



July 3, 2020

Dear Yellowstone Families,

We pray that you are safe and healthy through the continued spike in COVID cases in Houston. As we referenced in our message last Friday, we have been working diligently on a plan to welcome back students and staff in August. Based on the ongoing guidance we are receiving from various state agencies and health authorities, **we are ready to provide the [outline of our working plan](#), and we are now also [seeking your feedback](#).**

### **School Calendar: First Day of School Begins on August 18 and August 19**

The first day of school for Yellowstone College Prep will be August 18, and the first day of school for Yellowstone Academy will be August 19. You can access our calendar on our website [here](#). Our calendar is very similar to the way we've operated in the past. Recognizing that there is a high likelihood of school disruption during the year due to COVID-19, we have added three additional weeks of school at the end of the year from June 1 to June 18. Please reserve that time and plan to continue school in the event that we have to use those days to complete the school year. We will provide advance notification during the school year if we decide to utilize all or a portion of those days.

### **Our Model: On-Campus Instruction & Home Learning**

Yellowstone's campus and our educational model are ideally positioned to provide your family with a learning environment that can maximize both the safety and academic experience for your student. With even smaller class sizes, smaller teacher to student ratios, and a facility that includes many doors to the outside, we can follow CDC health guidance and the educational best practices developed during this crisis. We hope to begin the year with the following approach and regularly assess our plan to make necessary changes:

- All students in Prek-3 through 7<sup>th</sup> grade will receive on-campus instruction at least four days a week and home learning up to one day a week (see our survey for more details).
- Students in 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade will receive on-campus instruction two days a week and home learning three days a week.
- To ensure the safety of our students and staff and reduce cross-contamination, each grade level will be separated into its own "pod." This pod will have its own entrance/exit from the building, its own restroom, and a designated area outside for recess and outdoor instruction. This Pod System has been tested in day care centers across the country since the virus began, and the results have been very favorable. You can read more about this system [here](#).
- Within each pod, students will be assigned to a classroom where they will spend the day. There will be no more than 12 students per room. The desks will be adequately spaced apart and each desk will have a transparent safety shield. Students will eat lunch in their classroom, and the teachers will only rotate among the rooms in their pod to further limit exposure and movement in the building.
- We will follow the health guidelines outlined by the CDC and the Texas Education Agency. Students will have a temperature check each morning before entering the building. All adults will be required to wear a face shield at all times, and, where age appropriate, students will be required to wear masks (which Yellowstone will provide). There will be frequent opportunities for hand-sanitizing and hand-washing. We will also begin the year as a closed campus to limit risk and exposure.

- We have strict guidelines for when a student or staff member has a fever or exhibits other symptoms associated with COVID-19. We will stay in regular communication with our families to ensure everyone is informed and updated as the year progresses.
- We are including home learning each week so that our students, staff, and families can be comfortable with the virtual platform and student learning can be further personalized. This strategy will also position us well in the event that we have to close school and go to an all-virtual environment, and it will feel more routine to students, staff and parents. This will also give us the opportunity to do a thorough cleaning and sanitizing of the building to further secure our facility.
- In addition, we are developing a plan in the event that state or local authorities require us to start the school year with only home learning.

### **Our Proposed Plan for Transportation**

We believe the Pod System and the other details outlined here will be the best way to ensure the safest environment for everyone on campus. After much deliberation, we have come to the initial conclusion that there is no way to preserve this approach and also offer bus transportation next year. The health guidelines for bus service would severely limit how many families we could actually serve and potentially compromise our commitment to every student's safety at all times. We have also heard from many families who are already hesitant to put their child in a bus environment where it will be much harder to control exposure.

We know this news might be disappointing and distressing to some of our families. We also feel strongly that *not* offering bus service is the safest option for our community. To that end, we are proposing that Yellowstone Academy will suspend tuition for the year so that families can use that savings for any extra costs associated with transportation. For Yellowstone College Prep where there is currently no tuition, for families who apply and qualify, we will be offering monthly gas cards and/or public transit cards to offset this added cost. In the survey link below, we will be asking you to provide your feedback so that we can communicate our final decision as soon as possible.

### **Please Complete this Survey to Provide Your Critical Feedback**

Please access our short survey [here](#). This survey will give us the critical feedback we need to complete our plan and move forward with re-opening including:

- Preferred day for home learning for PreK3 through 7th grade.
- Questions around transportation
- Your intent to return in August

### **We need 100% participation in this survey by July 10 so that we can best serve you in the year ahead!**

We know that this is a lot to consider as you determine the needs for your family. We believe this plan will best serve our families and provide more in-person instruction than most surrounding school districts. Yellowstone is fortunate because we are small, nimble and resourceful. We look forward to hearing your questions and concerns.

We stand with you to ensure that your family's needs are being met and that we make the most out of a very difficult time. We look forward to updating you regularly in the weeks to come as these plans solidify further, and we prepare to welcome your students back to campus on August 18 and 19! Please continue to stay safe this summer--we cannot wait to see you soon!

Sincerely,  
The Team at Yellowstone