



# TREASURE VALLEY

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## CLASSICAL ACADEMY

July 24, 2020

Dear TVCA Families:

We trust this note finds you well, in good spirits, and enjoying your summer and the great Idaho outdoors. In about one month, we plan to launch our new school year. In concert with local, state, and national recommendations (noted below), it is our intention to return to normal schooling on Friday, August 21.

*... we must prioritize the opening of school buildings for in-person instruction ... despite incredible advances in digital learning, you can never replace the value and impact of in-person interaction with a professional, dedicated teacher.*

**Governor Little's Back to School Framework 2020**

*... all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school. The importance of in-person learning is well-documented, and there is already evidence of the negative impacts on children because of school closures in the spring of 2020.*

**American Academy of Pediatrics**

*... school districts should prioritize reopening schools full time, especially for grades K-5 and students with special needs ... Without in-person instruction, schools risk children falling behind academically and exacerbating educational inequities.*

**National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine**

*The evidence—scientific, health and economic—argues overwhelmingly for schools to open in the fall.*

**The Wall Street Journal (July 13, 2020)**

The COVID-19 Pandemic is a serious situation and the accompanying disease requires an intentional and thoughtful response. However, the data shows that demographics and local conditions should inform our response to the pandemic. The disease affects different parts of the population in disproportionate ways.

### **What does the data show?**

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 5-17 year-olds represent 5.1% of positive cases and only 0.1% of deaths nationwide. By comparison, the 50+

year group represents 40.1% of positive cases and 71% of deaths nationwide. The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare reports 8.4% of positive cases in children under the age of 18 with a zero mortality rate, while the 50+ year group has 38% of the state's positive cases and 98% of the state's deaths. As of July 13, 2020, the Wall Street Journal reports that according to the CDC, 30 children under age 15 have died from COVID-19 nationwide; in a typical year 190 children die of the flu, 436 from suicide, 625 from homicide, and 4,114 from unintentional deaths such as drowning. In fact, according to the Wall Street Journal, COVID-19 complications and deaths are rare among children; most children suffer mild or asymptomatic forms of the disease (WSJ, July 11, 2020). In Sweden, where schools remained open, only 20 children under age 19—0.6% of confirmed cases—have been admitted to the ICU and only one has died (WSJ, July 13, 2020).

Counties across our state vary widely in their infection rates. Ada County and Canyon County alone account for 61% of positive cases and 43% of deaths in Idaho, while Payette County and Washington County account for a mere 2.6% of positive cases and 3.4% of deaths.

Furthermore, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the preponderance of evidence indicates that children and adolescents are less likely to be symptomatic and less likely to have severe disease resulting from a COVID-19 infection. In addition, children may be less likely to become infected and to spread infection.

Therefore, according to the AAP, policies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 within schools must be balanced with the known harms to children, adolescents, families, and the community of keeping children out of school.

### **What are we doing to mitigate the risk?**

According to the CDC, COVID-19 is mostly spread by respiratory droplets released when people talk, cough, or sneeze. It is thought that the virus may spread to hands from a contaminated surface and then to the nose or mouth, causing infection. Therefore, personal prevention practices (such as handwashing, staying home when sick) and environmental cleaning and disinfection are important mitigation strategies.

More specifically, Treasure Valley Classical Academy:

- has a COVID-19 Response Plan that is fully compliant and approved by Southwest District Health and the TVCA Board of Directors;
- has installed touchless hand sanitizer stations in every classroom and in common areas;
- has purchased and is installing touchless water faucets and soap dispensers in all bathrooms;
- has a brand new, upgraded, high capacity HVAC system that continuously cycles high volumes of fresh air into the building;

- will continue to practice an enhanced, daily school-wide disinfecting and sanitization regimen using hospital-grade disinfectants;
- will provide cloth masks to all students who desire to wear them;
- will provide N95 masks to employees who desire to wear them; and
- will provide a hybrid education option for families with COVID-19-related special requests or unique health needs.

It is our highest calling to provide a safe and nurturing place for your children to flourish. We believe the best place to pursue our mission of training the minds and improving the hearts of our students is in the school building, in classrooms, with teachers. Our school culture, which actively promotes orderliness, decorum, and virtuous behavior, is also well suited to promote healthy personal hygiene habits. We agree with the American Academy of Pediatrics—no single action or set of actions will completely eliminate the risk of COVID-19 transmission, but implementation of several coordinated interventions (as listed above) can greatly reduce that risk. As stated by the National Academy of Sciences, *young children in particular will be impacted by not having in-person learning and may suffer long-term academic consequences if they fall behind as a result. In grades K-3, children are still developing the skills to regulate their own behavior, emotions, and attention, and therefore struggle with distance learning. Schools should prioritize reopening for grades K-5 and for students with special needs who would be best served by in-person instruction.*

Therefore, for the long-term well-being of our students, it is our intent to resume normal school operations on Friday, August 21.

In the coming weeks, we will be sharing further details with you in advance of our first day back.

