



Dear Upper School Students and Families,

I hope this update finds you healthy and well. In this unprecedented time of change in our society, I have been so inspired by the way our students and faculty alike have risen to the occasion to do what is their “best work” under the circumstances. As we move through many phases of change, and find rhythms in our adjustment, it is so important to take care of our mental and emotional health.

In my own house, we continue to tweak the “structures” we have some control over. Whether that be modifying the spaces we have to work and be on “live time” classes or meetings, or increasing the “playbook” of family meal options or frequency of family bike-rides, these allow us to be empowered in a time when there is little control. Most recently, we’ve just had a lot of fun learning poker games together at night, where the M&M’s are “\$1”, Skittles are “\$5”, and the coveted Gummy Worms are “\$10”!

I want to thank the students for the feedback you continue to share with your teachers, advisors and sometimes with me directly. This information, coupled with the data we received from the recent parent survey, have helped inform the continued evolution of our distance learning program. Our recently confirmed spring grading policy, ongoing tweaks to work volume and live-time class balance, and supports for students in terms of academic progress and mental health, are all examples of items that have been adjusted given feedback. As Matthew shared in a recent letter to families, we are planning opportunities in the coming weeks for families to join webinar-style live Zoom calls with me and other staff to learn about programs and ask questions.

Recently, and in consultation with the academic leadership team of the Upper School, we have decided to cancel final exams for all students this spring. Traditionally, we would have final exams in solely the math and language disciplines; under the current circumstances these assessments would not meet the goals they intend. In place of these cumulative experiences, department heads and faculty will be working on assessments throughout the spring that gauge skill and content development going into the next school year. We have also decided to close our next interim period this Friday, April 24. Faculty will gather snapshot category and course grades (not recorded) over that following week and that data will be shared with you all early in the week of May 4. Even though our overarching grade system is “Pass / Not Pass” for the spring, feedback on academic growth is critical for student development. To facilitate the grading and organization required, we will move the previously postponed “Upper School Faculty Work Day” to Friday May 1. This will be a day with no synchronous classes, and hopefully provide students a good opportunity to catch-up on some work at their own pace.

Our seniors have been having a uniquely difficult time as our distance from campus has impacted so significantly the traditional events of their spring. We have been working as a school, along with Matthew, to get creative with ways we can sustain any events for the class. Just after spring break, seniors took their traditional “skip day” as a group. Our student and staff yearbook team have completed that important project and I look forward to sharing more about distribution plans as soon as possible. Just today, members of our faculty and staff began delivering yard signs to Key seniors’ homes, as a way to celebrate and support them! We are also developing a modified and virtual “senior projects” plan for the close of the academic year so students can engage in that traditional capstone experience. We hope that these, and other, initiatives will help mitigate the impact the students are experiencing, but acknowledge the heavy toll exacted on these students.

The opportunities I have to connect with our students are incredibly important to me. A sustaining highlight has been gathering with our school’s Student Forum each Tuesday at lunch since our time away from campus began. This group is made of elected representatives from across all four grades in our Upper School, and they have been wonderful in focusing on two main initiatives: how can Key help the surrounding Annapolis community and what events can they host to increase the ability for students to connect while away from each

other. This has led to a few Upper School video game tournaments open to all students, ideas about how to bring back the activities program in a more full sense, the sharing of Annapolis community support opportunities with the student body, and the like. As has always been the case, our students are the most creative, resilient, hard-working, thoughtful, and kind young women and men I have ever encountered. Many things have changed recently, but that foundational essence of our students, your children, is intact.

Please let me know if you have any questions, and I look forward to our continued partnership as we move through this challenging time together.

Regards,
Brian