



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

Laboratory
Schools

BACK to LAB



INTRODUCTION

Lab would strongly prefer to have all Lab students return to school full-time in fall 2020 and resume the educational and co-curricular activities that comprise the rich Lab experience. However, due to the crisis created by COVID-19, Lab has developed contingency plans to ensure the health and safety of its students, faculty, staff, and families, which are of paramount importance for the entire community.

Lab can with relative ease return to pre-COVID operations on short notice, thus this fall 2020 vision and plan will emphasize preparations and structures related to the fully-remote and hybrid programs. Both will meet our students' developmental, academic, and social emotional needs while following distancing guidelines and federal, state, local, and UChicago public health guidance and requirements.

In developing our plans, we have considered our diverse student body, the important roles of Lab parents and guardians, and the needs of our teachers and staff. Our guiding principle has been to focus on our students and their experience at Lab.

UNDERSTANDING THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE

As we look toward fall, we know that school—like so many other elements of our lives—will necessarily look different than it did pre-pandemic. As Lab faces these unprecedented challenges, we remain committed to meeting our mission and offering an education that reflects the highest levels of academic excellence while prioritizing the well-being of our students, faculty, staff, and families.

We recognize that public health realities during a pandemic can evolve quickly, and what is best practice today might not be the same tomorrow. Everything in this document is based on what we know right now, in the third week of July 2020. Please understand that things may change. They will very likely change. Lab and University leadership and educators will be agile and responsive to new information and guidelines and make adjustments as needed.

We understand how this uncertainty creates great challenges for everyone. As part of the University of Chicago, the Laboratory Schools have access to incredible experts who have given their time generously to our school. Know that we are committed to communicating with our faculty, staff, and families regularly and promptly as we learn about and respond to federal, state, city, and University guidelines and policies.

PLANNING FALL 2020: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As Lab faces the challenges of the global pandemic, it remains committed to meeting its mission and offering an education that reflects the highest levels of academic excellence and promotes the well-being of its students, faculty, staff, and families. Fall planning at Lab embodies these values and will be guided by the following principles:

1. Prioritize the health, safety, and well-being of the entire Lab community.
2. Provide a high-quality, developmentally-appropriate education in imaginative new ways aligned with Lab's mission.
3. Value consistency and streamlined systems to benefit Lab students, faculty, staff, and families and enhance Lab's agility.
4. Ensure Lab continues to meet the needs of our diverse student and family communities with an inclusive program.
5. Preserve Lab's financial and operational integrity.

Our top priority remains the physical and emotional health of our students, faculty, and staff, and while we have shown that distance learning can be exciting, robust, and engaging, we believe it is a substitute for—and not the equivalent of—being together in person.

It is important to understand that the information in this plan reflects the recommendations of the Planning and Implementation teams. Final details regarding the working conditions will need to be discussed and negotiated with our Faculty Association (Lab's teachers's union.)

THE FALL 2020 PLANNING PROCESS

In May, Lab convened the Lab Central Working Group, which shortly thereafter linked with the University's N-12 Education Planning Group (see Appendix 1). Both groups reviewed peer plans, surveyed reports and white papers produced by educational experts, reviewed available information about international schools in remote and reopening phases, and reviewed state guidelines informing reopening.

Experts from facilities, nursing, operations, and information services advised the groups. Lab also benefited from expert guidance from Associate Professor of Medicine and Executive Medical Director, Infection Prevention and Control Emily Landon (who happens to be a Lab parent) and the UChicago Epidemiology Consulting Team, in coordination with Lab's nursing team. Campus Facilities and Information Technology Services experts addressed practical items related to classroom space, cleaning, arrivals and dismissal protocols, personal protective equipment (PPE), and learning management software and other tech platforms.

This Central Working Group worked collaboratively with school principals and solicited input during meetings to which Faculty Association (union) representatives were invited with assistant principals, deans, and depending upon the division, department- and grade-level chairs, grade-level teams, special areas, and steering and curriculum committees. At the start of June, the Central Working Group assembled division-level teacher implementation teams, a total of 24+ positions, who have been working on fall planning through the summer months.

Lab planning is informed by the many quantitative and qualitative data points gathered through regular pulse surveys of families, employees, and students during their spring 2020 remote experience. Of particular relevance going forward are parent and family priorities for what they need and value most from Lab in terms of remote learning:

- Clarity of assignments and due dates
- Clarity of schedule
- Overall academics
- Consistency of daily/weekly schedule
- Individual attention

FULLY REMOTE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Lab's summer professional development activities have focused on developing outstanding distance learning programs.

All faculty in grades K–5 were offered the opportunity to enroll in the International Society of Technology in Education (ISTE) Summer Learning Academy which focuses on:

- Designing online learning experiences.
- Assessing learning and creating community in online environments.
- Ensuring equity and inclusion in online learning.

All faculty in grades 6–12 were offered the opportunity, and a majority enrolled in a course through One Schoolhouse to deepen their understanding of best practices for online teaching and learning.

N3 and N4:

Due to the unique needs of these youngest students:

- Lab believes that a fully remote program cannot developmentally serve children in grades N3 and N4. Should the state require that Lab begin the school year with a fully remote program, Lab will postpone starting the school year for the N3 and N4 students and families. Tuition will be prorated for the time Lab is unable to offer the program.
- If school begins in a hybrid format but must later go back to fully remote, Lab will pause the N3 and N4 program. Tuition will be prorated for the time during which Lab is unable to offer the program.

Grades K-5:

Lab will use a simplified block schedule (ABCAB) with the C day devoted to special programming. This has major benefits, such as consistency and clarity for students—on daily and weekly bases—with much greater alignment between start, end, and class times. As age-appropriate, the C day will be devoted to special areas, Learning & Counseling, community building, project-based learning, etc.

- The pacing and structure of learning activities will be consistent and flexible enough to meet the needs of young children and their families:
 - Schedules will be simplified, more structured, and less changeable day-to-day and week-to-week.
 - Communications will be amplified to better explain pedagogical shifts before they happen and to do so grade-wide as often as possible.

FULLY REMOTE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- Developmentally appropriate and diverse structures, such as whole group, small group, or one-on-one synchronous learning will be provided to meet the needs of students.
- Independent, asynchronous work will also support families.
- The daily schedule will be structured to reduce fatigue and balance screen-time use—as advised by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Any work that can be done without screens will be explicitly created to support time away from the computer.
- To increase clarity and consistency in the student/family experience, technology tools will be simplified and streamlined. How teachers use those tools, especially for scheduling, will be developmentally-appropriate and consistent across the grades.
- Nursery teachers will be redeployed to support grades K-5.

Grades 6-12

Simplified block schedules (ABCAB) in grades 6–12 work whether Lab is fully remote or in a hybrid program. This has major benefits to consistency and clarity for all—on daily and weekly bases.

- All Middle and High School class and advisory meetings will be synchronous.
- Program consistency and clarity of assignments and due dates will be prioritized and formal systems will support that clarity:
 - Fixed meeting times for each course will help ensure students find their days more predictable and consistent.
 - Class periods will be limited to one hour; classes will not meet outside of their assigned time.
 - All classes will use Schoology and do so in parallel fashion: All assignments, assessments, major projects will be posted to Schoology and the Schoology calendar will be used for all classes, for all students.
 - Students will meet two times per week with their classroom teachers.
 - High School students will meet twice weekly with their advisors.
 - Middle School students will check in every morning with their advisors and will have a long advisory period on Wednesdays.
- The block schedule reduces the number of transitions per day, whether in-person or remote. It also:
 - Provides longer time between classes for screen breaks.
 - Allows designated space and time for thoughtful work away from screens.

FULLY REMOTE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- Clearly defines unscheduled time for students to meet one-on-one with Learning & Counseling faculty and for other individualized purposes.
- C days (Wednesdays) will be used as follows:
 - High School: for community time, social-emotional and DEI programming, and fixed office hours (for all HS faculty) during which students can engage remotely with faculty for one-on-one support.
 - High School classes will have office hours every Wednesday for student support.
 - Middle School: for long advisory, community time, and SEL and DEI programming.
 - We hope that periodically we will be able to host in-person small-group, socially-distanced programming. Gym spaces will remain available for possible recreation, PE, and other social emotional activities.
- Grading:
 - The High School will return to letter grades, with a thoughtful and supportive program design that prioritizes engagement while setting realistic expectations in this unique situation.
 - The Middle School will revise its approach to grading to provide a method for communicating feedback to students about their growth in their skills in each class while accounting for the extraordinary circumstances of the 2020-2021 school year.
- We are exploring cameras in science rooms for science teachers to conduct experiments and demonstrations remotely.
- After school clubs and team sport practice for those students interested in participating will continue as long as adult supervision and coaches are available and physical distancing maintained. Details to come.

HYBRID PROGRAM OVERVIEW

A note about a parallel remote program option

Lab will provide a parallel remote option (alongside any hybrid/in-person option) for K-2 students not attending in person.

Communications asking families to commit to this program option will be sent separately.

N3-K:

In-person, full-time, 5 days/week, all at Earl Shapiro Hall

- Students and adults will wear masks, wash hands frequently, and distance when possible.
- Children will be grouped in cohorts of 12 in one room. Two cohorts equal a full class. The teachers will move equally between the two cohorts. An additional adult will be assigned to each class, increasing the number of teachers working with each class to four (N) and three (K).
- To ease transition and maintain social connections and development: nursery classes will “loop,” meaning that all the students and their teachers will stay together for another year starting in September. Children will move to Kindergarten with large cohorts of nursery peers.
- All classrooms will have a dedicated outdoor space for the entire day. Outdoor spaces will be used for play, learning, eating, etc., weather permitting.

Grades 1-2:

In-person, full-time, 5 days/week, all at Historic Campus

- Students and adults will wear masks, wash hands frequently, and distance when possible.
- Children will be grouped in cohorts of 12 in one room. Two cohorts equal a full class class. The teachers will move equally between the two cohorts. An additional adult will be assigned to each class, increasing the number of teachers working with each class to three
- To ease transition and maintain social connections and development, large groups of students will continue onto the next class together.
- All classrooms will have a dedicated outdoor space for the entire day. Outdoor spaces will be used for play, learning, eating, etc. weather permitting.

Grades 3–5:

Fully remote as described above

- To ease transition and maintain social connections and development, cohort groups of students from current grades 2–4 will stay together for 2020–2021.
- As guidance allows, we will phase back in our Lower School students, starting with grade 3. It is likely that this approach will be a gradual transition that focuses first on the physical, mental, and social health and safety of students and faculty.

Grades 6–12:

Fully remote as described above

- To ease transition and maintain social connections and development, cohort groups of students from the previous grade will stay together for Middle School 2020–2021.
- As guidance allows, we will phase back in our Middle School students, starting with Grade 6. It is likely that this approach will be a gradual transition that focuses first on the physical, mental, and social health and safety of students and faculty.

A NOTE TO FAMILIES ABOUT YOUR END-OF-SUMMER PLANS

Please know that the University and the Laboratory Schools will adhere diligently to directives that require a person to quarantine for 14 days upon return from all international travel and from domestic locations deemed a risk by the State of Illinois.

The University is continuing the suspension of university-sponsored international and domestic travel until further notice. Travelers returning from international travel should not come to campus for 14 days.

On Monday, July 6, a Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) emergency order went into effect that directs travelers arriving in Chicago from states experiencing a surge in new COVID-19 cases to quarantine for 14 days. According to the CDPH, travelers who have spent longer than 24 hours in a designated state and arrive in Chicago on or after July 6 must quarantine for 14 days from the time of last contact within the designated state. For a list of designated states, criteria for states to be designated under the Order, and more information on the Order, please [visit CDPH's website](#)¹.

All faculty, staff, and students who have traveled to the identified states and return to Chicago on or after July 6 must quarantine for 14 days and not return to campus before the quarantine period is completed.

Please plan your end of summer activities with the full understanding that your child will not be allowed into Lab buildings for the 14 day quarantine period if you choose to travel to one of the locations or a location that is added to the Order while you are away.

¹ <https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/cdph.html>

ENHANCED HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

The success of all our planning for the coming academic year rests with each member of the campus community consistently taking steps to help keep themselves and our community healthy. Personal and shared responsibility are critical.

Like the rest of the University, ours is a multi-layered program designed to mitigate, not eliminate, the possible transmission of COVID-19 in our school. Lab benefits from expert advisors at the University of Chicago Medicine that are supporting the entire University in fall 2020 planning. Decision-making is made in partnership with UChicago epidemiologists and informed by other expert sources including the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

Families play a vital role in maintaining health and safety on campus. The number one preventative safety measure is to keep a child home if they are sick. The need to keep home any child showing symptoms is one we will continue to stress as critical—and the same will apply to adults at Lab. To support this effort, prior to the start of school, we will provide an updated student handbook with helpful information and orientation and training materials to help transition students to a COVID-prepared campus.

To help prevent the spread of COVID-19 everyone at Lab will join in these efforts and adhere to these requirements:



Universal Face Coverings: Everyone must wear a face covering over the nose and the mouth in Lab buildings, and on the campus grounds when others are present and physical distancing cannot be maintained. Lab will provide two reusable cloth masks to every employee and student, and we will expect families and employees to clean these after school each day. Families also have the option to provide a reusable cloth face mask for their children. All students and employees will receive training on proper mask-wearing.



Physical Distancing: Lab will maximize the use of our spaces, and reconfigure and reassign classrooms to de-densify and to allow for physical distancing.

- Lab will reconfigure rooms to support 6-foot physical distancing.
- Rooms will be cleared of excess furniture to maximize space.
- Time outdoors will be maximized.



Hygiene and Handwashing: Handwashing will be taught, reinforced, and frequent.

- Hand sanitizer stations will be placed throughout our classrooms and buildings.
- Signs will be posted in visible locations (e.g., school entrances, restrooms) that promote everyday protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs (such as by properly washing hands and properly wearing a face covering).



Cohorts and decreased mixing of students: In age-appropriate ways, we will minimize mixing groups of children. Also in age-appropriate ways, we will minimize student and adult movement. We will eliminate/reduce use of lockers.



Enhanced cleaning: Lab will partner with UChicago Facilities Services and ABM to ensure that all of our spaces are properly cleaned on a daily basis with “deep cleaning” as needed or required. This will include routine cleaning and disinfecting of high touch surfaces.



Self-Monitoring: While details are still being finalized, each day a child is to be in Lab buildings, families will be asked to fill out an online symptoms screening form which will automatically indicate if the child should remain at home. In those instances, the family will receive a follow up phone call from a Lab nurse.



COVID-19 Reporting: Individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 must follow University guidelines for isolation and cooperate with the University’s contact tracing program. Anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 and has been in a Lab or University owned or operated facility must contact C19HealthReport@uchicago.edu so that the health and safety of others in our community and facilities can be addressed. People who are determined to be close contacts must adhere to all quarantine requirements for COVID-19.



Contact Tracing: Lab will utilize the University Infection Control Team for the tracing of all positive tests.



Training and Attestation: To return to campus, employees and parents/guardians must sign an electronic form affirming that they will comply with safety precautions. Lab and the University will provide training to help our community meet these expectations.



Sick Policy: Now more than ever, our community must abide by our policy that faculty, staff and students must stay home if they exhibit signs of any illness. Anyone coming to campus is expected to self-monitor for symptoms and stay home if they have potentially been exposed to COVID-19 or have had any symptoms, including: cough, runny or stuffy nose, shortness of breath, fever, difficulty breathing, chills, body aches, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. Families will be asked to pick up their child promptly if they show symptoms of illness and need to go home.



Limiting visitors: Building access will be limited to students, staff, and faculty. Unnecessary visitors will not be allowed into the buildings. Please understand that in general parents will not be allowed in the buildings, though we are exploring the possibility of nursery parents being able to enter for drop-off and pick-up and still determining whether any non-emergency exceptions would be allowed.



Arrival and dismissal procedures: Lab will provide pickup and drop-off procedures that ensure safe distance is maintained. All students, faculty, and staff must wear face coverings on arrival. Students will wash their hands or receive hand sanitizer. Parents and guardians should not enter the building to escort students to/from classrooms at arrival and dismissal.



Parent-teacher meetings: Parent and teacher meetings should be conducted virtually, if possible.



Travel policy: In keeping with the rest of the University, we will require our Lab community to abide travel restrictions, including self-quarantining for 14 days upon return from a location that has been identified by federal, state, or local health officials. Please understand these regulations and adjust your summer travel as needed to prevent your child from missing the start of school.

APPENDIX 1:

LAB FALL PLANNING WORKING GROUP STRUCTURES

UChicago N-12 Education Planning Group

Daniel Abebe, Vice Provost
Catherine Braendel, Strategic Advisor,
Dir. of Comms, Laboratory Schools
Arthur Del Muro, Director of
Construction Management
Marc Klein, Assistant General Counsel
David Magill, Interim Director,
Laboratory Schools
Matt Meyer, Exec. Director for
Academic Technology Solutions
Meredith Shiner, Director of
Communications, UChicago
Urban Network
Dillan Siegler, Associate Provost
Kim Taylor, Vice President and
General Counsel

Lab Central Working Group

Sarah Abella, N-2 Dean of Students
Asra Ahmed, HS Assistant Principal
Paul Beekmeyer, HS Principal
Uzma Bogwani, LS Assistant Principal
Catherine Braendel, Strategic Advisor,
Director of Communications
Carla Ellis, Assistant Director of Schools
Jessica Hanzlik, MS Assistant Principal
Brent LaRowe, Director, Registrar
Services & Info Management

Area Specialists: Learning Model

(Lead Carla Ellis)

Ryan Allen, MS Principal
Sylvie Anglin, LS Principal
Paul Beekmeyer, HS Principal
Sandy Bixby, (former) MS Principal
Brent LaRowe, Director, Registrar
Services & Info. Management
Daniel Ryan, N-2 Principal
Additional members/groups consulted:
Assistant Principals and Deans
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
professionals
Department and grade-level chairs;
grade level teams; special areas
Faculty Association division-level reps
MS steering committee; HS curriculum
committee
Student Services and Learning &
Counseling Teams
Via quantitative/qualitative surveys:
faculty, staff, parents, students in
grades 5-12

Area Specialists: Safety/Security/Logistics

(Lead Brian Hewlett, Interim Associate
Director, UChicago Partners: Arthur Del
Muro & Matthew Meyer)
Medical/Nurses—Kristen Szewczyk, Lead
School Nurse
Facilities—Joseph Wachowski, Director,
Operations
Security—Joan Fiesta, Director, Safety and
Security
IT—Monica Bahroos, Interim Director IT

Division-level Implementation Teams

(including Principals, Assistant Principals
& Deans of Students)

Nursery-Grade 2

AJ Jennings, N3 homeroom & grade chair
Michael Eldridge, N4 homeroom
& grade chair
Melane Weber, N3 asst. teacher
Elspeth Stowe-Grant, K homeroom
& grade chair
Elizabeth Luna, 1st grade homeroom
Eli Johnson, 2nd grade homeroom
& grade chair
Lisa Harrison, Special Area teacher & chair
Lauren Snelling, Counselor & L&C chair

Lower School (Grades 3-5)

Erin McCarthy, 3rd grade homeroom
Michelle Holmes, 4th grade homeroom
Keren Faling, 5th grade Academic Specialist
Melissa Steger, Counselor
Sushma Lohitsa Frazier, Special Area/
Science

Middle School (Grades 6-8)

Susanne Pralle, 6th grade
& World Languages
Sam Nekrosius, 7th grade & Humanities
Diane Jackson, World Languages,
7th grade chair
Michael Wong, 8th grade & STEM
Thomas Toney, rotations/service learning
Scott Budeselich, PE Chair

High School (Grades 9-12)

Jane Canright, Math teacher
Charles Disantis, History teacher and
Grade 9 lead advisor
Laura Doto, Learning Coordinator
Zack Hund, Science Chair
Ian Taylor, English Teacher
Roz Torto, Music Chair



JULY 29 2020



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