

August 7, 2020

Dear Families:

My focus over the last eight weeks has been to lead the planning for a safe and healthy full in-person reopening with an option for families who have the resources to support distance learning at home. Teachers, administrators and support staff from the lower, middle and upper schools continue to work together in planning for in-person and distance learning. We do not know yet which model we will be operating for the start of school but **we are asking for you at this time to make a definitive decision about in-person or distance learning.**

In a recent preference survey in which 71% of Paul Cuffee School parents responded, 42% stated that they prefer distance learning and 58% stated that they prefer in-person learning. **At this time I am asking you to choose in-person or distance learning and if choosing distance learning to commit to distance learning for the full trimester** (or quarter for the upper school). The survey can be found here <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/17skryELMEBycgsfHZFvP1QeQOjpHMS4c5IcjS7vCq5c/edit?t=5f2da9a8> and is due Thursday, August 13.

In this letter I will attempt to make clear the expectations for in-person learning and distance learning. Also, we are holding question and answer sessions for parents and you are encouraged to attend the next session, being held Wednesday, August 12 at 5:00 pm. There are still a lot of unanswered questions, but the following details should help you to make an informed decision.

Should my child return to school? What will in-person learning look like?

Most students learn better in school. A safe and healthy reopening is our top priority because we just don't want anyone in our community to get sick. If the Rhode Island Department of Health determines that it is safe for Paul Cuffee School to open for in-person learning then you can be confident that the School will do everything it can to mitigate your child's risk for exposure to the coronavirus, including:

- Setting expectations that students will wear masks while indoors (and outdoors if in close proximity to others)
- Setting expectations for social distancing in classrooms, common areas, and school buses
- Organizing students into stable groups, meaning that students will remain with the same students all day in the same location except for outdoor time, which we will increase in frequency and provide close monitoring in order to maintain social distances
- Scheduling minute to minute transitions in order to prevent crowding in common areas
- Frequently cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces and adding maintenance personnel during the school day and after school hours
- Making hand sanitizer and hand washing with soap available in every classroom

- Maximizing fresh air flow in classrooms to reduce the spread of aerosolized particles
- Installing plexiglass in offices, student service areas, and classrooms where social distancing under six feet is not possible or is impractical
- Implementing a Rapid Response to COVID-19 protocol, which follows Rhode Island Department of Health guidance for closing stable groups if there is a confirmed positive case of COVID-19
- Requiring staff and parents of students to complete a COVID-19 Self-Attestation form every school day
- Requiring parents and caregivers to keep children at home if sick or showing COVID-19 symptoms
- Sending students and staff home if they show any symptoms of COVID-19 and requiring a COVID-19 test or letter from medical professional allowing the student or staff to return to school
- Requiring parents and caregivers to pick students up at school within one hour of being contacted by the school nurse if sick or showing COVID-19 symptoms
- Requiring parents and caregivers to switch to distance learning if the Rhode Island Department of Health decides to close in-person learning for a classroom or grade level

Should my child stay home? What will distance learning look like?

I believe the School is doing an excellent job to prepare for a safe in-person reopening; however, I recognize that many parents will choose a distance learning option this fall. Sending your child to school is a personal decision and only you know best how to navigate the risks. In order to be best prepared to support distance learning you should know that the expectations may be different than what you experienced in the spring:

- Students choosing distance learning will be taught using the same content and curriculum as in-person learning
- Students choosing distance learning will be placed in a distance learning classroom that is either connected to an in-person classroom or assigned to a distance learning teacher
- Teachers will provide clear schedules, family-facing lesson plans, and well-organized Google Classrooms for all lessons
- Students will be expected to attend distance learning activities for the length of a typical school day every day of the school week
- Parents and caregivers will be responsible for serving as an “at-home learning coach” who takes primary responsibility for managing the at-home distance learning program
- Students will be required to login to Google Classroom during specific times throughout the school day and must commit to being present and on time
- At-home learning coaches will be asked to make sure that their children are completing all of the must-do activities that the teacher assigns
- At-home learning coaches must be available for regular check-ins when the teacher is able to schedule them
- Parents and caregivers may be asked to pick up materials from the school in order to support distance learning activities
- Parents and caregivers choosing distance learning must commit to the full first trimester (or first quarter at the upper school)

Although we are requiring parents and caregivers to commit to the full trimester (or quarter), the **School will allow a student to transition to distance learning at any time if a parent or caregiver chooses to do so.**

In closing, I want to thank you for your partnership. I know this is a difficult decision and there are no easy answers. In these challenging times you can count on the School to help solve these problems with your child's best interests at heart.

Yours truly,
Christopher Haskins
Head of School (Superintendent)