picked up by a family member.

Alterations to Mount Alvernia High School’s Wellness Center include the construction of a wall to designate an isolation room. A separate door is used to access this space. It contains a bed as well as a monitor to communicate with the School Nurse.

If a student feels ill and is directed to this space, she will remain there until picked up by a family member.

COVID-19 testing in schools

At this time, in-school testing is not recommended. Students' families should discuss testing with their health care provider. As the accuracy of point-of-care testing develops, this guidance may change.

Mount Alvernia High School will only require testing documentation for a student to return to school following a positive diagnosis of the student or family member.

Vaccines

Districts and schools should work with parents to ensure that students are current on all standard vaccinations before they return to in-person school. In addition, health providers strongly recommend all students and staff get their regular flu vaccine. Whereas for COVID-19 it appears children are less likely to be infected with and to transmit COVID-19, this is not the case for influenza, where children are frequent transmitters. Therefore, ensuring all students, teachers, and staff receive the seasonal flu vaccine is an extremely high priority. The Department of Public Health will be issuing updated guidance regarding vaccines for schools and parents.

At this point in time, Mount Alvernia High School does not have a flu clinic scheduled for this Fall. With the uncertainty created by the Covid-19 pandemic, it is difficult to predict if the City of Newton will be conducting the annual flu clinic here at our school.

Health providers are strongly recommending that all students and faculty/staff receive a flu vaccine this year if possible. Ensuring that members of the Mount Alvernia community receive the seasonal flu vaccine is a high priority this year.

We ask that you reach out to your care providers regarding scheduling your flu vaccine for this Fall and it is requested that you notify the Wellness Center either by email or phone when you have received the vaccine

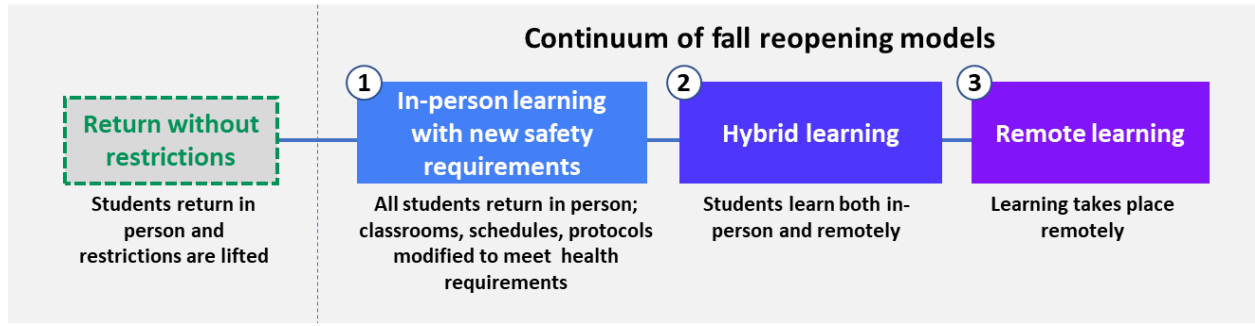
Health and safety/PPE supplies

Per the initial supply guidance issued by DESE, schools should have an inventory of standard healthcare supplies (e.g., masks and gloves). Use of additional supplies may be optional based on type of tasks performed.

Mount Alvernia High School has placed orders based on the DESE guidelines and has readily available all necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) including disposable masks, gloves and face shields.

Components of district/school fall reopening plans

Each district and school will need to plan for three possibilities on the continuum of reopening: 1) in-person learning with new safety requirements; 2) a hybrid of in-person and remote learning; and 3) remote learning. In addition, all districts/schools will also need a focused plan for serving special student populations across each of these models.



1. In-person learning with new safety requirements: For the fall, the box in light blue represents our goal to get as many students as possible back into schools for in-person learning—safely. In this model, all students return in person to school settings that are appropriately modified to accommodate the health and safety requirements outlined above. Examples of modifications could include altered classroom configurations, setting up additional learning spaces, and schedule changes.

2. Hybrid learning: In addition, all districts/schools must create a plan for a hybrid model in the event they are unable to bring all students back to school under the health and safety requirements despite their best efforts, or in case of COVID-19 related circumstances. A hybrid model means that students would alternate between in-person and remote learning. For instance, students could switch between in-person and remote learning on alternating weeks or days of the week.

3. Remote learning: All districts and schools are required to have a plan for operating a remote learning program. This model must be available for individual students who cannot yet return in-person, and for all students in the event of future classroom or school closures due to COVID-19. Additional guidance on statewide support and resources for remote learning will be provided in the coming weeks.

Mount Alvernia High School has developed its three recommended plans in conjunction with a cross departmental group of faculty members.

Our hybrid and distance learning plans are being developed by our Distance Learning Committee and will be shared by August 1, 2020.

Appendix 1: **Guidelines for Visitors to Mount Alvernia High School**

These guidelines are to be shared and followed for the entrance of any planned guests to Mount Alvernia High School.

- Guests are asked to take their temperature before leaving home and if it is 100 degrees or above they are asked to reschedule their visit.
- Any guest who is feeling sick, is exhibiting any of the following symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell), or has potentially been exposed to someone with confirmed or suspected COVID-19, should not come to Mount Alvernia High School. A potential exposure means having household contact or having close contact (within 6 feet) with an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 for a prolonged period of time (over 15 minutes) while the person is symptomatic or 48 hours before symptoms develop.
- Guests must arrive wearing a mask and the mask must be worn throughout the visit.
- Upon entry, guests must wash their hands.
- Guests must stay in the designated area of their visit or with the member of school administration hosting them.
- Surfaces guests come in contact with must be wiped down following their visit.
- Guests are urged to bring their own water bottle. We ask that no water be taken from any drinking fountain. No food or drinks will be served and/or provided at Mount Alvernia High School.
- A social distance of 6 feet must be observed at all times.