



A Return to the Meadow: An Approach Rooted in Relationship and Response

2020-2021



Our Mission

To celebrate and perpetuate each individual's quest for knowledge and skill, sense of wonder, and connection to the natural environment. We empower each to be a compassionate, responsible, and active global citizen.

From the Head of School

Dear High Meadows Families,

Let me begin by saying that I am honored to be joining High Meadows School as your next Head of School & Camp. I am thrilled by the opportunity to serve this community and the fabulous kids who are a part of this school.

In March, we all started to live in a world that we could not have imagined. None of us really knew what it would mean to “quarantine” or “shelter in place.” Every one of us continues to be affected deeply. Although the ethical dilemmas and medical realities we are facing as a nation can be exhausting, I find peace when I think about facing them with all of you within the context of the rich history of High Meadows School & Camp. This is a very special place. I assure you that I am completely committed to our mission and values.

The question on many people’s minds has been, “What will happen in the fall?” At this time, we plan to start school on campus with all students, staff, and faculty. There will be strict guidelines to keep people safe, and we will be updating our Family Handbook over the coming weeks with the details of the specific precautions we must take together. This document is designed to help you understand our overarching plan for High Meadows. It lays out the framework for several scenarios so that we can respond to the health and safety realities that may be presented to us. It provides a big picture.

I am grateful to the work of the Health and Safety Team created earlier in the year to assess the needs for returning to campus in the fall. They have done a tremendous job considering a myriad of factors in a world where there are very few clear-cut answers. As much as we may wish this would all disappear, it will take time before we see the medical breakthrough that re-calibrates our world. This group will continue meeting throughout the year so that we remain informed of the most up-to-date safety guidelines and can adjust to keep our entire community safe.

In the meantime, we are excited to share the plans for opening school and please do not hesitate to reach out to anyone on our Administrative Leadership Team if you have questions.

All the best.

Lisa Baker
Head of School & Camp



“Our school is well positioned to respond to whatever challenges the year holds. We have confidence in our ability to continue to serve our families and our students in a way that is meaningful and mission-driven.”

Mission-Driven Planning and Decision-Making

For nearly 50 years, High Meadows has offered a child-centered education where children are inspired to pursue learning through experience, inquiry, and relationships. It is with this in mind that we plan for the 2020-2021 school year. This effort has been led by our Administrative Leadership Team as well as our Health and Safety Team, which was formed in response to the unique challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. These groups include educators, school leaders, medical professionals, and public health professionals from The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



The objectives of these planning committees have been to:

- 🌱 Reflect upon and plan for a mission-driven, high-quality student experience whether on or off campus, while prioritizing on-campus school attendance whenever possible
- 🌱 Establish plans by which our students, faculty, and greater community can resume school attendance in a manner that minimizes risk and upholds the local, state, national, and CDC guidelines to the best of our ability
- 🌱 Anticipate the possible scenarios related to COVID-19 that might arise throughout the 2020-2021 school year
- 🌱 Draft written recommendations and protocols by which our faculty, staff, and families can uphold and support the school's safety and educational efforts throughout the year
- 🌱 Consider "hybrid" models to address distance learning needs for individuals who cannot safely return to campus

Resources consulted during this decision-making process:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention
Georgia Department of Public Health
Bright from the Start
American Camp Association
HMS COVID-19 Advisory Team
Legal counselors and insurance companies
Various independent school resources including SAIS and GISA
Feedback from High Meadows parents, faculty, staff, and leadership

Capitalizing on our High Meadows Resources

High Meadows School's structure, physical spaces, and teaching model have always set it apart from other schools. These differences uniquely position High Meadows to continue to deliver an exceptional child-centered education while meeting the recommendations for maintaining a safe learning environment more effectively than traditionally structured programs. Our strategic planning groups have carefully considered the many ways our school landscape, faculty, and educational model can facilitate flexibility and responsiveness this year.

High Meadows' unique advantages include:



A 42 acre campus where we can spread out across diverse learning environments and use outdoor spaces whenever possible.



Each classroom has direct outdoor access and well ventilated classrooms to allow fresh air for all students throughout the day.



Low student/teacher ratio and school model allows for small cohort sizes and flexibility in student grouping options.



Buildings and cabins provide additional instructional spaces beyond classrooms.



On-site expert nursing staff directly involved in preparing a plan for the protection and care of our community.



A faculty already steeped in innovative, responsive instruction, and social emotional learning.

Health and Safety Strategies Currently Under Consideration:



Monitoring temperature and health for 14 days prior to start of school

Daily temperature taking and health screening



Use of face coverings as recommended

Frequent handwashing and use of hand sanitizer



Train staff to recognize and respond to possible student illness

Drop-off/pick-up carpool procedures to promote physical distancing



Limit cohort size and interaction and spread out across campus

Our Return to Campus

We plan to open the school year on campus as scheduled, implementing a cohort model of smaller student groupings as needed. We will keep students together in cohorts throughout the day to mitigate spread and help with exposure tracking. Utilizing cohorts supports ongoing student-teacher relationships and interactive learning experiences.

We will continue to pay close attention to the medical and governmental authorities as well as the health of our community. Based upon our assessed level of risk and the guidance provided by The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Georgia Department of Public Health, the school will operate using the following scenarios.

Scenarios

GREEN	All Students on Campus Daily	Cohort Size: Normal Class Size
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohort intermingling and minimal physical distancing • Cleaning regime enhanced • Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices • Extensive use of outdoor campus as instructional space 	

YELLOW	All Students on Campus Daily	Cohort Size: Normal Class Size
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal mixing of classroom cohorts • Careful planning for movements around campus • Limited sharing of materials • Teachers rotating to homerooms versus students moving to classrooms • Classes will experience the Meadow daily with physical distancing between cohorts • Physical distancing with enhanced precautions • Face coverings as feasible for age group and environment • Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices • Cleaning regime enhanced • Extended carpool time to accommodate safety procedures and health screenings 	

ORANGE	Hybrid Model	Cohort Size: Smallest Feasible Size
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same safety precautions as Yellow • Pre-K through 2nd grade maintain the on-campus schedule, with classes split into two smaller cohorts using separate classroom spaces • 3rd grade through Middle Years have an alternating schedule with half of each homeroom on campus while the other half learn online remotely • All students will have a minimum of 2 days on campus each week 	

RED	Campus Closed	All Students Remote Learning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live interactions for all grade levels Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, with Wednesday saved for individual conferences and asynchronous learning experiences • Ongoing counselor-led sessions with students to address social/emotional needs • Consistent parent communication to provide explanations of learning expectations, student progress, and weekly schedule • Enhanced technical applications for both live and asynchronous learning • Intentional opportunity for unstructured, playful social time 	

Preparedness and Agility

As we learn more in the months to come, our greatest asset will be our agility and ability to deftly respond to a changing landscape of needs. We are committed to the ongoing research, planning, and responsiveness that are required during this time of uncertainty. The health, safety, and experience of our community are our utmost priorities.

To that end, we have scheduled five professional development days over the summer for our teachers and staff to be better prepared to face the multiple scenarios we could encounter in the coming year. Here are some of the topics we will be addressing:

- 🌱 Ensure there are ways to incorporate High Meadows core values over multiple delivery platforms
- 🌱 Train teachers to enhance their use of online teaching and communication tools
- 🌱 Consider various approaches to the social and emotional learning challenges that students might face given the realities of COVID-19
- 🌱 Adjust schedules and procedures to fit the developmental needs of students across the school
- 🌱 Reflect on feedback provided from parents and students to improve in remote learning should it be required
- 🌱 Develop clear student and parent expectations
- 🌱 Plan for smaller cohorts or hybrid learning models



Relationship, Community, and Connection

Relationships are, and will continue to be, at the heart of a High Meadows education. We are committed to creating new, meaningful ways for our students, faculty, and families to connect within any of the operational scenarios we encounter during this temporary situation. We will assess the community events, gatherings, and trips and determine which can continue as planned and which need to be rethought.

We will be relying on one another as we link arms to keep our students safe, to support their learning and growth, and to lift one another up during this time of change and uncertainty. Our community is strong, innovative, and made up of passionate educators, learners, leaders, and families who together will ensure a successful and memorable year.

We commit to:

- 🌱 Maintain clear, timely, and informative communication
- 🌱 Prioritize and work to protect the safety of our students and community members
- 🌱 Uphold the values and experiences that make High Meadows such a special place to learn and grow
- 🌱 Nurture, cherish, and support your children as we navigate change
- 🌱 Support you as partners in your child's High Meadows journey
- 🌱 Seek out and consider your thoughts, ideas, and feedback

We thank you for your trust and partnership and look forward to welcoming you back in August!

