

Dear Cary Christian School Families,

I want to begin by thanking you for the encouraging replies so many of you sent over the last few days and weeks. This has been a hard time for our staff and for our community. I will do my best to convey to each of them your appreciation for what they are doing. It is a joy to be part of a team which simply does not know how to quit. They love your children and our school. They prove each day they have accepted the charge to “work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,” by exhibiting “a next right thing” attitude.

I also want to thank you for the questions you sent to us requesting clarification on various aspects of our recent **Focus on the Future** communications. The purpose of this letter is to address your questions and concerns.

1. Can we have clarification on the possible use of masks?

At this point, predicting what will be expected by the CDC and best practices is difficult. So, much is in flux. In a school, changes like this create challenges. Some children may feel unsafe or frightened. Others will see it as an opportunity to create disruptions. Many children will think it's *superhero cool!* Teachers will be ready to comfort those who need comforting and to hold accountable those who need guidance. I suspect, if masks are required, within a few days, it will seem normal to most children. Of course, August is a long time away. If we are headed in that direction, most students will be accustomed to the expectation by then.

2. If a student is not in the facility but participating via a remote learning protocol due to illness or extenuating circumstances, will they be counted absent?

We monitor attendance to strengthen our partnership with parents and our relationships with students. It is a way to observe trends, to hold students accountable, and to protect the student from others and themselves. We count students absent for three reasons:

- To monitor why a child is absent: We need to keep up with why students are absent. If a trend is noticeable, we want to respond promptly and appropriately to an increase in contagious diseases.
- To determine due dates: If a child is absent, they are given extra time to turn in their assignments, as it states in the Parent Student Handbook. Ultimately this will be a conversation between teachers and students and teachers and parents.
- To determine if a student has permission to be off campus: If a child is absent, we notify parents. Occasionally, this notification surprises a parent. The notification could be an alert that a child is in danger. Or, it could mean that a student just decided to take a day off from school.

Unless approved by the Headmaster, children who are not present at school will be counted absent. We have learned a lot about remote learning during our current circumstances. This



will create new options to relieve the stress of missing school due to illness. Students who may have previously been tempted to come to school with fevers or other symptoms of illnesses, may now take advantage of our remote learning platforms.

3. If we begin to operate from Scenario #2, what off-site location(s) will be used? Would parents know in advance location plans?

The purpose of yesterday's email was to give you an outline of our plans so parents can see the direction in which we are heading. Over the summer, we will finalize our plans and secure agreements with local churches or other available facilities. This will be familiar to many of you who were part of the school in the early days. I must admit, God's providence always amazes me - Our 25th year of service may have some subtle reminders of our 1st year. As plans are finalized, we will notify parents and provide additional details on how we plan to operate. We will focus on the safety of each child. We are going to work intentionally and strategically to make sure that COVID-19 does not interrupt our year.

4. What do you mean by increasing staff to handle a "Social Distancing Scenario"?

First, we do intend to increase staff for the whole year. It was always our plan to look for strategic ways to decrease the teacher to student ratio. A great example is the new Seminar Class. Several of the class meetings will be spent in Socratic Dialogue, 1 teacher and 15 students. We had several other ideas that are part of our strategic plan. COVID-19 seems like a great opportunity to implement many of these ideas.

We also have a strong group of teacher assistants who are more than capable of leading a class through *guided learning*. Teachers can provide direct instruction, and the assistants can oversee small groups of students in guided learning activities.

Finally, before school begins, we will contract teachers who will serve both as substitute teachers or as expansion teachers, if we must move to a social distancing scenario.

5. What will sports, band, choir, and theatre, etc. look like in the fall?

Yesterday, Dr. Fauci said that he was hopeful that Major League Baseball would resume soon, and the Premier (soccer) League is looking at ways to resume their season, as well. We are committed to figuring out ways for a safe return to sports this summer and fall. I would encourage students to stay in shape and to use this time to improve individual skills.

Assuming we are in Scenario #1, we will assess options for resuming band, choir, theatre, and other group activities.



6. How are the teachers doing?

From Kelly Gardner (Lower School Assistant Academic Dean): The teachers are busy! We have adjusted to remote learning and navigated the learning curve that came with this new way of doing things. The challenge that remains is finding a quiet place around our homes to record videos. Many of us are balancing the time between guiding our own kids' schoolwork, answering questions from our classes, grading and giving feedback on returned work, and continuing to adapt and plan curriculum that engages our students. It has been an emotional time for the teachers as we are missing the face-to-face interactions with our students and the fun events that make 4th quarter special. We would much rather be doing what we love to do in our classrooms with the students that we love!

From Darla McDonald (Upper School Assistant Academic Dean): Teachers are doing well, but the transition from the classroom to remote learning has been a challenging one. Teaching to a room full of students using Socratic questioning is quite different from recording oneself narrating a PowerPoint lecture. But, nevertheless, teachers are continuing to provide our students with their discipline-specific content, while engaging student minds through analysis and critical-thinking activities. This time of remote learning has given our teachers the opportunity to learn new skills and a different modality of teaching. Much of what we have learned through this time we will use in the future to perhaps meet the needs of students when they are absent from class or to meet the needs of our school if we are required to return to a time of a hybrid or remote learning model.

7. Was it right to say that “a second wave of COVID-19 is coming?” Shouldn't we leave room for God to intervene?

I stand corrected. We do not know what God intends for the fall and each of us should pray that “His will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.” I would say with confidence that people will not get sick with COVID-19 in Heaven. So, as one staff member urged: “We should all pray that God would place His angels around our campus and keep Coronavirus out.”

God has been good to our little school. Over the last 24 years, He has guided us and strengthened us. God has prepared us for this moment. We are prepared to navigate this year intentionally and strategically. I also want to thank you for your prayers and for sharing our story with your friends. Even in the middle of “Shelter in Place,” our phone is ringing. We are receiving applications and have waiting lists in many classes. So, take some time to thank God for His kindness to our school.

In Christ,
Robbie Hinton

