The Burkard School Framework for Safe School Reopening
“This situation is evolving by the hour. Every school is struggling with what decisions are the ‘right’ ones to make and, in many instances, we may not know what is ‘right’ until we have the benefit of hindsight. Even then, we may not know. With that in mind, the ‘right’ decision is one that considers public health guidance, the law, your school’s mission and culture, and your community’s safety. What is ‘right’ for one school may not be right for another.”

National Association of Independent Schools
The Burkard School’s mission is to provide the absolute best educational environment for students who struggle with self-regulation, social-emotional learning, and executive functioning, and to grow that platform to reach as many students as possible.
As a private school, TBS’s reopening is governed by the San Mateo County Health Officer, Dr. Scott Morrow. Our framework must meet his guidelines.

The San Mateo County Office of Education has been very supportive of private schools in the county, and has held 3 separate webinars thus far on school closures and reopening specifically for private schools.

We have compiled information from these sources as well as articles and guidelines from sources such as the CDC, the California Department of Education, and the special needs community.

Lastly, we’ve listened to the experts on our students – our parents and faculty.
The purpose of this tool is to assist administrators in making (re)opening decisions regarding K-12 schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to check with state and local health officials and other partners to determine the most appropriate actions while adjusting to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the local community.

**Should you consider opening?**
- Will reopening be consistent with applicable state and local orders?
- Is the school ready to protect children and employees at higher risk for severe illness?
- Are you able to screen students and employees upon arrival for symptoms and history of exposure?

**Are recommended health and safety actions in place?**
- Promote healthy hygiene practices such as hand washing and employees wearing a cloth face covering, as feasible
- Intensify cleaning, disinfection, and ventilation
- Encourage social distancing through increased spacing, small groups and limited mixing between groups, if feasible
- Train all employees on health and safety protocols

**Is ongoing monitoring in place?**
- Develop and implement procedures to check for signs and symptoms of students and employees daily upon arrival, as feasible
- Encourage anyone who is sick to stay home
- Plan for if students or employees get sick
- Regularly communicate and monitor developments with local authorities, employees, and families regarding cases, exposures, and updates to policies and procedures
- Monitor student and employee absences and have flexible leave policies and practices
- Be ready to consult with the local health authorities if there are cases in the facility or an increase in cases in the local area

**SCHOOLS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

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**DO NOT OPEN**

**MEET SAFEGUARDS FIRST**

**OPEN AND MONITOR**
San Mateo County Office of Education Guidelines
Governing Principles from the San Mateo County Office of Education:

- “The San Mateo County Pandemic Recovery Framework for Schools calls on school leaders, elected school board members, and education professionals across all content areas to begin their return to school planning by identifying students with the most urgent learning needs and then building the Return to School Plan in a way that unequivocally meets these needs.”

- “It is important that decisions about students’ educational programs are grounded in equity and aim to provide every student what they need when they need it. If we set an ambitious goal that ensures every student is on track for success, **academically, socially, and emotionally** by the end of 2022, our decision making must be notably bold and courageous.” (emphasis hers)

- “The behaviors and actions required in the Four Pillars are grounded in science and represent best practices in preventing the spread of communicable disease.”

- “Effective implementation of the Four Pillars can significantly reduce community spread within a school so that in-person learning can be sustained with integrity.”

SMCOE Pandemic Recovery Framework
SMC’s Four Pillars for a Safe Return to School

Safe Return to School

- Health & Hygiene
- Face Coverings
- Physical Distancing
- Limit Gatherings
Pillar One: Health & Hygiene Protocols

Daily Hygiene Routines

- Our classrooms already have sinks. Touchless hand sanitizer dispensers will be posted at the entrance of each classroom and common areas.
- Teachers will build classroom routines for hand washing upon entering and leaving the classroom and create regular cleaning practices for desks, equipment, writing utensils, and other classroom materials.

Check for Signs and Symptoms

- Each family must answer COVID protocol questions in car line before leaving the car.
- We will monitor staff and students throughout the day for signs of illness; send home students and staff with a fever of 100.4 degrees or higher, cough, or other COVID-19 symptoms. During the school day, any student or staff member who exhibits any signs of COVID or illness will be brought to separate room and parents will be called for immediate pickup.

Temperature Taking

- Students will be required to go through the car line and have their temperature taken before leaving the car. Students who have a temperature of 100.4 or appear sick in any way will not be allowed out of their cars.

Essential Protective Equipment (EPE)

- We have procured face coverings, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, gloves for specific activities, standards-based cleaning materials, and face shields.
- Sneeze guards will be placed at every student and teacher desk.
Pillar One: Health & Hygiene Protocols

Cleaning & Disinfecting

- We have ordered a hospital-grade disinfecting system, the Clorox Total 360 machine, for regular and thorough disinfecting.

- We will implement an explicit and detailed cleaning plan that includes a frequent schedule for high traffic areas. We have devoted a full-time staff member, Michael Suruy, to be in charge of sanitizing common areas all day long.

- Bathroom use will be one-at-a-time with sanitization happening at least every 30 minutes.

Indoor Ventilation

- HEPA air purifiers have been ordered for every classroom.

- According to the SMC Pandemic Recovery Framework, maximizing outside airflow is the simplest and most efficient way to maintain a healthy classroom environment. We will run the HVAC fans which also have filters on them.

Limit Sharing of Material and Equipment

- We will limit sharing of objects and equipment, such as toys, games, and art supplies to the extent practicable. But where allowed, we will clean and disinfect between uses.

- We will suspend the use of drinking fountains and instead encourage the use of reusable water bottles.
Pillar Two: Face Coverings

- Per San Mateo County’s Health Officer, a “Face Covering” means a covering made of cloth, fabric, or other soft or permeable material, without holes, that covers only the nose and mouth and surrounding areas of the lower face. A Face Covering may include a scarf or bandana or a homemade covering made from a t-shirt, sweatshirt, or towel, held on with rubber bands or otherwise. A face-covering should not be medical-grade or use a valve device. A “Face Covering” should be considered essential clothing that is laundered at home by hand or machine washing and worn to school each day.

- For instructional purposes, teachers may work with students side by side as necessary, as long as both student and teacher are wearing a face covering.

- All staff will use cloth face coverings unless Cal/OSHA standards require respiratory protection. Teachers can use face shields, which enable younger students to see their teachers’ faces and to avoid potential barriers to phonological instruction. Face shields will include a cloth drape attached across the bottom and tucked into the shirt.
Pillar Two: Face Coverings

- 81% of TBS families reported that their child is likely or very likely to wear a mask at school.
- Our behavior specialists have been in close contact with the families to help support mask-wearing before school even starts. Our highly-experienced behavior specialists are expert at motivating wanted behavior from our students. Wearing a mask is a similar challenge to them in helping the students stay at their desks, keep from blurtng out, do non-preferred tasks, etc. The first week of school will be fully devoted to norming the students to the new hygiene practices that will be in place, including the wearing of masks.
- We intend to help our students by working up to a full school day after 3 weeks. The first week of school will be very short days (dismissal before lunch), the second week of school will go a bit longer (dismissal after lunch), and the third week of school there will be dismissal 30 minutes early.
- We will have clearly marked “mask break” areas outside so that students have a safe space where they can take a break from mask wearing, to help our students’ stamina with wearing masks all day long.
- Teachers will develop activities and classroom protocols to help students understand the rationale for wearing face coverings and to develop classroom culture that supports face coverings. Teachers are also encouraged to follow an incremental implementation for wearing face coverings during class time. The County’s suggested implementation is below:
  - 25% of instructional time: TK/Kindergarten students
  - 50% of instructional time: First grade students
  - 75% of instructional time: Second grade students
- Our behavioral specialists will be working with each family with the goal of 100% compliance, 100% of the time, across grade levels.
Pillar Three: Physical Distancing

- At TBS, class sizes are already very small – up to just 10 students in a classroom. Our rooms, on the other hand, are large and can accommodate 6 foot spacing between each student and teacher. We will have 6’ distance between desks in the classroom, in addition to sneeze guards.

- We will keep each classroom a separate cohort by staggering start time, lunch, and recess so that each cohort does not have contact with others. Playground monitors will remind the students to keep 6’ distance from one another.

- We doubled the number of lunch tables we have so that students can maintain 6’ spacing while eating lunch outdoors. In between lunch and recess, the play structure and lunch tables will be sanitized with the Clorox Total 360 machine.

- We are fortunate that our classrooms all open out to our half-acre playground, so there is plenty of room for entrance and egress while maintaining 6’ spacing. There are no hallways at TBS. For pick-up and drop-off, we will require families to stay in their cars until the health screening is complete, so there will not be a congregation of people at the entrance. In addition, we will stagger school start and end times.
Pillar Four: Limit Gatherings

- Because COVID-19 is primarily spread from person to person, it is essential to limit gatherings of people. Note, the instruction of students at school is not considered a gathering.

- Staff and other meetings will be held remotely.
A Step-By-Step Approach

Three Steps: Each a minimum of three weeks

Graduates from most restrictive in Step One to least restrictive in Step Three

Each individual school site administrator leads their campus through the steps based on local school, district, and county conditions.
Faculty Testing

- Upon any sign of illness, students and staff will be sent home with the expectation that they will need clearance from their doctor to return to school. If their doctor orders a COVID test, then that student or staff member must be rapidly tested and must follow the following California Department of Public Health guidelines in order to return to school:
  - Individuals who test positive for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and who **have had symptoms**, may return to work or school when:
    - At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared, AND
    - At least 24 hours have passed with no fever (without use of fever-reducing medications), AND
    - Other symptoms have improved.
  - Individuals who test positive for SARS-CoV-2 who **never develop symptoms**, may return to work or school 10 days after the date of their first positive test for SARS-CoV-2.

- Staff will be tested before returning to school, and a rotation of 25% of staff will be tested every two weeks. Staff may go through their primary care doctor or through one of the testing facilities listed on the State of California COVID Resource page: [https://covid19.ca.gov/testing-and-treatment/#top](https://covid19.ca.gov/testing-and-treatment/#top)
Faculty Training

At TBS, we have a small staff of 15 who have been instrumental in helping to develop our COVID plans and protocols. They are a driving force in keeping themselves and their students as safe as possible, and are asking for more safety protocols, not fewer. Staff is highly motivated to follow all safety protocols. We will review all protocols at our weekly staff meeting.
## Step One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Visitors</th>
<th>No Extracurriculars</th>
<th>No Gatherings</th>
<th>Remote Meetings</th>
<th>Reinforce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Allow no on-campus visitors including volunteers; parents who support direct instruction in preschool classrooms are exempt.</td>
<td>• Pause all extracurricular activities</td>
<td>• Pause all gatherings (a gathering is any meeting or social activity outside of classroom instruction that includes more than four people)</td>
<td>• Convene all meetings remotely</td>
<td>• Reinforce the wearing of face coverings by staff, students, and any others who enter the campus.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• No tours during school hours; students will still shadow.</td>
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Step Two

- Open the campus only to visitors and volunteers who directly support instruction with expectations that all will honor the Four Pillars.
- Restrict extracurricular activities to those that directly support and intersect with instruction, with expectations that any in-person activities will honor the Four Pillars.
- Restrict gatherings to groups smaller than four people.
- Convene most meetings remotely, specifically any that include groups larger than ten.
Step Three

- Allow volunteers and visitors on campus with strict adherence to the Four Pillars
- Restrict instructional and interest-based extracurricular activities to those that can be implemented with small groups who can physically distance
- If county health orders allow, convene high priority gatherings comprised of no more than 50 people, including sport and performance-based activities that can be conducted within the guidance of the Four Pillars
Cases and Contact Tracing in the School Community

If students, teachers, and staff present with symptoms of fever and/or respiratory infection, we will send them home immediately. We will separate them from others in an isolation space or “sick room” established on campus until they go home.
Confirmed Case at School

A **Case** refers to a person who tests positive.

**When a school has a confirmed Case:** The Burkard School administrators will take the following steps recommended by the San Mateo County Health if one student, teacher, or other staff member is confirmed positive for COVID-19:

- The Head School, Agapi Burkard, will communicate with the Office of the County Superintendent, who can then contact San Mateo County Health department.
- Administration will work with the infected individual to confirm they are under medical care and have a plan to self isolate according to the **CDC’s protocol**.
- Administration will confirm that other members of the household who are also part of the school community remain at home in self-quarantine per County Health guidelines.
- Staff will take immediate measures to sanitize and disinfect the school property impacted by the case.
- Administration will determine whether disinfecting measures can be implemented without temporarily closing the school campus or if temporary closure is necessary.
- The Head of School will continue to consult with the County Superintendent and County Health officials as needed.
- Administration will Communicate with the school community that a confirmed Case has been identified and outline the actions being taken to ensure a safe return to school.
- Administration will Maintain privacy of health and medical information for all individuals at all times per the ADA and FERPA laws.
- Once steps of the protocol are completed, resume school operations.
A **Close Contact** refers to a person who was in direct and close contact (less than 6 feet for more than 15 minutes).

**When a school community has a confirmed Close Contact:** The Burkard School administrators will take the following steps recommended by the San Mateo County Health if one student, teacher or staff member is confirmed to have been in **direct and close Contact** with someone who is confirmed positive for COVID-19:

- The Head of School, Agapi Burkard, will confirm that the Close Contact and other members of the household who are also part of the school community remain at home in self-quarantine per County Health guidelines.

- Administration will take immediate measures to sanitize and disinfect the school property impacted by the Close Contact.

- Administration will determine whether cleaning measures can be implemented without temporarily closing the school campus or if temporary closure is necessary.

- The Head of School will continue to consult with the County Superintendent and County Health officials as needed.

- Administration will communicate with the school community that a confirmed Close Contact has been identified and outline the actions being taken to ensure a safe return to school.

- Administration will maintain privacy of health and medical information for all individuals at all times per the ADA and FERPA laws.

- Administration will prevent discrimination against students who (or whose families) were or are diagnosed with COVID-19.

- Once steps of the protocol are completed, resume school operations.
**Indirect Contact at School**

**Indirect Contacts** are people who may have been in proximity to a Close Contact.

The Burkard School administrators will take the following steps recommended by the San Mateo County Health if the school community has individuals who suspect they may be an Indirect Contact:

- The school principal or district administrator should gather enough information from the individual to confirm their status as an Indirect Contact.

- Advise the individual identified as an Indirect Contact to continue practicing hygiene protocols and to closely monitor their health, staying alert to onset of fever or flu-like symptoms.

- If the person is not feeling well or is experiencing cold, flu, or other symptoms, they should stay home from school or work and contact their primary care provider.
TBS-Specific Concerns and Protocols
Family Involvement

- In-person learning at TBS can only work if parents are our partners. In order to mitigate risk of infection, parents will be asked to:
  - Keep your child home if showing *any* signs of illness.
  - Be available to pick up their child on short notice if your child:
    - Shows signs of illness during the school day
    - Refuses to wash hands
    - Has physical aggression necessitating close contact
- Updates will be made to the Family Handbook to reflect these changes.
**Summary of TBS Safety Protocols**

- Taking everyone’s temperature before exiting cars; asking each family the standard medical questionnaire "have you had any of the following symptoms in the last 72 hours, have you been exposed to anyone with those symptoms in the last two weeks"
- Staggering school start times so there isn't a gathering of people by the gate all at once
- Strict adherence to send-home policies (if student refuses to wash hands or is physically aggressive, or displays any sign of illness)
- Michael Suruy, aftercare leader and school secretary, sanitizing on campus all day with Clorox Total 360 system.
- Constant yard monitor (Michael, Admin) to keep students distanced during body breaks
- Removing items from classrooms that cannot be sanitized
- The first week of school focused entirely on teaching safety and responsibility to students and incorporating safety expectations into all subjects to set the tone at the outset of the school year
- Staggering recess so that the classroom cohorts remain stable
- Three-sided sneeze guards on every student and teacher desk; 6’ spacing; no shared seating
- HEPA air filters in each classroom, in staff room, and in reception area
- Frequent Faculty Testing
Triggers for Switching to Distance Learning

For our unique students, in-person learning is necessary in order to maintain their social-emotional wellbeing. During distance learning from March – June, we found that while we could meet their academic needs fairly well, we simply could not adequately meet their social-emotional and behavioral needs through Zoom. We saw students who had been thriving at school become almost uncommunicative. We had families struggle desperately to cope with their child whose behavior was wreaking havoc on the family unit because of the lack of structure our school provides.

As a 501(c)(3), our mission is to provide the best possible educational environment to these vulnerable students. We are thus hyper-focused on doing everything we can to stay in-person for as long as possible. This is why we will be keeping our small cohorts extremely stable: if we have to move one class to distance learning due to an outbreak, we can clean and re-open our other classes.

If at any time we feel that our students are best served by moving back to distance learning, we can quickly pivot to that model, having taught remotely for 3 months. Administration will be listening closely to the parents and faculty to determine if we need to move back to distance learning. The criteria will remain: “Can we keep our students and staff safe with our protocols?” If the answer is no, we will close the school and move to distance learning.
Communication

The Head of School will alert all families and staff about confirmed cases and close contacts via email. Privacy will be maintained by disclosing only that a certain classroom has been affected. No identifying information will be given about the case or close contact.