

Dear Faculty, Staff, Students, Parents and our entire School Community,

Greetings from The Piney Woods School!

I write today to share our current plans to reopen school for the Fall semester of 2020 while respecting the public health concerns we are experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic. While substantial thought and consideration has gone into these plans, we remain prepared to adjust our plans as necessary to keep students, families, and faculty and staff safe and healthy.

With this in mind, this letter outlines (1) how we will structure our school community, (2) our anticipated schedule for the Fall semester, (3) information about our expected onboarding process, and (4) details about health and safety within our campus community.

In the coming weeks, we will provide additional information as our plans continue to develop. Please know we are purposely keeping this plan flexible in order to incorporate the latest applicable guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), state health officials, our school's attending physician, and other government and political representatives.

Overall Structure of Our Learning Community.

This Fall we will welcome students across all grade levels as well as faculty and staff across all offered disciplines back to our campus. We have elected to bring students to campus because part of what makes this place special is being here, among students from other places, and with faculty and leadership who invest in the development of our youth.

On a daily basis, we work specifically toward the cultural empowerment of our students, and we do this as a holistic community, as a village. Some of the most impactful work here happens on the farm, during Chapel, or when students are with their peers. While we will use videoconferencing and remote learning where appropriate, we do not want students to miss what makes this experience so unique: the connections, conversations, and cultivation that happen here, in person.

This year, our school community will be intentionally small, requiring us to use only about one-third of the indoor and outdoor spaces on our 2,000-acre campus. At this smaller size, we can better implement social distancing and other practices to respond to COVID-19. For example, we are making efforts to provide students with single room occupancy. Exceptions will be made for siblings or other close relatives who reside in the same student house and can be requested to room together. Similarly, we will continue to have small class sizes, in most cases this means 15 students or fewer per class session.

We are blessed to be located on a private campus, in a controlled access, rural environment. Our students have plenty of room to spread out. We are also using this opportunity to add more value to the student experience through additional emphasis on our historic work program. Returning students can anticipate greater structure, higher expectations, more work, more fun, and more learning through our work program. This has already begun with our 2020 Youth Summer Work Program that several students have been hired into.

Our faculty have already begun devising and incorporating our community farm, lakes, animals, and forest land into lesson plans and projects as "labs" for student exploration and experimentation. Altogether, our small



A Revised Fall Schedule.

While we have high confidence in our structure and programs for the Fall, we have revised our academic schedule in response to the risks presented by COVID-19. We have moved our first day of class to September 8, the day after Labor Day, to allow for additional planning and preparation for the start of the year. However, students can begin arriving on September 1 to adequately prepare. We currently have a small number of students on campus, so students arriving early will join members of their Piney Woods family as they take the next steps in their academic journey.

We will break from on-campus, in person, learning at noon on November 25, the day before Thanksgiving. This represents a change from prior years where we provided a one-week Thanksgiving Break. When students depart for Thanksgiving, we will transition to online and remote learning for the remainder of the Fall Semester. Students will not return to campus until January for the beginning of the Spring semester. A small number of students—primarily our international children—will be exempt from this schedule and permitted to remain on campus during the breaks.

Once students arrive in September, we are requesting they remain on campus with us until November 25. This period is only 68 days, not including Sundays. We will have class or work six days per week, which includes a half-day on most Saturday mornings.

To be clear, we are specifically asking parents to work with us during our on-campus, in person session this Fall by refraining from checking students out unless absolutely necessary. Students who depart campus without prior notice and approval may be requested to complete any remaining coursework from home or, in an extraordinary case, could be dismissed from school altogether. We recognize there may arise the need for a medical appointment or other family emergency. Otherwise, please give us the 68 days. For more detail about our Fall schedule, please see the schedule below:

September 1	First Day of Student Registration (Individual Appointments Required)
September 8	First Day of Class for Fall Semester
November 1	Founder's Day (Virtual Ceremony)
November 25	Thanksgiving Break Begins at Noon
November 30	Remote Learning Begins Through Close of Semester
December 16	Final Project Week Begins
December 23	Final Day of Fall Semester
January 11	First Day of Class for Spring Semester
Additional details for the Spring semester to be circulated	

Onboarding Students This Fall. We are organizing our Fall onboarding period with much care and consideration. While we have not outlined every detail, we know it is important to minimize the number of people on campus and the frequency for potential close, in-person interactions.

Rather than one weekend of registration, we have expanded our registration period to one full week, which will allow us to spread out the arrival and move-in of students within our student housing. The first day of registration and move-in will be September 1. Students and families will be requested to schedule an appointment to register and move into student housing. More detail about the appointment process is forthcoming.



We are requesting that no more than two family members accompany students who come to register and move into student housing. Once the student has registered and moved into the student house, please plan for the student to remain with us and not to be transported off campus. Advanced planning will help us limit the number and interactions of people on the campus.

Campus Community Health and Safety. Even with all of the precautions and safeguards we employ, we recognize that a member of our school community could become ill. As a reminder, we have a school physician who has advised and supported our students' health and safety for over 30 years. We also have a full-time school nurse, who is on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We also have begun regular consultation with the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC), which has been at the forefront on COVID-19 testing and treatment in our state. Should an illness become serious, and potentially require hospitalization, our campus is only 20 miles from UMMC.

As a standard procedure, we have begun and will continue temperature screening every person who comes to our campus. Only individuals without an elevated temperature (less than 100.4 degrees) will be permitted on campus. In student housing, we will screen students daily through temperature checks and for any other symptoms of COVID-19. We will employ a two-step process for any student who may have symptoms consistent with the virus. The first step will be a temporary quarantine allowing sufficient time to test the student and receive the results of that test. If a student tests positive, the student will either be quarantined for at least two weeks or have the option of leaving campus altogether (of course, parents will have the opportunity to pick up the student). We are fortunate to have single family homes available on campus that can be refashioned for quarantine purposes. Any quarantined student, whether temporary or longer term, will be observed and treated regularly by our school physician and nurse.

Our first intention remains always to avoid the contraction or spread of COVID-19 on campus at all. We will practice mask wearing and physical distancing on campus. We will keep a sufficient supply of hand sanitizer, masks, and other personal protective equipment in stock. Hand sanitizer dispensers will be available throughout the campus, in all buildings. We will employ a daily sanitization routine in all common areas of our student housing, dining hall, classrooms, and other public spaces.

Closing Thoughts.

We recognize you may have questions about some of the plans we have shared. We will update these plans in the weeks ahead, so please stay tuned for more information. In the meantime, feel free to contact us by phone at 601-845-2214 or by email at pwsmail@pineywoods.org with any questions or concerns you may have.

The Piney Woods School is a sustainable learning community, but we are also a family. We care most about the health and safety of every student, faculty and staff member, and other members of this community. By pursuing this work responsibly, we can continue to offer learning opportunities for the next semester and in the years ahead.

Sincerely,



Will Crossley, President

