

OSA Emergency School Health-Related Closure and Phased Reopening Plan



Summary Statement

Per Governor Raimondo's official declarations made on Wednesday, March 18, 2020 and April 23, 2020 all Rhode Island school buildings are to be closed as of Monday, March 23, until the end of the 2019-2020 Regular School Year. Ocean State Academy therefore implemented a distance learning model, whereby our students have continued to receive instruction and therapeutic services during regular school hours and beyond. Now we are planning for the RIDOH guided, phased reopening of our school building starting with our ESY program and moving into the 2020-2021 school year. We want to assure our entire OSA community that every effort is being made to make this transition as seamless as possible, that our facility has undergone an intensive, multi-step, deep cleaning process by a RIDOH trained cleaning company and that we are prepared for Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the educational continuum.

Home Instruction: Scope & Intent

300.115(C) Continuum of special education placements and services: homebound and hospital instructional programs. (6.5.2(E))

(a) General. In determining the educational services for a child with a disability in homebound and hospital instruction programs, the IEP Team shall determine what constitutes an appropriate program, including the consideration of whether the child is in need of an extended school year program, as required by § 300.106.

(b) Homebound Instructional Programs

(1) The home atmosphere shall be conducive to learning. Special conditions recommended by the physician shall be observed.

(2) The minimum number of hours of instruction shall be five (5) hours per school week at the elementary level of education and six (6) hours at the secondary level of education unless fewer hours are recommended by the physician. Depending on the physical condition of the child, a number of instructional hours greater than the minimum number of hours required per week is permissible.

Accordingly the *Ocean State Academy* will provide home instruction for eligible students using our existing staff, who meet the requirements as Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) certified teachers.



As per state guidelines, a classified student may have his or her Individualized Education Program (IEP) implemented through one-to-one instruction at home or in another setting when no other program option is appropriate/available, given that instruction is provided for no fewer than 5 (elementary) or 6 (secondary) hours per week. As such, the Ocean State Academy will ensure that each eligible student receives at least 5-6 hours' (as appropriate) remote instruction, although we feel confident that maintaining our regular academic schedule, including online teacher-directed instruction and coursework, would extend far beyond this minimum.

Research has shown that homebound services create a unique and positive experience for students and teachers alike, affording teachers an opportunity to observe the home environment and family dynamics more closely than they can from within the brick-and-mortar school setting. Teachers can build stronger ties with families, along with closer bonds with their students, as a result of this change of venue that amplifies one-on-one interaction. For these reasons and more, we feel our students will not lose any progress, momentum, or connection during home instruction due to temporary health-related school closures.

Important Note: Ongoing Communication with Students' Families

Staying in touch with our student families is absolutely vital to the constructive implementation of all plan details that follow, and so our comprehensive team approach has been to prioritize ongoing communication with parents/guardians and students alike. Because our school population is relatively small, this allows us to maintain constant contact (virtually daily) with our families, who are warmly receiving and reacting to our frequent, open invitations to call, text, or email the School Supervisor and their child's teacher and social worker with any questions, concerns, or requests for support. In addition to the notifications and updates we send out on a weekly basis as part of our emergency closure plan, we've created a landing page (<https://oceanstateacademy.com/school-closure-information-updates/>). Parents receive automated text alerts when new updates are posted.

Addressing Special Education Needs

Through our comprehensive distance learning plan, Ocean State Academy is providing special education instruction and IEP fulfillment as close as possible, and to the greatest extent possible, as we do in the physical classroom setting. In other words, we're making great efforts to maintain "business as usual" when it comes to **staff-to-student connections, relationships, and interactions**, because we're supremely aware of how to effectively reach and teach our specific student populations. Accordingly, in-person **one-on-one attention** has simply been replaced with on-screen one-on-one attention, with student tracking and progress monitoring conducted along our usual channels. Our students are accustomed to both teacher-directed and self-directed academic studies, to both online and traditional textbook delivery of instruction materials, and to regularly

scheduled tutorial time with their teachers and teaching assistants, and all of that is still being upheld to the best of our ability through all available means, to minimize any potential repercussions of distance learning and the possible learning gaps that can accompany them.



The vast array of online education programs that are available today have been designed to convey the same knowledge and impart the same skills as traditional curricular materials do, so it's been relatively easy and convenient for our teaching staff to adapt their regular approaches to the online teaching environment. In most cases of virtual teaching versus in-person instruction, the only notable difference is the delivery model, which, in fact, has been shown to actually enhance and enrich the learning experience for students who are more engaged with and stimulated by technology. As such, we are not expecting significant deceleration of learning due to homebound instruction; rather, we see online instruction as a way of further empowering our students to learn by doing and to continue to display meaningful and measurable positive outcomes using educational software and programs with built-in progress monitoring and automated report capabilities.

Primary Software & Online Education Programs Used

Ocean State Academy is utilizing the following online products and platforms on an as-needed basis to promote teacher-to-student remote interaction and advance online learning:

- Renaissance Star 360 (our normative and regular means of online education and progress monitoring)
- Apex Learning Virtual School (recently added to our curriculum in March, per the shift to remote learning)
- Google Classroom
- Edgenuity
- NGSS
- Pathblazers
- IXL
- Education.com
- Nearpod
- Wilson's Foundations
- Reading A-Z
- NewsELA
- Khan Academy

Renaissance Star 360: All Students

As the name implies, the Renaissance line of products and solutions covers the full range of online



education: **literacy programs** (concentrated on math and reading/ELA), **customized assessments**, and **growth initiatives**. Ocean State Academy has been a long time adopter of this award-winning, research-based computerized tool used in 34,000 U.S. schools and districts, on board with its mission of “bringing assessment-driven personalized practice and digital access together to spark amazing growth.” Star Assessments have built-in cutting-edge computer-adaptive technology, are based on 30+ years of data about how children learn and grow, and provide educators with accurate, reliable data about their students’ achievement and growth. Our students benefit most from **personalized and individualized interventions**, and Star Assessments are highly rated by the National Center for Intensive Intervention. We use these assessments on a continual basis to track student progress and modify learning plans en route to meeting IEP goals.

Apex Learning Virtual School: Students in 9th-12th Grade

To supplement (but not substitute for) staff-led instruction and curriculum, OSA is using Apex Learning Virtual School—a fully accredited online private high school that offers full- and part-time options to students who need high-quality alternative education. Through Apex, we can track online attendance and student log-in hours on the platform. Additional benefits of the platform include:

- Apex boasts an impressive successful pass rate of 90%, with participating students doing better than the national average in subsequent related courses.
- Live academic support is available, in real time, from on-call teachers and tutors via text and video chats.
- The acclaimed courses center on active, personalized learning in which students proceed at their own pace, assisted by such built-in educational tools as text to speech, simulations, and study guides.
- Students are supported by a full team of adults consisting of teachers, counselors, coaches, and tutors.
- ALVS has been fully accredited by the NWAC, an accreditation division of AdvancED, since 1999.

Edgenuity: Students in 6th-12th Grade

Ocean State Academy currently uses Edgenuity as part of a blended learning approach to provide student’s access to their general grade level curriculum with the support of a classroom teacher to address diverse learning needs. Edgenuity provides teachers with over 300 standard-aligned, on-line courses to select from and modify for students in grades 6-12. Teachers are able to view student work, assess learning, and reassign lessons as appropriate. Edgenuity’s website states “Our online courses and curriculum are built using an instructional model grounded in research and are aligned to state standards, the Common Core, and the NGSS. We combine direct-instruction videos featuring expert, on-screen teachers with rigorous assignments, performance tasks, and assessments to engage students and ensure



subject-area mastery.” Given the diverse abilities as well as individualized learning needs, students utilized direct instruction time to support them in being able to access the rigor this program offers. This enabled students to successfully engage in this program during distance learning. This program will continue to be utilized to provide students access to grade level curriculum during all phases of distance learning. This will make for a smoother transition for students by providing continuity regardless instructional format.

Pathblazer: Students in K-6th Grade

Ocean State Academy currently uses Pathblazer as part of a blended learning approach to provide student’s access to their general grade level curriculum with the support of a classroom teacher to address diverse learning needs. Pathblazer provides teachers with a K-8 curriculum as well as supplemental materials for Tiers 1-3 interventions as appropriate. Ocean State Academy has aligned Pathblazer with our Renaissance Star 360 Program in order to use data driven assessments to drive the on-line curriculum. Teachers are able to view student progress and assign specific materials to meet individual student needs. They were able to successfully engage students in this program during virtual learning and will continue to use the program during all phases of distance learning. This will make for a smoother transition for students by providing continuity regardless instructional format.

IXL: All Students

Ocean State Academy currently uses IXL as a supplemental program to address individual learning needs for students in grades K-12 for Reading, Math, Social Studies, and Science. Students are able to access any lesson from Pre-K – 12TH grade using a smartphone, tablet or computer. As they answer questions, they are given feedback in real time as well as offered additional questions until the skill is mastered. Students successfully engage in this program during virtual learning and will continue to use the program during all phases of distance learning. This will make for a smoother transition for students by providing continuity regardless instructional format.

Education.com: All Students

Students participate in engaging games, videos, songs and exercises to practice foundational math and language arts skills that are essential for academic success.

Continued Fulfillment of IEP Requirements IEPs are the central driving force of Ocean State Academy School’s instructional approaches and procedures, and for this reason, they’ve received our central focus such that (a) **our IEP process has remained unchanged** throughout the health crisis and (2) **adherence to student IEP requirements remains fully intact**.

- All regularly scheduled IEP meetings are taking place as originally planned.
- Each student’s district case manager initiates and conducts the meeting, scheduling it over Zoom, Google Meet, or teleconference call.



- Attendees (teachers, parents, therapists, social workers, district personnel, etc.) then join by their chosen preferred means, either by conference call or video conference.
- Collaboration and cooperation with our sending districts has been proceeding very nicely, with all concerned parties in full agreement that these meetings are vital to guarantee ongoing student access to all necessary materials and resources, student tracking, and progress monitoring.
- To allow for the uninterrupted continuance of these measures, case managers for each student are provided with weekly Educational Verification Log Sheets that detail such parameters as daily attendance, subject-matter performance, IEP goal achievement, IEP objective attainment, length of educational services, type of educational services (delivery format), and provision of related services.
- On the basis of OSA's normative ongoing data collection represented in log sheets and other relevant documentation, IEPs are evaluated and reevaluated as needed.
- Internal evaluation to ensure that our students are following IEP protocols is conducted using each student's Excel spreadsheet, which includes daily assignments, IEP goals addressed, and progress made on these goals. These quantitative grids not only document student and staff efforts, but hold school administration accountable to the highest standards. When and if progress slows or stalls, adjustments and modifications are immediately made.
- As covered above, Renaissance Star Assessments also facilitate the evaluation/reevaluation process by providing reliable, real-time data that allows us to deliver the right instruction, at the right time, for the right reason. Rather than overwhelming educators and students with testing, the goal of Ren Star is to streamline assessments that inform instruction by generating a complete view of a student's progress at the grade-school level, including achievement and growth measures.
- Equipped with these tools, Ocean State Academy teachers are able to compare actual instruction to actual student performance and then bring their recommendations for any warranted IEP revisions to the larger team meetings.

Continued Fulfillment of IEP-Prescribed Related Services An important aspect of the student IEP is the provision of related services deemed appropriate for that child's continued development, nurturance, and growth.

Social work services and **mental health/behavioral counseling services** are still being delivered by our own staff and social workers. This continuity in personal interaction with the same counselors our students have come to know and trust is playing a central role in their emotional well-being and balance in this very emotionally trying time.

Speech-language is being delivered by **TalkPathLive**, with whom we have provisionally contracted for the duration of the school closure for the ongoing delivery of prescribed therapies so that our students can continue to work toward their identified outcomes and milestones.



Occupational Therapy is being delivered by **CBS Therapy** by the OT and COTA who were working with students prior to the health related school closure. They are meeting with the students remotely, working to support parents and families and other OSA staff to continue to support the students' progress on relevant goals.

Equitable Access to Instruction

The Ocean State Academy is attended predominantly by "Students with Disabilities," all of whom are receiving equitable access to instruction via a combination of readily accessible resources we've adopted:

Primary Tools / Methodologies Used & Made Available to All Students

- Streaming video platforms
- Live chats (on an individual, group, or full-class basis)
- Web conferencing tools
- Telephone/email correspondence between staff and both parents *and* students
- Text e-blast alerts
- Virtual office hours
- Hard-copy transmission of printed assignments / work packets to supplement online content

These means of delivery encourage live participation and interaction, as well as offer the ability to capture screens, share audio and visual materials, and exchange student information and content as needed.

To ensure that all students have equal access to these resources, the school leadership team conducted **home surveys** in early March to determine the available technology and computer devices in each student's home. Any homes lacking adequate hardware were supplied with computer devices (e.g., Chromebooks) that enable online delivery of services; and students lacking Internet access were directed to local cable companies offering limited-time free service and basic equipment to qualifying families. So far OSA has distributed over 100 devices to Rhode Island families who were in need of technology to ensure equitable access.

Furthermore, all students and their families have access to any kind of tech support they need from our regular IT department so that they can continue to receive instruction aligned with their age-appropriate needs and grade-level benchmarks, per their IEPs (*see Component 2 below*).

Students receive the bulk of their instruction through online channels, supplemented by hard-copy materials and work packets delivered to the home by the school (accompanied by prepaid-postage return envelopes for completed assignments).



Secure Video-conferencing Platform for the Provision of Special Education Instruction & Related Services

Ocean State Academy has contracted with a company called **Prentgraf Ltd.** for the provision of a private **Zoom** account to enable a two-way, secure, encrypted connection to ensure privacy, safety, and HIPAA, FERPA, and COPPA compliance.

Prentgraf provides Ocean State Academy with private video rooms in which staff and students connect, live, in real time, face-to-face. This connection can be made via any Internet-connected device with audiovisual functionality—whether that's desktop, laptop, tablet, or smartphone—which eliminates all barriers to access for all of our students. Each Zoom session can accommodate up to 100 participants, so group instruction, when that's the preferred teaching vehicle per context, does not present an issue at all.

Prentgraf and OSA's IT department have collaborated to make available any training and technical assistance requested by our teachers, therapists, and support personnel so that they can deliver comprehensive education plans as equitable as possible to those provided in the classroom setting.

Addressing Bilingual Needs

Ocean State Academy is fortunate to have an entire front office team who are bilingual, completely fluent in English and Spanish. We have an Administrative Professional with our Clinical Team who is also bilingually fluent and a Spanish speaking School Social Worker as well. It has always been a part of our standard program procedures to accommodate and assist ELL and ESL learners, parents, and family members thusly:

- Each non-native English-speaking student household is assigned one direct contact with a staff member who speaks their native tongue; if we do not have such a member on staff, we subcontract with a translator who can provide one-on-one communication with the family, both by voice and in writing.
- Progress reports, needs assessments, and IEP documents are provided in hard copy to all Spanish-speaking parents, in the event that computerized documentation or English-language materials would not be fully comprehended.
- Mental health services are offered in Spanish, as are any other health-related resources—like doctors, clinics, agencies—to assist Latin communities.
- OSA's School Supervisor acts as communication liaison with residential facilities that do not provide translation services and for any issues that present to parents (like knowing their child's rights).

- We provide assistance filling out any forms relevant to student financial aid for postsecondary education under DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) policy.



Additionally, all school paperwork is available in translated form, as are all homework assignments; and OSA students can take advantage of online programs' built-in translation capabilities, as needed.

Safe Delivery of Meals

OSA provides weekly meal delivery services to our families in need through direct pick-up of boxed meals, deliveries by dedicated staff following applicable health department guidelines and through gift cards to local supermarkets. Need is determined by a concerted outreach effort to our families, whereby we regularly and routinely contact them and remind them that help is available and forthcoming for the asking. Our delivery of required or requested goods—whether arranged through the store's delivery service or delivered by our own staff at safe designated meeting places—extends beyond just food to various sundries and such.

We have also supplied lists of free meal plans and food pantries in our communities, both sent home and posted online on our school's dedicated COVID-related school closure information page at: <https://oceanstateacademy.com/school-closure-information-updates/>

Please see the attached Food & Relief Supplies: Plans & Procedures info sheet for further information.

Length of Virtual or Remote Instruction

Of paramount importance in keeping our students on track and in tune with their individualized academic and behavioral plans is sustaining our normative forms and formats of learning, to optimize and maximize growth and advancement, during Phase I and as applicable in Phase 2.

Whether we're teaching in the classroom or over the computer screen, Ocean State Academy remains aligned with our foundational instructional principles and guiding educational philosophies, which are heavily informed and influenced by the work of Carol Ann Tomlinson, which centers on **responsive classrooms, targeted curriculums for struggling learners, and differentiated education in mixed-ability classrooms.**

Differentiated Instruction in a Virtual Environment

Ocean State Academy students have intensive needs that call for intensive interventions based more on individual learning barriers and ability levels than on grade levels. As such, we implement

custom-tailored differentiated instruction along three primary modalities that fully translate to a virtual environment:



1. **Student IEPs:** Each student's IEP is highly specific to the student. It therefore forms the entire framework of instruction and wraparound services prescribed for that student's continual progress and growth and it's therefore the first and foremost source of our lesson planning and outreach via distance learning. Basically, the student IEP is the GPS system by which we navigate from point A to point B—assessing their current performance level and setting goals that proceed upward from that level.
2. **Teacher Assessment:** This baseline assessment—conducted regularly and adapted as needed just as often is done mainly by the teacher, via a combination of observation, interaction, and analysis. Every single one of our special ed students has a different profile and so each receives a different learning plan, constructed by the home-room teacher who knows their capabilities and deficits best. The special education teacher determines what instruction should be teacher-supported and what can be done independently. We then test and monitor the efficacy of customized lesson plans with:
3. **Renaissance Star Assessments:** This evidenced-based online compilation of subject-matter-focused assessments and interventional instruction programs differentiates each student's reading and math levels. Because the tests are computer-adaptive, they adjust to each answer the student provides. On the basis of the footprints left behind by this data collection, teachers craft assignments in accordance with grade-level benchmarks and IEP objectives and student workloads are both aligned with their current performance and directed at manageable, incremental progress beyond current performance.

Note: Since March 2020, differentiated instruction is also provided through **Apex Learning**, student engagement with which OSA tracks as regularly as Renaissance participation. Based on performance activity and levels in Apex, students are allocated assignments in multiple subject areas to advance their present skills acquisition and mastery.

Attendance

Ocean State Academy's teaching staff and administration is closely monitoring student daily attendance by the following parameters: (1) phone calls home, to check in with and ensure daily student engagement, follow up on assignments, answer questions, and provide assistance; (2) video chats over Zoom with teachers to support student needs; (3) log in time on Various Distance Learning (as discussed above) ; (4) timed participation on the Renaissance platform. When absenteeism is suspected, parents/guardians are contacted, and calls/texts/emails are made or sent until lapses or barriers are addressed and resolved.

Just like in the physical classroom as well, students have both IEP goals and curriculum goals that must be achieved. Without hitting those targets, the students don't advance, just as they wouldn't in our school building. We're maintaining our approach of positive reinforcement techniques to



incentivize and motivate our students to maintain their regular in-school schedule so that they continue to strive toward desired goals, like graduation and moving-ups. When a problem is suspected, a staff member close to the student—usually their special ed teacher or social worker—makes direct contact with the student to redirect their efforts and get them back on track.

Facilities

Because our school staff and administrators have been coming and going from the school building throughout the duration of the health-related crisis, our regular facility maintenance schedule has been in place without interruption. Accordingly, on a daily basis, our maintenance engineer cleans and sanitizes the facility, including constant and highly conscientious spraying and wiping of all surfaces with approved and recommended products. Additionally, once monthly, we're doing a deep cleaning of the entire building, following rigid standards and procedures applicable to flooring, walls, appliances, furniture, bathrooms, storage areas, etc. There are no plans to either cease or curtail any building operations or amenities—utilities, water, trash removal, security protocols, internet access, and so forth—in anticipation of and in preparation for school reopening.

ESY (Extended School Year) Programming

Regardless of the Phase that we find ourselves in, OSA remains committed to maintaining the highest quality of education possible in order to meet the unique learning needs of our students in the most supportive environment possible.

Although we believe an in person on the premise learning environment is optimum, we are prepared to host the summer program virtually if Rhode Island is still in Phase 1 of the state-wide reopening plan or if our partner districts are not yet reopened for in person ESY.

If so, ESY programming will proceed as RSY programming has been—with some program aspects mirroring classroom learning to the fullest extent possible and some aspects adapted as needed for distance learning:

- **Preparation:** There will be no ramp-up time needed to implement a remote ESY program, since our staff is already acclimated to the online environment; we will simply carry it over from June to July–August.
- **Staffing & Resources:** Per usual, our regular full-time staff will be staffing the ESY program, and we will retain all of our virtual programming, and all of our other contracted online services and providers to continue to meet our students' needs and fulfill their IEP goals.
- **21st Century Learning & Incorporation of STEM:** OSA has always taken a holistic,



comprehensive approach to special education in exceptional agreement with 21st century learning principles. But because summer education allows some freedom from standardized-testing preparation and space beyond a focus on math and reading literacy, we can incorporate more 21st century learning approaches into the summer curriculum, including project-driven instruction, more diverse content materials, heightened collaborative learning that aims to empower our students as active participants in their own education, and units designed to cultivate critical thinking. More than anything, we'll be concentrating on generalization of skills, for carryover application into real-world settings.

Summer programming also allows more room for STEM-oriented learning—the “technology” element of the curriculum automatically fortified in the distance-learning environment. Our summer learning curriculum will likely not just depend on computerized means of delivery and connection, but we're planning to utilize an array of online software and technology-enabled instructional modes that feature scientific and mathematical concepts and elements: computerized whiteboards, educational video games, fun experiments that can be done at home with common household materials, scavenger hunts in backyards and neighborhoods, nature walks where students will collect specimens and bring them back to the virtual space for inspection and discussion. As a rule, OSA's summer learning projects are designed to appeal to our students' particular interests and talents.

- **Credit Recovery:** Apex Learning Virtual School will be particularly advantageous this summer, since one of the hallmarks of the program is credit recovery. Through this valuable means, any and all of our students who wish to make up any missed time and lagged coursework can do so, at their own pace and at the level of effort they invest. This is especially applicable to our high school juniors and seniors looking to get back on or stay on track for high school graduation. Teachers and counselors will certainly guide and encourage OSA students to actively engage in this effort, but self-motivated students can benefit immensely from the credit recovery opportunities provided.

- **Summer Learning Loss:** Summer learning loss is *a/ways* a concern—both in general education and special education—and this year, all of America (all of the world, actually) is obviously particularly concerned about widening any and all gaps created by mandated school closures throughout the spring 2020 semester. Several measures are being put in place to minimize learning loss by maximizing the instruments we have at our disposal:

First off, we're encouraged by the high demand from our sending districts for substantial enrollment in our ESY program with the dual goal of (1) avoiding regression and (2) maintaining performance levels. It goes without saying that a far shorter break in regular instruction and far greater access to our students than we traditionally have over the summer will work to lessen learning loss.

Our entire education staff constantly assess our students, of course, but at present, we're magnifying our focus on spotting regressions attributable to remote learning—to the simple fact that we've lost in-person face-to-face social interaction and the social skills inherent in actual



contact between individuals. Most years, “slippage” is limited to the times when we’re not in the physical presence of our learners, but because that span has been extended this year, we’re devising new means to meet our students through this new mode of communication. Some SEL examples that we’re working into our summer program: virtual group picnics for lunch, where we all eat the same delivered food at the same time; word games and questionnaires that students will engage in online together; and virtual field trips that take us to zoos, museums, aquariums, and landmarks worldwide (e.g., <https://padlet.com/davidaderhold/VirtualExperiences>).

On the academic side, all students need a certain amount of time to “recall” and “recoup” previously learned abilities, and special education students often need more time to do this. We’re committed to granting that time through Ren Star—leveraging the program to not just assess if our students are maintaining or progressing, but to determine if they are regressing. If any regression is noted, serious interventions are undertaken to remediate the issue by the student’s education team.

Additionally, Apex is particularly well suited to mitigating regression because of its virtually limitless opportunities for students to revisit material not yet mastered, to make up missed assignments, to improve performance on completed assignments, and its 24/7 access .

All this said, the best remedy for regression is to prevent it from happening in the first place—to catch our students before they fall. In an effort to accomplish this to the greatest extent possible, our teachers are supplementing their own virtual visits to our students’ homes by recruiting parents to engage in age- appropriate recommended activities with their kids during this shelter-at-home span, such as: reading together, assigning book reports on a summer reading list, having students calculate grocery bills, do measurements for cooking recipes, circle vocabulary words in printed materials, journal or blog, start a scrapbook, conduct mock job interviews, and write short stories and poems.

In any and all ways possible, the entire Ocean State Academy Family is making the best of the situation—taking advantage of Zoom, offering on-call counseling sessions, assisting students with the online platforms they’re accessing from home, making phone calls and house calls—to sustain and stimulate regular day-to-day learning and instruction in this time of unprecedented distance and irregularity.

School Reopening

Prefatory Statements:

The Ocean State Academy remains committed to cooperating with the appropriate state and local agencies to protect the health of our school community and all of the communities we are part of. As such, under the State’s plan for Phased Reopening our school building will be closed to all but essential employees performing essential tasks anytime the state is in Phase 1.



In the Governor's plan, "Reopening RI Phase II", there is potential for some in-person activity. Masks, vigilant hand-washing and increased cleaning must remain in place. All activities must account for strong social distancing guidelines of remaining six feet apart.

Also, because we work closely with our partner districts and wish to maximize student safety in consideration of local differences in COVID containment, potential transportation dilemmas, and potential equity of access issues we will **only** be open for in-person for students from districts that have already re-opened for traditional in-person for any categories that apply to individual students from that district enrolled in our program. All other students will be enrolled in our distance/virtual learning program. This will ensure students have equitable access to programming that other students attending in-district schools have without exposing anyone to undue risk.

Certain global statements, facts, assumptions, and qualifications apply to this School Reopening Plan as a whole and should be understood to underlie and inform all parts of this plan and all content herein.

Namely:

- The safety and health of our staff and students is the topmost priority at this time of nationwide school reopenings, above all other priorities, even those related to academic instruction.
- Local, state, and Center for Disease Control (CDC) regulations must be followed from day one, above and beyond any other recommended or suggested guidelines that schools may opt to enact at the opening of the school year and as the school year proceeds, on an as-needed basis.
- OSA's School Reopening Plan has been composed with the interests of all of our stakeholders and all of our learners in mind; it cannot and will not give preference to any particular subgroup and the benefits/deficits that subgroup(s) may experience in comparison to the others.
- Rhode Island schools have been instructed that they should resume in-person instruction, at least in some capacity, at the start of SY 2020–2021.
- Accordingly, OSA will be resuming regular on-the-premises operations according to our normal school year schedule (8:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m., Monday–Friday) as of 8/31/2020, fully prepared and in full compliance with all regulations to do so. (*See Appendix A for annual school calendar.*) For parents or districts that prefer/require distance-learning programming (i.e., remote instruction), we are equally prepared to accommodate that desire/need.
- Modifications to SY 2020–2021 programming—particularly in the areas of modes of attendance, synchronous vs. asynchronous learning, and teacher evaluations for remote learning—will be made, as needed, to accommodate the needs of our families who are experiencing changes/interruptions to their work, schooling, and/or child care schedules. We will work with each family on a one-to-one basis to customize program details as warranted.
- Such modifications will continue to be made, as needed, as the school year unfolds with its inevitable emergent challenges and developments. In other words, the education plan for SY



2020–2021 should be considered an ongoing work-in-progress that will be adapted and amended as needed in response to updated circumstances and allowable, advisable recommendations and regulations to address those circumstances.

- Every effort has been made to compose this School Reopening Plan in accordance with guidance provided by the Rhode Island Department of Education and the Rhode Island Department of Health.

1. General Health and Safety Guidelines

OSA will comply with all local, state, and CDC guidelines across all stages and phases of our pandemic response. To do so, we have instituted the measures listed below, we have informed and will train our staff of these measures, we have composed a form that must be signed by all employees to acknowledge understanding of and agreement with these measures, and all relevant measures were added to our school's longstanding and overarching "Emergency Management Plan" promptly upon receipt of CDC guidelines. The series of **behaviors we have adopted to reduce the spread of infectious disease** include but are not limited to:

A. Face Coverings & Other PPE

Everyone on school premises (with the exception of students who cannot be mandated to wear a mask) including not only all employer/employee personnel, support staff (like janitorial custodians), but also any and all visitors to our campus (like parents, therapists, district personnel, maintenance workers, etc.)—will, as a rule, be required to wear a **face mask**. Exceptions to the rule will be allowed for certain circumstances (e.g., for eating, for children under 2 years of age, for individual student health or safety reasons, during properly distanced rigorous exercise), but even then, social distancing of at least 6 feet must be maintained between the unmasked person and others in the vicinity. Face masks of choice can be worn, so long as they cover both the nose and mouth and so long as they do not display any objectionable or obscene content in the design. For any individuals who do not have a face covering available on any given day at any given time, OSA will provide disposable face masks at the entrance to the school as well as at multiple other locations throughout campus to replace misplaced or damaged masks.

Disposable **gloves** will also be available throughout the campus for those wishing to use them and for situations in which physical contact applies (e.g., nursing checkups, distribution of instruction materials, certain forms of hands-on therapy). Physical touch and close proximity will be kept to a minimum, but OSA wants to acknowledge the fact that there are and may be times when touching students with moderate to severe disabilities is not only recommended, but necessary. Consistent checks will be done to confirm that reusable PPE is being properly cleaned and maintained.

B. Handwashing & Hand Sanitizer

OSA pledges to follow CDC guidelines pertaining to appropriate hand hygiene thusly:

- **Handwashing** with soap and water will be enforced upon entering the school building, after touching common surfaces, prior to consuming edibles, when leaving the school building, and, of

course, following bathroom use. All individuals have been/will be educated on the five steps for proper handwashing:



1. Wet hands with clean, running water and apply soap.
2. Lather hands by rubbing them together with the soap (backs of hands, between fingers, and under nails).
3. Scrub hands for at least 20 seconds.
4. Rinse hands well under clean running water.
5. Dry hands using clean paper towels or air dry.

- A plentiful supply of **disposable paper towels** will be on hand at all times, and **no-contact trash receptacles** will dispose of drying/wiping products to eliminate risk of contamination from the receptacles themselves.

- **Hand-sanitizing stations** have been situated throughout the school and will be continuously supplied with sanitizing solvents that meet CDC regulations (i.e., 60% alcohol content). All school occupants are frequently and repeatedly guided in the proper use of hand sanitizers:

1. Apply the gel product to the palm of one hand (read the label to learn the correct amount).
2. Rub hands together.
3. Rub the gel over all the surfaces of hands and fingers until hands are dry, for around 20 seconds.

C. Social Distancing

Social distancing measures have not only been put in place throughout our campus, but the size and layout of our school facility has actually *greatly facilitated* social distancing practices. See sections “2. Classrooms, Testing, and Therapy Rooms” and “4. Student Flow, Entry, Exit, and Common Areas” below for more specifics, but general campus-wide policies include:

- Maintenance of at least 6 feet of space between all individuals whenever possible
- Wall signage and floor markers indicating necessary distance from, for example, the desk of the school’s administrative assistant and staff/student visitor to her office
- Open windows to allow greater air circulation when outside temperatures allow
- Limited number of individuals in restrooms at any one time
- Orderly and monitored procession of limited number of students when movement from one part of campus to another is called for
- In-person staff meetings conducted in large school conference room, with empty seats measuring a minimum of 6 feet required between all attendees

D. Reasonable Accommodations for High-Risk Individuals



Special provisions will be made for individuals who are at higher risk of contracting the coronavirus. Conditions/populations deemed “high-risk” include:

- Adults aged 65+
- Chronic lung disease or asthma (moderate to severe)
- Serious heart conditions
- Immunocompromised
- Severe obesity (body mass index, or BMI, of 40 or higher)
- Diabetes
- Chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
- Liver disease
- Medically fragile students with IEPs

E. Additional Health Practices

Other Standard measures and common-sense practices will apply daily until further notice, including

- Guidance to cover mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing; washing/sanitizing will immediately follow any coughing or sneezing
- Continued education and reminders about avoidance of touching one’s face
- Tissues available in all school spaces and rooms
- Appropriate signage and messaging posted throughout the school, wherever applicable
- Nonessential visitors to the school will be limited
- Implementation of a variety of **minimal touch policies**; for example:
 - Water fountains have been temporarily deactivated, replaced by multiple water-cooler stations with disposal paper cups that can be accessed by only one person at a time
 - One-person-at-a-time access to staff break rooms and any equipment/materials frequently touched by staff (e.g., coffee pots, photocopiers, filing cabinets)
 - Immediate wipe-down of touched items by staff
 - Limit on items staff and students can bring into the school each day (e.g., personal items, disposable brown bags for food/snacks)
 - Absolutely minimal use of shared items (e.g., computer keyboards, writing implements, office phones, toys, scissors) and mandatory disinfecting of items between users when shared use is necessary
- School nurse appointed as primary point of contact for communication with local and state health safety authorities, for reports of or suspicion of emerging COVID-19 symptoms, and for all required follow-up steps thereafter.

2. Classrooms, Testing, and Therapy Rooms



Ocean State Academy is delighted to report excellent news in this area of school-reopening compliance. Basically, **our school building was made for social distancing!** What we mean by this is that we have a large, spacious, multi-floor building of 58,000+ square feet to accommodate a tremendously manageable population of approximately 150 students and 50 full-time staff members to start on 8/31/2020 (especially given that parent surveys indicate roughly half of our school's student population intends to select virtual programming). And even if our enrollment grows to 160 or 170 students throughout the school year (dependent upon student referrals from our sending districts), we can easily meet—exceed, actually—the NSF guidelines for social distancing recommendations in all areas of the school: classrooms, therapy spaces, recreational spaces, staff areas (offices, conference rooms, break rooms), hallways, stairwells, and common areas.

Prior to COVID, we were already not utilizing all rooms in the school, so we already had at our disposal built-in availability of extra space to implement smaller class sizes, spread-out workstations, and separate workspaces for high-risk individuals. Specific physical adjustments and amendments now in effect include:

- Student cohorts grouped by age and grade level will remain in their home-room classroom for all daily instruction, as opposed to alternating classrooms/school spaces for different courses and activities.
- Per-classroom student groups have been reduced from our former 10–12 students per class to **7–8 students per class**.
- Students are allotted their own distinct storage spaces for their belongings (e.g., cell phones, knapsacks, lunch bags). Personal belongings will not intermix.
- When subject-area specialists deliver curriculum content (e.g., foreign-language teacher, art instructor), they will travel to the pertinent student group instead of the students moving to different places throughout the school.
- Student intermingling will thus be minimized throughout the day, decreasing the rate of student-to-student exposure, and staff traveling will also be closely monitored, so that the same adults lead the same sets of students for the large majority of instructional time, if not all of it.
- In classrooms—during both instruction time and testing times—individual **desks have been moved at least 6 feet apart**, all facing in the same direction to keep the direction of respirations consistent.
- Our standard variable workstation areas have also been adequately spread out so that individual vs. group learning occurs in distinct and properly-spaced areas of the classroom.
- Disinfectant and cleaning materials have been placed in all classrooms to sanitize and sterilize work surfaces, computer equipment, and instructional materials.
- Use of shared objects will be drastically limited and will include appropriate cleaning techniques between uses.



- Stickers have been adhered to floors to mark necessary distance from teachers' desks to areas of student interaction.
- When transitions from one school space to another are needed, taped arrows have been adhered to flooring to indicate **one-way traffic patterns** for all traveling pedestrians.
- When non-instructional spaces are employed student groups will be staggered, with no overlap between different classes and with appropriate cleaning done inside the space before another student group occupies it.
- At all instruction times, **face coverings** will be required to be worn by all staff members and strongly encouraged for students, except when wearing inhibits a child's well-being, provokes an intense emotional/behavioral reaction, or significantly limits academic goals. NOTE: In this regard, it should be noted that students with moderate to severe disabilities can sometimes be triggered by physical limitations that they perceive to be dangerous or threatening; in such cases of students refusing to or reluctant to wear a face covering long-term without interruption, accommodations will be made, such as situating them farther away from the rest of the class for social distancing to the fullest extent possible; breaks in the Nurse's Office; therapeutic and calming counseling as warranted; and/or, if the number of students warrants it, a separate classroom set up for those students who either cannot or will not wear a mask.
- Recognizing that students with special needs may have difficulty adjusting to and adhering to this batch of new norms and routines, **constant and frequent directions** will be given about hygiene practices, proper use and disposal of PPE, new "hall rules," maintaining distance, etc.
- All indoor spaces will have acceptable **ventilation systems** in operation to ensure that recirculated air is infused with fresh air (including open windows whenever conditions allow).
- Outdoor instruction will be allowed and encouraged when seasonal and appropriate.
- We are instituting periodic and regular breaks throughout the school day when all students sharing an instructional or non instructional space will sanitize their work areas (to contribute to perpetual classroom cleanliness), leave the room to wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds in the restroom (in small groups), and "stretch their legs" as a span away from their home-room classrooms. These cleaning breaks will be especially prominent after times of eating, sneezing or coughing, physical education, or any kind of properly distanced group activity. Student groupings will of course be staggered so that all other students are "inside" when one group is "outside."
- Students who need assistance with any of these measures may be approached/touched by faculty members, so long as both student and staff member follow sanitizing precautions following any physical contact. For example, younger students may need help with hand-over- hand washing or students with motor impairments might require regular intervention from their 1:1 aide. Such instances are standard occurrences in special education environments and will be handled with the utmost care and safety.



- When and if a whole-school meeting/gathering is called for, we will utilize our gymnasium to assemble, which allows for more than adequate spacing between the total number of students and staff occupying our school.

Therapy Delivery & Spaces

Where and how students receive their IEP-prescribed therapy (speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, counseling, etc.) will consist of any combination of remote teletherapy and in-person therapy.

3. Transportation

The Ocean State Academy is not responsible for bussing our students to and from school; rather, each student's respective school district takes care of transportation. As such, students will be expected to follow all social distancing protocols their sending school district enforces, and it is assumed that the sending school districts will adopt best practices for cleaning and disinfecting all vehicles used for transporting students.

4. Student Flow, Entry, Exit, and Common Areas

There will be an orderly, regimented entrance to and exit from the school each day, with 6 feet of distance between each person coming, going, or waiting in line to be screened. Once inside the school, appropriate signage and messaging will be clearly visible, reinforced with floor stickers, taped arrows, and posted instructions to direct flow and foot traffic. Adult supervision and verbal direction will supplement these measures throughout the day in all common areas. At the end of the school day, classrooms will stagger release times, alternating the order of classrooms throughout the week, so that there is an incremental departure from school instead of a mass exodus. Before leaving classrooms, the classroom teacher and teaching assistant will confirm that each student's PPE is properly secured and in place, and staff will escort a line of single-file students to the exit to make sure that social distancing is maintained at all times.

Due to OSA's exceptionally high staff-to-student ratio, it will be possible for students to be continually accompanied and supervised by faculty members at all times of the day, in all school areas.

5. Screening, PPE, and Response to Students and Staff Presenting Symptoms

A. Pre-School-Day Screening

OSA's systematic screening process follows state and CDC guidelines to the letter:

- Our full-time on-staff nurse has been appointed the facility's designated screener.
- Our on-site nurse is being monitored and supervised by our consulting pediatrician, who is overseeing CDC regulations on our campus, who is on call for any immediate or real-time assistance needed, and who makes multiple visits a year to the school for further training and in-person observation.



- Each morning, the school nurse will be the very first person to enter the school, after she herself has confirmed the absence of any presenting symptoms that would preclude attendance. (In the event that our school nurse has any COVID symptoms or is absent for the day, our Principal becomes the de facto designated screener. Third in line to act as screener, if necessary, is our Dean of Students. The screener will handwash or hand sanitize as required, don all mandatory PPE—face mask, eye protection, and disposable gloves—prior to greeting all incoming staff.
- Each staff member will be screened one by one, right outside the main entrance to the school, where there is ample room to line up for entry with 6 feet of distance between each person:
 - First, temperature checks will be conducted with no-touch digital thermometers to ensure no reading above 100.4°.
 - Then, each staffer will be asked to answer “yes” or “no” regarding each of the symptom questions experienced in the past 24 hours: – Cough – Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing – Chills – Repeated shaking with chills – Muscle pain – Headache – Sore throat – New loss of taste or smell – Fatigue – Congestion or runny nose – Nausea or vomiting – Diarrhea
 - Staff members will next be asked if they have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19 or exposed to COVID-19 since the last time they were in the school building.
- Any employee presenting with a temperature above the limit or a “yes” answer to any of the above questions will be denied entrance to the school.
- Students on busses with bus monitors provided by OSA will be screened prior to boarding the busses. Students who are on busses without OSA trained monitors will be met at school by already screened staff wearing their own proper PPE, following the exact same screening process that applies to the staff. Students will not be permitted to go through the closed doors until they are cleared for admittance each day.
- If any student registers a temperature above the limit and/or presents with one or more COVID-19 symptoms or has been exposed to someone with the virus, they will be instructed to return to their home (in the case of pre-bus-screening) or to an isolated area by a staff member (in the case of at school screening), to safely and securely await pickup by a parent or guardian, who will be called immediately.
- NOTE: This same screening process applies to any **visitors** to the school, including but not limited to parents/guardians, visiting therapists/education specialists, maintenance workers/repairmen, and school district personnel. Visitors will be kept to a minimum at this time, with school doors locked for entry after all staff and students have arrived and all visits therefore needing to be called in ahead of time and approved by a member of the OSA Administrative Team.

Face masks will be required for entry to the school for all non-students (and strongly encouraged for all). All deliveries will be left outside the school, in areas designated by proper signage for delivery people.



B. Midday or After-Hours Presentation of Symptoms

Any school inhabitant who experiences virus symptoms while on the OSA campus must be safely and respectfully isolated from others, as quickly and discreetly as possible, to maintain privacy rights and to limit class-time interruptions. The areas we have designated for initial isolation are 4 isolation pods located in the Nurse's Office. Employees will self-report to the Nurse's Office. Students will be accompanied by an adult designated by the staff member who first becomes aware of the student's symptom or possible symptom(s).

The nurse will immediately conduct an appropriate health check—again, safely and respectfully, in accordance with applicable privacy laws and regulations, and making any necessary accommodations for students with disabilities. Results must be documented immediately upon observation of COVID-19 signs and symptoms, and then steps in section “C. Response to Student or Staff Symptomology” below will commence in order. The individual will be sent home in the safest way possible—making sure that all surfaces touched have been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and that the individual's whereabouts and contact with others throughout the entire day has been fully recorded.

Employees who develop symptoms outside of work should notify their supervisor as soon as possible, stay home, and follow CDC-recommended steps to self-isolate.

C. Response to Student or Staff Symptomology

The school nurse will perform continuous monitoring of the staff member or student sent home via diligent follow-up efforts to assess escalating symptomology and to receive confirmation of positive or negative COVID-19 testing results.

If any Ocean State Academy team member becomes aware that an individual who has spent time in our school tests positive for COVID-19, then our school nurse will immediately notify the proper local health officials and coordinate with our point(s) of contact there on all advisable, applicable, and necessary next steps:

- Informing staff and families of a confirmed case while simultaneously maintaining confidentiality
- Determining if early dismissal from school that day is warranted
- Determining if short-term closure of the school is warranted
- Following current Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting
- Implementing the appropriate contact tracing protocols (*see section “6. Contact Tracing” below*)
- Devising readmission strategies, consistent with official guidance, for individuals who have recovered from COVID-19



- Preparing for school reopening

D. Other Nurse-Assigned Duties to Reduce the Spread of Infectious Disease

- Ongoing communication/training/education with parents to include:
 - How to spot the signs and symptoms of COVID-19
 - How to be on the alert for these signs/symptoms and keep their children at home when they are sick
- Instructions on how to proceed if a family member tests positive for and/or suspects contraction of the virus
- Regular check-ins to question family's possible exposure to the virus
- Information on the school's policies and procedures on health crises
- Staff training/education on:
 - Infectious disease control
 - School hygiene, safety, and health precautions and maintenance of PPE
 - COVID signs and symptoms of Stay at Home protocols for sickness/potential sickness
 - Self-reporting measures to aid contact tracing efforts, if applicable o Safety and privacy regulations for persons suspected of COVID exposure/contraction

NOTE: Staff training by the school nurse is considered a critical measure in our Professional Learning efforts throughout the course of the health crisis. If and when updates to school regulations are published and/or amendments to existing regulations are made, staff will stay abreast of all such developments through our school nurse.

- Duties to school management:
 - Report on PPE inventory to maintain steady flow of supplies
 - Provide updates and policy amendments to national, state, and local health regulations
 - Consult with supervising school pediatrician as needed
 - Advise of emergent family issues (e.g., noncompliance with stay-at-home directives)
 - Recommend additional parent training and/or staff PD sessions when warranted.

6. Contact Tracing

In the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 among our school population, it is incumbent upon our school to fully collaborate and cooperate with the proper public health authorities to enact the integral function of contact tracing to the fullest extent possible. Not only that, but it is our duty to inform and educate our staff about the critical role of contact tracing to keep our community safe from the spread of contagious disease.

Accordingly, with our full-time school nurse serving as point person with state and local health officials, we will unwaveringly follow all necessary and recommended guidelines for screening, for safe and respectful isolation, for proper responses to presentation of symptoms, for reporting (see *previous sections*), and, when applicable, for initiating the appropriate contact tracing procedures in accordance with mandated protocols. We will maintain thorough and up-to-date records of composition and location of all student groups/cohorts, staff in contact with them, and daily



attendance rolls to facilitate contact tracing procedures should they arise. If and when contact tracing must commence amid our school community, we will do everything in our power to aid and assist the properly trained community professionals who will spearhead contact tracing efforts.

7. Facilities Cleaning Practices

OSA's regular and routine facilities maintenance and cleaning schedule was updated and enhanced in late spring 2020 (February–March), when news of coronavirus in our country first circulated. At that time, we confirmed that our normative hygiene practices accorded with [EPA guidelines](#) and RI Department of Health directives, and we're not only continuing to adhere to them now, but we've greatly intensified our cleaning procedures and protocols to allow the safest possible reopening of our school.

Our original measures include but are not limited to:

- Daily campus-wide cleaning and disinfecting, every day at close of school, by professional cleaners
- Use of EPA-approved, CDC recommended cleaning products
- Hand sanitizing stations situated throughout the school
- Lysol wipes available in all classrooms and common areas
- Student and staff education by school nurse on proper hygiene

Additional measures taken to our established cleaning practices specific to our School Reopening Plan include but are not limited to:

- Regularly scheduled “cleaning breaks” throughout the school day to sanitize and disinfect manually touched objects, equipment, surfaces, and school apparatus (e.g., doorknobs, door handles, desktops, seats, computer devices, bathroom fixtures, light switches, tables/countertops) by staff and students alike
- Staff supervision of all student-assisted cleaning procedures
- Increased volume of hand sanitizers, disposable paper towels, and touch-free trash receptacles in virtually all areas of the school
- Student “wash-up” intervals following any and all instances of social contact and interaction (e.g., after bussing, eating times, P.E.)
- Water fountains deactivated and replaced with alternative forms (water bottles, water coolers with disposable paper cups)
- Doors propped open for no-touch entry to rooms



In combination with our previously outlined screening and PPE policies and our daily professional cleaning services, we feel confident that we can mitigate the risk of infectious disease potentially transmitted by “things” as opposed to “people.”

Site Specific Closure

In accordance with state and federal guidance: should illness be detected we will close the school building and have the school resume virtual instruction for two days (minimum) and have the building professionally cleaned by our Covid-19 certified cleaner. Students and families as well as staff will be informed, along with the appropriate government agencies for tracking purposes. It will be recommended that the infected individual(s) self-quarantine as per state guidelines applicable at that time.

8. Meals

- Sanitation
 - All counter surfaces, front of as well as handles on refrigerators, as well as all doorknobs and faucet handles will be washed with warm soap and water and sanitized before any students enter the kitchen area. Then every 2 hours throughout the day. The handwashing station will always be stocked with soap and disposable towels with a no-touch receptacle. The dish sink will be prepared (checking sanitizer levels) first thing in the morning, changing all bays every 2 hours. End of day kitchen will be cleaned and sanitized.
- Student Internships
 - There will be temperatures taken of any person entering the kitchen area. Students will wash hands, Per RI Health Dept guidelines put on uniform and report to their station. Students will wear a mask throughout their shift. Gloves will be worn and changed according to RI Health Dept guidelines.
- Food Prep and Delivery
 - Breakfast will be in classrooms before student arrival. All items will be served in disposable containers. Cutlery will be individualized in plastic covering with napkins.
 - Lunches will be packaged and marked with the student's name on it. All items will be served in disposable containers with individualized cutlery in plastic covering. Food will be delivered and placed outside the classroom door for classroom staff to take into the classroom.

9. Recess/Physical Education

Physical activity is not just beneficial to school-aged children, it's virtually imperative to our particular population of special education students with moderate to severe behavioral challenges that make it difficult for them to sit still or attend to any one task for too long. Further, our learning environment is improved when we can offer our students short-term breaks and

diversions that shift the focus from their intellectual to their physical faculties. The release physical activity provides our students is invaluable to their sensory system and central to their well-being.



Given this, we plan to uphold our regular physical education component, but with clear and firm exceptions:

- Exercise sessions will no longer consist of large groups. Rather, smaller groups of 8 or 9 students at a time, maximum, will engage in physical education in our full-sized gym.
- The team sports our students are used to enjoying (e.g., basketball, flag football) will be entirely replaced by activities that can be done on an individual basis, with students spread out far and wide in our gym space.
- These activities will include games in which students take turns completing the same or different actions (like shooting hoops, tossing a football through a tire, or hurdling obstacles); calisthenics and aerobic activities; and "rotating races," where each student is assigned an exercise to complete in their personal space before the next student follows in his/her own personal space, timed, to make it more fun and add a competitive element among the group.
- We will employ allowable equipment such as cones, flags, and floor tape to separate both students and student areas.
- Masks will be encouraged.
- Shared equipment will be to an absolute minimum, but when an item or apparatus is in play, it will be wiped down between uses, as will be any and all areas employed by one group before another staggered student group occupies the gym.
- P.E. sessions will be followed by student cleaning intervals in restrooms, but there will be no locker room use and no changing of clothes.

10. Field Trips, Extracurricular Activities and Use of Facilities Outside of School Hours

For the time being, we are refraining from all off-campus field trips, all after-school activities that would alter students' bus schedules or keep them on campus longer than the normative school day, and all on-campus family and communal events that would unnecessarily bring new visitors to the premises, either during or after regular school hours. This includes assemblies, school-wide shows and fairs, and our annual open house.

Instead, we're planning to take advantage of the paths technology affords us, such as:

- Virtual field trips and tours that will expose our students to new and interesting places
- Teleconference, instead of in-person, parent-teacher conferences, and IEPs
- Student Group Meetings online
- After-school projects that students can complete at home and/or online

- Limited use of facilities during non-school hours including no athletic competition or groups larger than 15 for any purpose.



What this means for our staffing, logistical, and timing patterns:

- Our staff will be expected to work on the premises (with exceptions allowed for fluctuating circumstances or at-home work).
- Our in-person related service providers will still be delivering IEP-prescribed therapy services on campus, in rooms and spaces designated for safe and private therapy delivery. However, they will also be employing teletherapy for at-home students and/or be supplemented by temporarily added tele-therapists, depending on caseload and availability.
- Individual classrooms will still be manned by a minimum of one special education teacher and one teaching assistant (TA)—this is an integral part of our education model and it will never change.
- Classrooms will consist of 7–8 students each, instead of our normative 10–12, grouped by age and grade band, in so far as functional and performance levels allow. Otherwise, cohorts will be organized according to disability diagnosis and special needs considerations (e.g., students on the spectrum grouped together, students on our lowest or highest behavioral levels grouped together), paired with the instructor most qualified to lead that cohort.
- **Model 1** students will be expected to follow our regular attendance policy and in-school scheduling for class lectures, assignments, projects, independent seatwork, computer tutorials, online assessments, etc.
- **Model 2** students will be given the same instruction, assignments, curriculum, projects, tutorials, and assessments as their peers; however, allowance can and will be made on an individual basis concerning how attendance is tallied and how synchronous vs. asynchronous learning time is calculated based on personal circumstances at home.

Academic, Social, and Behavioral Supports Highlights

- The foundation of any effective and empathetic education system lies in the school culture—the climate created there by the interactions and relationships between people, by not just what is done in the course of a school day, but how it is done. There's a feeling a school gives you when you walk its halls and peer into its classrooms; at Ocean State Academy, there's a sense of structure, order, and the teamwork to make that all happen, yes, but there's also an unmistakable atmospheric aura of compassion, patience, mutual respect, and an allegiance to the spirit of true learning, across all facets of life. This first semester back in particular, we will be quelling negativity with positivity, replacing anxiety with calm, and supplanting insecurity with security. Our whole staff understands the importance of this effort to maintain our acclaimed school culture in the most challenging of

times, and we all stand united in rebalancing and refocusing the students we feel honored to serve.



- Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) isn't a new ingredient in our school formula, prompted by recent emotionally challenging, even traumatic events; rather, it's at the core of our entire program and always has been. So we will be maintaining our intense emphasis on our students' emotional health as a critical factor in their overarching education plans, but with awareness that our current societal climate calls for special attention in such areas as reengagement with educational goals, reconnection with teachers, counselors, and peers, realignment on the path to progress, and reassessment of each student's current mental and emotional status. Our social workers and therapists employ research-based, student-centered SEL programs and curriculums that engender deeper dives into feelings and motivations. We routinely hold whole-class or small-group discussions on timely and sensitive age-appropriate topics most applicable to our students' present challenges or worries, and in-the-moment interventions are a customary part of our school day—addressing areas of need as they arise in real-time and then applying SEL tools and techniques to conflict resolution and problem-solving efforts.
- Our wholistic approach to educating the special needs child intrinsically entails multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) and wraparound services that meet each child where they currently are and designs personalized interventions that target the obstacles interfering with progress toward their academic and behavioral goals. Intervention strategies incorporate both internal (school-based) and external (community-based) resources, utilizing such means as behavior contracts/BIPs (behavior intervention plans), time-proven RTI techniques, online single-family counseling meetings, referrals to health-based care outside of school so that students can achieve in school, and school-to-home continuity of learning. Individualized intervention plans are “tiered”—progressing in level of intensity depending on student response and need—and they integrate the recommended methodologies of universal screening and progress monitoring, collaborative problem-solving, and data-based decision-making as we provide each child with an all-encompassing education plan tailored to their individualized profiles and needs.
- Closely tied to these multi-layered and dimensional frameworks particularly applicable in a special education setting is the creation and provision of robust mental health supports. All OSA students always have and always will receive daily emotional and behavioral counseling that grounds them where they are and guides them closer and closer each day to where they want to go. This seminal part of our program is interwoven into all aspects of our school day curriculum such that students are continuously observed and monitored by our staff, which reveals budding and pressing problems quickly and effectively. In 2020–2021, we will be concentrating on the difficulties our students have faced since the



outbreak of the pandemic. At least one faculty member will do a mental health check-in with each student every day, so our students start to regain their footing in these very destabilizing times and feel assured that they're not alone, that there's always an adult they can confide in and seek help from. Again, this is not new to Ocean State—this is what we do ... and what we do best. Still, we're expecting to see a greater need for mental health supports when school resumes, and our therapeutic staff spent considerable time this past summer readying to meet that need.

- Critical to the success of special education students is family engagement—the “buy-in” of their guardians and caretakers to our program approaches and objectives. To keep building on the momentum created by the COVID crisis—to keep our families as involved and invested in student progress and outcomes as they are now—we will continue to poll our parents on their preferences, we will stay in close contact in all ways available to us (mental health check-up calls, text updates, home deliveries, virtual home visits), and we will host virtual events like Zoom meets and online support groups to sustain our parents’ commitment to generalizing their child’s in-school learning at home. Each of our families is well acquainted with whom to reach out to for support and, we’re proud to say, our families often do reach out. In the process, we’re given a platform to reinforce the importance of family engagement to the child’s success and to extend our support to the family to the family’s support of the child. We’ll also be further eliciting the involvement of our families this year by inviting them to take part in our pandemic response committees/focus groups and the educational planning initiatives that have resulted from the health crisis.
- The well-being of our educators translates to the well-being of our students. Measures we are taking to support our instructional staff include regular check-ins by their supervisors and colleagues to assess their mind-set, emotional state, and energy level; gathering feedback on their current wants and needs to facilitate their job functions; seeking input on the themes they’d like to see addressed during our planned Professional Development sessions; supplying them with information on such topics as social isolation and trauma-induced anxiety and depression; and holding weekly staff meetings dedicated to airing frustrations, sharing solutions, and fostering unity. We are directing our faculty to professional resources that offer support specifically for the education community (e.g., CASEL), and we are promoting daily de-stressing practices, like mindfulness, deep breathing, and meditation. We are also very open to supporting and financing wellness programs and certifications our staff propose.
- Before any educational needs can be met, basic needs must of course be met to even make student attendance, participation, and engagement possible. Consistent access to adequate supplies of food is a real, ongoing concern to some OSA families during this time of crisis.



As such, we're ensuring that our families are continuing to be aware of and make use of district-provided free breakfast and lunch programs that have been in place since school closures in March 2020 and have, thankfully, continued to the present. We're intimately aware of the constitution and circumstances of each of our family units, and so we know who needs the most help, who lacks provisions, and who has transportation limitations. We will therefore continue operating the supplies pipeline we set in place months ago to make sure our families have adequate groceries, toiletries, OTC medicines, cleaning products, school supplies—whatever they need—making home deliveries as needed.

- Beyond food, shelter, and home necessities, OSA has historically helped our families become educated about and secure access to such community-based services as health and welfare agencies, training programs, employment agencies, mental health organizations, legal counsel, and child care services. We're fully aware that a child stands on the shoulders of the people at home, and so we bolster and fortify the home environment in any and all ways that we can.

Concluding Note

OSA understands that special education students require greater creativity, continuity, and structure than other students and that social distancing measures will likely be more difficult to implement with students with moderate to severe deficits.. But it's also known—both quantitatively and qualitatively—that special needs children learn best, respond better, and thrive more in in-person settings, and that's why we have no qualms and only enthusiasm about having them under our roof again, for any student who wants to be here, whenever they feel it's safe enough to be here.

Everyone agrees that there's no one-size-fits-all solution to educating special education students during a pandemic; we would argue, in fact, that there's no one-size-fits-all solution to educating any students anytime. It is therefore imperative to repeat—it cannot be stressed enough—that the small size of our school, coupled with our particular education model and program elements, affords us a level of freedom and flexibility to truly reach and teach each individual child individually.

We have outlined the broad strokes of our 2020–2021 reopening plan herein—like our academic, behavioral, and social supports and our support services for parents and training initiatives for staff—but there are places lacking detail precisely because certain elements will differ for certain students, for certain families, for certain lesson plans, and even for certain staff members, who will benefit from different kinds of support and guidance.



So if all our families and districts opt for regular in-person programming, we can do that. If all our families and districts opt for remote-distancing learning, we can do that. But if even one student's parent + sending district team wants a hybrid program, we can do that too. ... If even one student's child care situation at home means she has to do her classwork in the evenings, we can accommodate that. And If even one student prefers that his regular speech therapist comes to his home instead of meeting with him on screen, then we can make that happen.

It is this willingness, capacity, and expertise to customize our programming that puts the "Individualized" in "Individualized Education Plan" at The Ocean State Academy. It's also what fosters the sense of partnership we're so proud of with our district personnel, our educators and caregivers, our students and their families. Together, we will cope. We will conquer. And we will come out of this stronger for it.