

A photograph of the Columbus Torah Academy building, a modern structure with a curved, light-colored brick facade and large windows. The building is surrounded by lush green trees and a well-maintained lawn. Three tall flagpoles stand in front of the building, flying the Israeli flag, the American flag, and a third flag. The sky is clear and blue.

Columbus Torah Academy

Reopening Road Map
for 2020-2021

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Safely educating our students

The leadership of CTA believes being in person affords us the most optimal platform, however we are prepared to pivot our learning models to meet the health and safety of our school community. All decisions will be aligned with recommendations from ODH, ODE, CDC and our medical advisory committee.

At CTA, our primary focus is to ensure that our students learn in person, on our campus, in a healthy and safe environment with the individualized attention and engagement that define us as a school. We are committed to the intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development of our students as well as the foundation of their growth in Torah learning and middot.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Columbus Torah Academy is to develop our students into educated, contributing, active, aware members of contemporary American and Jewish societies. In the midst of this pandemic, with new and sometimes confusing information coming out, it's more important than ever to keep our mission as a guide so that we stay focused and on track.

We are committed to three priorities that will shape how we approach Covid-19 when we return to the building this Fall. As always, we ask for your partnership as we navigate these new waters together and all serve as role models for our students.

The Reopening Road Map will be a fluid document with policies and procedures that are in alignment with current medical and scientific facts along with best practices in education that meet the needs of our Jewish day school.



Priority Areas

Plans for reopening for the 2020-2021 school year stem from three priority areas which are guiding our plans as we navigate the coming year.

1. Create the best and most effective learning environment for all students **(Learning Models)**
2. Prioritize student, faculty and staff health and safety **(Health & Safety)**
3. Take responsibility for each other **(Community Responsibility)**

Our Task Force and Methods of Assessment for Reopening

The responsibility of reopening school for the 2020-2021 school year is not a singular action. There is a wide number of individuals who are serving on Task Forces and committees to determine what is right for CTA.

We would like to recognize our faculty and staff who epitomized stepped up this Spring to quickly pivot to an At Home Learning model for the remainder of the school year. We admire their integrity, growth mindset, kindness and positive energy focused on each student and are grateful for their continued commitment moving forward.

Thank you to the lay leaders and staff members serving on committees to make leadership decisions that are best for our students and school community. They are meeting constantly this Summer. We appreciate their time and dedication.



Thank You Lay and Staff Leadership

Medical Advisory Committee

- David Bernzweig, Battalion Chief for City of Columbus ~ Division of Fire
- Lara Blumberg, MD, Central Ohio Primary Care
- Yaffa Gewirtz, MD, Nationwide Children's Hospital
- Naomi Kertesz, MD, Nationwide Children's Hospital
- Robert Wolf, MD, Central Ohio Primary Care

Strategic and Finance Committee

- Buddy Adler, Finance Committee
- Gary Blumberg, Past President
- Rabbi Avrohom Drandoff, Head of School
- Larry Garvin, Finance Committee
- Robin Garvin, PhD, Executive Board Member
- Rabbi David Ginsburg, Finance Committee
- Victoria Ilin, Finance Committee Chair
- Norm Leist, Chief Financial Officer
- Raanan Lefkovitz, Executive Board Member
- Robert Wolf, MD, Board President

Building Health and Safety Task Force

- Chaired by Norm Leist, CFO and Facilities Manager
- Eliza Delman, Upper School Counselor
- Paige McKenzie, Lower School Teacher
- Chris Morford, School Nurse
- Amy Rahav, Lower School Teacher
- Sharon Schramm, Upper School Teacher
- Karan Tanenbaum, Food Services Director

Administrative and Educational Leadership Team

- Rabbi Avrohom Drandoff, Head of School
- Lou Staffilino, Interim Upper School Principal
- Nicole Miller, Lower School Principal
- Norm Leist, CFO and Facilities Manager
- Shari Herszage, Admissions, Marketing and Development
- Faculty and staff committees

Parents as Partners

Parents continue to be an integral part of the planning process. The At Home Learning Survey and One on One Parent Meetings with administrators showed that an overwhelming number of parents want to see their children back in the school building for learning. We continue to be available to answer your questions and take suggestions. CTA always has an open-door policy for communication. We plan to offer Town Halls and updates as policies and procedures develop.



Learning Models

We look forward to welcoming our students back into our wonderful building. As we make plans, we are taking into account all scientific and health care expert recommendations.

Our primary focus is to ensure that all of our students have the opportunity to learn in a healthy and safe environment and we are making plans to be on the school campus. The intellectual, emotional, social and physical development of each student as well as their growth in Torah learning and middot continues to be at the core of all that we do. We are preparing to pivot to alternative models if we need to adhere to new guidelines or any stay at home orders.

We are prepared to meet the needs of individual students and families on a case by case basis. Remote access is an option for students who need to temporarily quarantine or who cannot join in school classes.

Primary Learning Model: Fully in school classes with Health and Safety guidelines

There are going to be many unexpected challenges that we will face as a school community. Together, we will meet them and view challenges as opportunities to help our students develop grit, flexibility, and empathy for others. We are committed to maintaining our focus on actualizing our mission statement to develop our students into educated, contributing, active, aware members of contemporary American and Jewish societies.

We are striving to keep the daily school day schedule as close to typical as it always has been with davening, classes, specials, lunch and breaks. Of course, certain aspects of responding to appropriate health and safety measures will require modification. It is important to allow students to be students. We expect the start and end of the school day to be the same as usual: Grades K-8 from 8:30 am - 4:00 pm and Grades 9-12 from 7:30 am - 4:00 pm.



Lower School

In an effort to mitigate risk, each class will operate as a separate cohort while maintaining social distancing to the best extent possible. All academic instruction will take place in assigned rooms, which will be designated as the student's homeroom. Primary teachers will rotate to the classroom as opposed to the students moving to different classrooms. Students will **not be relegated** to their classrooms for the entire school day. They will have recess, specials and participate in other co-curricular activities around campus. Teachers will also look for opportunities to move learning outside when appropriate.

Upper School

The nature of an Upper School schedule with 8-9 class periods, classes with mixed grade levels, and advanced courses does not allow us to adopt the cohort model. In an effort to mitigate risk we will separate the Junior High and the High School where possible. In order to maintain social distancing, we will regulate and limit locker use to decrease hallway traffic and limit the number of students who can be in the bathroom at one time. We will repurpose certain larger spaces to accommodate larger classes of students. We will also look for opportunities to learn outside when appropriate.

Alternate Learning Model #1: At Home Learning 20-21

In the event that we are forced to close the school, CTA will pivot to "At Home Learning 20-21". CTA At Home Learning will continue to be guided by **community, rigor, purpose, individualized instruction, and simcha**. As we move closer to the start of school an "At Home Learning" schedule will be shared with you. The primary difference with "At Home Learning 20-21" is a fixed schedule that will begin with davening in every grade. The At Home Learning schedule will be different than an in-school schedule.

In an effort to be proactive, this summer we have been increasing our technology capabilities with additional devices. This will help us support a fixed schedule for At Home Learning in all grades with an adequate number of devices in circulation. Additionally, where appropriate, we will incorporate technology use and training when we are learning together in school to build student comfort and capacity. This will prepare students to pivot easier to At Home Learning. Essentially, the more we prepare our students, the easier it will be for them to adapt to learning at home in the event that we must pivot quickly.

Alternate Learning Model #2: Hybrid

Given the size of our student population and the size of our building, we do not anticipate the need to use a Hybrid model across the school. However, in an effort to be prepared for any possibility, we have developed a Hybrid option in the event that we cannot have all students present in the building.



Health & Safety

All health and safety plans at CTA are in compliance with recommendations from the CDC, Ohio Department of Health, and Ohio Department of Education. We are following the Health and Safety Guidance for Ohio K-12 schools as presented by Governor DeWine. These include:

1. Carefully Assess for Symptoms
2. Wash and Sanitize Hands to Prevent Spread
3. Frequently Clean and Sanitize School Environment to Limit Spread on Shared Surfaces
4. Practice Social Distancing
5. Implement Face Coverings Policies

Carefully Assess for Symptoms

The most effective way to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID- 19 is for our entire school community to be proactive and carefully self -screen daily prior to coming to CTA. CTA will absolutely be supportive and partner with any member of faculty, staff or student who needs to stay home because they are exhibiting identified symptoms.

To mitigate risk:

- Faculty, staff, students, caregivers and volunteers must conduct daily health checks prior to coming to CTA which should include taking their temperature
- CTA will conduct daily visual inspection for symptoms and consider current CDC recommendations on health screenings
- Anyone (student, staff or visitor) exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms will not be allowed in the school building.
- If an adult develops symptoms while at school they will be asked to leave.
- If a student develops symptoms while at school they will be sent to the nurse, isolated, and parents will be contacted to pick them up.
- There will be no stigma attached to developing symptoms. These symptoms can be due to both COVID-19 or other respiratory illnesses.
- Travel Plans: Upon the advice of our Medical Advisory Committee, given the variety of individual family travel plans we ask everyone to make an effort to be back in the state of Ohio two weeks prior to the 1st day of school (August 11). The two weeks will give each family enough time to monitor themselves for symptoms of COVID-19, screen if necessary and appropriately distance themselves.



Wash and Sanitize Hands to Prevent Spread

Keeping hands clean is one of the most important things we can do to stop the spread of germs and stay healthy. We view the additional emphasis on washing hands as an extra opportunity to teach about general hygiene.

To mitigate risk:

- Faculty, staff, students, and volunteers will practice frequent hand washing throughout the day. It will be incorporated as part of the daily routine.
- In the sections of the building/campus where it is impractical to set up a washing station, we will provide hand sanitizer stations.

Thoroughly Clean and Sanitize School Environment to Limit Spread on Shared Surfaces

We have always taken pride in our school building being exceptionally clean. However, we understand the need to increase the level of cleanliness to reduce the chances of members of our community coming in contact with the virus. To this point, we plan to increase our cleaning regimen during and after school every day.

To mitigate risk:

- We will implement a strict daily routine for cleaning bathrooms, classrooms, hallways, common areas, doorknobs, railings, etc, when school is in session along with rigorous night time routine and periodic deep cleans on weekends and no school days.
- The sharing of school supplies will be minimized. Students will have their own school supply kits. Shared supplies, if any, will be sanitized between use.

Practice Social Distancing

Students will have to maintain physical distance from each other to reduce the spread of the virus. We are fully committed to fostering the warm and loving environment that CTA regards as an important part of our school community. We will incorporate the importance of community building where appropriate in our curriculum. We view the unnatural circumstances of social distancing as a unique opportunity to teach our students how connecting to one another is deeper than physical space.

To mitigate risk:

- Class size will be determined by how many students we can fit in a room and maintain appropriate distancing.
- Staff will maintain appropriate distancing among faculty, staff, students, and volunteers in all environments including classrooms, restrooms, playground, drop off and pick up locations, and school buses.
- We will use visual cues such as markings on the floor and signs to reinforce distancing.
- We will limit the number of visitors to school and their access to the building. We will be evaluating our policies about field trips and after school activities.
- Lunch will be delivered to students.
- We will make every effort to minimize student density in large common areas such as the gymnasiums, shul, playgrounds, libraries and multi-purpose areas.
- We will take full advantage of our large and beautiful campus to bring students outside on a regular basis including using outdoor spaces as classrooms.



Implement Face Coverings Policies

Use of cloth face coverings can reduce the spread of respiratory droplets that, in infected people, carry and spread COVID-19, therefore, face coverings will be part of our reality. We recognize that students and adults may find wearing a face covering to be a challenge. Face covering breaks will be incorporated into the daily schedule. These critical breaks are an additional opportunity to take advantage of our beautiful campus and outdoor spaces. In specific circumstances where a child is struggling with wearing a face covering, as always, the school will work in collaboration with the family to design an appropriate plan that will not compromise the safety of the student or others.

To mitigate risk:

- Faculty and staff are required to wear face coverings at all times.
- All volunteers, vendors and maintenance personnel are required to wear masks
- Students will be required to wear masks in the school building. Mask breaks will be incorporated into the school day by using outside space. Teachers will be allowed to use discretion based on students' individual developmental and emotional needs.



Community Responsibility

At CTA, we are a family. Our school community includes our faculty, staff, students, parents, volunteers, and visitors. Our small size is a benefit and affords us the opportunity to take personal responsibility for each other. We expect that everyone will take reasonable precautions to prevent exposure to Covid-19 and minimize risk to fellow faculty, staff, students, and parents.

The rules and regulations that we are following as a school are designed to keep our community safe and healthy. We are taking the opportunity as a teaching moment with your children and ask you to partner with us to support the rules and regulations. Please keep these considerations in mind:

- All members of our community and visitors to the school must wear masks, wash and disinfect their hands and practice social distancing.
- All members of our community and visitors to the school must follow self-screening and comply with self-quarantining in cases of exposure.
- All members of our community and visitors must help to maintain a healthy environment by showing respect and concern for the safety of all school staff members and fellow families.
- All members of our community will make every effort when possible to avoid traveling to areas designated as a “hotspot”.

Questions

As always, we continue to be available. If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact Rabbi Drandoff, Head of School at adrandoff@torahacademy.org or 614-864-0299, ext 228

