

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

Three Objectives in Three Scenarios in the Year of Covid-19

THREE OBJECTIVES

As I said in yesterday's email, between now and August, we are going to transform our campus and our classrooms to prepare for a predicted second wave of COVID-19. I want to say with clarity, I expect to be in school in August. Based on conversations with health professionals, other schools, and individuals with government contacts, we are preparing to spend the year in a posture that, for the children, will soon feel very normal.

In this email, I would like to begin describing the changes necessitated by this novel virus as we strive to meet our objectives this coming school year. **While we cannot remove all the dangers of the Coronavirus, or of life for that matter, we can mitigate these threats.**

If you read between the lines and are good with numbers, you will quickly realize that the changes we are making are expensive. The good news is that our goal all along was to improve the teacher to student ratio, to improve our use of technology, and to improve professional protocols around cleaning and health. If you understand the nature of project planning, you will realize that these objectives create some daunting expectations for our team. I understand that as a leader, you have to focus on what is proximate and make changes only as quickly as an organization can handle. I have spoken with each individual member of our administrative team. They are energized by the opportunity to accelerate our plans to serve you better.

Each decision we are making is about increasing our strategic Focus on the Future and the expectation that we will execute from a shared strategy:

By focusing our efforts on developing the habits of the mind in a way that develops the habits of the soul to the end that each student develops a heart for God and gains the mind of Christ, we will consistently nurture students and graduates who possess a goodness that reveals itself in strength and freedom and a wisdom that unveils itself in curiosity, creativity, and innovation.

Again, our goal for 2020-2021 remains the same: to create a strategic alignment of all our efforts toward building a strong teacher-student relationship and a well-defined teacher-parent partnership.

As a classical and Christian school, we believe that to meet our goal, there are three objectives that must be present in the three scenarios we imagine for Cary Christian School next year.

- **Forming Habits of the Mind:** We are practicing respect, responsibility, and thoughtfulness in our classrooms.
- **Forming Habits of the Soul:** We are infusing our school culture intentionally, strategically, and sacramentally with a heart for God and the mind of Christ.
- **Forming Relationships:** These habits are formed in relationships where teachers are seeking to know their students and to be known by their students. We will engage our students and pursue them through Socratic conversations that magnify the meaning and purpose of all we do.



The purpose of our Focus on the Future goal for 2020-2021 is to create a strategic alignment of all our efforts toward building a strong teacher-student relationship and a well-defined teacher-parent partnership. Our teachers, administrators, staff, and board have been working extremely hard all year to prepare our school for 2020-21 and the future. It was my privilege to present these plans to the board in February for approval. Before we look at those specific improvements, it seems wise to demonstrate our readiness to execute with excellence this year.

THREE SCENARIOS

As mentioned above, based on conversations with health professionals, other schools, and individuals with government contacts, we are preparing to spend the year in a posture that, for the children, will soon feel very normal. Nevertheless, we will be prepared to execute with strength and kindness in each of the three scenarios.

Using the [CDC School Decision Tree](#) as a guide, we are preparing for three different operating scenarios.

SCENARIO #1: READY AND ALERT

Once testing and contact tracing procedures are in place, the country will be ready to operate in a scenario that will, for the most part, simply feel more intentional and more strategic. We should note that while we are prepared for potential increases in the spread of the virus, we expect that we will be in Scenario #1 for most of the year. We are investing heavily in cleaning protocols and improvements to facilities. **We intend to be ready and alert.**

PRACTICING HEALTHY HABITS

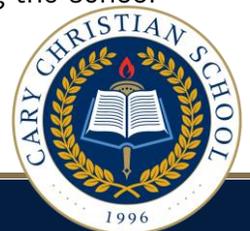
The first change students will notice is an increase in handwashing, hand sanitizing, and reminders to cover their mouths appropriately when they sneeze or cough. Teachers will diligently educate students on ways to increase health and immunity. Parents will be reminded to watch for symptoms of any contagious disease, especially COVID-19. We have transformed the downstairs conference room into a private health office where students, if exhibiting flu/virus like symptoms, will be isolated until they can be picked up by parents.

MANAGING ABSENCES

We will be ready for absences. When a student cannot attend school, remote learning has taught us several strategies to help students stay caught up or to catch-up. We will have plans to support students who cannot attend school because they have a compromised immune system or have unavoidable contact with someone who has a compromised immune system.

KEEPING OUR CAMPUS CLEAN

Parents should notice the heightened cleaning protocols. We have a team that is hard at work studying “best practices” and learning CDC guidelines to develop clear protocols around keeping the school



clean, disinfected, and sanitary. We will continue to have regular conversations with our cleaning suppliers and cleaning company to ensure best practices for the health and safety of your children. They are studying HVAC requirements and looking into new products that might help prevent the spread of the virus.

CREATING SPACE

Everyone should notice a few changes to our facilities as we seek to spread classes to different spaces around the campus. Some of these may be temporary facilities and others may be permanent improvements that were part of long-term plans. We think we can create at least 6 extra classrooms that are not on one of the four hallways. This should reduce the number of students on each hall. Thus, some of the hallway traffic will be reduced. As you will see in “The Cary Christian School Block Schedule” document (which you also will receive today), we are transitioning to a block schedule in our Rhetoric School. One advantage of the block schedule is that students will have fewer transitions, and therefore, be in the halls less.

FINDING SOLUTIONS – INSIGHTS...

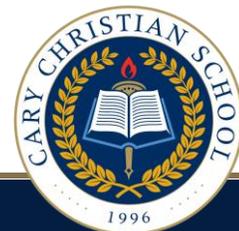
For those of you who are interested, let me offer a little more information. Most of us are aware that we need to decrease the number of students in the Upper School hallways. Our Phonics teachers have asked for space and support to offer more individualized reading support. We received a request from the Grammar teachers for a Science teacher who could focus on improving our 3rd-5th grade curriculum and allow teachers to increase focus on improving the rest of the curriculum. Some of you were involved in conversations back in March discussing moving classes off the Upper School Halls and creating strategic space for our Lower School. We were looking for feedback to see if parents thought these initiatives met the goals of “Called to Cultivate,” our current strategic plan. The idea was to develop plans that would become actionable in the next 3-5 years. Last night, the board began a discussion about the idea of trying to fulfil these requests as solutions to the problems of COVID-19. We will meet the demands of COVID-19. Our goal is to meet them in a way that serves our students now and in the future.

PURSUING STUDENTS

Hopefully, everyone will notice increases to our strategic pursuit of each student.

- With financial and health concerns on everyone’s mind, staff will receive training on teen mental health, empathy building, listening skills, and conflict resolution.
- We will seek to implement *community building* activities while keeping the safety of our students as a priority. We are still planning to have the Senior Service Practicum and we are adding a Rhetoric School Retreat. We are optimistic we will have some field trips. Each grade will have a focused class and grade relationship-building activity.

While we are moving through this period of history, there will be a few unique expectations. There will be protocols for the wearing of masks and best practices for lunch. Even though we are spreading students out across the campus, Upper School students should expect that we will stagger each classroom’s exit into the hallway. At this point, it is not possible to know if these protocols will be necessary for the whole year or simply during periods when the spread of the virus is increasing in the community. We do believe, however, that these improvements to protocols, increases in faculty, and additional classrooms will provide us with a safe and well-ordered environment.



Again, these changes should simply feel reasonable, responsible, intentional, and strategic. These changes will complement our long-term plans to ensure the safety of your child and achieve an extraordinary outcome.

SCENARIO #2: SOCIAL DISTANCING

If the government officials and health experts believe that the rate of spread exceeds “moderate,” we should expect that they will shift the country into a state of “containment.” At that time, social distancing protocols will be put into place. Currently, a team is working on plans that would allow us to reduce class sizes so that we could space students 6 feet apart. We are looking at several scenarios that may involve temporary classes or even using spaces in local churches. We are preparing for faculty rotations and adding staff. At this point, we have two feasible plans that would allow us to have school on campus (or temporary local sites), even if the virus begins to spread again. Over the summer, we will continue to develop these plans and choose the best one.

If wisdom dictates that we should operate from a social distancing platform, we are confident that operate with excellence. This scenario creates a class size of 12 students for every teacher. Each student should feel pursued and safe.

NOTE: Our community, like most communities, has a diversity of families with a diversity of needs. It is our responsibility to use our skills and capacity to offer adequate support for our families who may not be able to stay home with children or to guide their child’s learning. If for some reason, the school cannot operate as normal, such as during a social distancing scenario, the school will have contingency plans to provide academic oversight for all K-8 students for all normal school hours.

SCENARIO #3: REMOTE LEARNING

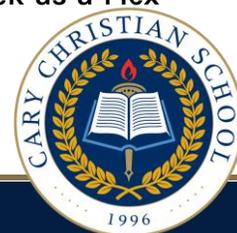
If the government officials and health experts believe that the rate of spread is nearing “substantial” they will most likely declare a state of emergency and mandate “Shelter in Place.” If this happens, we will return to remote learning. While we have proven this can work, we know we can do it better. A team will take some time this summer to survey our community and to improve our plans and our technology in case we are required to return to remote learning.

NOTE: TECHNOLOGY READINESS

Adventures like this spring, while challenging, are perfect opportunities to learn new skills and to make operational improvements. Thus, as we explained in Scenario #1, we will have plans to support students who cannot attend school because they have a compromised immune system or have unavoidable contact with someone who has a compromised immune system. As we serve these families over the year, it will improve our ability to serve all families if we need to return to remote learning. This does, however, create an expectation that all families make it a priority to have your personal technology capacity ready.

NOTE: FLEX WEEKS

It is reasonable that we will be able to predict when the peaks will occur. If epidemiologists predict a wave in the fall, we will move the second week of fall break to the expected date. If epidemiologists predict a wave in the winter, we will move the second week of spring break to the expected date. The second week of fall break and the second week of spring break are being reserved as Flex Weeks. **The plan is to have the first week of the breaks as scheduled and reserve the second week as a Flex**



Week to move to accommodate peaks, if necessary. We recommend that you do not make plans during for the second week of the breaks.

EXPECTATIONS

It is not my expectation that we will spend the year moving between these scenarios. Remember, the primary reason for the implementation of “Shelter in Place” was because of the expectation that our healthcare infrastructure would be overloaded. The reason we are sheltering in place now is to make sure the systems are ready to reopen. It is reasonable to expect that the number of ventilators and the amount of Personal Protective Equipment should be increased before the next COVID-19 wave crests.

As the picture of what the fall will look like develops, we will continue to update you on our plans. You can expect a final plan to be emailed on July 15th. Please pray with us, as we prepare the plans to continue providing *an excellent classical education founded upon a biblical worldview* for your children at Cary Christian School.

Robbie Hinton
Headmaster

