July 13, 2020

Dear Norfolk Academy Parents,

As the summer marches on and we learn more about the state’s plans for reopening schools in the fall, our own Reopening Task Force has been hard at work developing procedures, designing spaces, and consulting our network of external experts as we prepare to welcome all of our students back to campus for daily instruction beginning August 26th. Much work still lies ahead, but I want to maintain these regular communications with you in order to increase your comfort level and confidence in our preparation for a return to campus.

I also want to take this opportunity to get your feedback as we make important plans and consider logistical questions. I would ask that you complete this survey within the next few days but not later than Monday, July 20 – it should take less than five minutes of your time. If possible, please limit responses to one per household. Also, please understand that by responding to this survey you are not committing yourself to signing up for bus service, sending lunch with your child, or anything else; we will use this survey for informational purposes only.

I do have several updates on campus changes we’re making and policies that we are establishing in preparation for the school year. Please remember that these are based on current knowledge and best practice, but may change before we begin classes. For now, though, we have developed the following plans:

- All students will be required to wear cloth face coverings as recommended by the Virginia Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control. Faculty and staff will also be masked, although some faculty may choose to wear clear face shields while teaching so that students can better see their facial expressions and enunciation. Masks will be worn at all times except for limited circumstances, such as when eating or in outdoor settings under supervision.

- We intend to offer morning and afternoon bus service covering a geographic area similar to the area served in past years. Drivers will be checked daily for fever and other Covid symptoms, and the buses will be cleaned and sanitized twice daily. The driver and all riders will be required to wear masks at all times. Based on the poll results, we will pursue measures to maximize physical distancing on the buses.

- Air filtration and the airborne transmission of the coronavirus have been in the headlines recently. We will encourage the opening of windows in classrooms to the extent possible in order to maximize airflow. We have also upgraded all of our HVAC units to use filters with a MERV (Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value) rating of 13. This is the highest MERV rating for our units, and these filters are intended to trap the vast majority of airborne particles on the first pass. These air filtration methods, coupled with appropriate mask usage and social distancing, are sound mitigation strategies.

- On July 7th, the state issued new school-opening guidelines permitting desk spacing as close as three feet, as long as students remain masked. To the maximum extent possible, we are rearranging our classrooms to ensure six feet of separation between all student desks. In some cases (such as science laboratory spaces) we are limited by the room and number of students and may need to place desks less than six feet apart.
• Our food service provider, Meriwether Godsey, will prepare boxed or bagged lunches, but students may bring their own prepared lunches. Please note that we will not be able to provide for the refrigeration or heating of student lunches. Since the Bulldog Bookstore will be extremely limited in its capacity, we will allow students to bring their own snacks to school as well. If you do choose to send food with your child, please make sure that it is appropriately packaged and easy for your child to unpack and eat while sitting at a desk. We are unable to use our refectory for large-scale lunch service, so we anticipate that lunches will be eaten at desks in classrooms or in a physically distanced arrangement outdoors.

• Finally, we are considering loosening our dress code requirements since we will not be able to use locker rooms for changing into athletic attire for physical education or any permitted team workouts. We haven’t finalized those adjustments but will let you know soon, as we realize that it will affect your back-to-school shopping.

I will continue these updates as the summer progresses, and we receive more information from the state and from our healthcare partners. If you have urgent questions or inquiries specific to your child, please feel free to contact division directors. We remain firm in our conviction that reopening school on campus is the best approach for the fall, as we work to continue our mission of educating and developing your children in a safe and welcoming community. Thank you, again, for your support and your trust.

Sincerely,

Dennis G. Manning
Headmaster