Soaring Safe

Alabama Christian Academy
Return to Campus Plan
2020-2021
ACA Family –

We eagerly await the reopening of our campus on Tuesday, August 11, 2020. It fills us all with joy to envision our classrooms with students and our campus energized with student activity. We have been working exceptionally hard to prepare for your return and we are pleased to provide you with this document outlining many of the changes we have adopted to ensure our campus is safe and prepared for your student to grow. In these ever-changing times, we are committed to constantly evaluating these procedures and testing them against the collective wisdom of public health experts as well as the regulatory guidance provided by the State of Alabama, City of Montgomery, the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH), and other similarly situated government offices. Based upon the guidance provided by these entities, the enhanced protocols and procedures outlined in this document, and the abiding commitment to personal and public safety from all of the families that make up our ACA community, we are confident we can learn and grow together on our campus for the entire academic year.

ACA’s motto is beautiful and simple – “Thrive in wisdom. Serve in spirit.” This motto as well as our steadfast dedication to Christian principles will serve to guide us well during these uncertain times. We believe the ACA education experience is holistic – it involves growth beyond academic and intellectual skills. Importantly, ACA’s educational experience is purposed to grow students relationally, emotionally, and spiritually. In all areas, but particularly in the areas of relational and spiritual health, we learn and grow best when we are together. We want to be sharpened by one another (Proverbs 27:17), spurred on by one another (Hebrews 10:24), and held accountable to one another as we seek opportunities to bear fruit that blesses those around us – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)

Our desire to be together is so great we are willing to go the extra mile to create the type of safe, healthy, and respectful environment that will allow us to grow and learn together. Please know our plan is fluid and will be updated as needed. New information emerges daily and we will modify our protocols accordingly. We ask you to continue to partner with us in grace, flexibility, and in modeling a strong sense of resilience and courage in the face of uncertainty. And through this all, I ask you to keep ACA in your prayers – let us not ever forget we serve a God who is “gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in love.” (Joel 2:13)

In His Service,

Greg Glenn
Head of School

ALABAMA CHRISTIAN ACADEMY
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

WE ARE COMMITTED TO SAFETY.
As we seek to maximize our ability to grow and learn together, we are determined to hold to the highest standards of acceptable group activities as defined by public health authorities. We will fearlessly listen to all guidance offered, data collected, and evidence presented by public health experts to assist in making our determinations for ACA’s protocols and procedures.

WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER.
While it may be more convenient and more flexible to continue distance learning, the truth is we are better when we are together. Growth and learning are supercharged when they occur in our classroom environments under the watchful guidance of ACA’s fantastic faculty. While it is true our teachers are all highly trained subject matter experts, it is equally true that their impact extends far beyond mastery of course material. Our teachers are passionate about helping students grow across all areas of their life. They carefully position students to face fears, overcome obstacles, discover new talents, hone their giftedness, and influence others. These are just some of the major educational experiences that are diminished through distance learning. While we are unafraid to adopt distance learning models again, if so required, we believe we are better together.

OUR ACA FAMILY IS HONEST AND FORTHRIGHT.
Successfully implementing ACA’s health and safety protocols requires a vulnerability, honesty, and forthrightness few communities can expect to be embraced and embodied. For the sake of ourselves and others, we must be honest with one another when faced with information that complicates our schedules and plans – information such as contact with the virus or experiencing symptoms consistent with Covid-19. Our community is strong enough to trust each family is equally dedicated to the safety and wellbeing of all of us and is committed to honesty and integrity.

THIS WILL NOT BE THE LAST MAJOR CRISIS OUR STUDENTS WILL NAVIGATE.
We know our students will continue to face challenges in this world as they age and grow. Whether in another worldwide pandemic, moments of economic uncertainty, periods of armed conflict and war, social upheaval, personal trials, or any other type of major crisis, we know our students must be adequately prepared to lead in challenging times. Accordingly, we believe it is critical to take this moment in time captive and use it to demonstrate to students how their Creator has ordained for them to be wise, prudent, resilient, resourceful, and courageous even when faced with adversity.
ACA’S COVID RESPONSE TEAM

Earlier in the summer, the Head of School commissioned the creation of ACA’s Covid Response Team. This group of ACA employees as well as the addition of a public health expert worked together to review reports and guidance from governmental entities, dozens of procedures adopted by peer institutions, and listened to feedback from faculty, staff, students, and parents. This group is dedicated to both the continued review and research of information pertaining to the virus as well as creatively and clearly providing solutions that meet the learning needs of ACA students. Members of the Covid Response Team include:

Mike Anderson          Director of Operations
Doug Black             Principal, Lower School
Beth Camp              Counselor, Upper School
Courtney Cochran       Dept. of Nursing Chair, AUM, ACA alumnus
Marla Evans            Assistant Principal, Upper School
Manuel Guice           Assistant Principal, Upper School
Cecilia Porterfield   Counselor, Lower School
Josh Roberts           Associate Head of School, Chair
Julie Taggart          Principal, Upper School
Dana Wingard           Campus Nurse
FACILITIES AND SERVICE OPERATIONS

When the ACA staff returned to campus after Spring Break, our facilities team began a thorough disinfecting process for the entire ACA building. This included disinfecting all desks and furniture, walls and baseboards, restrooms, and lockers.

Additionally, all air returns were removed, disinfected, and properly re-installed.

High traffic areas such as hallways, restrooms, and lobbies are currently being cleaned and disinfected on a continuous basis.

Doorknobs, handles, crash bars, and other high-contact and high-usage touchpoints are currently being cleaned and disinfected multiple times each day. When classes resume we will be utilizing personnel stationed at high traffic doorways during class change periods to assist in making certain students do not have to touch high-contact areas such as doors.

While the disinfectant products used at ACA met the CDC disinfectant standards, we have nonetheless adopted new disinfectant products to supplement our efforts. Some of these products include a hospital grade aerosol disinfectant that does not require wiping/residue removal following usage. This product is ideally suited for students to use when disinfecting desk areas prior to meals.

Upper School teachers will be issued disinfectant cleaning products and will disinfect their desks and classroom furniture between each class change. Lower School teachers will be issued the same disinfectant cleaning products and will disinfect their desks and furniture no less than twice each day with increased disinfectant applications depending upon the day’s classroom activities.

Facial tissue will be distributed to all classrooms and throughout the common spaces of our school to ensure students have easy access to hygiene products purposed to limit the spread of germs.
SELF SCREENING

Using guidance from the CDC and the Alabama Department of Public Health, ACA recognizes the first line of defense against Covid-19 is screening prior to group gatherings. ACA has successfully utilized screening procedures throughout the summer months for athletic practices, band practices, and Camp Eagle. All students (with the oversight and cooperation of a parent or guardian) are required to self-screen before school each day by asking these questions (all answers related to the last 24 hours):

1. Have you experienced a fever? Have you taken fever-reducing medicine?
2. Have you experienced a cough, sore throat, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath?
3. Have you experienced chills or repeated shaking with chills?
4. Have you experienced nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea?
5. Have you experienced a recent sudden loss in taste or smell?
6. Have you tested positive for Covid-19 or are you currently awaiting test results?
7. Have you been in contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19 or who is currently awaiting test results? (please refer to page 9 for guidance on what constitutes contact / exposure)

If a student responds “Yes” to question 6 or 7, they are prohibited from being on ACA’s campus until a telephone consultation can be scheduled with ACA’s campus nurse.

If during an on-campus screening a student responds “Yes” to any questions 1-5, they will be prohibited from entering a classroom until they have been evaluated by ACA’s campus nurse. In this case, students should proceed directly to the nurse’s office located in the Upper School.
MORNING DROP OFF PROCEDURES

FACULTY & STAFF – All faculty and staff will undergo a temperature screen and symptom check each morning upon arrival.

LOWER SCHOOL – All K3 – 5th grade students will be dropped off in the Lower School car line. Detailed car line instructions for arrival and dismissal, including dismissal and cleaning for extended care students, will be provided in advance of the first day of school. Temperature checks as well as screening questions and symptom checks will be administered prior to students entering their classrooms. If a student’s temperature is greater than 100.0, then the student will not be able to enter their classroom and will be sent to the Clinic Annex located across from ACA’s athletic training room for a re-check. If the student then successfully completes ACA’s health screening, is cleared by ACA’s nurse, and their temperature is measured at less than 100.0, the student will then be able to be admitted to their classroom.

UPPER SCHOOL – All 6th-12th grade students will be responsible for self-screening prior to school each morning. In some cases, students may require the assistance of a parent in order to adequately perform the full self-screening procedure. Additionally, temperature checks will occur prior to students entering their first period classroom. If a student’s temperature is measured at greater than 100.0, the student will be sent to the Clinic Annex located across from ACA’s athletic training room. If the student successfully completes ACA’s health screening, is cleared by ACA’s nurse, and the student’s temperature is measured at less than 100.0, the student will then be able to be admitted to their classroom.

NOTE: The policy supplements and does not replace ACA’s current health policy requiring all students to be fever free, vomiting free, and diarrhea free for 24 continuous hours prior to reporting for any ACA activity, including attending class.

CAMPUS NURSE

Dana Wingard, RN serves as ACA’s campus nurse and is available to students for all health-related needs during school.

ACA’s Nurse’s Clinic is located just off of the main lobby in between the CLC and LEAP classroom. While our clinic will remain operational, ACA has established a Clinic Annex at a separate location designated for students/faculty/staff who display Covid-19 symptoms. The Clinic Annex is located across from the athletic training room on the south side of the gymnasium.
MASK POLICY

The City of Montgomery and State of Alabama have currently enacted a mandatory mask order. Accordingly, ACA will abide by these regulations.

MASK/FACIAL COVERINGS – Everyone present on ACA’s campus is required to wear a mask. Exceptions to this policy will be made (1) for individuals in a private vehicle and (2) for identified moments where social distancing can be properly observed. All students are required to have access to an extra mask for use as needed. Extra masks for Lower School students can be stored in the classroom. In cases where a student is unable to secure a mask, we will provide a mask for them. Additionally, all individuals are required to be wearing a mask at all times in which they are indoors and not stationary.

ACCEPTABLE MASKS – Standard masks (including disposable and single use masks) or neck gaiters are the preferred face coverings at this time. No words, lettering, or other messaging may be displayed on masks with the exception of (1) approved ACA branded logos, (2) sports team logos, and (3) personal monograms. Patterns and designs featured on masks are subject to approval. Any pattern violating the ACA handbook, distracting, or inappropriate will be disallowed.
COVID-19 EXPOSURE POLICY

ACA has adopted the CDC’s standard for exposure to Covid-19. According to the CDC, exposure to Covid-19 occurs when an individual has contact with another individual that has Covid-19 (1) for a continuous 15 minutes or longer, (2) indoors, (3) being less than 6 feet apart, and (4) without wearing a mask.

If a student or staff member is exposed to Covid-19:
- He/she will notify the appropriate principal or school nurse.
- He/she will be required to remain off campus and self-quarantine for 10 days from the date of the last exposure to Covid-19. The exclusion requires separation from all school related activities that do not offer an online/distance participation option.
- In the event he/she becomes symptomatic at any point during the 10-day self-quarantine period, he/she will be allowed to resume ACA activities when the individual can attest to being symptom free for 3 days and at least 10 days removed from initial onset of symptoms, completes a consultation and subsequent recommendation with ACA’s Nurse, and (if requested) obtains a note from a physician stating the individual is healthy enough to return to normal school routines.

If a student or staff member has a positive Covid-19 test:
- He/she will notify the appropriate principal or school nurse. ACA will then follow heightened cleaning protocols for the areas affected and will, when appropriate, work with local health authorities to determine additional measures.
- He/she must remain off campus until they can attest that they are at least
  - 10 days removed from the onset of symptoms, and
  - Symptom free for 3 days

If a student becomes sick while at ACA:
- If a student experiences symptoms of Covid-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste/smell) while at school, he/she will be sent to the Clinic Annex for evaluation. If ACA’s nurse deems it appropriate to call a parent, the student will be escorted to the parent’s vehicle upon arrival of the parent.
- If the nurse’s evaluation suggests a likelihood of Covid-19, the student may return to school when he/she is symptom free for 3 days or in possession of a negative Covid-19 test.
- Any student who becomes sick while at school will be sent home. So long as a student does not experience Covid-19 symptoms, ACA will continue to follow the existing sick policy. The student must be fever free (100 degrees or higher) and symptom free for a minimum of 48 hours without the aid of any medication.
LOCKERS

Lockers will not be assigned at the beginning of the school year. Our intent is to minimize the congestion of our common spaces (including hallways) and to evaluate procedures that will decrease the potential for close contact. We will reevaluate student needs on an ongoing basis to decide on the proper time to utilize lockers this year. Any student with special storage needs should contact their principal regarding alternative storage arrangements.

LUNCH PERIODS

A rotation of cafeteria, classroom, and outdoor areas will be utilized for lunch times in order to maximize social distancing and provide a necessary respite in the day for students to unwind from their teaching environments. Lunch arrangements will be made in such as way as to maximize student social interactions while observing social distancing principles.

CHAPEL

Chapel is an integral part of the culture and student life at ACA. We will continue to meet daily for this special time; however, we will begin the year by utilizing small group chapels extensively. Depending upon the day of the week, Upper School students may be in chapel with their homeroom, choice group chapel, club group or they may remain in their 2nd period class and view a recorded or simulcasted speaker. Lower School students will have chapel programming incorporated into their daily classroom schedule. Until group meeting restrictions change, we will not be able to meet as an entire campus body. We are dedicated to providing innovative, interactive, life-changing chapel programming in multiple formats for the entirety of the time we are required to observe social distancing principles.

HALLWAYS / CLASS CHANGES

Directional signage will be posted in each hallway designating traffic flow. Students are expected to be mindful of walking patterns as they transition to and from classes. Volunteers will be stationed at exterior doorways during class change times to alleviate the need for students to physically touch doors or door handles.
PE CLASSES & RECESS PERIODS

Upper School students enrolled in PE classes (2nd and 4th periods) will neither dress in gym clothing to start the school year, nor will students access the locker rooms during PE classes. At this time, Lower School students will not combine with other classrooms for PE activities or recess periods. We will adapt PE activities to be compatible with our ACA uniforms and will provide parents with ample notice when our PE class activities change and when students are able to utilize locker rooms once again.

ATHLETIC CLASSES

Students in 1st, 3rd, or 7th period Athletics will use locker rooms to change into athletic gear; however, their usage will be strictly limited to pre-assigned areas. Students will be limited to these pre-assigned areas and will be required to store all personal belongings in their assigned area only.

FIELD TRIPS / FIELD STUDIES

All field trips and field studies are currently postponed. We will evaluate each desired field trip, field study, class trip, and other travel need on a case-by-case basis and in accordance to recommendations from the ADPH and CDC. We believe an essential component of education occurs when students engage in travel together off of our ACA campus. Accordingly, we will seek to reschedule the maximum number of travel experiences once it is appropriate to resume group travel.

SOARING SAFE TRAINING

Soaring Safe training will be integrated into each student’s schedule and incorporated into a variety of classes. Soaring Safe Training is ACA’s student education initiative designed to train students on proper health precautions, safe hygiene practices, and full understanding of safety procedures designed to create the safest and healthiest learning environment. ACA endeavors to model well the Christ-like response to a public health crisis and utilize this school year to actively teach students how to grow in their capacity to love their neighbor, demonstrate respect and compassion towards those in their path, and be a wise steward of their physical health.
ACA WELLNESS PLEDGE

Alabama Christian Academy is dedicated to providing a safe environment for all individuals present on our campus. Accordingly, we ask all faculty, staff, students, and parents/guardians demonstrate their dedication to one another in the ACA community by affirming the following pledges. Your presence on ACA’s campus will serve as the sign you have accepted and made these pledges.

As a parent or guardian, I pledge to honestly assess my student using ACA’s self-screening procedures and will keep my child at home when they do not meet the self-screening standards.

I pledge to take appropriate self-quarantine/isolation precautions in the event of a positive test among anyone in my household. In the event this occurs, I will work with ACA’s Nurse to determine the appropriate timing and clearance procedures.

I pledge to wear a mask when ACA’s procedures so require and to instruct my student to abide by ACA’s procedures and the directives of the faculty and staff of ACA.

I pledge to regularly engage my student in conversations designed to help them grow in the virtues of respect, kindness, compassion, and service towards all members of the ACA community.

I pledge to navigate conversations surrounding Covid-19 with a sense of maturity, professionalism, and purpose.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW WILL ACA PROVIDE FOR THE EMOTIONAL HEALTH OF STUDENTS?

Strengthening the emotional and mental health of our student body is a motivating factor in our decision to return to campus. We know that we are designed to be part of a community and that we better understand our own selves and giftedness when we share experiences with others. The social and emotional development of students is a priority for ACA. We also know that in a school of our size, we can expect for some students to experience anxiety, depressive experiences, isolation, and apprehension related to Covid-19. Our ACA counselors are trained to provide guidance for students experiencing emotional stressors and they remain available for students that would benefit from meeting one-on-one. Additionally, our teachers and staff are always willing to support and encourage students towards emotional health.

WILL ACA MOVE TO A DISTANCE LEARNING MODEL THIS YEAR?

While our goal is to provide on-campus, in-person education for the entirety of the 2020-2021 academic year, we understand our response to Covid-19 must remain flexible. We know governmental regulations as well as public health data may require ACA to move to distance learning options at some point this year.
HOW DO THESE PROCEDURES AFFECT BAND, CHORUS, AND FINE ARTS?

Band practices, chorus practices, and fine arts practices will continue with social distance modifications. When social distancing is not possible, mask wearing will be strictly enforced. Where appropriate, limited audiences will be allowed for practices and performances.

WILL THERE BE FOOTBALL OR OTHER SPORTS?

ACA is governed by the Alabama High School Athletics Association (AHSAA). As of July 21, AHSAA has not yet provided guidance on football competition and game attendance, though they are expected to publish guidance as early as July 22. Our football athletes have been practicing on-campus since mid-June utilizing daily health screening and social distancing protocols. We expect to be able to enjoy a competitive football season this Fall. We are also evaluating our football stadium facilities and our livestream capabilities to determine appropriate heightened safety protocols as well as digital broadcast access to ACA football games for families desiring to avoid crowds.

WILL EXTENDED DAY STILL BE OFFERED?

Extended day will continue; however, afternoon club activity will be postponed and launched later this Fall.

CAN I STILL VISIT MY CHILD AT SCHOOL?

We have temporarily suspended campus and classroom visits for all guests. In an effort to better control the potential for cross contamination, parents and other typical classroom visitors will not be permitted to enter classrooms or other indoor spaces during the day. Additionally, ACA has significantly limited campus visitors to the interior of the ACA buildings, including service operators, repair technicians, and delivery attendants.
CAN I BRING SNACKS, CUPCAKES, OR OTHER TREATS TO CELEBRATE MY CHILD’S BIRTHDAY WITH THEIR CLASS?

We are not allowing campus visitors at this time and this limitation will extend to delivering treats and snacks. In fact, students will be instructed not to share snacks or lunch items with one another, even when those items are prepackaged. Our desire is that every parent has the security to know their child has extremely limited close contact with others in the maximum possible regard. We look forward to loosening these restrictions when it makes sense to do so.

HOW WILL LOWER SCHOOL STUDENTS ENGAGE WITH SPECIAL AREA TEACHERS?

Special area teachers (e.g. music, art, counseling, STEM) will rotate among Lower School classrooms alleviating the need for Lower School students to travel throughout the day.

WILL ACA DISCLOSE THE NAMES OF STUDENTS OR FAMILIES THAT TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19?

If your student is exposed to someone on ACA’s campus that tests positive for Covid-19, ACA will promptly notify the parents of all exposed students. In accordance with CDC and HIPAA guidelines and state privacy laws, we are not able to share the names of any positive tests with others.

IS IT POSSIBLE FOR MY CHILD TO BE PROVIDED DISTANCE LEARNING OPTIONS BECAUSE A MEMBER OF MY HOUSEHOLD IS HIGH RISK?

At this time, ACA is not offering a full-time, voluntary distance learning option; however, families that would like to discuss unique needs they have may request a review by their child’s principal to determine the appropriateness and feasibility of distance learning options.
WILL ACA BE PROVIDING HAND SANITIZER AND OTHER CLEANING PRODUCTS?

ACA will be providing hand sanitizing stations, access to cleaning supplies, facial tissues, and other similar products throughout campus. We expect students to frequently wash their hands and sanitize areas in which they come into sustained direct contact. Additionally, we encourage students to bring their own approved cleaning products when they desire to. Approved cleaning products include travel sized hand sanitizer, travel sized disinfectant wipes, and similarly sized non-industrial cleaning supplies. Teachers will help to provide instruction on the proper usage of these products.

WHAT ABOUT HUGS, HIGH-FIVES, AND HANDSHAKES?

Friendliness is a hallmark of the ACA experience. We are proud of the way the ACA community is known as a caring, nurturing place and we believe in the power of healthy physical touch. Unfortunately, the virus requires us to rethink many of the interactions we formerly took for granted. We expect students to limit personal contact with one another, including handshakes, hugs, high-fives, and other incidental contact. Additionally, we will be instructing students not to share personal items such as pens, pencils, phones, and other items that are normally frequently borrowed.

WILL MY CHILD BE DISCIPLINED FOR NOT WEARING A MASK OR FOR NOT OBSERVING SOCIAL DISTANCING PRINCIPLES?

Every effort will be made to encourage mask wearing through educational conversations; however, our mask policies are mandatory and failure to adhere to our mask policies may result in disciplinary actions. Please know we are working hard to maximize the amount of time students will spend in mask-optional environments. Also, if your student experiences a disability or other individualized need that affects their ability to wear masks, please contact your student’s principal to discuss appropriate accommodations. Finally, we are very sensitive to the challenges associated with teaching young children to wear masks. The State of Alabama’s mask order specifically exempts children ages 6 and under. We are currently examining how this should affect ACA’s mask policy and we will provide additional detailed instructions for our Pre-K, Kindergarten and 1st grade students in the near future.
NOW THAT ACA HAS SUCCESSFULLY HOSTED GRADUATION EXERCISES, DOES THIS MEAN WE WILL GET TO PARTICIPATE IN LARGE GROUP EVENTS THIS YEAR?

Our graduation program was held on Sunday, July 12. Our Upper School administration carefully orchestrated a wonderful celebration of our 2020 graduates. This event was made possible because of their dedication to enforcing safety measures, their tireless time commitment, and heavy regulation on seating assignments and mask requirements. At this time, we have postponed all large group events and we look forward to rescheduling these events on a case by case basis based upon our ability to apply similar measures of planning and safety precautions as modeled in the planning stages of our Graduation program.

HOW WILL TEACHING ASSIGNMENTS OCCUR FOR STUDENTS THAT ARE REQUIRED TO QUARANTINE/ISOLATE?

When a student is required to quarantine or isolate in order to comply with ACA’s policies, the student will be provided with an individually tailored education plan in consultation with the student’s teachers and the student’s principal. We are dedicated to meeting the needs of each family and to arranging for educational opportunities consistent with continued academic progress based upon the unique circumstances associated with each, individual student.
WILL I RECEIVE A PARTIAL REFUND IN THE EVENT ACA IS REQUIRED TO MOVE TO A DISTANCE LEARNING MODEL?

After 6 consecutive weeks of distance learning, a family may request to withdraw their student from ACA and be released from future tuition obligations with no financial penalty. Additionally, after 6 consecutive weeks of distance learning, ACA will publish a new, reduced tuition model designed to increase financial flexibility and acknowledge families cannot receive our intended level of benefits when we are forced away from being physically present together. **Please know this represents a significant change to ACA’s tuition and withdrawal policy from past years.** It is important to us at this time to provide parents with increased financial flexibility and respond to some of the worry many families are experiencing. Our goal is for our ACA family to remain fully together and committed to one another throughout this academic year. We are looking forward to having your child on campus this year, but in the event we are required to stay off campus for an extended period of time, we do want to provide parents with opportunities to re-evaluate their financial needs.