

# AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF BUCHAREST

Dear Parents,

I am writing to further update you on our plans for reopening for the academic year 2020-21. We want to provide as much clarity as we can, so you can plan ahead, which is why this is a rather long communication.

This is the current situation: we have applied to the highest levels of government to be empowered to make independent decisions about reopening our campus to students. We understand that our application is being assessed. We do not have a formal response at this point.

As many of you may know, there is a national debate on the reopening of school in Romania - how to do it, when to do it and whether to give autonomy to individual districts and schools. Officially, all schools are closed until the beginning of the Romanian school year on September 14. The government has stated that it will make decisions and articulate guidelines at the end of August.

All of us at AISB want to welcome students to campus as soon we have approval and it is safe to do so. While we will continue to deliver a high-quality distance learning programme, we understand that our students need to be back together with each other and their teachers for their well being and their learning. We miss our students.

## **Our Roadmap for August and September**

This is our roadmap for the weeks ahead, based on the current situation:

- **We will open the year on Tuesday 18 August as planned using Distance Learning.** Before this online restart, we will communicate with you:
  - How students can collect the learning resources they will need from campus
  - Our updated Distance Learning Programme for the first weeks of school
- For our new families, we will do an **online orientation programme for Secondary students on Friday, 14th August and for ELC and Elementary students on Monday 17 August.**
- **As soon as we have authorisation and it is safe to do so, we will transition to the Adapted Model of learning, described in our [Reopening Plan](#). Currently, we are targeting September 14th as the date that we will move to this model.** The Adapted Model provides a balanced approach between face-to-face on-campus learning with some continued distance learning. It is based on our 7 Principles of Wellbeing as described in the Reopening Plan in particular, carefully limiting student group size and the mixing of students across groups and grades.
- **Before September 14, we will continue rigorously preparing for the complex logistics of opening our campus to students.** We continue upgrading our health infrastructure,

which includes new thermo-scanners, COVID signage, a medical isolation room and more handwashing and disinfection stations. In addition, we are exploring the practicalities and effectiveness of COVID testing to keep our community safe.

- The rate of COVID infection in Romania continues to be concerning. We will monitor the local health situation carefully and make a final decision to open the campus to students if we judge that it is safe to do so. When the Romanian authorities publish their guidelines for schools, we will update the Reopening Plan if necessary, to respond to the local evolution of COVID. We will explain any changes that we make and continue to answer your questions.

### **Listening to You**

There was an excellent 80% response rate to the July parent survey. Thank you. From those who responded, we learned that 87% of our students would be able to attend school from August 18 having followed self-isolation protocols as required. Parents representing 73% of the sample are comfortable sending their children to school in the current health situation. These statistics did not vary significantly across the age range. There were many individual comments from parents noting that they may change their viewpoint based on how the pandemic evolves in the weeks ahead. There continues to be a range of parent views on the severity and risks of this COVID-19 pandemic.

It is the school's responsibility to make decisions based on the best available evidence. The decisions that we make will prioritise the safety of our community given the seriousness of the health risks. When we open our doors, we will do everything we can to reassure families that remain anxious. If parents would still prefer a continued distance learning option, we will do our best to accommodate these requests in a way that our professional team can manage reasonably. If we 'livestream' a classroom, for example, then students can participate from home. However, this solution has several technical issues and works better for older students who are more independent. This is just one of the operational complexities that all schools will be seeking to manage in the year ahead.

### **Faculty Orientation**

Our professional team has responded magnificently to these unusual times. For our students to feel safe, happy and supported at school, our staff and teachers have to feel the same things. It is our teachers who need to project positive energy and care for our students that will sustain them.

Given the complications of world travel presently, I am pleased to share that by mid-August our faculty team will be here in Bucharest and ready to go. We have welcomed an excellent new faculty group from overseas, many of whom have braved multiple flight cancellations and quarantine periods on the way. They are a resilient and optimistic group who are very much looking forward to meeting our students.

In the first weeks of August, the faculty will prioritise conversations about the social and

emotional care of our students, the enhancements we want to make to our Distance Learning programme and how we get ready to deliver the Adapted Model of learning.

### **What We Can Learn from Around the World About Reopening Schools**

In closing, I want to briefly share what we are learning from schools that have reopened during this pandemic across the world. Scientific studies are still preliminary, and, in some cases, the results are not aligned. We know that some countries that have managed a phased reopening process very well, such as Norway and Denmark. In these societies, reopening schools did not generally affect the level of COVID infections. In other countries, such as Israel, the opening of schools caused a spike in new infections, so much so that they had to be closed again. In all these three countries, prior to reopening, the level of COVID infections was relatively low and controlled.

The emerging science indicates that children under ten years old are less vulnerable to the effects of COVID and that they may not transmit the virus so easily. However, a recent study out of Chicago demonstrated that even young children can carry a high viral load. It seems probable that children over ten can transmit the virus as easily as an adult. Some better news is that trials for vaccines are proceeding faster than was first anticipated.

Our success as a school this year, more than ever, depends on the actions of our entire community - colleagues, students and parents alike. We all have a personal responsibility to do our part to try to stay healthy and help others stay healthy. If we all commit to doing what is required, at home and school, that will greatly increase the likelihood that our students can spend more time at the campus as opposed to distance learning.

Please keep safe,

Peter Welch  
Director