Dear Norfolk Academy Parents,

Faculty have returned to campus in recent days for faculty meetings to launch the 2020-21 academic year, and their arrival has brought a fresh surge of energy around campus, even after months of preparation this summer. While nothing in our launch feels normal, with masks and temperature checks as a requirement for stepping inside the doors, we know that is as it must be; we continue to do everything possible to ensure an operating environment at our school that puts health and safety at the forefront. We continue to investigate best practices, and as physicians and researchers gain new insights about COVID-19, we are remaining flexible, prepared to modify our plans. We have a sense of what I would call “earned” optimism, achieved through the diligence of our efforts, that we will be able to offer a superb learning experience for our students, whether they are on campus or learning from home. The contents of this email speak directly to the strength of our home-school partnership, essential for achieving sustained success in reopening the campus and remaining open throughout the fall.

Decision Tree for COVID-19 Evaluation

This graphic summarizes the decision-making plan related to individuals in the school community who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms. It is essentially two interrelated flow charts; one deals with home evaluation, which falls to each individual family, and the second chart involves our school’s approach to students who begin to feel ill at school. We are also providing a more detailed statement to provide further context about decision-making related to COVID-19 cases, including guidelines for quarantining and isolation for households with a positive case.

A few key points to highlight:

- Students must be evaluated at home every day for other possible COVID-19 symptoms (see an updated list, contained in the graphic, from the CDC); younger students must be evaluated by parents and older students should get in the habit of self-evaluation. We will send out emails to remind you of the requirement to screen for COVID-19 symptoms.
- No one, whether student or faculty, may come to school if he or she has experienced a fever of 100.4°F or higher or has vomited within the previous 24 hours.
- Anyone who has experienced three or more of the listed symptoms must be seen by a physician and bring a note to the divisional office or department director expressing permission to return to school or work. If your child’s physician orders a COVID-19 test, you are asked to contact the clinic to arrange for a school-provided test. School-provided tests are free to families and may result in a quicker turnaround than outside tests.
- All people entering the school buildings will be scanned for high temperatures. Any person with a scan of 100.4°F or higher will be sent to the clinic for further evaluation. If the clinic confirms the high temperature, that student’s parents will be called to bring the student home; if the student is a member of a carpool, all fellow riders will also need to be taken home.
- If a student or employee experiences any of the above symptoms at school, he or she must report to the clinic for further evaluation.

We are not able to publish a definitive grid outlining conditions under which we would move an entire classroom, grade level, or division to remote learning since there are too many factors to consider in each circumstance. Should we see positive test results among students or staff, we will consult immediately with
our expert health consultants and the Virginia Department of Health to determine the best course of action given the concentration of positive cases, infection and spread rates in the local community, and other metrics. Our goal, of course, is to sustain on-campus instruction and activity, but we must be prepared for all scenarios and shifts in operating conditions.

Acknowledgment of Community Responsibility

We are requiring parents to sign a statement that acknowledges our shared commitment to protecting members of our school community. This acknowledgment can be accessed by logging into the school’s website; you will see a banner at the top of the page with instructions for retrieving the acknowledgment forms, one for each child enrolled at the school.

I would ask that you read through this acknowledgment carefully, paying close attention to each item. We recognize that sacrifices and, in some cases, difficult choices to abstain from certain activities, are mandated as part of the acknowledgment. Please give special consideration to the following: Families who have participated in any high-risk activity or gathering, where protocols for physical distancing and mask-wearing are not followed, should switch to distance learning and remain home for at least two weeks. We recognize the challenge inherent in this request, but we also know that such restrictions are our best chance to re-open the campus successfully and sustain our in-person learning.

Testing

For each wave of students returning to campus, parents will receive an email about a week in advance of the testing with testing procedures and forms to schedule an appointment and for release of testing information to the school. (Parents of students in Grades 1-3 were sent the email on Friday.) That email includes the survey for parents to express a final decision for how your child/children will begin the school year, whether in-person or as a distance learner.

As a reminder, the testing schedule is as follows:

- Grades 1 - 3, testing Aug. 28
- Grades 4 - 6, testing Sept. 4
- Grades 7 - 9, testing Sept. 11
- Grades 10 - 12, testing Sept. 18

I recognize that this email and others to come will be dense with information and serious in tone. While that is necessary, I do not want to suggest that the burden of these times is detracting one iota from the tremendous joy and excitement we all feel at the prospect of reuniting with your children and commencing learning. Our faculty are inspired and invigorated by the prospect of beginning anew, and their anticipation is evident in all that is happening around campus, from technology training to classroom preparation. We are prepared and eager to start. Stay Bulldog Strong!

Yours sincerely,

Dennis G. Manning
Headmaster