

# GARRISON FOREST SCHOOL

300 GARRISON FOREST ROAD • OWINGS MILLS, MARYLAND 21117

CHRIS HUGHES, HEAD OF SCHOOL

Dear Garrison Forest Families,

Next week is the final week of the 2019-2020 school year. Monday will mark final assemblies in the Middle and Lower Schools, with 5th and 8th Graders celebrating their closing exercises on Tuesday. The Upper School wraps up their work later in the week, enjoys a final Grizzly Gathering on Wednesday, and builds toward their celebration of the Class of 2020 on Friday. I have said it before, and I'm sure I will say it again: I am so very proud of all of the members of the Garrison Forest School community—students, faculty and staff, and parents—for their perseverance, engagement, and spirit throughout this challenging time.

All the adjectives we might use to describe the past several months are overused, even if they are accurate: unprecedented, unbelievable, frightening, frustrating; all of these descriptions and many more are appropriate. One of the things that continues to make the situation so difficult for many of us is the number and the nature of the challenges we are facing. The disease itself is one thing: members of our community have been directly touched by COVID-19, and have lost loved ones to the disease this spring. But we also know that members of our community have been impacted by so many other crises in recent weeks. Many of our families have dealt with job loss and economic difficulties from the shut-downs, for themselves and for those around them. As an international boarding school, we are also impacted by events abroad: the extended shutdown of much of China and the situation in Hong Kong have affected many of our families, and we have international students who are still struggling with the question of how and when to return home (and I extend my most heartfelt thanks to those GFS families who have opened their homes to host some of those students this spring).

Most immediately for many members of our community, the murder of George Floyd in Minnesota and the violence in Louisville and other cities has added another element of pain, doubt, and frustration to an already overloaded—and sometimes overwhelming—sense of concern and uncertainty. In a school in which "compassion" is one of our core values, I know our students care deeply about those who are suffering both near and at a distance.

I want to acknowledge that many members of our wonderful community may be feeling pain, fear, and concern as we prepare to close this school year, and the isolation of social distancing increases that impact. I so value the fact that Garrison Forest School is a vital and integral part of the support network for our students and families, and I don't want that support to be lost in the bustle of these closing days. We know that many of our students and families have been struggling with heavy burdens of concerns for themselves and their friends and families. If students are struggling with these and other concerns, they should continue to reach out to a trusted adult at school—an advisor, a teacher, a counselor. As much as we are committed to celebrating the end of the year with all of you, we are even more committed to caring for you and supporting you.

We will have our celebrations next week, and they are well-earned. We also all look forward to the time when we can come back and be in community together, so that we are in one place to celebrate the good and to grapple with the bad; that day isn't here yet, but it will come. In the meantime, please know

that this is a community that cares deeply for you, and is here to support our students and our families.

All my best to all of you,



Chris Hughes  
Head of School



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