THE GOW SCHOOL REOPENING PLAN
Working Draft Document – July 30, 2020

The Gow School Reopening Task Force was asked to consider and offer relevant health and safety recommendations for Gow to resume academic programming in the fall of 2020. In developing this comprehensive plan, we have included four sections: Repopulation, Monitoring, Containment, and Closure. In creating this plan, we have solicited input from The New York State Department of Health, The Erie County Department of Health, The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), The New York State Interim Guidance for In-Person Instruction at Pre-K to Grade 12 Schools During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, The New York State Reopening Guidance for Religious and Independent Schools, the CDC’s Interim Guidance for Administrators of U.S. Institutions of Higher Education, and others. We have also solicited guidance from an Advisory Committee comprised of health professionals, Trustees, Gow School parents, and Gow faculty and staff. We are grateful for their advice and support.

Gow will be bold as we execute this evolving plan designed to guide our community using reasonable, safe, and independent measures. Gow will follow the advice and guidance of local, state, and national health experts and update this document accordingly. The Gow School website includes this safety plan, public health guidelines, and updated information to inform members of our community.

Gow has already implemented many of these protocols. As a school focused on educating students with dyslexia and similar language-based learning disabilities, Gow hosted a five-week summer session from June 29 to July 31, 2020. As per Governor Andrew Cuomo’s Executive Order 202.37 dated June 5, 2020, Gow provided in-person classroom instruction for special education students.

In March of 2020, Gow was required to quarantine twenty students and five faculty on campus after they returned from a student trip to Italy. Working in tandem with the Erie County Department of Health, students and faculty received daily monitoring until the quarantine order was lifted on March 7, 2020 by Dr. Gale Burstein, Commissioner of Health for The Erie County Health Department.

The Gow School will continue to take a science-based planning approach to ensure the well-being of our community. While it is unreasonable to assume that exposure to contagious illnesses, including COVID-19 can be eliminated, we are confident that our strategy is comprehensive and will minimize risk.

The Gow School Reopening Task Force:
- Jenn Bamann (Communications Coordinator)
- Gayle Hutton (Committee Chair, Director of Development)
- Luke Salerno (Head of the Middle School)
- Julie Wysocki (Assistant to the Headmaster and Registrar)

Advisory Council Members:
- Priscilla Bennett (Day School Parent Representative)
- Tom Jolls (Gow Buildings and Grounds Department)
- Karen Kopp (Trustee, Parent)
- Liz Meyers (Chef, SAGE Food Service)
- Paige Payne (Parent Association President)
- Halila Reisdorf (Gow School Nurse)
- Daphne Uliana (Trustee and Alumni Parent)
• Gerald Zeis (Gow School Science Faculty)
• Brian Zolot (Gow School Counselor)
• Ula Zolot (Gow School Reconstructive Language Faculty and Executive Function Coach)

Chapter 1: REPOPULATION

Arrival and Student Intake
• With a low 4:1 student to faculty ratio and a 125-acre campus, we are confident that The Gow School facilities and environment will satisfy recommended distancing guidelines;
• Before arriving at Gow, students and their families will receive virtual instructions about safety protocols. Once on campus, all faculty, staff, and students will be trained in proper hand and respiratory hygiene, face covering protocol, and social distancing guidelines;
• Gow will implement daily screening and temperature checks for students, faculty, staff, and where applicable, vendors, and visitors to identify individuals who may have COVID-19 or who may have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus. Appropriate social distancing will be enforced during screening. Screeners will wear a mask, and may wear gloves, a gown, goggles, and/or a face shield;
• Screening questions will be used to determine if the individual has:
  o knowingly been in close or proximate contact in the past 14 days with anyone who has tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19, or has, or had symptoms of COVID-19;
  o tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 in the past 14 days;
  o has experienced any symptoms of COVID-19, including a temperature of greater than 100.0°F in the past 14 days; and/or;
  o has traveled internationally or from a state with widespread community transmission of COVID-19 per the New York State Travel Advisory in the past 14 days.
• Individuals traveling from international locations or from a state designated through the New York State Travel Advisory, will be required to follow New York State quarantine guidelines;
• Students, faculty, staff, and visitors will wear face masks in the presence of others, and in public settings where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain;
• Using verbal and written communication including signage, students, faculty, and staff will receive training and be encouraged to follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and New York State Department of Health guidance regarding the use of personal protective equipment;
• If students feel ill, feverish, or have cold-like symptoms, they will be required to tell a teacher or staff member and report to the health office. The teacher or staff member will notify the nurse before the student enters the health office. Access to the health office will be limited to one student in the waiting area at a time;
• As students return, the campus will be repopulated in phases to allow for adequate screening, restricted access to the dormitories, and possible isolation of symptomatic students. Entry to the dormitories will be limited to the student and two family members only. All will be screened and required to wear a mask when entering the dormitory.

Academic Instruction and Daily Operations:
• Day student families will be asked to take their child’s temperature before leaving home. The student’s temperature will be taken again when they arrive on campus and if a student’s temperature exceeds 100.0, the student will be sent home;
• Gow will maintain records confirming that individuals were screened, but will not keep records of specific temperature data;
• Gow will adhere to and promote hygiene, cleaning, and disinfection guidance from the New York State Department of Health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC);
• Gow will train all students, faculty, and staff on proper hand washing and respiratory hygiene;
• Academic building access will be limited to those who work in that specific building;
• Visitors and guests will be restricted from accessing residential buildings and other campus facilities, unless as part of an official tour or with prior approval;
• To ensure efficient contact tracing, each academic building will have a designated logbook to track and document visits by faculty, staff, and guests who do not regularly occupy that building.
• Gow will maintain maintenance logs that include the date, time, and scope of cleaning and disinfection, as well as identify cleaning and disinfecting frequency for each facility and area type, and assign responsibility to staff;
• Gow will recommend that students and faculty bring their own water bottles and use water bottle filling stations located throughout campus;
• Classrooms will be configured according to recommended distancing guidelines;
• Increased ventilation through open windows and doors will be encouraged, while maintaining health and safety protocols;
• Facemasks and hand sanitizer will be available at campus building entrances;
• Gow faculty and students may use alternate PPE such as face coverings that are transparent at or around the mouth for instruction or interventions that require visualization of the movement of the lips or mouth, such as speech therapy or language classes. These alternative covers may also be used for students who benefit from being able to see the mouth of the faculty or staff member;
• Gow will use highly effective disinfecting cleaner, rated to kill COVID-19 and most other viruses in one minute;
• Gow is installing touch-free hand sanitizer dispensers at entrances of designated buildings;
• Gow has purchased electrostatic hand misting sprayers to help expedite cleaning times and improve product effectiveness;
• Gow has purchased additional disinfectant spray bottles to be placed throughout campus;
• Gow will post signs throughout the school consistent with the New York State Department of Health COVID-19 signage to remind individuals to:
  o Stay home if they feel sick;
  o Cover their nose and mouth with acceptable face covering when unable to maintain social distance from others;
  o Properly store and when necessary, discard PPE;
  o Adhere to social distancing instructions;
  o Report symptoms of, or exposure to, COVID-19 and how to make a report;
  o Follow hand hygiene, and cleaning and disinfecting guidelines;
  o Follow respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette.
• When appropriate, interior doors will be propped open;
• All door handles, light switches, surfaces, and knobs will be cleaned and disinfected daily;
• Building access and meals in the dining hall may be restricted to students, faculty, staff, and approved guests;
• Walking meetings and outside classes will be encouraged;
• Faculty development meetings, dormitory meetings, and student assemblies will occur virtually, or in an area that can accommodate proper social distancing measures;
• To limit student contact during the academic day, teachers may stagger classroom dismissal to prevent overcrowding in the hallways;
• While instruction is occurring, teaching faculty will maintain a reasonable physical distance from students;
• In student gathering areas such as the library and study hall areas, appropriate social distancing guidelines will be maintained;
• Students will have access to restrooms during classes to reduce crowding in facilities between classes;
• For those students who are enrolled but unable to travel due to restrictions, Gow will offer a temporary, virtual learning plan until they arrive on campus;
• For faculty and staff with a higher likelihood of serious illness associated with COVID-19 infection, their assigned duties may be subject to review in consultation with their health care provider, and with approval by the school.

Residential Considerations:
• Student dormitories will only be accessible to students and dormitory supervisors living in that dormitory;
• In the dormitories that contain more than one wing or grouping of student rooms, students may be restricted to their own wing;
• Students will use an electronic fob to gain access to the dormitories, ensuring a time log is maintained;
• Being a residential campus, in situations where students share a room, reasonable social distancing and proper hygiene practices will be implemented;
  o Students sharing a room will maintain reasonable social distancing, clean surfaces, and carefully monitor their health;
  o Student beds will be spaced as far apart as possible, with special attention to staggering head positions;
• Students may not have access to shared refrigerators or microwaves;
• Students may be required to wear a facemask when traversing outside of their room within the dormitory and when entering and leaving the dorm;
• Students will stagger the use of the bathroom facilities during high-frequency times (i.e. mornings and evenings);
• The Gow School will provide students with access to cleaning agents to wipe down personal and shared spaces daily;
• Gow will contract with an outside vendor to professionally launder clothes for those in grades 6-8.

Campus Dining & Food Service Guidelines:
• As students, faculty, and staff enter the dining hall lobby, an adult monitor will ensure that they apply hand sanitizer;
• Working closely with food service contractor SAGE, Gow will implement recommendations including facemasks for servers, and appropriate social distancing in the dining area;
• At the conclusion of each meal, dining hall and maintenance staff will do a thorough cleaning;
• To reduce the number of people in the dining hall, meals may be staggered to meet capacity requirements within the dining hall. Dining hall seating is restricted to 50% of capacity;
• Students and faculty will wear face coverings in the dining hall unless eating;
• When buffet-style food service is utilized, masked faculty or staff will serve the food. Those in line at food stations or the dish return will appropriately distance and wear masks;
• Meals may be restricted to screened students, faculty, and staff, and approved guests.

Off-Campus Student Outings & Extracurricular Activities:
• Gow has established protocols and procedures for transportation. Individuals must wear acceptable face coverings on school vehicles (when entering, exiting, and seated) and maintain appropriate social distancing;
• Gow may consider restricting or eliminating extracurricular programs where practical physical distancing guidelines cannot be applied;
• When transportation is required, Gow will abide by suggested guidelines including opening windows to increase ventilation and cleaning of surfaces after use;
• When on organized, off-campus trips, students and faculty will wear facemasks and adhere to established social-distancing protocols.

Interscholastic Athletic Guidelines:
• To implement a safe, reasonable, and independent athletic plan, Gow will follow New York State Department of Education guidelines.

Chapter 2: MONITORING
The Gow School, with guidance from the New York State and County of Erie Departments of Health will monitor the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff. If a positive COVID-19 diagnosis is identified, proper isolation, contact tracing, and reporting will occur at the direction of the Erie County Health Department.
• Masks may be required for all students, faculty, and staff if social distancing cannot be maintained;
• Gow will implement daily screening and temperature checks for students, faculty, staff, and where applicable, vendors, and visitors to identify individuals who may have COVID-19 or who may have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus. Appropriate social distancing will be enforced during screening. Screeners will wear a mask, and may wear gloves, a gown, goggles, and/or a face shield;
• Gow will maintain records confirming that individuals were screened, but will not keep records of specific temperature data;
• Gow will continue to implement, in coordination with The Erie County Health Department and New York State guidelines, a contact tracing program with visitor logs in campus buildings;
• Gow’s health office, in consultation with local health department officials, will oversee testing of symptomatic individuals, those with close contact to someone suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, and individuals with recent international travel or travel within a state designated through the New York State Travel Advisory;
• Gow will follow established state and local health department metrics to define and monitor early warning signs that COVID-19 rates may exceed acceptable levels;
• To more quickly diagnose a suspected COVID-19 case, the Gow Health Office may utilize tele-health options or contact a pediatrician before taking a student for testing. This will decrease possible exposure to COVID-19 at the health care provider’s office;
• The Gow School will create and display signage reminding all students, faculty, and staff to socially distance when possible, to wash hands often, and hand sanitize when appropriate.
Students will also be reminded that there will be no sharing of electronic devices, writing utensils, sporting equipment, and other objects;

- The Gow School Buildings and Grounds Department will ensure that Gow has an adequate supply of masks, hand sanitizer, gloves, and gowns;
- Gow will make sure that the nursing staff has appropriate PPE to tend to the needs of students in isolation;
- Preapproved guests will be screened upon arrival to campus;
- Faculty and staff who show symptoms of COVID-19 will be asked to remain at home until they meet recommended guidelines;
- Gow will offer testing to any student suspected of infection or exposure to COVID-19;
- To ensure efficient contact tracing, each academic building will have a designated logbook to track and document visits by faculty, staff, and guests who do not regularly occupy that building.

Chapter 3: CONTAINMENT
Should a case be identified on campus, the following steps will be taken:

Communication
- Gow administration will contact local health officials to coordinate an appropriate course of action which may include alterations to facilities, class restrictions, and extra-curricular events;
- Gow administration will communicate with members of The Gow School community to provide a health update while maintaining the confidentiality of infected individual(s) as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, as applicable;
- The Gow School website includes this safety plan, public health guidelines, and updated information for members of our community.

Containment Guidelines
- If events and classes are suspended, administrators will seek guidance from local health officials to determine when students, staff, and faculty can safely return to campus and what additional steps will be required;
- If a case is confirmed, Gow will isolate the patient as per public health guidelines on campus or at home, if practical. Gow will work with public health officials to determine appropriate travel options, self-isolation, and monitoring procedures for those with symptoms or exposure;
- Gow will establish a residential facility with supervision where patients who are suspected or confirmed to have been exposed to the virus can be isolated, while they continue their studies virtually;
  - This facility will be physically separated from other residential student rooms and be stocked with a thermometer, sanitizing wipes, tissues, soap, hand sanitizer, and toiletries;
  - Students who test positive will remain in isolation until a negative test is achieved;
  - While isolated, the student academic, health, housing, and dining needs will be supported;
  - Isolated students who are ill or asymptptomatically positive, to the degree reasonably feasible, will be encouraged to continue academic activities remotely or be provided with academic accommodations due to illness;
- Staff who are caring for ill students will receive proper protective equipment, training, and adequate cleaning and personal hygiene supplies;
- Meals will be prepared and delivered to the student;
- Students will be monitored by Gow’s nursing staff;
- If a case is confirmed, Gow will consider monitoring roommates and others with close contact, and they will be asked to self-monitor for symptoms;
- Gow has established protocols and procedures, in consultation with the local health department to determine when individuals, particularly students, who have screened positive for COVID-19 symptoms can return to the in-person learning environment. This return to school protocol shall include, at minimum, documentation from a healthcare provider following evaluation, a negative COVID-19 test, symptom resolution, or if COVID-19 positive, release from isolation;
- Areas used by the infected student will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. If possible, outside doors and windows will be open to increase air circulation while cleaning;
- When appropriate, some services may be curtailed to prevent transmission of the disease. Library book sharing may be limited, athletic events curtailed, and meal delivery methods altered;
- Gow will consider added protocols for restricting social contact when limited infection occurs.

Chapter 4: CLOSURE
The following are two containment options for The Gow School; a school mandated containment option in the event of an outbreak on campus, and a statewide mandated closure which would require Gow students to return to their homes.

A Schoolwide Containment Determined by Gow
Working with local health department officials, Gow may decide to institute an on-campus containment option. This short-term isolation of the community would help to reduce the spread if Gow has an infected person on campus. If this happens, the following procedures will be followed:
- Gow will coordinate with Erie County Department of Health officials, and communication with students, staff, faculty, and families;
- Gow will follow the New York State quarantine guidelines;
- Gow will ensure faculty and staff remaining on campus receive training to protect themselves from the spread of COVID-19;
- Gow will ensure the continuity of food services on campus;
- Depending on the length of the school-wide isolation or state mandated closure, Gow may implement virtual instruction;
- Gow will consider alternatives for providing students with essential social emotional learning and health services;
- When possible, non-residential faculty and staff will be encouraged to work from home to prevent community spread.

A Statewide Mandated School Closing:
In the event of a state mandated closure of schools:
- Gow administration will contact parents/guardians with information;
- Advisors and the business office will work with families to coordinate travel plans;
- The school nurse will distribute medication to dorm parents to give to students before they leave campus;
- The business office will distribute passports to dorm parents to give to students before travel;
• For students living in a country or region that has closed due to an outbreak, housing will be provided to them;
• Students will be encouraged to take laptops and other academic materials home;
• If possible, Gow will implement distance learning programs;
• Gow will assign a staff member to coordinate dorm room packing, shipment and storage of student items.

SUMMARY:
The Gow School is a college-prep boarding and day school for students, grades 6-12, with dyslexia and similar language-based learning disabilities. Founded in 1926, The Gow School's mission states: "A leader and innovator in dyslexia education with a commitment to the values of kindness, respect, honesty and hard work, since 1926 The Gow School has been helping students with language-based learning differences develop the skills and confidence to succeed in higher education and beyond as creative, compassionate adults and engaged citizens."

We are confident that these recommended steps, taken independently with foremost concern for the care and safety of The Gow School community, provide appropriate guidelines for the 2020 school year. As a school community, we are looking forward to reviewing and adjusting these measures as the pandemic eases, and to returning to the culture and traditions we treasure.

As members of The Gow School Reopening Task Force Committee, we wish to thank the Advisory Committee, and those Gow faculty and staff who helped coordinate this report’s findings and recommendations.

Most sincerely,

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