

MIZZENTOP DAY SCHOOL

2021-2022 SCHOOL REOPENING PLAN



Karin Shultz, Head of School
64 East Main Street
Pawling, NY 12564

www.MizzentopDaySchool.org
(845) 855-7338





Dear Mizzentop Community,

We are so excited to welcome all of our new and returning families to Mizzentop for the 2021-22 school year. Your teachers and administrators have been hard at work all summer in preparation for the students to return for a successful and safe school year.

We are following the daily updates from the CDC, Department of Health, New York State officials and Dutchess County officials on Covid-19 and the Delta and other variants. While the situation is one that changes daily, our commitment to ensuring the safety of our students remains constant.

We were so lucky to have a community that shared that commitment last year. All of you worked so hard in support of our mission to keep the children in school full time. We are counting on that same communal effort and resilience this year to allow us to focus on educating the children and instilling in them our Living Values despite the uncertainty of the world around us.

Please read Mizzentop's revised opening plan carefully so that you can be fully aware of our plans and policies. Hopefully things will change over the year so that we can lessen our safety protocols gradually, but that remains to be seen. We are asking our families to sign our [community pledge](#) so that each of us can play our part in providing Mizzentop's students, faculty and staff with an exceptional- and safe- school experience this year.

Sincerely,

Karin Shultz
Head of School

Our Priorities

Mizzentop Day School's Mission Statement

Mizzentop Day School (MDS), an independent school for students in Early Childhood through Grade 8, provides a stimulating and innovative educational program dedicated to building a supportive community through living values and instilling a love of learning in our students.

[School Song](#) - Recorded May 2020.

Safety

Our objective is to commence on campus 5 days a week for ALL students in measures that are compatible with the health and safety demands associated with COVID-19.

In many ways, our intentionally small sized community works to our great advantage in terms of COVID planning. But like many schools, Mizzentop is taking a number of strategic measures to allow for the maximum in-person experience for students, while also building in the flexibility to adjust our plans, if necessary, to accommodate new information about the virus, testing, vaccines, and other factors. These measures will include adjustments to our social calendar, new health protocols, increases or adjustments in classroom space to reduce density, changes to our lunch procedures, and many more.

In the preparation of these plans, we have adopted guidelines from the Department of Health (DOH), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Social and Emotional Well-Being

Providing a caring, safe and supportive learning environment for all students and adults is foundational to a successful reopening of Mizzentop Day School. Many of our students and adults in our community suffered from trauma and stress due to the pandemic and many will continue to manage challenging emotions as we navigate our new normal. We will embed best practices in social-emotional well-being in our daily lives to support all members of our learning community.

Safe and Educationally Sound Learning Environments

Mizzentop's plan is constructed with the belief that **ALL** students will be on campus.

If health data indicates that it is not safe to return to the school building for instruction, we are prepared to transition to remote learning. Teachers will deliver lessons, assignments and meetings through Zoom, Google Classroom and Seesaw. More details of our remote learning plan are outlined in the Distance Learning section.

Ongoing Communication

Effective two-way communication is more important than ever. Our reopening plans as well as other relevant information will be readily available. Families will be provided with clear and ongoing communication about what to expect, during and prior to reopening. Any changes that may take place will be communicated in a timely manner.

REOPENING of in-person instruction

Mizzentop Day School includes protocols and procedures for restarting school operations including students, faculty, and staff returning to in-person instruction.

With approximately 165 students in the entire building, small class sizes and social distancing protocols, we believe that we can continue to meet five days a week.

RISK MITIGATIONS

We have adopted guidelines from the Department of Health (DOH), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). We understand that we cannot stop the spread of COVID-19, we can only mitigate the risk of exposure.

However, the most important and effective strategy for mitigating the transmission of COVID-19 to others in a school setting is to keep your child home if he or she is demonstrating any of the known symptoms. Parents and staff are informed of knowing the symptoms of COVID-19, which can include the following:

- Cough
- Fever (100.0 or higher)
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell

Recent guidance suggests that symptoms of COVID-19 may also include gastrointestinal symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Contact your physician if you or your child experience symptoms. **Under NO circumstances should a child showing symptoms be given Advil, Motrin, or any other medication that reduces a fever.**

Further Details: Social Distancing

We realize that students are naturally curious and social. Therefore, any effort to keep children apart will be a challenge. However, guidance from the medical field indicates that social distancing of **THREE** feet, when possible, is an effective strategy to reduce the spread of germs and COVID-19. Therefore, we will take the following steps to ensure this strategy is in place:

- Place desks and tables in measured distances from others.
- Require that teachers (rather than students) rotate to classrooms when possible to reduce the likelihood of transitions in hallways where students would come into contact with other students.
- Ensure hallways are clearly marked to allow unidirectional movement of students and staggered dismissal times will be created.
- Spread out lockers in the hallways so that they are in groups of 6 rather than 20+.

Further Details: Face Coverings

In concert with the most current medical research and recommendations from the CDC and New York State, we are requiring facial coverings for at least the first month. Educators and parents agree that requiring the donning of face masks for students and staff will be a challenge and a source of frustration. However, guidance from health professionals indicates that consistently wearing face

coverings will greatly mitigate the transmission of COVID-19. Therefore, we will implement the following strategies to ensure compliance:

- We require that parents purchase facial coverings for their children, to support some autonomy of choice for students to allow families to choose the most comfortable fit for their children. In the event that a child forgets his or her facial covering, a disposable mask will be provided and will be expected to be worn during appropriate times. See chart below.
- Mizzentop Day School will assist students who may have difficulty in adapting to wearing a face covering and train our community on how to adequately put on, take off, clean (if applicable), and discard PPE.
- We understand that mask-breaks are going to be a necessary part of the school day. Teachers will provide students with opportunities to remove their masks at appropriate times, in safe, physically-distanced settings.
- We understand that some students and staff may be unable to wear face coverings due to certain medical conditions. Families must contact us to determine if special accommodations are needed.

Face Coverings On	Face Coverings Off
School-provided transportation (am/pm)	Family-provided transportation (am/pm)
Classroom instruction with breaks during instruction	Snack/Lunch
Transitions in the school building	Physical Education and Recess (outdoors)
While using the lavatory	Breaks provided throughout the day (instruction)

As we wish to take the strongest measures possible to protect students and staff, most (PreK through Eighth Grade) students will be masked during instruction except for frequent and scheduled mask breaks. However, we reserve the right after 6-8 weeks of following this standard to observe results in other schools that are choosing not to have students masked during instruction. If it appears COVID-19 is not being transmitted in those schools after 6-8 weeks, Mizzentop Day School may determine that unmasking during instruction is safe and will communicate this new approach to staff and families and the reasoning behind this decision.

Further Details: Personal Hygiene

While gloves may be utilized, gloves are no substitute for frequent handwashing. Regular handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds will be reinforced. Hand-sanitizer will be supplied in classrooms where students are supervised. Sanitizer stations will be positioned in other key locations such as hallways, fields, lobbies and the Student Center. It is imperative that students and staff follow the outlined procedures to mitigate the transmission of germs. These practices are time-tested and should apply even after this pandemic has subsided. Please review the CDC’s guidance [here](#).

- Clean hands often
- Avoid close contact
- Use face covering when around others
- Cover coughs and sneezes

Adjustments will be made as new information is released from the Department of Health and/or CDC.

OTHER: Cohorts

It is recommended that we establish stable cohorts within the school population, when feasible, by placing students into groups and teams. All grades are considered one cohort. For example, PreK is one

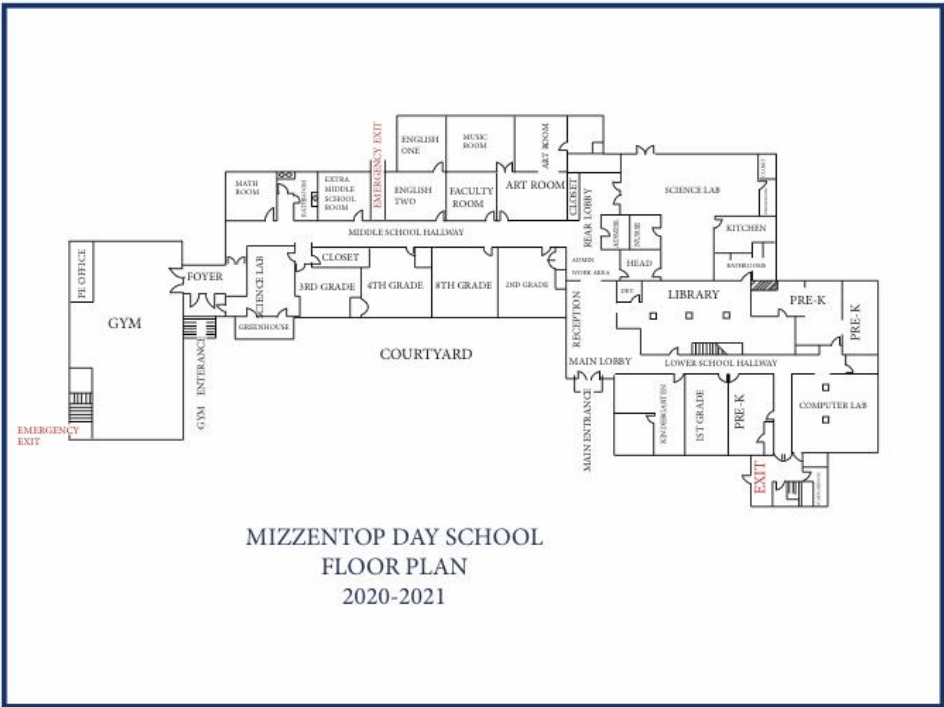
cohort, K is one cohort, etc. In the Middle School, Fifth and Sixth Grade, together are a cohort and Seventh and Eighth Grade, together will be a cohort. On the basis of this recommendation, we have taken the following steps to minimize interactions between small groups:

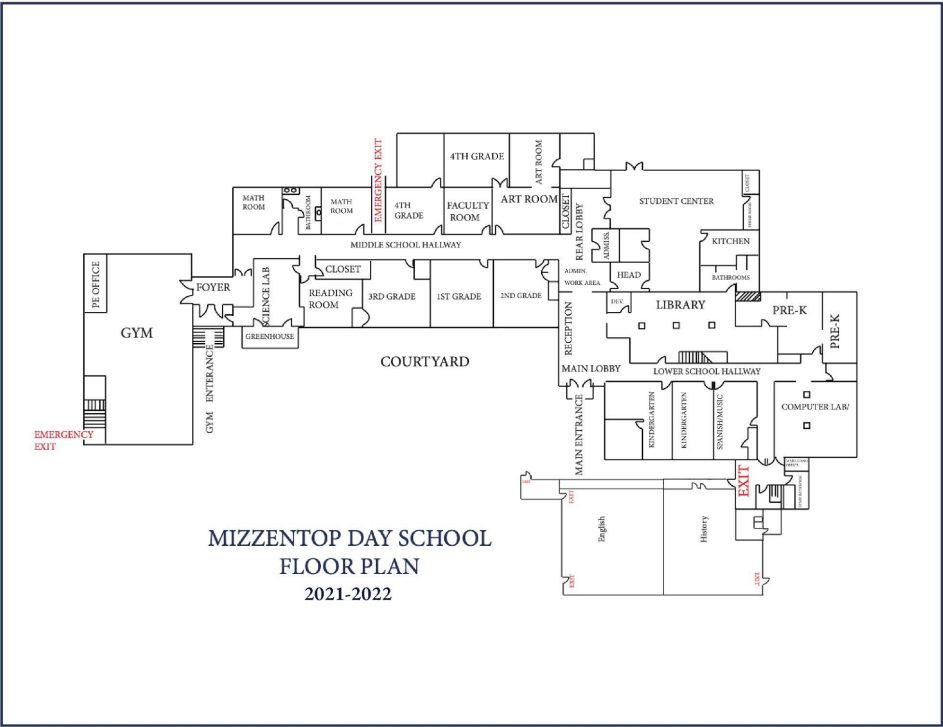
- Restructure the environment so that lunches can be eaten in classrooms, cohorts in the Student Center or outside.
- Encourage families to drive children to and from school rather than relying on bus transportation.
- Allow music, technology, library, and health to be taught in the classroom for PreK, K and some lower school classes rather than students moving to another room.
- Fall sports and lower school intramural options will be options for students as well as add other low risk means of exercise such as hiking or running clubs. We will continue to hold these activities unless we are directed to cancel.

CAPACITY and OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY

Redesigning our physical configuration in the building to support a safe in-person learning environment includes:

- **Repurposing larger spaces**, such as the Surbeck Auditorium for middle school classrooms.
- **Using outdoor spaces as often as possible** (field, grassy area, courtyard and playground) to offer physically-distanced PE, reading classes, lunch areas as well as recess periods.
- **Smaller student cohorts with consistent teachers to reduce contacts.** If our Pre-K classes become too large, they will be split into smaller groups and another classroom will be utilized. All repurposed spaces will be outfitted with the necessary equipment and allow us to safely distance students.
- **Less movement throughout the building during the day.** Lower School students will spend the majority of class time in their primary learning space with their cohort, with teachers and some special area teachers coming to them. Hallways will be designated as one-way where possible and traffic flow designed to prevent crowded spaces during class transitions.
- **Multiple building entry points** to reduce crowding and support safe travel from entryways to classroom spaces will be created.

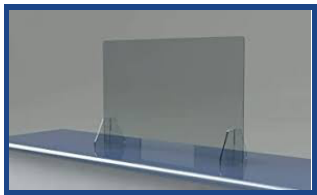




Classroom Spaces

In order to maximize space between the teacher and students, each classroom was assessed to determine the number of desks that could safely occupy the classroom. Our configurations allow for plenty of distance between the teacher and the first row of students to enable demonstrations at the board. According to the CDC, schools should use 3 feet distancing. We will adhere to this where possible.

Small Group Instruction



There may be times where a teacher/student needs to be in close proximity for instructional purposes. During these times, we have 36” by 24” plexiglass dividers that can be utilized as a physical barrier. This will also be used when speech instruction is given.

Outdoor Spaces

Repurposing outdoor spaces is a cost-effective way to reduce the burden on indoor classrooms while providing fresh air, hands-on learning opportunities, and the health benefits associated with increased access to nature. Mizzentop has created such spaces that can be used for reading, lunch, advisory, etc.



RESTART OPERATIONS

Our plan to safely reopen facilities and grounds include shampooing carpets, redoing floors, restarting building ventilation, water systems and more. All components have been running all summer and have been serviced if needed.

HYGIENE, CLEANING and DISINFECTION

Promotion of Healthy Habits

Signage will be prominently posted in classrooms and throughout the building (i.e. entrances, hallways, bathrooms/sinks/faculty rooms) with visuals to increase the accessibility and promote awareness to stop the spread such as properly washing hands, properly wearing a face covering, and maintaining social distance.

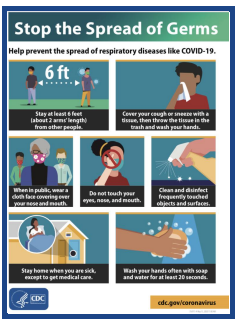
Training for staff related to health and safety protocols will be identified and performed during our In-Service days from August 30st through September 2nd. Topics include, but not limited to: social distancing, cleaning and disinfecting protocols, and hygiene practices. This training will be mandatory for all staff and substitutes. This information will be communicated to all families and will be accessible on the school’s website for continuity in messaging. During the first days of school, students will be trained on proper hand and respiratory hygiene through live demonstrations and a video that will be previewed.

Ventilation

The school’s air conditioning system is inspected and repaired or replaced as necessary. However, fresh air will be vented into classrooms as much as possible through open windows and Life Breath units that are installed. All classrooms have 2 air purifiers and windows are open as much as possible.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Cleaning and hygiene protocols recommended by the CDC and OSHA will be followed and communicated to staff. These protocols will be adhered to by all Mizzentop staff and participants. Signs on how to “Stop the Spread of Germs” will be posted in easily seen locations. All spaces used by the school will be cleaned in accordance with DOH and CDC guidelines, including frequent disinfecting of high contact areas and thorough sanitizing of bathrooms, twice a day. In addition, CDC listed disinfectant wipes will be positioned conveniently for staff use, if necessary. A thorough cleaning of the school will be done by our contracted cleaning company nightly. Teachers will reinforce appropriate habits. All classrooms have been given a bucket of cleaning supplies to be used and restocked.



EXTRA CURRICULARS

There will be some extracurricular activities this Fall such as interscholastic sports, intramurals, after-school clubs, music lessons etc. We will need to limit the amount of games played with other schools and follow all guidelines that they may require. Assemblies and other gatherings will be considered depending on guidelines set forth by the NYS, CDC, etc.

BEFORE AND AFTER CARE

The option to drop-off early and/or pick-up later in the day is an essential support for many Mizzentop families, and we are designing safe, physically-distanced models to continue to provide these options. Our efforts will include designating spaces and student configuration in the spaces to reduce contact.

Two important shifts in our Before and After Care program philosophy: **we will ask that only families who need these options enroll their children, and that families keep a planned schedule as much as possible**, rather than using the service on a casual drop-in basis as in the past. Parents dropping off in the mornings will not be allowed inside the building and will be greeted by the front door by a staff member.

We hope that in a few months, the before and after care program can be run pre-pandemic.

VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Our faculty, students and staff are the heart of our school. We are committed to supporting all of our community's health and well-being as we work together to deliver our mission and support our students safely as well. All of our work in designing a physically-distanced in-person learning and working model is designed with the goal of protecting our faculty, students and staff as they focus on the essential work of delivering our program.

At this point, 94% of the faculty and staff are vaccinated and will be required to wear masks as directed for at least the first month. Updates will be shared in regards to vaccinated students and adults. If a faculty or staff member is not vaccinated, we ask that he/she test each Friday with results sent to the nurse to return to work on Monday.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation to Mizzentop is provided by the district in which the child resides, and we have not received any bus safety protocols yet. We will update families when that information is provided. Mizzentop is not responsible for any practices or procedures set forth by district transportation offices. Parents should contact their local school district's transportation office with any questions or concerns.

FOOD SERVICES

In-classroom dining will now be part of Mizzentop COVID safety changes. Lunches will be safely packaged and delivered to the classrooms with a minimum number of people involved. Lunches will be made fresh daily, just as in past years. Hot lunch and/or sandwiches will come with prepackaged sides such as veggies, applesauce, fruit cups, to name a few. The kitchen will be sanitized before lunch prep begins, after lunch is served and any time in-between when necessary. Sharing of lunches or snacks will be prohibited at snack time and lunch time.

Mizzentop will continue to prepare lunches that protect students from food allergies and will be prepared in spaces separate from other lunches.

Students will be directed to perform hand hygiene before and after eating. Homeroom teachers and special area teachers that will be assigned to certain cohorts will help with cleaning and disinfection before class begins.

WE HOPE THIS WILL CHANGE AFTER A FEW MONTHS AND WE CAN DINE IN THE STUDENT CENTER SOON!



MENTAL HEALTH, BEHAVIORAL and EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Mizzentop Day School will put health and safety, including social and emotional health and safety, for staff and students as our highest priority by establishing a positive and supportive learning environment per our mission statement. In order for our students to return to school successfully, we will need to use resources through the New York State Education Department, The Committee for Children and local psychologists and others to anticipate needs, assess well-being and implement interventions as necessary. Ensuring a safe and positive return to school is essential for our students.

- Faculty and staff will participate in professional development as available in social-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching, especially as these topics relate specifically to COVID-19.
- Administration will help assess needs as well as practicing use of the health protocols in place such as social distancing and wearing masks. Faculty and staff will address the needs of identified students.
- Parents will be encouraged to share experiences and connect with families who express a need or are new to Mizzentop.
- The Representation Team and professional development will help teachers plan for and support students, families, faculty and staff who care deeply about recent national issues related to social injustice, and how to address these issues when school resumes. Tahirah Simmonds was hired to speak to our faculty during August In-Service. The Representation Team will continue to meet throughout the year.

MONITORING

Mizzentop Day School includes protocols and procedures to track health conditions at school.

SCREENING

It should be understood that the safety of our school depends on disciplined individual adherence to a set of shared guidelines designed to mitigate risk. In terms of our process for reopening the school, one essential part of our plan is that Mizzentop will ask all students, faculty, and staff to follow “safer at home” protocols for two weeks before September 7th, Drop-In Orientation Day.

Well-Being of our Mizzentop Students and Staff

The CDC is not requiring morning temperature checks or school health surveys however, MDS would like to continue the morning health surveys and morning temps. We have simplified them and only

three questions must be answered each morning. We are not using Cognito Forms this year, we will be using Google Forms found [here](#). We hope that after time, we can eliminate these requirements.

Late Drop-off and Early Pick-up

We request that parents/guardians limit late drop-offs and early pickups. If a child will be late, parents should email Arica Vancil, avancil@mizzentop.org, and a staff member will meet the child outside the front door upon his or her arrival.

TESTING PROTOCOL

Containment Plan and Fever Protocol

Any student showing symptoms of COVID-19 will be taken to the health office for evaluation and placed in an isolated room adjacent to the health office and must be picked up by a parent/guardian within one hour when possible. Mizzentop will notify the DOH of any potentially active cases in order to obtain guidance for how to proceed with notifications and return-to-school protocols.

Mizzentop will maintain a fever notification protocol for each grade. Should a student within a class have a fever, we will notify the families of that grade. Please know that students get sick and have fevers that are not COVID-19. We will notify all families immediately if we suspect any potential COVID-19 infections.

CONTAINMENT

Mizzentop Day School included protocols and procedures for how to respond to positive or presumed-positive cases, as well as preventative practices.

INFECTED INDIVIDUALS

Families and staff should notify the school (Head of School and nurse) and should not return until they have met criteria to discontinue home isolation.

- At least 10 days since symptoms first appeared AND
- At least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication AND
- Symptoms have improved.
- Mizzentop will require a negative test result, rapid tests will not be accepted, for COVID-19, before the individual is allowed to return.

In order to obtain important medical information, reporting illnesses will use the following procedure for parents:

- Call (845) 855-7338 and ask for Natasha Scaperotti, the School Nurse. If she is unavailable, ask for Karin Shultz, Head of School.
- Include your child's name and grade.
- Specific symptoms your child is experiencing.
- Any additional school programs in which your child has participated such as intramurals, before care or after care.
- If your child is experiencing symptoms that are consistent with COVID, please provide the date of your child's appointment as well as the anticipated timeline for receiving test results.

EXPOSED INDIVIDUALS

Unvaccinated families or staff that have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus must complete quarantine and have not developed symptoms before returning to in-person learning. Discharge from isolation and return to school will be conducted in coordination with the local health department.

- ~~While of course the ultimate authority for quarantine is the health department of the county of residence, the current rules are such that students who are properly masked are not close contacts of a confirmed case, nor are any vaccinated students or adults, so long as all remain asymptomatic. These quarantine rules, should they remain the same, will be very helpful in limiting the amount of school absence.~~ Due to the Covid variant, the CDC has updated its guidelines defining it's close contancet. See CDC and DOH guidelines [here](#).

CONTACT TRACING and COMMUNICATION

In accordance with state and local laws and regulations, school administrators will notify local health officials, staff and families immediately of any case of COVID-19. Any individual who has had close contact with a person diagnosed should stay home and self-monitor for symptoms.

New York State has partnered with Bloomberg Philanthropies, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Vital Strategies to create the NYS Contact Tracing Program, a nation-leading initiative to help slow the spread of COVID-19 and make it safer to begin to return to normal again.

Contact Tracers work with people who have tested positive for COVID-19 to identify people they have had contact with and let them know they may have been exposed to the disease.

If you get a call from “NYS Contact Tracing” (518-387-9993), PLEASE answer the phone. Answering the phone will keep your loved ones and community safe.

More info on contact tracing [here](#). A **Close Contact** is defined by the CDC as someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic clients, 2 days prior to positive specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated.

All communications will be sent through emails from the Head of School through MailChimp. Please understand that we will not give out names of families, rather grades that the child is in during our communication through email.

CLOSURE

Mizzentop includes procedures and protocols for decreasing the scale or scope of in-person education and/or closing the school.

CLOSURE TRIGGERS

Mizzentop has no intention of initiating a school closure during the new school year. Any closure that would force our community to leave campus would occur if we were **mandated by an executive order or DOH directive**. However, should our community experience a localized outbreak, we may determine it is safer to close Mizzentop than to wait for an order.

Should this happen, Mizzentop would continue to pursue a remote learning program for that period of time. Schedules will be shared with each class in a timely manner.

DISTANCE LEARNING

We know that, due to the continued uncertainty about the trajectory of the COVID-19 virus, distance learning may be part of our experience at some point this school year. In our summer planning and professional development, we are taking advantage of the opportunity to build on our successes from this spring. **Our refinements based on research, faculty reflection, professional development, and parent feedback will result in increased live experiences, small groups, and consistent structures that allow for school day continuity.**

Tools and Technology

Tools for learning will include a technology device, along with expanded use of tech platforms that were successful this spring, and creating kits of physical classroom supplies to help support learning at home.

- We will work from the start of the school year to ensure all families are prepared with necessary tech devices at home.
- We will expand the use of Seesaw, which was a successful platform for sharing student work and engaging teacher feedback at other schools. This platform will also be used in the classrooms during in-person learning to build students' comfort and readiness to use Seesaw at home in a distance learning setting. This will be demonstrated to our community at our Back to School Evenings in September.
- Google Classroom, our learning management system used in 4th grade and Middle School, will be implemented immediately at the beginning of the year so that students will be comfortable and confident using it more independently at home.

SIGN COMMUNITY PLEDGE

ADDITIONAL SAFETY INFORMATION, GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES

New York State Department of Health Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) [website](#).
New York State Education Department Coronavirus (COVID-19) [website](#).
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Coronavirus (COVID-19) [website](#).
Occupational Safety and Health Administration COVID-19 [website](#)