



FORDHAM PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Faith, Scholarship, Service

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): Fordham Prep's Fall 2020 Opening

Updated June 30, 2020

The Fordham Prep leadership and faculty have had a robust dialogue with our students and parents throughout the Covid-19 crisis and plan to continue that dialogue with parents. We've prepared this FAQ to respond to those questions that parents of current students have asked about the Prep's plans for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Updates to this FAQ document will be posted on Fordham Prep's website as we receive new information from the State and City of New York regarding the reopening of schools and make decisions in response to these guidelines.

What has Fordham Prep been doing to prepare plans for the 2020-2021 Academic Year?

We're basing our plans on the many lessons we've learned in the past months and on a daily tracking of government research and guidelines. In times of crisis and a public health emergency of this nature, the school is committed to follow the directives of state, local, and national authorities. On March 12, we [announced](#) a suspension of in-person classes due to the coronavirus pandemic. On May 1, we [announced](#) that in-person classes for the remainder of the academic year were canceled following guidance from New York State government officials.

This spring the [Board of Trustees](#) temporarily changed its committee structure to more effectively manage the current crisis. The Board formed special committees to focus on the following areas:

- Health, Safety and the Environment
- Finance, Fundraising, and Enrollment
- Core Academic Mission

Advising Fordham Prep on the *Health, Safety, and Environment Committee* are [Dr. Kirk Sperber](#) who specializes in immunology and public health and [Dr. Ralph Cipriani P '21](#) who is board-certified in infectious diseases.

During the summer months we will continue planning and preparing for the 2020-2021 academic year. While our intention is to open school on our regular schedule, we will follow the directives put in place by local and state government officials. Our primary objective continues to be to deliver an exceptional Catholic Jesuit education while ensuring the safety and health of our community.

2020-2021 ACADEMIC YEAR

How will Fordham Prep make decisions about school this fall?

The Chancellor and Interim Commissioner of the New York State Education Department (NYSED) announced on May 1, 2020 that a statewide task force has been created to work with the Department of Health and Governor Cuomo to guide the reopening of the state's schools.

Fordham Prep's board and administration will follow the guidance of the task force and the NYSED as well as look to advisories from our state accreditation agency, the New York State Association of Independent Schools (NYSAIS).

In addition, in order to share best practices and prepare for the fall, Dr. Petriello and Fr. Devron meet regularly with leaders from secondary schools sponsored by the USA East Province of the Society of Jesus and those within the Archdiocese of New York.

How will Fordham University's decisions about opening in the fall impact Fordham Prep?

Since 1970, the Prep and University have been separate entities, each with its own governing board. The Prep owns its property and has an agreement for students, faculty, and staff to gain access to our campus via University campus entrances. As a residential institution, the University faces different challenges than the Prep. The Prep may not necessarily close its campus to students in the event that the University decides to do so for its students. Fordham Prep's board and administration will follow the guidance of the statewide task force and the NYSED and look to advisories from our state accreditation agency, NYSAIS, as they pertain to independent secondary day schools.

What will school look like in the fall? Will distance learning continue?

We hope to provide students with robust opportunities for in-person instruction and learning, but until an effective vaccine is widely available, we anticipate the need to be flexible and to operate with some form of distance learning. We are studying various scenarios for the fall, including a hybrid model which includes both in-person and distance learning.

This past semester, the dramatic shift to distance learning allowed us to leverage our innovative [One-to-One Computing Program](#) which Fordham Prep adopted several years ago to integrate technology into our coursework. Parents and students have given Fordham Prep's faculty strong, positive feedback in surveys designed to evaluate our [Distance Learning Plan](#). Fordham Prep is committed to support our faculty in migrating teaching and learning to online platforms, and in pivoting between online and in-person educational environments. Our faculty participate in significant professional development in distance learning strategies and methods from outstanding resources including the [Global Online Academy](#).

The first day of classes is usually scheduled for the week after Labor Day. Do you expect any changes to the school calendar or the daily schedule?

We are considering a number of options with regards to the daily academic schedule including different start and end times, and flexible schedules. We have moved up orientation dates for both freshmen and returning students (see below) so as to hold our first day of classes on **Tuesday, September 8.**

These decisions will be made with health and safety as our top priority. We will inform our parents and faculty as soon as we have definitive scheduling information.

Please view our current [“Mini-Calendar”](#) of important dates for the fall. (Updated June 18)

Freshman Orientation (updated June 18)

August 25-27

Each freshman will only have to attend one of those three days based on the schedule of mentor groups. As mentor group assignments are released with schedules in early August, students and parents/guardians in the Class of 2024 will receive more details at that time.

Returning Student Orientation (updated June 18)

September 2-3

A detailed orientation schedule will be provided in early to mid-August.

Assuming in person classes continue, will there be a fall sports season? What about the Prep’s retreat, service, and global education programs and other co-curricular activities, such as the dramatics society and jazz program?

Since Fordham Prep is a member of the [Catholic High School Athletic Association](#) (CHSAA), our athletic programs are governed by its regulations. We expect that the CHSAA will make a decision about the fall sports season after New York State releases its guidance for schools. The availability of all other co-curricular activities and programs will depend on health and safety guidelines, including social distancing.

How will Fordham Prep help students build a sense of community, especially in the absence of in-person classes?

During the current distance learning period a special committee of students, faculty and administrators met each Monday to discuss and plan ways to continue to build community among our students. Some of the ideas from the committee which were implemented included a faculty “Favorites” list for the Easter Break and an [online talent competition](#). We offered Daily Mass in the Prep Chapel which was available to [stream](#) each weekday and virtually hosted the [Junior Convocation Mass](#).

We also asked a number of community members to share their thoughts during this unique time for our popular Five Questions series:

- [Paul Homer](#) - Religious Studies Teacher
- [Analisa Blanco](#) - Science Teacher
- [Tom Gaffney '04](#) - Editor, New York Times
- [Jan-Michael Llanes '09](#) - Dir. of Corporate Giving - National 9/11 Memorial and Museum
- [William Meehan '70](#) - Professor, Stanford University
- [Anthony Palombi](#) - School Counselor
- [John Mercorella '07](#) - Assistant Dean of Students

In addition to the committee’s efforts, many clubs held meetings online and some athletic teams offered online workouts with students coming together over Zoom. The Physical Education department also began offering a weekly Zoom workout for each grade level.

Nowhere were these efforts to engage the community more prevalent and necessary than with the Class of 2020. The class lost the opportunity to celebrate their achievements together so we celebrated with them virtually.

- Each senior was profiled on the Prep's [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) feeds
- The faculty and staff created a [video](#) to send their best wishes the Class of 2020
- The senior [Baccalaureate Mass](#) was held virtually
- The [Senior Awards Ceremony](#) was held virtually
- On the scheduled day of graduation, we celebrated the Class of 2020 with a [video](#) presentation to recognize the graduating class for their achievements over the past four years. Maclane Farrel '20 shared his address with the senior class. We still plan to have a postponed in-person graduation ceremony when state guidelines allow us to gather for such a celebration (tentatively scheduled for July 31)

We will continue to use all resources at our disposal to ensure that students see, hear, speak to, and interact with the Fordham Prep community if we spend time apart in the fall. The Prep's social media feeds ([Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#)) are also an important part of this strategy.

When will you announce the final plan for the fall?

We plan to make an announcement about our final plans shortly after New York State makes public its guidance to schools.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

If the Prep holds in-person classes in some way this fall, how will you keep the student body safe?

We will follow all directives from the state of New York and the CDC regarding the safe and healthy assembly of students.

Assuming that in-person classes occur this fall, what are Fordham Prep's plans for social distancing, keeping its facilities clean, and providing resources for student hygiene?

The CDC has released guidance regarding reopening of schools, workplaces, and public spaces. While this guidance may be updated over the summer months, we expect and are preparing that students and faculty will be required to implement social distancing measures and perhaps wear a mask. The requirement of social distancing may mean that not all students will be present on campus every day, and student cohorts may have to alternate between distance and in-person learning. We are also preparing a comprehensive process to regularly disinfect and clean our facilities as well as to install additional hand-washing stations throughout the building.

How will you ensure that lunch service is safe?

Our food service vendor, Aladdin, is studying options for lunch to maximize the safety, health and nutrition of our students. This includes preparing box lunches for students to eat at a safe distance from each other.

Will Fordham Prep require faculty, staff, and students to get tested for COVID-19 and disclose test results to the administration? What action will Fordham Prep take if a member of the student, faculty, or staff community tests positive while in-person learning is taking place?

The New York state task force will likely address questions of whether schools will require surveillance testing in their communities and provide guidance on how schools should respond if someone reports a positive test result. We will follow that testing and communications guidance to ensure the health and safety of our community.

TRANSPORTATION

My son is planning to take public transportation (e.g., New York City subway or Metro-North) for his commute. What is being done to ensure that riders will be safe? What if Metro-North alters its schedule?

These services operate under the authority of New York State. We expect that the state will need to ensure the safety and health of riders in order for it to recommend that schools and businesses in the New York City metropolitan area reopen. Fordham Prep is preparing to respond as best we can to support and assist students' commuting needs.

TUITION AND NEW FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

What if I am unable to make a tuition payment(s) due to circumstances brought on by the coronavirus pandemic?

We are aware that families will face new financial challenges as a result of this pandemic. Job loss and other economic effects will limit the ability of some families to meet their tuition obligations. We never want to lose any student for reasons of financial hardship, and we are committed to retain every enrolled student. If the current crisis has created new challenges for you, please be assured that we will consider carefully any request for additional tuition assistance. We have provided a mechanism, the Google Form linked below, for those finding it necessary to make such requests

[Coronavirus Pandemic Tuition Assistance Request Form](#)

The most important and necessary step in this process is your timely and transparent communication which will allow us to best serve you. As always, we will treat matters confidentially.

We anticipate Fordham Prep will be required to stretch limited resources, and we are confident that there is more than enough generosity and compassion within the Fordham Prep community to sustain our mission and assist those in need in this time of suffering and uncertainty.

If you have any questions pertaining to this, please email COVIDRelief@fordhamprep.org.

SPIRITUAL NEEDS AND MENTAL HEALTH

We continue to support the spiritual and mental health needs of the Fordham Prep community. To access resources for continuing your spiritual development and service opportunities, please visit this [page](#) on the Fordham Prep website.

Jennifer Kelly, PsyD, Fordham Prep's school psychologist has also created a list of [resources](#) for both parents and current students to use during these challenging times.

We continue to pray for those members of the Fordham Prep community serving on the front lines to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic. We also continue to pray for all those affected by this illness both in our own community and around the world.

PRAYER IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC

Lord Jesus, you came into the world to heal our infirmities and to endure our sufferings.

You went about healing all and bringing comfort to those in pain and need.

We come before you now in this time of illness
asking that you may be the source of our strength in body,
courage in spirit and patience in pain.

May we join ourselves more closely to you on the cross
and in your suffering that through them we may draw our patience and hope.

Assist us and restore us to health
so that united more closely to your family, the Church,
we may give praise and honor to your name.

Amen.

Background

Fordham Prep is an independent school, governed by its own Board of Trustees. The school is sponsored by the USA East Province of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) and is a member of both the [New York State Association of Independent Schools](#) (NYSAIS) and the [Jesuit Schools Network](#) (JSN). School operations are run on a day-to-day basis by the [School Leadership Team](#) (President; Principal; Chief Financial Officer; VP of Mission Integration and Planning, VP of Engagement, Development, and Communications; two Assistant Principals; and the Dean of Students). Our faculty consists of 82 teachers, counselors, and clinicians across seven academic departments and our school counseling department.