March 12, 2020

Dear Parents,

I am writing to update you on the coronavirus situation as it pertains to Norfolk Academy. We have learned today that, during spring break, an upper school family with only one child at Norfolk Academy was possibly exposed to a person who has since been diagnosed with the coronavirus. That family is currently under self-quarantine and all family members have been tested for the virus in spite of the fact that they have exhibited no symptoms; test results are expected back this weekend. We have been in close communication with local medical experts and the Virginia Department of Health regarding this case, and although the risk is considered low for faculty and students, we have decided to close school tomorrow, Friday, March 13, and Monday, March 16, in order to thoroughly clean and disinfect the campus and to provide for faculty training on Monday in anticipation of moving to remote instruction. This decision, not easily reached, we believe is squarely in the best interest of our students, families, and faculty and also recognizes our institutional responsibility and obligation to the region.

Please note that all after-school activities are canceled beginning this afternoon at 3:15. We will continue to provide after-care until 5:00 p.m. today, but there will be no late (5:40) buses. Should we eventually make the decision to suspend onsite school operations for a longer period of time, we want our Bulldogs to continue to progress in their studies -- and for us to maintain connections among teachers and students. All students have been informed to take all instructional materials home with them today.

We are working on distance learning processes and taking an inventory of technology resources in order to support these goals. Our faculty, with your support and understanding, will endeavor to continue instruction and learning through digital tools and in age-appropriate ways. For middle and upper school students, our Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) will be the spine of this digital, online instruction. The lower school faculty is exploring options for content delivery that will be age-appropriate for those grades. We will be providing more information about this potential migration to online/digital platforms in the coming days. We will be asking a great deal of our faculty, and they will need your support, understanding, and patience.

As we assess distance learning, we are asking for your help in preparing to meet the needs of every student. If your child faces significant hurdles in using technology from home, such as lack of a device (tablet, laptop, or desktop computer), or lack of ability to connect to the internet (whether Wi-Fi or wired connectivity), please let us know immediately. You can simply send an email to your child’s Division Director, and we will reach out to you about possible solutions.

We will continue to send updates so that you feel apprised of developments as conditions evolve. Anytime we are dealing with an unknown, the initial reaction can be one of fear or panic, but we must look at the credible risks posed to us in our day-to-day life and compare this situation to any
other risks – driving, athletics, flying, or other communicable illnesses such as the flu. In that context, this situation, although new, is still less of a risk than many elements present in our normal lives. We believe we have a good plan in place for the continuation of your children’s education regardless of location or delivery method, and my simple request of you is to remain positive, flexible, and supportive – an important and reassuring example for children. I am profoundly appreciative of our unity as a Bulldog Family during this challenging period.

Yours sincerely,

Dennis Manning
Headmaster