



Fall 2020 School Reopening: Frequently Asked Questions

As we continue our preparations for the opening of school in September, we wanted to respond to some of the more frequently asked questions. We are still awaiting final guidelines for the reopening of school from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The constantly-changing circumstances of the pandemic demand that we be flexible and prepare for multiple scenarios; we appreciate your patience and partnership as we work to fully educate your daughters in these uncertain times.

Opening of School

Q1: Why are students coming back to campus on October 5 rather than September 8 as originally planned?

A: During September, students will have the opportunity to be on campus one day each week with their grade, and will be learning from home (“distance learning”) the other four days. As outlined in our [June 28 letter](#) to parents, this unexpected schedule change is due to a delay in the installation of the new heating and ventilation system, which will improve the air quality in the main school building.

Q2: How certain are you of the October 5 date? Is there any chance that this plan might change?

A: We have repeated assurances from the equipment manufacturers and contractors that the schedule is realistic and attainable.

Q3: Did you consider other options, such as having students occupy the Science Wing and other parts of the school while the work is done, or lengthening Christmas break?

A: At the point in time when we made the decision, we considered many options: installation over Christmas break, postponement until the summer of 2021, etc. The benefits of improved ventilation within the school as we operate during the pandemic were considered essential to the health of our students and their families.

Q4: When will more detail be available regarding new student orientation?

A: New Student Orientation will take place on Wednesday, September 2 (grades 7-8) and Thursday, September 3 (grades 9-11). Details regarding this event will be released by the beginning of August.

Q5: How will Ursuline build community and foster the relationships between students and faculty in the early weeks of school?

A: Creating community and providing continuity in both academic and social relationships is an important goal of Ursuline's fall plan. There is great richness in the strength of the relationships that students share with one another and with faculty members. By allowing for time both on and off campus each week, opportunities are created to humanize the learning experience and build important foundations for community engagement. Students will have the opportunity to engage with their classmates each week on campus at Ursuline enjoying a regular schedule of activities to support and enhance their social-emotional and physical well-being.

Health Protocols

Q6: Please explain how social distancing will be maintained in classrooms and hallways.

A: We will be instituting seating plans and plentiful signage to ensure compliance with CDC and state requirements for social distancing. Those details will be communicated before the start of school.

Q7: If Ursuline reopens for on-campus instruction but it is not desirable for a family to send a student to school (for example, because of family health concerns), will a student be able to continue her studies from home rather than in person?

A: Yes, the administration will work with students and families on a case by case basis if there are health issues that require a student to learn from home (“concurrent distance learning”).

Q8: How will social distancing, mask-wearing, hand-washing, and staying home if sick be enforced with students and teachers/staff beyond just providing a recommendation to follow these CDC guidelines? What will the ramifications be for students and families that violate the rules?

A: In addition to having communications and signage that emphasize the importance of the guidelines regarding mask-wearing, hand-washing, etc., we will be asking all students, families, and employees to agree to a code of conduct to mitigate risk within our community. We are seeking to partner with all families to assess their daughters' health on

a daily basis and keep them home if sick or if exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID. Clear instructions and protocols for these decisions will be communicated before the start of school.

Logistics

Q9: What will the schedule be for the new school year?

A: We are still working on the specifics, but we are planning a schedule of class times and rotation that maximizes concern for student health and well-being while facilitating learning.

Q10: Will transportation be available during September during the one-day-per-week period?

A: Ursuline students may ride bus transportation offered by Catholic Memorial (three bus routes) and offered by Xaverian (one bus route). We are awaiting final confirmation from both schools on bus transportation, pending final state guidelines.

Q11: How will lunch be handled?

A: At this time, we are working with SLA, our food service provider, on the possibility of single serving hot and cold lunch options. We are awaiting additional guidelines to determine which spaces may be utilized for lunch.

Academic Instruction

Q12: How will distance learning in September differ from March-May? We need more “face” time teacher-led instruction than we had.

A: Our technology team, along with our academic dean and faculty, are evaluating audio/visual solutions that incorporate and complement the software applications used in the spring (Google Classroom and Zoom) to provide all students, on- or off- campus, with a combination of face-to-face classroom experiences and online learning. Several options are being trialed now so that teachers will have ample time to integrate new technology into their classes.

Q13: How are teachers preparing for the possibility that on-campus instruction will be limited beyond September, in light of the possibility of a second wave of the virus?

A: Our teachers have access to professional development opportunities sponsored by several leaders in on-line learning to help them design their on-line instruction according to best practice. Ursuline faculty are also participating in subject-specific instruction coupled with technology, such as that provided to the math department from the Bureau of Educational Research. Our expectation is that teachers will build professional knowledge as a

community when they share their learning experiences at our August meetings. Conscious that we may have to shift platform formats throughout the year, Ursuline will expect teachers to develop consistent course instruction and project work to benefit the students' continuous learning regardless of physical location.

Sports/Extracurriculars/Service Requirements

Q14: Will competitive sports happen in the fall?

A: At this point in time (July 21, 2020), we are awaiting the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) decision on the fall athletic season. It is anticipated that they will release their decision by the end of July.

Q15: What will community service opportunities and requirements look like since students' ability to engage in service is limited or prohibited by current conditions and many opportunities have been cancelled?

With many service sites closed or significantly impacted by COVID-19, Ursuline's Campus Ministers will cultivate and collect new opportunities that can be done either safely in the community or remotely. Additional information regarding specific questions for each class will be shared with families at the beginning of the school year. While the service landscape has been altered in the past several months, there is more need than ever to assist and support others in our wider community through service work.

Q16: In light of the likelihood that in-person instruction will be disrupted in the coming school year, how will extracurricular activities (drama, clubs, etc.) be formatted and supported so that they can continue to operate?

A: We are eager to have the students fully engaged in extracurriculars and offer support to the faculty leaders to determine how they want to format these activities during the September phase.

Costs

Q17: Is tuition being prorated because of remote learning?

A: Tuition will not be prorated due to distance learning. We have invested in additional technology resources to make our continuous learning plan as strong as possible. While our hope is that the distance learning period is very limited during the 2020-2021 school year, we are committed to delivering an academic program that offers the quality expected of an Ursuline education whether students are on campus, at home, or a combination of the two.