

Safely Open Denver Academy

For in-person teaching and learning



Plans, preparations, and guidelines established for the health and safety of Denver Academy's students, teachers, and staff.

Prepared for fall, 2020

**Note: Although we are starting the school year with in-person learning, we are also aware that a virus outbreak in the school, city, or state could lead once again to mandatory distance learning and campus closure for the whole school or one or more "cohort" groups. We certainly hope to maintain in-person learning for the year; however, we must be prepared for these possibilities as well.*

Introduction

I am pleased to inform you that Denver Academy will begin the 2020-21 school year with in-person, on-campus, face-to-face learning as scheduled on August 17. We are committed to resume face-to-face learning while adhering to public health safety requirements and recommendations. In the following pages, you will find the summary of the plans and preparations established by the “Safely Open Denver Academy” (SODA) working group. I would like to thank this group for their tireless and extraordinary efforts over the summer on behalf of our students, faculty, and staff. It has been no easy task to develop plans for safely re-opening a school campus amidst the ever-changing moving target of recommendations and requirements. That being said, we are confident that the planning and work we’ve done over the summer will allow us to follow the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) in a manner that provides for the health and safety of our community.

On behalf of the entire Denver Academy community, I extend immense gratitude to the members of “SODA:”

Mark Wood, Head of High School
Lori Hull, Head of Lower School
Amy Thomson, Middle School Dean
Jim Levinson, Director of Facilities
Karen Lozow, Director of Development

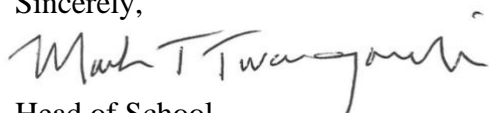
Anthony Slaughter, Director of IT
Mark Twarogowski, Head of School
Philippe Ernewein, Director of Education
Valerie Hamlin, Director of Marketing/PR
Rebecca Musil, Asst. to Head of School

Additionally, I’d like to express my gratitude to the Denver Academy Board of Trustees. Your ongoing guidance, input, trust, and support have been invaluable over the past few months. Denver Academy is fortunate to have a collection of such talented, committed, and passionate professionals overseeing the mission of the school.

I’d also like to thank the parent community and families of Denver Academy. Your willingness to adapt and demonstrate flexibility in support of the education of your children and safety of their teachers is inspiring. We can do this. But we must do it together and safely, and your ongoing trust, confidence, and support will be critical in the coming months. I’ve had many conversations this summer with DA parents, and I’d like to thank you (you know who you are) for your input, perspectives, expertise, and creative ideas. A small group of DA families has chosen to start the year with a distance learning option, and we look forward to welcoming you all back on campus when the time is right.

Finally, and most importantly, I’d like to thank the teachers and staff of Denver Academy. Your willingness to return to campus in the fall, despite significant anxiety and uncertainty, speaks volumes to your character and commitment. You too have shown a willingness to adapt and be flexible, and the trust you have shown through this process drives me to do my best to support your work, health, and safety.

Sincerely,



Head of School
Denver Academy

Our Community: “The Big Five”



As complex and difficult as it was this summer to formulate plans to open campus safely, we realized that adopting these five school-wide essential elements was the best approach. This document will lay out the details of these elements further but for now, the “big five” are as follows:

- 1. Frequent hand washing/sanitizing**
- 2. Physical distancing**
- 3. Mask wearing**
- 4. Symptom screening (especially at home)**
- 5. Creating a culture of keeping each other safe**

Instituting these five elements is an approach that we might think of as a combination intervention—like a medication “cocktail.” The elements are all familiar: hygiene measures, distancing, screening, mask wearing, and care for others. Each has flaws. Skip one, and the treatment may not work. But, when taken together, and taken seriously, they give us the best path to success.

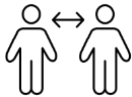
Your Community: At Home

The success of in-person learning will depend heavily on the sustained behaviors and consistent commitment of our entire community. In the same way that you all support your children’s teachers on a daily basis with homework assistance, communication, and other efforts, we ask you to support our teachers’ health and safety and their efforts to keep in-person learning intact through the following:

- Support and reinforce the guidelines and rules set out in this document with your child.
- Mirror school practices at home (frequent hand washing, physical distancing, mask wearing when appropriate, etc.)
- Consider self-quarantine after travel before returning to campus.
- Exercise thoughtful/careful socializing, both within DA and outside the DA community. Pay special attention to avoiding “cross-cohort” gatherings or transport of students. (See Health and Safety Protocols for further explanation of cohorts.)
- Show constant vigilance as to possible virus exposures to students and family members.
- Demonstrate an abundance of caution when sending your child to school. Conduct daily health “screenings” of your child - the mild symptoms can be most important to notice - and when in doubt, keep kiddos at home.
- Practice transparency and openness – we are all in this together.
- Follow CDC and CDPHE guidelines.

Health and Safety Protocols

In order to open campus for in-person teaching and learning, we will be implementing a number of strategies to ensure the safety and health of our students and employees. **The following protocols will be strictly enforced, and failure to follow these rules will be treated as disciplinary issues.** As previewed in the DA community letter dated June 26, the following will be in place in order to limit exposure and transmission of COVID-19 and provide a safe and healthy environment:



6' physical distancing will be in effect as much as possible, indoors and outside. Fortunately, our small class sizes should allow us to keep most student desks at six feet apart. Our classrooms and buildings are being set up in order to accomplish this, and all departments are planning for their classes with physical distancing in mind.



Masks: Employees and students will be required to wear face coverings inside of buildings. Masks may be removed at the direction of a teacher when outside if physical distancing can be maintained. We understand how uncomfortable masks can be for many and will build in frequent “mask breaks” outside (every 30-45 minutes). DA students and staff should bring their own masks to wear at school each day. Teachers will have a limited number of disposable masks available in the event of breakages and/or masks left at home.



No-touch hand sanitizers are installed in each classroom, and students will be required to sanitize their hands upon entering each class. We will also institute enhanced cleaning and disinfecting protocols. Teachers will wipe down all touched surfaces between classes, and there will also be increased hand washing for students and staff.



Parents will conduct daily health screenings of their child before bringing them to school: If your child is in attendance at school on any given day, it is an implied affirmation of the following:

1. You have confirmed that your child has none of the following symptoms:
 - a. Fever or chills
 - b. Cough
 - c. Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - d. Fatigue
 - e. Muscle or body aches
 - f. Headache
 - g. New loss of taste or smell
 - h. Sore throat
 - i. Congestion or runny nose
 - j. Nausea or vomiting
 - k. Diarrhea

AND:

2. Your child has not had a positive test for COVID-19 or been exposed to someone with or suspected of having COVID-19 within the last 14 days.

(We will take the temperature of each student upon entering the building first thing each morning. Employees will also have a temperature screen each morning. Students or employees with a temperature of 100.4° or higher will be sent home.)



We will reduce shared items and spaces as much as possible. Students will not have access to a locker. Art and other supplies will not be shared. We'll encourage the use of backpacks for high school students and plastic crates with lids will be provided for each elementary, 6th grade, and middle school student in order to store their school supplies.



As recommended by the CDE and Governor's office, we will implement class schedules that involve keeping students in "cohort" groups of 50-60 students. These groups will move through their day together and should not interact with other cohorts. This will significantly reduce the number of unique person-to-person interactions and will help us trace, track, and manage any outbreak that may occur on campus. We will attempt to limit each teacher contact to no more than two cohorts. In order to make this work, we have made some adjustments to our normal schedule, including a few classes that will be taught to students on campus "virtually" by teachers via videoconference (some elective classes and some high school math classes).

Our cohorts will align with student grade levels as follows:

- Cohort #1: All elementary students, grades 1-5 (Elementary Building)
- Cohort #2: All 6th grade students (Elementary Building)
- Cohorts #3&4: ½ of middle school students each
- Cohort #5: 9th Grade (Mustang Hall)
- Cohort #6: 10th Grade (Richardson Hall)
- Cohort #7: 11th Grade (Richardson Hall)
- Cohort #8: 12th Grade (Richardson Hall)

Middle school students will be assigned to either the "Blue" or "Green" cohort – mixed grades. One cohort will "live" in the old middle school building, one will "live" in Senior Hall. If you have a middle school child, you will be contacted soon with your cohort assignment and building location.



What will we do if there is a case of COVID-19 in our community? In the event of a confirmed case of Coronavirus at Denver Academy, we will consult with our local health department for guidance and will promptly communicate our plans with the DA community. For more information, visit the [CDPHE website](https://www.cdphe.com).

What Will School Look Like?



The School Year Calendar (See Back to School packet with revised/July 2020 DA calendar)
Our plan is for all students to be at school five days per week. We will be revising our school year calendar in order to maximize school attendance during lower transmission times. The changes to our original calendar include:

- A shortened Fall Break
- A planned two-week “distance learning” session after Thanksgiving
- An extended winter break

These adjustments will allow for maximizing time on campus during good weather, while allowing our community to be off campus between Thanksgiving and the New Year. This version of the school calendar is also subject to change based on evolving conditions and public health information.

*Also note that ALL students will begin classes on August 17 with a student orientation day.

*August 18 is a teacher planning day (No school for ALL students)

*August 19 is the first day of regular classes for ALL students.

Daily School Schedule

In order to reduce the overlap and contact across cohort groups, Denver Academy will institute a staggered schedule for the start and end of the school day, as well as a staggered bell schedule between classes. The daily start and end schedule is as follows:

Elementary, 6th Grade, and Middle School:	8:15 AM – 3:00 PM
High School 9th and 10th Grade:	8:20 AM – 3:05 PM
High School 11th and 12th Grade:	8:00 AM – 2:45 PM

Please do not arrive on campus prior to 7:45 AM, and please pick up your child NO LATER than 15 minutes after the end of their school day.

Before and After School Activities

There will be no before-school or after-school activities to start the year. We will consider adding them as the year progresses and we determine it is safe to do so.

Athletics

At this time, we will not be participating in any competitive athletics, with the exception of high school golf. Please contact Athletic Director [Mark Bender](#) for more information. We are considering offering cohort-controlled conditioning and individual skill development sessions for other high school sports. If we decide to add programs, we will provide more information as we assess the culture and climate of health and safety in our campus community.

Preparations for Opening the DA Campus for In-Person Learning

We have spent the summer months preparing Denver Academy's campus, buildings, and classroom spaces for safe, in-person teaching and learning. The following is a not-quite complete list of the steps we have taken to ensure the health and safety of our students, teachers and staff as we return to campus in August:

- We intend to hold as many classes outside as possible, weather permitting. We are fortunate to have a large, beautiful campus, and we plan to take advantage of the opportunities to teach and learn outside. We are in the process of installing 14 large tents on campus that will serve as outdoor classrooms (complete with rolling dry-erase boards). We have also identified 10-15 shady spaces large enough to accommodate full classes. We anticipate that students and teachers will be able to be outside a majority of each school day. As long as the weather allows, we'll be outside in the open air (even if it's a bit cold...)
- We are upgrading the outdoor Wi-Fi coverage to accommodate the increase in user density in outside spaces.
- We have moved all non-essential furniture items out of classrooms, hallways, and shared spaces in order to facilitate physical distancing and disinfecting procedures.
- We have inspected and upgraded the HVAC systems in all of our classroom buildings. We have upgraded HVAC filters to the maximum MERV 13 level and will be installing Plasma Air, whole-building, bipolar ionization technology in order to purify the circulated air in all of our classroom buildings.
- We have removed most picnic tables and benches on campus to limit the temptation to sit close and compromise physical distancing.
- We have disabled all drinking fountains except for the bottle filling functions. Students should bring a water bottle to school for filling and drinking!
- We have installed touchless hand sanitizing stations in each classroom and building entrance to facilitate the required frequent hand sanitizing.
- All teachers have been equipped with masks, gloves, disinfecting wipes, spray surface disinfectant, and touchless forehead thermometers (and pre-made 6-foot poles to quickly verify 6-foot physical distances...).
- Teachers will be equipped with wireless headset microphones and Bluetooth speakers for their classrooms. This will allow them to speak in a regular tone of voice so that students can hear them clearly even when wearing a face mask. (This should also help with teacher fatigue.)
- All lockers have been zip-tied closed and will only be used by teachers to store personal belongings and classroom materials.
- Buildings and classrooms will display signage reminding students and teachers about physical distancing, mask wearing, hand sanitizing, and other health and safety protocols.
- We will be hiring an extra cleaning staff to focus on continuous sanitizing and disinfecting of common areas and surfaces.

Final (probably not) Thoughts

- **Visitors to campus:** Until further notice, we will be limiting visitors to campus. We are able to accommodate certain visitors after school hours by appointment.
- **Denver Academy Parent Association (DAPA)**

The parent association has a particularly tough job this year: creating and maintaining a sense of community for our students, parents, and teachers during a pandemic. But their job has never been more important or relevant. If you are a new family, please reach out to DAPA ([more via this link](#)) – they are expecting you and want to help you feel connected and part of this amazing community. We will be working with DAPA on connecting volunteers, planning events (virtual and otherwise), and doing our best to stay connected! Stay tuned for information on how you can be involved!
- **We are suspending outside food service for now.** Students will need to bring their own lunches (no off-campus lunch, no shared microwave use).
- **Getting to School:** We are strongly discouraging the use of public transportation for now. Also, please avoid carpooling with “out-of-cohort” students (siblings excepted).
- **Extra School Supplies:** In addition to the “regular” list of school supplies (included in the Back to School packet), please provide the following for your child:
 - A super-cool portable camping chair. They will use it for outdoor classrooms and for outdoor breaks and lunch time. The chair should be the right size for your child and should be easily carried, stowed and folded by the student. *Please, no rocking chairs or fancy chairs with umbrellas or other complicated attachments* (except maybe a cool attached table – proving to be quite handy...). Please label your child’s chair clearly with their name so as to be easily recognized. They will keep their chairs at school – no need to transport back and forth from home.
 - A refillable water bottle for...well, you know, water.
 - Personal-sized hand sanitizer for backpack or bin.
 - 2-4 packages of Lysol or Clorox disinfecting wipes for classroom use.

Thank you. Looking forward to a fantastic year!