

Dear Parents:

Every business and institution faces significant challenges confronting problems stemming from the Covid pandemic. Valwood is no exception, and we thank you for your support through the past spring. As we look to the future, the Administration, faculty/staff and Board of Trustees have spent the last sixty days formulating plans and options to insure that Valwood offers the best possible learning experience for our students. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the general outline guiding us as we prepare for the 2020-21 school year and beyond. Please note that the one predictable characteristic of this pandemic has been its unpredictability, and, hence, these plans cannot be chiseled in stone. Rather, these guidelines are intended to provide us with maximum flexibility and nimbleness as we continue to educate your children.

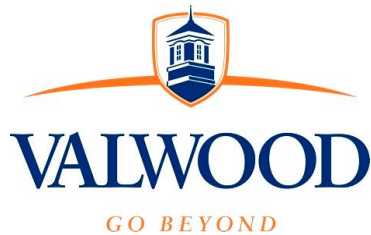
Our preference for the coming year is that we operate on-campus in a "business as usual" manner, and that is our intention as of today. However, we may encounter circumstances that force us to depart from that approach in whole or in part. We can foresee situations in which we shutter all or parts of our physical campus for various intervals. We can foresee conditions during which some families are comfortable with having children on campus but others are not. Our over-arching ambition is to minimize any meaningful disruption to the teaching process by delivering seamless instruction to our students.

To realize this ambition we are adopting a two-pronged approach. The first prong is to keep the campus as safe as possible through enhanced hygiene measures. The second prong is to be thoroughly prepared to deliver the best distance learning processes that are used in conjunction with on-campus instruction or that can stand alone if necessity so dictates.

As constantly changing updates from the CDC and other health agencies show, the best measures for optimal hygienic practice in response to Covid-19 is constantly in flux. As more about the virus becomes scientifically certain we will doubtless adjust certain practices. At this time we anticipate hiring additional custodial staff to insure that the campus is as clean and sterile as possible. We anticipate using infra-red touch free thermometers to take each student's temperature each morning before they enter any buildings. Care will be taken to make sure that students have a clean, safe space that belongs to them. Whenever practicable, teachers will rotate to different classrooms rather than classes rotating to different classrooms. We will minimize the size and number of "interactive" working groups. Appropriate use of personal protection equipment will be mandated. The foregoing is by no means an exhaustive listing of all of the enhanced hygiene measures we plan to implement, but is meant to be representative of a common-sense approach to keeping everyone healthy so that the whole school can remain open at all times.

The second prong of our planning for next year centers around the creation of a new position on campus, the Director of Technology and Distance Learning. The creation of this position was under consideration even before the pandemic struck as the administration has recognized that distance learning is increasingly used in the course of normal instruction by colleges and universities. As a college prep school, it therefore behooves us to prepare our students for this type of instruction. We proudly announce that we have hired Jessica Warren to tackle this job. Many of you know Ms. Warren as a current faculty member and Valwood parent. She has been working with the Technology and Distance Learning Committee to prepare for any number of eventualities during the upcoming year.

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Her immediate responsibilities include developing an online Portal for the school which will be in use (and useful) regardless of how instruction is taking place. The Portal will provide faculty, students and parents a simple to use, central online facility through which all assignments pass back and forth. Parents will be able to review their students' progress, receive helpful hints and information, deadlines, etc. She has immediately embarked on assisting faculty with functional on-line lesson plans which can be utilized during either partial or full campus shut downs. (As noted above, we can envision circumstances in which some parents may not want their children to be physically present on campus. Ms. Warren is integrating systems and technologies which will allow teachers to deliver their lessons to real and virtual classrooms simultaneously.) Because there exist differing levels of technology fluency among our faculty, Ms. Warren is developing customized training/education strategies for all teachers. She will serve as the liaison on technology matters between administrators, faculty, service technicians and Trustees.

In other words, we are preparing for the following scenarios and expect to be able to shift back and forth between them with the flip of a switch: full on-campus operations; delayed opening; hybrid in-class and remote instruction; and, fully remote instruction. We are confident that we will be the most nimble school around, and will not be bound by the one-size-fits-all approach of other area schools.

We plan to offer voluntary remedial study during the week preceding the official start of the school year. This instruction will be offered in the mornings only, and we will have more information coming soon. But, you may wish to keep this in mind as you plan summer travels.

Again, as the summer progresses and we learn more about the Covid-19 and the pandemic, we will be refining our plans and procedures. Our preparedness will insure that we are able to deliver the best education available, and we thank you in advance for your confidence.

Sincerely

John L. Davis, Sr.
Head of School