



Burgin Center for the Arts

AT MERCERSBURG ACADEMY

Return to Performing Arts: Health and Safety Plan Arts Department

The guidance provided in the following plan consists of policies, recommendations, and considerations as student artists return to performing arts activities this fall. It is important to note that resources and details are constantly changing and updating on a regular basis. As more public health information becomes available, the Mercersburg Arts Department, working in collaboration with Storm Watch-Mercersburg Safe Campus Initiative, along with other campus resources, will work to release further guidance which could impact fall, winter, and spring performing arts participation.

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented performing artists across the world with myriad challenges. The COVID-19 virus is a highly contagious illness that primarily attacks the upper respiratory system. The virus that causes COVID-19 can infect people of all ages. Research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), among others, has found that while high school age individuals do get infected by COVID-19, relatively few with COVID-19 are hospitalized. However, some severe outcomes have been reported in the younger population, and a child with a mild or even asymptomatic case of COVID-19 can spread the infection to others who may be far more vulnerable. While it is not possible to eliminate all risk of furthering the spread of COVID-19, the current science suggests there are many steps schools and arts programs can take to reduce the risks to students, directors/instructors, and their families.

Mercersburg Academy performing arts programs will take necessary precautions and implement recommendations and guidance from the federal, state, and local governments, along with the CDC, Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH), Pennsylvania Department of Education (DOE), and National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS). Additional guidelines are being implemented from performing arts-specific organizations, including the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), Actors Equity, Voice and Speech Trainers Association (VASTA), National Association for Music Education (NAfME), and the Educational Theatre Association (EdTA). Mercersburg Academy's Arts Department recognizes that the knowledge regarding COVID-19 is constantly changing as new information and treatments become available. This "Return to Performing Arts-Health and Safety Plan" may be adjusted as new information becomes available in order to decrease the risk of exposure of COVID-19 to our student artists, directors/instructors, and audiences.

Mercersburg Academy Arts Department COVID-19 Planning Team

Members of the Mercersburg Academy performing arts leadership team, working in conjunction with the Health and Wellness Center medical services, are responsible for the development and implementation of this plan and include:

- Rick Hendrickson, Dean of Experiential Programs, Storm Watch Chair
- Laurie Mufson, Director of the Arts
- Kelly Dowling, Assistant Director of the Burgin Center for the Arts
- Jessica Doubell, Technical Director of the Burgin Center for the Arts
- Denise Dalton, Director of Dance
- Bryan Morgan, Director of Music
- Jim Brinson, Arts Faculty
- Dr. Nate Derstine D.O., School Physician
- Rita Barone, BSN, RN, NCSN, Health and Wellness Center
- Stephanie Comer-Concordia, CRNP, Health and Wellness Center

This planning team meets on an as-needed basis to review the implementation of the following plan and to make any necessary adjustments.

Stages of Performing Arts Participation

At this time, Franklin County remains in the Green Phase of operation set forth by the Governor's Plan for Phased Reopening. Official on-campus performing arts activities will begin until after the initial arrival plan for students and on-campus quarantine periods are completed. Considerations for each stage are based upon the Governor's Plan, PDE Preliminary Guidance for Reopening, NFHS, NAFME, and VASTA guidelines.

Stage 1: On Campus Performing Arts Rehearsal Procedures: Mercersburg Academy Level 3

- On-campus performing arts activities will commence with some restrictions.
- No gatherings of more than 50 individuals outdoors, including directors/instructors, at a scheduled location.
- No indoor gatherings of more than 25 individuals (or a lower participant number determined by safe physical distancing guidelines), including directors/instructors, at a scheduled location.
- Low- and moderate-risk performing arts activities can rehearse normally while maintaining six-foot physical distancing and wearing masks.
- High-risk performing arts activities should modify their rehearsals to insure greater physical distancing is maintained throughout activities.
 - Masks must be worn by all student artists unless they are unable to participate while masked (e.g., playing a wind instrument).
 - Barriers will be added to equipment that poses a possible spreading hazard (e.g., covering bells of wind instruments, microphone screens, etc.).
- Directors/instructors will be masked and observe physical distancing unless technique adjustments are required.

Stage 2: On Campus Performing Arts Rehearsal Procedures: Mercersburg Academy Level 1 & 2

- On-campus performing arts activities will continue with some restrictions.
- No gatherings of more than 50 individuals outdoors, including directors/instructors, at a scheduled location.
- No indoor gatherings of more than 25 individuals (or a lower participant number determined by safe physical distancing guidelines), including directors/instructors, at a scheduled location.
- Low- and moderate-risk performing arts activities can rehearse indoors normally while maintaining six-foot physical distancing and wearing masks. As-appropriate physical distancing may be lessened for performance blocking, but should remain non-contact.
- Low- and moderate-risk performing arts activities can rehearse outdoors normally while maintaining six-foot physical distancing and removing masks.
- High-risk performing arts activities can modify their indoor rehearsals to lessen physical distancing during activities.
 - Masks must be worn by all student artists unless they are unable to participate while masked (e.g., playing a wind instrument).
 - Barriers will be added to equipment that poses a possible spreading hazard (e.g., covering bells of wind instruments, microphone screens, etc.).

- High-risk performing arts activities can modify their outdoor rehearsals to lessen physical distancing during activities.
 - Masks must be worn by student artists not engaged in direct rehearsal for a production number unless they are unable to participate while masked (e.g., playing a wind instrument).
 - Barriers will be added to equipment that poses a possible spreading hazard (e.g., covering bells of wind instruments, microphone screens, etc.).
- Directors/instructors will be masked and observe physical distancing unless technique adjustments are required.

Stage 3: On Campus Performing Arts Virtual Performance Procedures

**In this stage, participants will be recorded in performance and only members of the ensemble and directors/employees will be present.*

- Low- and Moderate-risk performances
 - Student artists being recorded for a final product can perform unmasked while remaining mindful of physical distancing.
 - Directors/instructors and student artists NOT being recorded will remain masked and observe physical distancing.
- High-risk performing arts performances indoors
 - Student artists being recorded for a final product should observe physical distancing guidelines and perform masked unless they are unable to participate while masked (e.g., playing a wind instrument).
 - Barriers will be added to equipment that poses a possible spreading hazard (e.g., covering bells of wind instruments, microphone screens, etc.).
 - Directors/instructors, and student artists NOT being recorded will remain masked and observe physical distancing.
- High-risk performing arts performances outdoors
 - Barriers will be added to equipment that poses a possible spreading hazard (e.g., covering bells of wind instruments, microphone screens, etc.).
 - Directors/instructors and student artists NOT being recorded will remain masked and observe physical distancing.

Stage 4: On Campus Performing Arts Live Audience Performance Procedures

**In this stage, participants may be recorded in performance, members of the ensemble and directors/instructors will be present, as well as live audience members (as dictated by the school's Community Event plan).*

- Low- and Moderate-risk performances
 - Student artists onstage can perform unmasked.
 - Directors/instructors and student artists NOT onstage will remain masked and observe physical distancing.
- High-risk performing arts indoor performances
 - All student artists will perform masked unless they are unable to participate while masked (e.g., playing a wind instrument).
 - Barriers will be added to equipment that poses a possible spreading hazard. (e.g., covering bells of wind instruments, microphone screens, etc.)

- All director/instructors and student artists should maintain physical distancing if not performing and remain mindful of physical distancing during performances.
- High-risk performing arts outdoor performances
 - Barriers will be added to equipment that poses a possible spreading hazard. (e.g., covering bells of wind instruments, microphone screens, etc.)
 - All directors/instructors and student artists should maintain physical distancing and remain masked while not performing.
 - Student artists in a production number should remain mindful of physical distancing.
- Audience guidelines will adhere to the school's Community Gathering protocols.
- Any student artist or director/instructor may choose to remain masked during any stage of the safety plan.

Recommendations for All Performing Arts Programs

1. All student artists at Mercersburg Academy will follow the standard school policy set forth for daily COVID-19 procedures. Included within the school policy, students are required to complete a daily signs and symptoms questionnaire each morning prior to attending school activities. Results of the questionnaire may require further action related to the school policy and procedures for COVID-19. Students will also report any signs or symptoms experienced throughout the day to the Health and Wellness Center.
 - a. PGA and other co-curricular activities attendance should be accurately taken daily by directors/instructors.
 - b. Directors/ instructors will complete verbal signs and symptoms checks for all student artists at the beginning of any rehearsal activities each day.
 - c. If a student artist reports signs and symptoms to a director/instructor, they will not be permitted to participate in performing arts activities and will be referred to the Health and Wellness Center for evaluation.
2. All directors/instructors and student artists not participating directly in arts rehearsal activities should wear a face covering at all times while in the Burgin Center during performing arts activities.
3. Directors, performing artists, and ensemble members should wear a face covering at outdoor performing arts activities if 6 feet of physical distancing cannot be maintained.
4. All student artists, directors/instructors should thoroughly wash their hands (20 seconds with soap and water) prior to the beginning of rehearsals and performances and immediately following performing arts activities. Hand sanitizer will also be accessible for use as resources allow.
5. All student artists should have and use only their personal water bottle at all times. **Water bottles should not be shared.**
6. Hands-free water-cooler spouts will be installed in the Burgin Center to allow for safe filling of individual water bottles.
7. Directors/instructors should sanitize all used equipment (tools, props, etc.) at the completion of rehearsal and performance activities.
8. No dressing rooms will be available, so boarding student artists should dress for rehearsals and performances in their dorm rooms and return directly to their dorm room after rehearsals/ performances. Day student artists should use assigned changing areas in the Burgin Center. Student artists involved in heavy cardiovascular activity should shower in the dorm immediately following performing arts activities.

9. Student artists should not engage in close group activities or hand shaking, high fives, etc., during or after performing arts activity.
10. Student artists should not share equipment or costuming; all items should be sanitized after each use as appropriate.
11. Physical distancing should be encouraged through increased spacing, smaller groups, and limited mixing between groups when feasible.
12. Student artists and directors/instructors will complete education regarding health and safety protocols.
13. Any person who is sick should report to the Rutherford Health and Wellness Center.

Classification of Arts Programs: *(Based upon NFHS and performing arts specific organizations including VASTA, NAFME, and EdTA)*

High Risk:

Performing-arts activities that have a high probability that respiratory particles will be transmitted between participants even while physically distanced and wearing a mask.

- At Mercersburg Academy, this includes: dance performances where student artists cross through each other's breath stream, and Chorale and the a cappella singing groups Octet and Magaila (these small singing groups are of particular concern because they need to maintain distances of less than 6 feet to properly hear each other and tune to each other's voices).

Moderate Risk:

Performing-arts activities with protective equipment in place that may reduce the likelihood of respiratory particle transmission between participants OR intermittent close contact.

- At Mercersburg Academy, this includes: dance technique classes where physical distancing can be maintained; Band and Jazz Band (if rehearsing indoors); Chorale, Octet, and Magalia (when rehearsing outside or with extreme physical distancing in place), and musical theatre productions (when singing or dancing indoors with a large ensemble present and physical distancing limited).

Low Risk:

Performing arts that can be done with physical distancing or outside or individually, all with protective equipment in place that reduces the likelihood of respiratory-particle transmission between participants.

- At Mercersburg Academy, this includes: dance (when rehearsing outdoors); Band and Jazz Band (when rehearsing outdoors); String Ensemble; and Stony Batter non-musical play rehearsals.

* High/moderate-risk performing arts may move to a low- or lower-risk category with non-contact modifications and outdoor rehearsals .

Additional Recommendations

1. Mercersburg Academy cleaning staff assisted by the directors/instructors will create and maintain adequate cleaning schedules for all performing arts spaces to mitigate any communicable diseases, including COVID-19.

2. Arts facilities should be cleaned prior to arrival and post-activity gatherings.
3. High-touch areas should be cleaned more frequently.
4. Face coverings are required within the Burgin Center for the Arts.
5. Appropriate clothing and shoes should be worn at all times, as determined by individual performing arts programs.
6. Occupancy limits will be established and maintained in the Burgin Center for the Arts.
7. Reduction in contact:
 - a. Performing arts director/instructor meetings, gatherings, etc. should be conducted virtually or in open areas where physical distancing may be maintained.
 - b. Fall health and safety meetings with performing arts faculty/directors/instructors will be conducted virtually.
 - c. The all-school concussion meeting should be completed virtually or pre-recorded for students to watch during advisee sessions.

COVID-19 Education

Student artists and directors/instructors will be educated through seasonal meetings, posters, flyers, the school website, and emails on the following:

1. The content of the Mercersburg Academy Return to Performing Arts-Health and Safety Plan.
2. COVID-19 signs and symptoms.
3. Proper ways to limit exposure to COVID-19 (hand washing, cough into your elbow, disinfecting touched surfaces, physical distancing, avoid touching eyes, nose, face, mouth, no spitting, no gum chewing, etc.).
4. No hand shakes/celebrations (high fives, elbow/fist bumps, chest bumps, hugging) etc.
5. Any pertinent COVID-19 information released by state/local governments, NFHS, etc.
6. Directors/instructors will be required to complete the “COVID-19 for Coaches and Administrators” course, provided by [NFHS](#).

Positive Case Plan (students and/or directors/instructors)

What are the signs and symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Symptoms may range from mild to severe. Symptoms may include:

- Fever or chills (100.4° F. or higher)
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

What to do if you are sick?

- If you are sick, stay home or report the Health and Wellness Center immediately. It is essential that all steps are taken to prevent the disease from spreading to others.
- Notify the Health and Wellness Center immediately.
- It will be determined if others who may have been exposed need to be notified, isolated, and/or monitored for signs and symptoms.

What to do is a student-artist, director, or instructor becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms during rehearsal, performance, or during transportation to or from a performance?

- Every effort will be made to isolate the ill individual from others until the student artist or director/instructor can leave the activity.
- The student artist, director, or instructor will be referred to the Health and Wellness Center immediately to be assessed and monitored.

What is the return of student artist, director, or instructor to arts activities following COVID-19 diagnosis?

- The student artist, director, or instructor should have a medical clearance from a physician or health care professional.
- The Health and Wellness Center physician and/or staff must also provide clearance.
- Individuals must be determined to be non-contagious.
- Individuals must be fever-free without fever-reducing medications.
- Individuals must demonstrate Improvement of respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath).
- Individuals must not have vomiting or diarrhea.

Resources and References

The following resources/references assisted the Mercersburg Academy COVID-19 Leadership Team in the development of the Mercersburg Academy Return to Sport-Health and Safety Plan.

- [NFHS: Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Website](#)
- [VASTA](#) and [NAfME](#)
- [DANCE/USA](#)
- Pennsylvania Department of Health Website
 - [Department of Health](#)
 - "Coronavirus Symptoms"
 - "Phased Reopening Plan by Governor Wolf"