



IMS OPENING OF SCHOOL PLAN

2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 Message from the Head of School3
- 2 Vaccination Policies and Reporting Procedures.....4
- 3 Testing Protocols.....5
- 4 Masking.....5
- 5 Academic Calendar.....5
- 6 Quarantining.....6
- 7 Health Center Spaces and Protocols.....6
- 8 Athletics.....7
- 9 Student Life.....7
 - Dress Code.....7
 - Meals.....7
 - Residential Life.....7
 - Drop-off/Pick-Up.....7
 - After-School Programming (Lower School).....7
 - Morning Circle (Lower School).....7
- 10 Outdoor Adventure Education.....8
- 11 Community Engagement.....8
- 12 Opening of School Details.....8
- 13 Other Safety Measures.....8

MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

I remain grateful for and inspired by the ability of our community to not only adjust to these difficult times, but to do so with positivity and compassion.

DEAR IMS COMMUNITY,

This report outlines our current planning to safely open school and mitigate the continued risk of Covid-19 as we begin the 2021-2022 academic year.

We had hoped that this level of planning would be unnecessary this fall and remain hopeful that we will be able to peel back these layers of mitigation throughout the year. However, you have no doubt seen that regions in the United States, including most of Connecticut, have seen recent spikes in cases. As a result, schools, businesses, and organizations will continue to face various degrees of uncertainty in the weeks and months ahead.

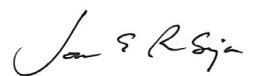
Just like our plan for last year, included in this report are our current safety measures, which are intentionally designed to be malleable and not contractual in nature so that we can adapt as circumstances, as well as recommendations and mandates from federal and state agencies, change. This plan covers many areas and provides some specific and general policy guidelines, but it does not attempt to address every contingency that can arise. We will continue to monitor and respond to mandates at the state level, CDC guidance, and advice from the American Academy of Pediatrics. We understand that no single preventative health measure can be singularly relied on, so our planning continues to include layers of protective approaches. However, as a school, we remain committed to providing a safe campus, an excellent education, and a robust program for our students.

The State of Connecticut currently still requires all individuals to wear masks indoors in school settings, regardless of vaccination status. In light of this mandate, and as we monitor the evolving spread of the Delta variant, we will require masks for all students and employees indoors this September.

We are still assessing the particular mitigation measures for our boarding community during residential hours and will keep students and families informed as we learn and plan more in the next few weeks.

Though we are disappointed that we will need to continue to operate under these conditions, I remain grateful for and inspired by the ability of our community to not only adjust to these difficult times, but to do so with positivity and compassion. We are eager to have students back on campus and to continue our important work together. As always, I am extraordinarily grateful for your partnership and support.

Warmly,



Jody Reilly Soja

IMS OPENING OF SCHOOL PLAN - 2021-2022

VACCINATION POLICIES AND REPORTING PROCEDURES

It is our goal as an institution to be open in the fullest capacity possible with only those Covid-related restrictions that are necessary to provide a safe campus. Due to the ongoing risks associated with the spread of Covid-19, it is our expectation that all those who are eligible will be fully vaccinated by Monday, August 23 so that, pending state regulations, we can hopefully begin to reduce certain policies and protocols that were in place last year. These policies include but are not limited to masking, podding, safe re-entry periods, and limiting sports and other activities. Current vaccine eligibility as of August 2021 includes children ages 12 and up. While we are not “mandating” vaccination at this time, our ability to make certain programming shifts depends on being as close to fully vaccinated as possible. Currently, our planning assumes a mostly vaccinated student population in Grades 7-9. Therefore, we may ultimately join many peer and secondary schools in mandating the Covid-19 vaccine.

If you have a concern about the Covid vaccination that you would like to discuss, please contact Erin Ohler, Director of Nursing and Medical Care; or Kyle Halloran, Covid Coordinator and Assistant Head of School for Student Life. Certain limited exemptions will be accepted in accordance with law as it evolves. Proof of vaccination should be uploaded via Magnus Health along with all other pertinent medical information for your child. Please also note that unvaccinated students will be required to follow our more stringent school Covid protocols.

For your planning and awareness, please be advised that students 12 and over wishing to participate in the following groups/activities will likely be required to be fully vaccinated:

- Outside of school/travel sports or activities, including dance classes and private lessons (For 12 and under, please see the “Athletics” section for more information.)
- Competitive interscholastic sports at IMS
- Team practices or games at other schools (including Hotchkiss)
- Boarding (age eligible) at IMS
- Travel to and from campus on weekends (for boarding students)
- Participation in Outdoor Adventure and Education overnight trips
- Travel off-campus with IMS group (without a mask)

At this time, the State of Connecticut is requiring masks in schools. If the State eventually removes this requirement, it is our plan to make masks optional indoors during the school day for those who are fully vaccinated, but they will likely be required for those who are not vaccinated. And, if Covid cases spike within our local community, we may ask unvaccinated students to learn asynchronously from home for a period of time.

TESTING PROTOCOLS

To ensure the safety of our entire community, we will require a seven-day safe transition period prior to the first day of classes for our unvaccinated population. During this time, we ask that families avoid unnecessary mass gatherings, wear face masks indoors when reasonable, and take other precautions

IMS OPENING OF SCHOOL PLAN - 2021-2022

to limit exposure to possible Covid contagion. Additionally, we will require negative PCR tests to be secured within 7 days of arrival on campus and submitted to the Health Center **for both vaccinated and unvaccinated students, faculty, and staff.**

Following CDC and DPH guidelines, we will continue weekly surveillance PCR testing for our Upper Campus population. Lower Campus students will not be a part of this testing, but parents who would like to sign their child up to be a part of this pool may do so by emailing the Health Center at nurse@indianmountain.org.

MASKING

Per state guidelines, masks are still required for all individuals, vaccinated or not, indoors in a school setting. The current executive order requiring masks in Connecticut schools is in place until at least September 30. Should the mask mandate be lifted, vaccinated individuals will likely be able to remove their masks indoors while all unvaccinated individuals as well as vaccinated individuals who feel more comfortable with a mask, will remain masked throughout the day. There will be certain exceptions to these masking rules throughout the day, such as while riding school busses or during morning assemblies, so we ask all individuals to bring at least one mask to school. Assuming safe distance between individuals, masks will not be required outdoors.

In any setting, wearing a mask is a personal choice based on individual comfort levels, underlying health conditions, sharing homes with or being a caregiver for others who are immunocompromised or unable to be vaccinated, etc. Therefore we want it known that IMS respects the decisions and privacy of all individuals who feel more comfortable wearing a mask throughout the day.

ACADEMIC CALENDAR

You may find the details of the 2021-22 academic calendar on our [Veracross Parent Portal](#), but please be aware that dates and events are subject to change based on regional Covid cases in our area as well as CDC and State recommendations about travel and quarantining. We will be sure to regularly communicate any anticipated changes throughout the year in order to give families plenty of time to plan in advance.

For the 2021-22 school year, IMS plans to hold in-person classes between Thanksgiving and December break; however, international students who would otherwise lose out on their opportunity to travel home due to travel restrictions will be allowed to remotely attend classes during this time.

It is important to note that our policies are still being determined for the re-entry periods after school breaks, such as Thanksgiving and the winter vacation. Please be aware that we may need to build in remote learning periods in certain situations that involve travel. We will keep a close eye on the availability of vaccines for different age groups and the evolving travel guidelines. Please stay tuned for more information.

IMS OPENING OF SCHOOL PLAN - 2021-2022

QUARANTINING

In the event that a member of the IMS community is a close contact of a known positive Covid case, please take note of our protocol based on CDC guidance:

Vaccinated Individual - No quarantine required unless the individual becomes symptomatic.

Unvaccinated Individual - 14-day quarantine off campus or 10 days if a negative PCR test is received on day 7 and a mask is worn in school days 11-14.

Currently, we are requiring unvaccinated individuals who travel internationally to quarantine for 7 days after their return and submit a negative PCR test within that time as well.

HEALTH CENTER SPACES AND PROTOCOL

Similar to last year, IMS will hold one Health Center on the Lower Campus, one Health Center on the Upper Campus, as well as a Sick Center on the Upper Campus. The Health Centers will be available for typical ailments and check-ins, whereas the Sick Center will be for students potentially going through Covid protocol. On the Lower Campus, the Health Center will have a breakout room for students who may need to go through Covid protocol. Boarding families should note that the Sick Center is a temporary holding space in the event of certain illnesses and that regional guardians (within a short drive) are required for all boarding students with family outside of a five hour drive in the event that a student needs to be picked up and leave campus immediately.

Any student suspected of having Covid-19 will be isolated and tested. If the student is on campus when they become symptomatic (see below), a rapid test will be administered. If the test is negative, a PCR test will be done and the student will be sent home or off campus with their parents or regional emergency contact until the PCR results become available. If the student becomes symptomatic while at home they will be referred to their primary care provider for evaluation and Covid testing. Students must have a negative PCR test and be symptom free for 24 hours before returning to school. If a student tests positive, they will be instructed on isolation requirements by the Covid team and contact tracing will be done to notify individuals of possible exposure.

Covid symptoms include:

- Fever 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

IMS OPENING OF SCHOOL PLAN - 2021-2022

ATHLETICS

We currently anticipate a full competitive fall athletic season for students on the Upper Campus; however, competition and practices at other schools will be reserved for vaccinated individuals. All students will be required to wear masks on busses, regardless of vaccination status. Students will have access to locker rooms this year, which will be assigned by grade. We are pleased to announce that travel sports are once again open for vaccinated students. **For unvaccinated students on both campuses, we ask that requests to participate in outside sports be submitted [HERE](#) and approved by Max Abendroth, Director of Athletics.**

Lower School after-school sports will also open up again after a period of time, so please stay tuned for more information from Amy Vorenberg, Head of Lower School.

STUDENT LIFE

Dress Code - Our guidelines can be found on the [Veracross Parent Portal](#), in our Student and Parent Handbook, or [HERE](#).

Meals - Students in Grades 7-9 will have their meals in the dining hall. Our students in Grades 5-6 will pick up lunch in the dining hall and bring it to their pod to eat in classrooms or outdoors as weather permits. The Upper Campus will have special lunches on Monday and Friday for all students that will be brought outdoors (weather dependent) and broken up by advisory. Upper Campus students can once again bring their own lunch to school if they prefer, as long as the items are all nut free.

Lower Campus students will once again eat outdoors when possible, or in their classrooms.

Residential Life Modifications - We are still assessing the particular mitigation measures for our boarding community during residential hours and will keep students and families informed as we learn and plan more in the next few weeks.

Drop-Off/Pick-Up Locations - All **Upper Campus** students will now be dropped off at the main building Front Circle. Pick-up will be in two locations: the Student Center circle for students in Grades 7-9 who do not carpool with 5th or 6th grade students, and the main building Front Circle for 5th and 6th grade students and/or carpools (including those with older students).

Lower Campus students in Grades 1-4 will be dropped off and picked up by the main entrance. Pre-K and Kindergarten families are welcome to park in the lot nearest to the classrooms and parents may walk children to the classroom doors.

After-School programming for Lower School - We will return to enrichments and regular programming, but will have a two week safe transition period. We will start our After-School Program on Monday, September 27th.

Lower School Morning Circle will happen on Fridays outdoors. The last Friday of every month, parents are welcome to attend!

IMS OPENING OF SCHOOL PLAN - 2021-2022

OUTDOOR EDUCATION

At the moment, we anticipate moving forward with outdoor education trips, which will include an overnight trip for 9th graders in the fall. A message was sent in early August to 9th grade families by Director of Outdoor Adventure and Education, Eliza Statile, regarding their upcoming wilderness trip. Eliza will also communicate with other grades as trips approach.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

While our parent/community events are on hold for now, please take note of the following updates:

- **Boarding parents** may visit campus. We ask that you please adhere to the IMS Family Visitation Policy and Expectations (to be shared with boarding families in a separate communication), and contact Kyle Halloran with any questions.
- **Secondary School Fairs** on campus will recommence for our 9th grade students. We are requiring that all visitors are vaccinated and will take all necessary precautions to ensure safe interactions within our community. More information to come from our Director of Secondary School Advising, Lisa Schmitt.
- **Fall Parents Weekend** will be open to parents and approved guests for outdoor sports spectating, as well as an outdoor reception. We will not be holding an indoor “IMS Today” on Friday, October 22 due to health and safety concerns. We hope to have this portion of Parents Weekend in the spring term if conditions allow. We may be able to hold scheduled in-person conferences on a limited basis. Please stay tuned for more details in the coming weeks.

OPENING OF SCHOOL DETAILS

Information for the opening of school, including registration and orientation dates for both campuses, [can be found here](#).

- **Move-in Details** - Boarding parents can expect an email from Kyle Halloran in August outlining procedures for moving onto campus and signing up for move-in slots.

OTHER SAFETY MEASURES

Ventilation will remain the same as last year with window fans in each room. We will have fans both pulling air out of the room and bringing in fresh air from outside for ideal circulation.

Music/instrument instruction and singing will open up this year with a few modifications such as increased distancing and masks, when necessary.

Podding will apply for Pre-K - Grade 6 to begin the year and will be reassessed throughout the fall term. This is an added precaution being taken for our unvaccinated population.

What if we have a positive case? In the event of a positive case, our contact tracers will determine the “close contacts” and provide quarantine instructions as necessary. Vaccinated individuals who are asymptomatic are not considered close contacts and will be allowed to remain in school.



Questions: Kyle Halloran, Covid Coordinator and Assistant Head of School for Student Life
Kyle_Halloran@indianmountain.org