



Ida Crown Jewish Academy

The Esformes Family Campus

בס"ד

July 2020

Dear ICJA Family

The new school year is just a month away, and despite our very best efforts at anticipating the unique needs of this coming school year, we continue to consult, adapt and prepare for a school opening that will be like no other.

A few weeks ago, we released our school reopening plan. It was created together with experts in the field, in consonance with Illinois State Board of Education and Illinois Department of Public Health guidelines and with full awareness of the recommendation of the American Academy of Pediatrics "that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school."

Nevertheless, we recognize that no scenario that advocates leaving our homes' safety, whether for work, recreation, or school, is at this time, risk-free. Therefore, we continue to look to our entire ICJA family to teach our students the importance of wearing masks whenever in public, proper hand hygiene, and social distancing. Together, we can create a reasonably safe environment at school that minimizes risks and maximizes the educational opportunities for all of our students.

Of course, some members of our family, students, faculty, and staff are unable to attend school in the fall despite all of our efforts. For them, we have created opportunities via zoom to remain part of the ICJA experience. If you plan on attending school virtually, please let us know as soon as possible.

Attached to this letter are some of the frequent asked questions (FAQs) we have received, and our responses. Please feel free to be in touch with me directly if you have any questions or concerns, and please understand that we are committed to doing our best in these trying times.

This is a perfect segue to reviewing some of the exciting new developments at ICJA, despite the pandemic.

The very first word of our motto is "inspiring," which continues to be a focus of our efforts. To that end, we have expanded our *mechanchim* program to now include two male and two female faculty members to serve all of our students. But even more, Rabbi Yoni Fox, Rabbi Meyer Simcha Stromer, Mrs. Lynn Kraft, and Mrs. Jenny Hagage will be working with our social service team (Mr. Phil Zbaraz and Ms. Julie Avner) to find ways to focus on both religious growth and emotional health – especially in these times.

Inspiring Bnei and Bnot Torah to Thrive in the Modern World

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AFFILIATED WITH THE ASSOCIATED TALMUD TORAH OF CHICAGO • A PARTNER WITH JUF IN SERVING OUR COMMUNITY • ACCREDITED BY THE NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS



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While in-person special events may be beyond our immediate reach, plans are underway for online programs to add to the formal curricular experience at ICJA. Our Kollel is imagining ways to create *Yimei Iyun*, and our activities committees are planning fun and safe special programs.

Academically, we continue to improve our program. This past year, and despite the upheaval of COVID, witnessed improvements in our AP scores, ACT scores, and honors received by our students and faculty. Over the summer, our faculty has been meeting to continue their efforts at creating a stronger awareness and alignment of our curriculum to national standards and engaging in many professional development programs.

In addition, in response to the crisis of this summer, ICJA has partnered with Rev. Roger Cheeks, the Director of Seminary and University Outreach at International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, to create a unique online seminar for our students on racism, and the question of the African American-Jewish relations. We are grateful to our alumna, Yael Eckstein, president of IFCJ, for her support of this effort.

Finally, we are pleased to welcome to our faculty, Rabbi Yehuda Meyers, who will be teaching Talmud and Tanach, and Ms. Julie Avner, LCP who will join our social service team to support the social and emotional needs of our students.

Wishing you a safe, healthy and wonderful end to your summer, and looking forward to a very different, but with G-d's help and yours, a safe and inspirational new ICJA year,

I remain,



Rabbi Leonard A. Matanky
Dean

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How will ICJA ensure that everyone will follow the rules for a safe reopening?

We will be meeting with all of our students and families in advance of our reopening to review the rules and explain that these rules are the only way we can reopen safely. Throughout the building, there will be signage reminding students of these rules. All teachers will be responsible for their classrooms and will remove any student who is not wearing a mask or maintaining social distance. But, all of this will only work if the entire ICJA Family supports this effort. Therefore, we also look to our parents to speak with their children and reinforce the importance of these rules.

What happens when a student is “removed from class” for failing to abide by the rules?

Students will be sent to the office and sent home. They will need to remain home for the rest of that day and for an additional day. During that time, they will be allowed to attend classes virtually. After the second day, they will be allowed back to school. If G-d forbid, a student violates these rules a second and third time, s/he will not be allowed to return to school until the IDPH no longer requires masks.

How will you ensure that bathrooms will not have more than four people at a time?

There will be signage outside all of the bathrooms, and every other sink (and in the boys' bathrooms, one of three urinals) will be closed off. However, we cannot post staff in the bathrooms to oversee this rule, and therefore it will be a student responsibility.

What happens if someone tests positive for COVID-19, will you close school?

Our experts have told us that if G-d forbid, a person tests positive, only those who were within six feet and not masked for 15 minutes or more will need to quarantine for 14 days. Since our students in classrooms will all be socially distanced, this will significantly minimize the risk and need for quarantine. Since students will be sitting in assigned seats, we will also be able to support tracing. Of course, all of this is contingent on whatever the Skokie Health Department will also request of us.

What happens when a student isn't feeling well, will s/he be allowed to come to school?

As part of the self-wellness check, our students, before they enter school, teachers, and staff, must attest that they do not have any of the symptoms associated with COVID-19. If G-d forbid, they have any of the symptoms they will need to remain at home until either they have an alternate written diagnosis



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(e.g., a simple cold or flu) from their physician and the symptoms subside or have taken a COVID test to confirm that they do not have COVID, no longer have a fever and are feeling better.

What protocols are you following for re-admitting students, faculty, or staff who may have been sick or COVID positive?

At the recommendation of our advisory committee, we will follow the protocols of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). The protocol is as follows:

1. Quarantine and School Absence Policies for Symptomatic and Exposed Persons:
Symptomatic individual/child with test positive: exclude for 10 days from symptom onset AND at least 3 days after fever resolution (if present) AND improved respiratory symptoms
2. Symptomatic individual/child not tested: exclude for 10 days from symptom onset AND at least 3 days after fever resolution (if present) AND improved respiratory symptoms
3. Symptomatic individual/child determined to have an alternate cause or illness by their primary medical doctor: exclude until symptoms resolve
4. Symptomatic individual/child with test negative: exclude until afebrile for 24 hours (if fever present) AND improved respiratory symptoms
5. Exposed and asymptomatic: exclude for 14 days from last exposure if remains asymptomatic; exclude until meets criteria #1/2 if becomes symptomatic There is no role for testing to get a "negative test" to clear a child to return to school. The COVID-19 positive individual does NOT need a repeat COVID test or a doctor's note to return to school.
6. If a child or staff member has a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19: Call the local or state health department for further instructions.

What are you doing to address the social-emotional needs of the students?

After the physical health of our students, this is the most critical issue on our minds. Everyone has reacted to the pandemic in different ways, and while we believe that teenagers are extraordinarily resilient, we need to recognize that they are facing significant challenges. As a result, our social service team is working with our *mechanchim* and will be working with our teachers to learn how to identify signs of concern. If identified, those students will be approached by trained personnel, and we will also involve parents. In addition, we look to parents to share their concerns with us or things they are noticing. Phil Zbaraz (pzbaraz@icja.org) will be taking the lead on this initiative.



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What are the plans for davening this year?

For shacharit, we will be dividing as per State guidelines into minyanim of fewer than 50. These minyanim will be fixed, and all seating will be socially distanced, and masks will be required. At present, when the Torah is read, the same person reading will have all of the aliyot, taking out and replacing the Torah and doing hagbah (if the experts change their stance, this too may change). During the month of Elul, the shofar will not be blown in the minyanim, but outside of school after minyan.

For mincha, because of some of the logistical challenges, we will establish an optional minyan during 8th period and another 12th period. However, by the time mincha can no longer be davened after school, we will find a solution to the logistical challenge and arrange for mincha at school.

What will happen during free periods?

During free periods we will offer students two options, either to go outside (there will be a tent that seats 40 with social distancing and other areas to sit) or to be in an assigned part of the building which will be limited to a specific number of students so that social distancing can be observed.

What about meals?

As noted in the reopening plan, almost all students will be eating their lunches in classrooms. During meals, masks may be removed, and we will have an adult present to supervise. We also ask that as much as possible that meals should not include bread since we want to avoid long lines for washing. Lunches may also be ordered in advance from our in-house caterer, StarrKosher-ChicagoTailgators.com . Meals may also be eaten outside with social distance observed.

Can students eat snacks or have drinks during the day?

No one is allowed to remove their masks while in the building, except for the brief lunch break (our goal is to keep that to 10-15 of unmasked time). As a result, a student who wishes to eat a snack will have to leave the building. (As noted in the reopening plan, drinking fountains in school have been shut off.)



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What will you do about students who may have visited a “hot-spot”?

Students, faculty, and staff who have visited a "hot-spot" will be asked to self-quarantine for 14 days. While it is true that the Skokie Department of Public Health does not require this, and that masks and distancing should preclude the need, we want to take the extra precaution and ask all of the ICJA family to abide by this.

What special measures is the school taking to sanitize the building?

Throughout the day, high contact surfaces (door handles, counters, etc.) and the washrooms will be cleaned with virucide. When students arrive in their classes, they will be asked to spray their desks with virucide. At night, there will be a more thorough cleaning of the building, including the use of an electrostatic sprayer, a disinfectant, and virucide. In addition, we have installed MERV-14 filters on our HVAC system and use a 35% outside air mix throughout the building.

Why are the lockers being closed off from use?

ISBE has recommended that we suspend the use of lockers. This is an especially important step because our building has locker bays in which it is impossible to observe social distancing. However, we also recognize that students will have many things to carry. Therefore we have requested of faculty use as many electronic texts as possible and, when possible, to allow students to store their textbooks in their classrooms.

Will there be a sports program this year?

We hope so. However, presently, the IHSA and IDPH recommend limiting the program to socially distanced, outside conditioning and not actual play. Should that recommendation change, we will consult with our advisory panel and determine our next steps.



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What do I do if I don't want my child to attend in-person in the fall?

Please contact Rabbi Matanky (imatanky@icja.org) and he will work with the Administrative Team to make sure that all necessary arrangements are made in advance to support your child's learning. However, the online option will only be available if a student is unable to attend (due to COVID concerns or medical necessity). Choosing to attend some days online and some days in-person is not an option.

When will we know which teachers will be teaching remotely?

We have a fantastic faculty, and they are doing everything possible to teach in-person. However, some do have health concerns and have been advised by their physicians not to teach in-person at this time. We are hiring Teacher's Assistants to staff classrooms where the teacher will be teaching remotely to support our students' safety and educational needs. A list of teachers who will be teaching remotely will be released when we are closer to the school year.

What additional changes to the reopening plan can we expect?

We don't know. But we are committed to continuing to respond to our students' needs, the mandates of the State and municipality, and the advice of our experts. Please stay in touch!