MPCS FAMILY REUNION
A PLAN TO GET BACK TO CAMPUS

MOUNT PARAN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
DEAR EAGLE FAMILY - IT’S TIME FOR A REUNION!

If you are anything like me, I know you cannot wait to be back together again as the MPCS family! It is just around the corner.

As we plan for the opening of the 2020-2021 school year, we are confident that we will be together as an entire community on Tuesday, August 11 for the first day of school. Prior to our opening day, we will have our Back-2-School Night on Thursday, August 6, with details to follow soon.

While we are confident that we will begin our school year on time, we are prepared to be flexible and proactive should any government mandate or shift in public health demands require it. Thanks be to God, we are equipped and ready. Since April, the MPCS Executive Council and the Scenario Planning Committee have been working through every detail for the opening of the school year — no matter what that looks like. Within this document, you will find brief explanations for the most likely scenarios that may unfold. Likewise, it will also briefly explain the scenario process we went through to create the Reunion Plan for starting safely back to school. This included a task force of the executive council, cabinet members, faculty and staff members, and registered nurses.

This Reunion Plan provides clarity and strategies for responding to an evolving health crisis and will include:

• Health and Safety
• Dexterity for Learning
• Finances and Tuition

Our top priority in reuniting our community is the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff, and parents. We do not anticipate new campus closures, but we will be flexible and ready regardless and will continue to provide the world-class education that you have come to expect.

In a safe and healthy way, we want to get back to school and help you get back to work. As a school of faith and innovation, let’s do this together. Our reunion promises to be sweet as we gather back on campus on August 6 for Back-2-School Night, in preparation for our first day of the 2020-2021 school year, August 11. I cannot wait to see you!

Dr. Timothy Wiens
MPCS Head of School
Blessed with a 68-acre campus buzzing with life, MPCS is thoughtfully considering the challenges that a PK-12 school encounters on a daily basis when operating within a pandemic. The physical health of our youngest students up to our faculty nearing retirement is at the forefront of this careful planning. While we cannot control the threat of COVID-19 until a vaccine is developed, we can minimize the risks as much as possible for the protection of our entire MPCS community. We, therefore, commit to:

- Remaining well-informed by the government, public health officials, and medical experts on updates to virus behavior, safety protocol, and sanitization strategies.
- Reducing risks to our MPCS family through daily temperature checks and screening of all faculty, students, and visitors until restrictions loosen.
- Focusing on the equally important social, emotional, and spiritual health of our students and staff.
- Serving and supporting our community as we face anxiety and unknowns.
- Educating students on the importance of reducing the risk of exposure with simple and consistent hand-washing and personal hygiene practices.
- Providing flexible learning options, as outlined in this document, to families with health concerns.
- Remaining steadfast in our mission to be Christ-centered and be creative in delivery methods to disciple and engage students in their faith.

RESOURCES WE TRUST:

*The school clinic and administration is seeking guidance and updates from these organizations:*

- Cobb and Douglas Public Health — [www.cobbanddouglaspublichealth.com](http://www.cobbanddouglaspublichealth.com)
- American Academy of Pediatrics — [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)
As we develop strategies for the health and well-being of our school community, MPCS is also putting many additional safety protocols in place:

- Following CDC hygiene protocols and posting signs throughout campus.
- Hiring a second full-time nurse with rooms for students who become ill.
- Hiring a second security guard on duty for the duration of the school day.
- Daily use of safe, electrostatic handheld sprayers on prepped surfaces and all public spaces.
- HVAC/AC system cleaning and maintenance of high-grade filters in all facilities.
- Using only EPA-approved, safe disinfectants.
- Continual cleaning of common interior spaces throughout each day.
- Installing 60 more hand sanitizing stations to double sanitization locations, bringing that total to more than 100 stations on campus.
- Providing masks and gloves for use by staff members if required.
- Offering optional student masks (available for purchase in the Eagles Nest).
- Suspending use of vending machines and water fountains.
- Changing protocols for campus and visitor access, if required.
- Utilizing multiple new computer equipment cleaning units.

MPCS will evaluate these protocols throughout the school year to measure the effectiveness and appropriate need going forward.

Upon return to school, the dining hall experience will involve the following:

- Washing/sanitizing hands upon entry and exit of the dining hall
- Eliminating common serving utensils
- Providing pre-packaged lunches for student meetings
- Continuing to clean the eating areas between lunch periods
- At first, using a simplified menu to gain experience with the logistics of new approaches
- Utilizing tented patio and common areas to spread out, if needed
- Using non-traditional dining spaces or other group rotation options to spread students out in the case of increased strict physical distancing requirements
FACTS ABOUT CHILDREN AND COVID-19:

MPCS nurses and counselors have compiled information from the CDC and AAP about advocating for children during the pandemic. Here’s some information to consider concerning mental and physical health of children:

- Importance of washing hands with soap and clean, running water as the most effective way to prevent spread of infections to others, reducing respiratory illnesses by up to 21%.
- Importance of teaching other healthy habits such as coughing or sneezing into a tissue or elbow and avoiding touching the face.
- Risk of death from COVID-19 in children 1-4 years in age is .004%, ages 5-14 is .007%, and ages 15-24 is .01% per CDC data to date. Early research suggests few children with COVID-19 have had to be hospitalized.
- Ability of children to cope with fear, worry, or feelings of isolation during a pandemic.
- Importance of social and emotional connections and personal interaction for children and teens, especially in crisis.
- Importance of providing a safe-as-possible learning environment for children while parents are at work.

MONITORING ILLNESS

It is very possible that members of our school community will get sick. As such, we will follow the “Return to School” guidelines recommended by the Georgia DPH for the safety of the MPCS family. In addition, if a student, faculty, or staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19, the clinic and operations staff will maintain health protocols and adhere to CDC procedures:

- Require that parents keep their student home if their temperature is above 99.9°F.
- Take caution to keep your child home if they have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19 or experience symptoms of fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle/body aches, headache, new loss of taste/smell, runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- Request that parents alert the MPCS clinic if anyone in the household has tested positive for COVID-19 or has come in direct contact within a 14-day period with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- Notify local health authorities of a diagnosis of COVID-19, as well as others who may be affected, as required by the DPH, while maintaining privacy and confidentiality.
- Require quarantine of the student/teacher for at least 14 days, without return to campus until they test negative.
- Require quarantine of siblings and family members living with the affected student for 14 days, with return dependent upon DPH guidelines (no symptoms, etc.).
- Continue with school utilizing the virtual classroom option if student is able.
- Close the primary area where the student was located for extended time, leave for up to 24 hours per CDC guidance, and heavily disinfect before re-entry.
- With DPH guidance, trace diagnosed cases within our community to allow for a better understanding of the overall school-wide health condition, localized to campus, building, and classroom.
- Decide about school dismissal or cancellation of school events in coordination with our local health officials.

OUR TOP PRIORITIES IN REUNITING OUR SCHOOL FAMILY IS BOTH SAFETY AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL HEALTH.
God designed us to be in community with one another. The strength of the mission and core values of MPCS is the foundational relationship between a student and a teacher, collaborating on campus together, and growing in faith. The fuel for motivation, engagement, and belonging is discovered through teacher and peer relationships in the classroom, cast-mates on the stage, and teammates on the field or court. Meaningful connections that ground us and even transform us are nurtured most effectively in person, not through a video conferencing platform. This is as true for our high school students as it is for our preschoolers.

In contrast to many school systems, we are fortunate to have the flexibility to make decisions that are appropriate for our school community of approximately 1,100 students and 200 staff members. We also have the advantage of a 68-acre campus in which to spread out, yet still create safe environments for interaction and continuous learning.

MPCS has identified plans for multiple scenarios and responses to any new government or CDC mandates for safety or physical distancing. However, our strategy involves focusing on the three most likely options which best fit the needs of our families:

1. Reunion Plan (in effect currently)
2. Physically Distanced, On Campus
3. Virtual Learning
REUNION PLAN

Under the current Georgia government requirements and CDC recommendations, MPCS is able to begin school as scheduled on August 11. We are thrilled to invite you to campus on Back-2-School Night on August 6! Plans for this family reunion event are underway, and details will be shared soon. As communicated in the recent MPCS town hall, these changes will be in effect:

- Minimum restrictions as pandemic gradually declines (“green” per DPH/GaDOE K12 recovery plan).
- All families will be welcomed back to campus with a normal start, 5-days a week as normally scheduled, beginning August 11.
- Synchronous learning will be offered using classroom-based camera/distance learning technology for students who have at-risk family members, are at-risk themselves, are currently or who go into quarantine, or who are not ready to begin school on campus. Please contact your division head concerning this option.
- Outlined safety plans, continual personal hygiene, and rigorous cleaning will be in full effect.
- Our calendar has not changed but school hours have adjusted for safe arrival, structured transitions, and time for thorough instruction. Please take note of the new hours:
  
  **PRESCHOOL (half day):** 7:50 a.m.-11:45 a.m.
  **PRESCHOOL (full day):** 7:50 a.m.-3:00 p.m.
  **KINDERGARTEN – FIFTH GRADE:** 7:50 a.m.-3:10 p.m.
  **MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL:** 7:50 a.m.-3:15 p.m.
  **LATE-START WEDNESDAYS:** 8:35 a.m.

- Since class sizes are already small, students will be spread out within classrooms, where feasible.
- Sage Dining team members will handle lunch service without shared dispensing and employ additional safety and cleaning precautions.
- Masks will be optional (available for purchase in the Eagles Nest).
- Chapel, extracurricular clubs, arts, and athletic activities will take place once the government’s large-gathering restrictions are lifted and with GHSA regulations.
PHYSICALLY DISTANCED, ON CAMPUS

We know that schools, by design, are not meant for physical distancing — in fact the opposite is true in that children need social interaction, collaborative skill development, and emotional connection. Students in the classroom, on the playground, on the stage, or on the field are meant to be together. However, if moderate restrictions are increased in order to curb a resurgence of the virus (“yellow” per DPH/GaDOE), MPCS will opt to stay on campus, but enforce further physical distancing by:

- Utilizing additional spaces such as unused areas of the Murray Arts Center, gyms, dining hall, and outdoors to allow for physical distancing.
- Eating lunch in classrooms.
- Requiring masks in hallways, while transitioning and collaborating.
- Requiring extracurricular clubs and groups to meet virtually.
- Broadcasting chapel, special events, or speakers online to limit crowds.
- Physically distancing students in after school care programs.
- Allowing only one student per row on bus routes.

VIRTUAL LEARNING

In the case of a public health escalation, spike in community cases, or government mandate to shelter-in-place (“red” per DPH/GaDOE), MPCS would mobilize to at-home, virtual learning with these goals:

- Preschool would continue on campus, if essential services are permitted with guidelines as they were previously, to allow parents to work or manage virtual learning.
- A transition to virtual learning would be seamless and ready for implementation.
- Each division will craft a schedule to support student learning appropriate to their age and development.
- Middle and high school students will continue to utilize their Connected Learning Program devices to access instruction remotely via platforms such as Google Classroom/Meet.
- Lower school students who have no device at home will be issued one from the school in order to utilize Google Classroom and Zoom classes.
- Devotion, chapel, and special events will be presented online.
- MPCS will consider all options to optimize campus use where permitted, as feasible.
- MPCS faculty will be committed to meeting and exceeding expectations with continuous instruction of the required curriculum within the virtual platform.
- Faculty will be continuing training, gathering additional tools and resources to be prepared for optimum student engagement, should virtual learning be required.
Mount Paran Christian School remains vigilant in fulfilling our mission. Despite economic and public health challenges, we remain committed to providing a top-tier educational experience built on collaboration and relationships, equipping this generation of students for the innovative workplace, while supporting our families throughout this journey.

Our goal is to be transparent and forthright concerning finances in the event of another forced campus closure. Approximately 94 percent of the MPCS 2020-2021 operating income will come from tuition, fees, and the Annual Fund. The rest of the school’s operating budget is covered by designated gifts, investments, and other supplemental income such as program fundraisers, vending machines, school store, summer camps, facility rentals, the Murray Arts Academy, etc.

Approximately 60 percent of school operating expenses are for faculty and staff payroll and benefits. The remaining 40 percent of school operating expenses includes, but is not limited to, academic resources, athletics and arts programs, student care, campus operation and maintenance, technology, bus transportation fleet operation and maintenance, debt, and general administrative operating expenses.
FINANCIAL IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS

MPCS has been a fiscally responsible non-profit organization, maximizing funds for programmatic improvements and enhancing opportunities available to students for a total educational experience. To continue this trend despite impacts of the pandemic, our financial team is proactively finding solutions to fund these areas:

- Increased costs for sanitization, supplies, and safety protocol.
- Added staff for security, clinic, and custodial services.
- Increased budget for classroom-based camera and distance-learning technology for instructional support.
- Furnishing non-traditional spaces to enable physical distancing.
- Investigating digital software solutions to reduce physical contact.
- Increased financial aid for impacted families, given employment furloughs.

We are projecting a strong enrollment, despite setbacks, as we are finding that many families are opting for a more reliable academic experience, whether it be on campus or virtual, that is Christ-centered.

TUITION

Tuition is set by the Board of Trustees each year based on a thorough review of the administration-developed budget, mindful of keeping tuition well below comparable independent school programs in our area, without sacrificing our Christian mission. As such, with school beginning on schedule and on campus, families can choose different annual payment plans using FACTS. We are very aware some families have been deeply impacted financially due to the quarantine. We encourage you to reach out to Kristy Hubbard in the business office for guidance concerning financial aid applications or payment plans. Our goal is to:

- Help current and new families financially impacted by the pandemic to continue to afford an MPCS education.
- Provide need-based financial aid options and work with families on payment plans.
- Provide prorated account credits for certain program services which are undeliverable beyond a two-week time frame in the event of a school-initiated transition from campus to Virtual Learning. Such undeliverable program services might include after school care, transportation, trips, portions of player pack items, and lunch.

Rest-assured, if authorities mandate the third plan for Virtual Learning for more than two weeks, refunds for pro-rated food services and a portion of tuition will be issued.
MPCS is well-equipped and prepared to respond to shifting health mandates. We have taken a proactive approach to a safe, long-awaited family REUNION of our beloved staff and students. We are committed to a safe return to campus Thursday, August 6 at Back-2-School Night. Plans for this event will be shared in July as we lead up to the first day of school Tuesday, August 11.