

## Overview of Buxton's COVID-19 Plan for the 2020-21 School Year

August 31, 2020 Edition

### **Reminders:**

- If you have not yet made arrangements for your student to be tested for Covid-19 in the week prior to arriving at Buxton, this is now a priority. You may wish to connect with your child's doctor to get a referral for testing to see if insurance can cover the test.
- Please make sure to send Lindsey a copy of the test results at least 24 hours prior to arrival. If you do not have the results yet, please stay in touch with Lindsey as we get close to your student's arrival date.
- If you have not yet returned the Procedures for Return, "Covid Customs," and Family Plan for Closure to Lindsey, please do so ASAP.
- Please be careful to continue quarantining as much as possible for these last weeks even if your child has received a negative result back from the Covid-19 test.

### Updates as of 8/28/20

#### Arrival Day:

When you arrive, please come first to Buxton's main building (the 291 South St. address, straight up the driveway), for a temperature check and health screening. After that, you'll be directed to the appropriate dorm for unloading. Remember that only students will be allowed inside the dorms and we are asking that only one adult come with the student.

#### Campus Use:

This question arose during the parent meetings this past week. With the exception of the kitchen, students will be able to go to all the areas of campus they normally would – library, studios, student lounges, etc.

There are some restrictions: students must wear masks indoors whenever they are not in their own room, even if they are the only person in an art studio or the library, to prevent any lingering air droplets being present if another person enters. The weight room will be limited to two people at a time, on a sign-up basis. The practice room will be limited to one person if the door is closed and two people if the door is open and a fan is running. And the Billiard room will probably only be open to students on weekends so that off-campus faculty have a place to work safely distanced during the day, in between their classes.

#### Flu Vaccinations:

There will be an on-campus flu clinic at the end of September for students and faculty. The article linked below is a good explanation of why the flu vaccine is particularly important this year, and also notes that Massachusetts is mandating it for students.

If your student has received the flu vaccine before returning to school, please have your doctor note that on their health form, or bring along the confirmation from wherever the flu shot was given for Buxton's health records for the state.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/25/health/flu-vaccine-coronavirus.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage>

### **Health Screenings:**

In addition to the daily screening survey for students on campus, a faculty member will do a daily temperature check during bed check for boarding students. Day student families are asked to check their student's temperature and have them fill out the daily screening survey before coming to campus (once they are commuting.)

### **Rooming:**

The dorm faculty have been working this week to configure the rooming arrangements and will let families know as soon as it is finalized. Parents asked during one of the parent meetings whether we'll have the flexibility to rearrange rooms if the pairings truly aren't copacetic, and we will try to accommodate that if needed (although we do hope to get through those first fragile couple of weeks before risking blending further.)

**Statistics:** Here are some of the regional background data sites to keep an eye on if you wish:

<https://www.publichealthwm.org/covid-19/data>

<https://www.williams.edu/coronavirus/dashboard/>

### **Symptomatic Protocols and Reporting:**

Our nurse, Kristin, is providing the faculty with a series of protocols to follow for any student running a fever or showing any symptoms of 'flu or Covid, (e.g. what level of fever is considered within a normal range and what should trigger moving a student to an isolation space.) For a general review of our plans, please see p. 10-11 in this document.

### **Testing:**

Despite the recent CDC change in guidelines about asymptomatic testing and although the state of MA is prioritizing targeted rather than general testing, the town of Williamstown has agreed that there is a valid public health rationale for supporting testing of the Buxton community upon our return to campus.

Our testing of each cohort as they return throughout the week of Sept. 6-12th will be done through Berkshire Medical Center. We hope to test students on the day of arrival as much as possible in order to receive results back as quickly as possible. We will obtain the test kits from B.M.C. and the actual swabbing will be done on campus by our nurse Kristin Kennedy.

### **Updates as of 8/21/20:**

#### **Activities:**

- Our sports league is creating a set of non-contact "competitions" that each school can conduct and submit to the league.

- Our African Dance and Drum program will be starting up right away this fall, initially outdoors, and then moving inside, masked, and distanced, when the weather requires.
- The weight room will have a sign-up system, with only two people allowed to use it at a time, masked, at >6 feet distance, and with the understanding that they disinfect equipment after using it.
- Musical Activities that involve singers and wind instruments will be scheduled for the early afternoons so that they can happen outdoors for as long as possible. We will evaluate later in the fall whether it is safe to move these activities inside, with more distance, or not.
- The alternative sports program can still make good use of our trail system, fields, and basketball court (for non-contact forms of basketball games or activities). We also plan to take a few students at a time, with safe distancing in the school vans, to outdoor spots off campus – Mt. Greylock, Hopkins Forest, etc. – for some variety.

Campus:

- We purchased two tents for outdoor dining on the patio and others to allow classes to move outdoors more easily.
- We are outfitting each classroom with omni-directional mics to make it easier for distance learners to hear discussions.
- Our maintenance staff will be cleaning classrooms each morning before classes start, and also cleaning campus bathrooms on a set schedule.

Classes:

- All new students and (almost) all returning students have their courses chosen and ready to be scheduled.
- Our class schedule will have slightly shorter (40 min.) class meetings, with 10 minutes in between classes to allow students (and faculty) a longer “mask break” outdoors, and to allow time to wipe down tables and chairs in between classes.
- We will be scheduling some classes on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings in the 7-9 pm time block. This will allow activities that normally happen in the evenings, but need to move outdoors this fall, to do so.

Communications: Buxton will send out regular updates to families that include health updates for our community as well as the regional health conditions. Please note that we will be keeping names of students private in these communiques, to honor privacy laws.

Covid task force: we welcome Kristin Kennedy, our new school nurse, to our planning and preparation.

Dining/Kitchen Requirements:

- Initially meals will be served in to-go and grab-and-go fashion. Once we are confident that community safety standards are being maintained, meals will be served buffet-style as a “walk-through,” with everyone masked while in the kitchen, and maintaining a 6 ft distance.
- We will be making use of disposable utensils and plates to minimize exposure to the kitchen staff from cleaning used items. Students will have the option of using metal table cutlery, provided by

the kitchen, for their own personal use if they agree to personally wash them between meals. One full set will be given to students upon request. There will be no personal dishwashing in the kitchen.

- Roommates will be assigned seating together at tables, potentially with another room when the two rooms also share bathrooms. Assignments will rotate in the first few weeks between eating indoors and outdoors. On good weather days, students who are assigned to eat inside may also choose to go with their roommates and “picnic” outside as long as they continue to observe social distancing from other sets of rooms.

Dorms: The fall semester will have students spread out more than usual in the dorms - most rooms will be doubles, with only a few triples planned. The dorm faculty are putting lots of extra thought into planning fall term rooms as a mix of returning and new students, knowing students will be living in those rooms for ten weeks. A housing survey was sent to all students, and the dorm faculty will be meeting soon to organize rooms.

Flu Vaccine: We would like all members of the community to receive this year’s flu vaccination if at all possible. This is highly advised by our medical consultants and the state of Massachusetts has, as anticipated, added the flu vaccine to the list of required vaccinations for school attendance. We are planning a flu vaccination clinic on campus for the end of September.

Testing:

- If a student shows symptoms of flu or Covid-19 during the semester, they will be tested as quickly as possible to ascertain which illness they are dealing with. Our nurse, Kristin Kennedy, is trained in testing procedures and we plan to have materials on campus to test for flu and Covid-19.

**\* Buxton’s Campus Reopening Plan from July – with August updates highlighted in bold \***

**Background:**

Our Buxton Covid Task Force has been working since mid-spring to research and review available information regarding Covid-19 and schools, consult with medical professionals both on our board and locally, and begin the process of drafting documents to help Buxton reopen in person in September. We have used information provided by the CDC, the state of Massachusetts, the state of Connecticut, our accrediting body NEASC, the association for independent schools (NAIS), Berkshire Medical Center, and a wide array of plans and information shared by regional colleges and universities.

The Buxton Task Force is comprised of Linda Burlak – Academic Dean and Science teacher, David Bluestein – Science and Math teacher, Micah Manary – Math teacher, Lindsey Wyatt – School coordinator, and Greg Roach – Head Chef, reporting to Associate Director Peter Beck and Director Franny Shuker-Haines.

Our medical consulting group includes Dr. Kathryn Wiseman, MD, Buxton's consulting pediatrician who also oversees our school nurse; Regina Ungewitter, Buxton's previous school nurse and Kristin Kennedy, our new nurse; Dr. Benjamin Graeme Fincke, MD, Buxton alum and board member, infectious disease specialist and associate professor at Boston University School of Public Health; Dr. Walter Kernan, MD, Buxton alum and board member, and professor of medicine at Yale University School of Medicine; and Cami Lenett, board member and former parent, and Nurse Manager at UCSF Medical Center.

One thing is clear: the Covid-19 situation in the U.S. continues to change on an almost-weekly basis. Our Task Force will continue to research and monitor what is happening locally and nationwide in the weeks between now and September, and on throughout the school year, revising and updating these policies whenever we learn anything that could increase the safety and comfort of the Buxton community.

### **Our Goals:**

Create a lively, engaging, academic and artistic experience based on campus while also:

- Protecting all, especially the most vulnerable, members of our Buxton community
- Reducing the chance of the Covid-19 virus entering the community
- Reducing possible transmission between community members
- Bringing alumni, guest artists, and Buxton family members in to the community virtually to share their talents and ideas
- Being able to respond to changes in the Covid-19 situation nimbly and flexibly.

### **Criteria for Opening the School:**

- State permission / Massachusetts and U.S. government regulations
- Access to testing before students & faculty return, and after everyone arrives
- Monitoring the specific Covid-19 situation in Massachusetts and Berkshire County.

### **Major Changes to the Schedule:**

- We will not have an off-campus fall home weekend this year. We will be planning a mid-term "long weekend break" in-house, combined with a Project Day.
- The in-person classes of the fall semester will end after Fall Arts when students travel home to their families. Fall Arts itself will probably have to be offered virtually to families.
- After the Thanksgiving week, the fall semester will wrap up with two more weeks of distance learning, including final projects/papers, self-evaluations, and report conferences.
- Winter term is likely to be quite different than it usually is. The winter/ spring schedule is still tentative and will depend on Covid-19 factors both around the country and regionally. We do not

expect to be able to include an out-of-town urban intensive trip this year, but may replace it with a local version or an expansion of the winter study courses, or both.

### **Preparing the Campus before students arrive**

- Reconfigure public spaces to allow for socializing while also making social distancing easier.
- Arrange the dormitories with students spread out at lower numbers per room, and separate (outside the dorm) quarantine spaces.
- Close the campus water fountains as a potential source of viral spread. (Asking students to bring their own reusable water bottles to campus as a safer hydration source.)
- Relocate the nurse's office to a less central position.
- Designate private spaces for tele-health medical and counseling appointments
- Tents for outdoor dining on the patio and others to allow classes to move outdoors more easily have been purchased.
- Outfit each entrance to buildings, each classroom and public space, and each vehicle on campus with spray bottles of disinfectant, cleaning supplies, and hand-sanitizer.
- Obtain stocks of PPE, disinfectant, etc. as mandated by the state
- Outfitting each classroom with omni-directional mics to make it easier for distance learners to hear discussions.

### **Pre-arrival requirements for Students and Faculty**

- Our summer mailing was sent out in early July laying out our current opening policies and expectations, including **Procedures for Return and "Covid Customs"** to be signed by both parents and students. *Please make sure that these forms are returned to Lindsey in the Buxton office by Aug. 1.*
- It also included a **Family Plan for Closure** for each student: If we have to close quickly, or the student has to leave campus, where will they go, and how? (Note: we are providing on-campus quarantine for students who need to do so until they can travel home safely.)
- During the final two weeks before school starts, we are asking students, faculty and staff to come as close as possible to "**quarantining**" at home.
- **Testing:** All students, faculty and staff will need to obtain Covid-19 tests and negative results a week before returning to school and the results need to be shared with the school.
- Transportation: We are planning an in-house pick-up of students from the larger area 3-4 hours away from campus who do not have access to family transportation.
- Students who have to fly are arriving early and quarantining locally (on campus if needed), or quarantining and doing distance learning, for fourteen days.
- Students and the adult bringing them must be non-symptomatic on the day of travel in addition to having had a negative Covid test. Parents need to have a back-up for bringing their student to campus if needed. (Note - if there is exposure to, or a diagnosis of, positive Covid in the household, the student should start school online until CDC guideline times have passed and they have had negative tests.)

## Opening Week

- Parent gatherings for returning parents were offered on Monday Aug. 24th or Wed. Aug. 26th via Zoom. New parent meetings will happen over the weekend of Sept. 6th, via Zoom.
- Students are returning on a more staggered schedule this fall to allow for testing, separation of cohorts, and communication about the year.
- **Our testing of each cohort as they return throughout the week of Sept. 6-12th will be done through Berkshire Medical Center. We hope to test students on the day of arrival as much as possible in order to receive results back as quickly as possible. We will obtain the test kits from B.M.C. and the actual swabbing will be done on campus by our nurse Kristin Kennedy.**
- Each cohort of staff, faculty, and students will receive mandatory Covid-19 training as they return (provided remotely for students who cannot attend in person.)

## First-Day activities (for all students)

- We are asking that only one household member travel with each student in a car and that both student and household member be symptom free, or wait to come until they are well.
- Each student needs to have their temperature checked and be screened for symptoms before entering campus. Per our medical consultants, no student can be dropped off if they have a fever or have symptoms of respiratory illness. **When you arrive, please come first to our “Main House” building at the top of the driveway at 291 South St. for this screening.**
- Cars will be unloaded to tables outside the dorm, and only students will enter the dormitories.
- New students will be pre-registered for their courses and their schedules pre-made to be provided to them and their parents (roommates and faculty advisors can collaboratively go over the schedule with each new student together upon arrival.)
- All paperwork and communication with our nurse, our school coordinator Lindsey, and the business office, should be done virtually ahead of arrival.

**In order to reduce the chance of entry of the virus onto campus and the chance of spread, we are putting into place a number of new expectations for the communal behaviors of all members of the Buxton community as we begin and continue on through the fall and year:**

## Community Culture:

- The fall semester will have students spread out more than usual in the dorms - most rooms will be doubles, with only a few triples planned. The dorm faculty are putting lots of extra thought into planning fall term rooms as a mix of returning and new students knowing students will be living

in those rooms for ten weeks. **The dorm faculty met Wednesday, are in the process of finalizing the rooming arrangements, and will share them as soon as possible.**

- Students, faculty, and staff will be asked to fill out a **short daily screening survey** to monitor possible symptoms and will be required to self-isolate or quarantine if that screening indicates any concerns.
- **A faculty member will do a daily temperature check during bed check for boarding students, and day student families are asked to check their student's temperature and have them fill out the daily screening survey before coming to campus (once they are commuting.)**
- Boarding students will remain on campus completely, aside from necessary medical appointments. (Day students: see separate description below.)
- The faculty will continue to try to socially isolate in terms of any off-campus contact as much as possible. Staff will do the same, but also aim to have minimal contact with students and faculty, including working from home in some cases.
- Students, faculty, and staff will wear masks in all shared/public indoor spaces, including dorm hallways, in bathrooms as much as possible, and whenever social distancing is not possible outdoors.
- Classes will meet outdoors as much as possible, particularly while the weather remains good.
- When meeting indoors, classrooms will be set up following the MA state guidelines.
- Roommates will be assigned seating together at tables, potentially with another room when the two rooms also share bathrooms. Assignments will rotate in the first few weeks between eating indoors and outdoors. On good weather days, students who are assigned to eat inside may also choose to go with their roommates and “picnic” outside as long as they continue to observe social distancing from other sets of rooms.
- Our daily routines will include a higher level of regular disinfection. Between classes, particularly after the last class of the day, and at the end of study hall every night, each classroom will be wiped down. Work jobs will happen every night and include significant cleaning of bathrooms, and shared spaces. Work Program will include a significant disinfecting regime for cleaning crews. Our maintenance staff will be cleaning classrooms each morning before classes start, and also cleaning campus bathrooms on a set schedule.
- Our class schedule will have slightly shorter (40 min.) class meetings, with 10 minutes in between classes to allow students (and faculty) a longer “mask break” outdoors, and to allow time to wipe down tables and chairs in between classes.
- We will be scheduling some classes on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings in the 7-9 pm time block. This will allow activities that normally happen in the evenings, but need to move outdoors this fall, to do so.
- Evening study hall will be spread out between room study, activities, and classroom spaces to minimize the number of students in any one space, and allow students to have times when they can study in their rooms and don't have to remain masked through the evening.
- When available, we would like all members of the community to receive this year's flu vaccination if at all possible. This is highly advised by our medical consultants and the state of Massachusetts has, as anticipated, added the flu vaccine to the list of required vaccinations for school attendance. We are planning a flu vaccination clinic on campus for the end of September.



- Buxton will send out regular updates to families that include health updates for our community and the larger regional health conditions.. Please note that we will be keeping names of students private in these communiques, to honor privacy laws.

### **Day Students:**

- At the beginning of the school year, local colleges will be bringing students back to the town and region all at the same time. During the initial few days when Buxton’s returning students arrive on campus before classes begin, and throughout the first two weeks of classes, we are asking that day students either remain on campus as temporary boarders, or make use of distance learning from home.
- After the first couple of weeks, if the regional situation seems reasonably stable, then day students may be present on campus for the day and return to their own home to be with family and sleep in their own beds with the understanding that:
  - Other family members will take all possible precautions in their own workplace/school/the larger world to prevent transmission not only back to their own family but also to the larger Buxton community
  - Our expectation (as defined by our local pediatrician and our medical consulting team) is that day students will “shelter at home” when they are home, and will absolutely not be going into town, restaurants, or other public places, or spending time indoors or unmasked with local friends.

### **Dining/Kitchen Requirements**

- Expect that all fall there will be no students allowed behind the serving counter or in the pantries or refrigerators other than students specifically working under the guidance of the kitchen staff. Students will not be able to hang out in the kitchen.
- Our head chef, Greg Roach, is setting up a variety of detailed safety measures for the kitchen and for the kitchen staff that will be laid out clearly at the start of school.
- Everyone must wash their hands if at all possible, or at a minimum thoroughly clean with hand-sanitizer, before any and each entrance to the kitchen.
- Initially meals will be served in to-go and grab-and-go fashion. Once we are confident that community safety standards are being maintained, meals will be served buffet-style as a “walk-through,” with everyone masked while in the kitchen, and maintaining a 6 ft distance.
- We will be making use of disposable utensils and plates to minimize exposure to the kitchen staff from cleaning used items. Students will have the option of using metal table cutlery, provided by the kitchen, for their own personal use if they agree to personally wash them between meals. One full set will be given to students upon request. There will be no personal dishwashing in the kitchen.
- We are hoping to have a large tent with tables on the patio and possibly a table in the Student Lounge to spread students and faculty out beyond just the dining room space.

- Students will have assigned seats, probably with roommates/close room pods, for at least the first two weeks.

### **Activities:**

It's clear that there cannot be a competitive sports season with other schools in the fall. However we hope to develop a good active sports/physical activity culture for those initial lovely weeks of the fall, along with multiple other activities.

- Our coaches are designing a non-contact, zone-based, form of soccer for fun and for enhancing skills.
- Our sports league is creating a set of non-contact "competitions" that each school can conduct and submit to the league.
- Our African Dance and Drum program will be starting up right away this fall, initially outdoors, and then moving inside, masked, and distanced, when the weather requires.
- The alternative sports program can still make good use of our trail system, fields, and basketball court (for non-contact forms of basketball games or activities). There will be a mountain-biking activity happening regularly. We also plan to take a few students at a time, with safe distancing in the school vans, to outdoor spots off campus – Mt. Greylock, Hopkins Forest, etc. – for some variety.
- The weight room will have a sign-up system, with only two people allowed to use it at a time, masked, at >6 feet distance, and with the understanding that they disinfect equipment after using it.
- Musical Activities that involve singers and wind instruments will be scheduled for the early afternoons so that they can happen outdoors for as long as possible. We will evaluate later in the fall whether it is safe to move these activities inside, with more distance, or not.
- Many of the clubs that began this spring during distance learning will continue on campus!

### **What happens if someone shows symptoms of Flu or Covid-19?**

- Any student whose daily screening indicates, or who is showing, symptoms of flu or Covid-19 will be moved to one of our on-campus quarantine spaces. If the student lives nearby and can be picked up to return home safely, that is encouraged; if not, they can live in the quarantine spaces as needed while they recover. (Faculty and staff members would quarantine at home.)
- Our nurse and faculty are being outfitted with PPE to check on students in quarantine regularly and disinfect the spaces each time they visit. Students living in quarantine areas will also have access to disinfectant supplies.
- Students will be tested as quickly as possible to ascertain which illness they are dealing with. Our nurse, Kristin Kennedy, is trained in testing procedures and we plan to have materials on campus to test for flu and Covid-19.
- Contact tracing: Roommates and close acquaintances will be asked to self-isolate in their dorm rooms until we know the test results.

- All students will be able to continue their classes through distance learning for however long is needed. Students isolating in rooms and/or in the quarantine spaces will be brought food by adults, checked on regularly, and have 24-hour access to faculty “on call.”

### **What happens if there is a positive Covid-19 test result for a student?**

- Any space the student has been in will be closed for 24 hours, ventilated, and then disinfected. (CDC guidelines)
- If a student who tests positive needs to remain on campus, they will remain in a quarantine space, we will monitor them carefully, and follow the best practices as known at that time to help students recover during their illness.
- The student’s roommate(s) will also be relocated to a separate quarantine area. If their family wishes, they can then be picked up to return home to quarantine and be tested.
- This may require that all other students remain in their individual rooms during those 24 hours and switch to distance learning for that day. During this time, the kitchen will deliver meals and faculty members will stay in good contact with all students.
- We will follow all guidelines from the CDC and the state, along with advice from our medical professionals, as to how long a student should remain in quarantine (on campus or at home) as they recover.
- All families will be notified.

Going forward from that positive test result until we know the campus is clear again:

- Day students should either stay on campus, or stay at home and do distance learning, to avoid any risk of transmission between communities.
- We will do another round of testing for all students, faculty and staff.
- Kitchen service may move to shifts, with students eating at assigned, socially-distanced, locations to be further separated while eating, since that requires being unmasked.
- Some faculty members may teach from home, and some classes may need to be split into even smaller sections to increase social distancing.

### **What happens if Buxton has to close?**

- Closure would happen either because the state requires it or if there are multiple cases on campus and it seems that the situation cannot be contained. In this situation, we would be advised by our public health officials; we expect to have a few days notice to act on plans.
- Each family has been asked to complete a plan for closure so that families know where students will go. Any students who cannot return home safely (for travel or family reasons) will be allowed to remain and quarantine on campus until they can travel home safely.
- International students will also have a closure plan in place and we will assist them in following it.

- We would encourage families to take all their student's belongings home at that point, just in case the school has to remain closed. (This is one reason for asking students to bring minimal belongings this fall.)
- We will have a parallel plan in place for both our daily schedule and course curriculum so that if we have to close mid-semester we can move quickly and easily into a robust schedule of distance academics and activities.

**Conclusion:**

Covid-19 risk cannot be eliminated entirely. But it can be reduced, and these policies are all designed to help Buxton reopen in person as safely as we can. The Buxton Task Force, along with its team of medical and educational consultants, has designed these policies to reduce the risk of Buxton community members becoming infected with Covid-19, and also to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus. The Task Force has written or compiled these policies, but it is up to every single member of the Buxton community to live by them. Our best hope for a healthy semester together in person relies on everyone doing their part to keep themselves and each other safe. That means following these policies when we are together, when we are on our own, before we come to campus, and when we are on campus. Keeping each other—the students in our community; the adults in our community; the families, friends, and caretakers in our community—safe means taking these precautions as seriously as possible, and living by them as well as we can. The Buxton Covid Task Force has helped set us up for the opportunity to learn and live together this fall; the rest is really in all of our hands. We cannot wait to see everyone again soon!