

Aug. 4, 2020

Dear Lower School families,

Last week you received a letter from Head of School Dr. John Nagl which outlined the work the School has done in preparation for [reopening school](#) on Sept. 9. Today, I am writing to follow up with a broad overview of the Lower School program, with specific attention given to the changes that we are making to support student learning, while also ensuring the health and wellness of the community.

Throughout the summer, a collaborative team comprised of the Lower School leadership team, teachers, and the School's Reopening Task Force worked to design learning plans, schedules, routines, and procedures that will best position us to support the learning and social-emotional wellbeing of our students, while also prioritizing the health and safety of our community. This group also worked with third-party scheduling consultants, discussed plans with peer schools in our area and from around the country, and examined best practices for elementary-aged boys.

All decisions were made with the following four priorities and principles in mind:

1. maintain the health and wellness of community members,
2. prioritize and preserve in-person learning,
3. maintain educational continuity between in-person and virtual learning scenarios,
4. sustain the essence of Haverford's academic programming.

In order to meet our four core priorities and the needs of our students, adjustments have been made to our schedule, routines, and class structure. We will also offer various learning scenarios this year.

Below I detail modifications to Lower School procedures and schedules, and what families and students should expect when returning to campus and information for families who are unsure of whether in-person learning is right for their son at this time. Please note that this restructuring will currently only be employed for the 2020-21 academic year.

I encourage you to take time to read this letter thoroughly, and request that you notify me of your family's decision regarding which learning scenario you are *MOST LIKELY* to select using [this form by Aug. 15](#). Both learning scenarios will require preparation on our part, as well as at home, so having an idea of what choice you are leaning towards will help us prepare accordingly.

Lower School Schedule Overview:

For the 2020-21 school year, the Lower School will run on a Monday to Friday schedule. This shift makes for an easier transition between physical and virtual learning scenarios, while also helping to create patterns in our schedule that are easier for students and families to follow.

This change in schedule has allowed us to allocate longer blocks of time for academics balanced against breaks (recess, lunch) and specials classes. This also reduces the number of transitions during the school day, which helps to mitigate the number of students in the hallways and in grade level pods.

In the event that a family opts to remain virtual in the fall, or that we return to an all-virtual learning environment per government or health department mandates, the structure of the schedule will provide time for students to engage in both the synchronous and asynchronous aspects of their classes. Student classes will be spread out across the day, with adequate breaks built in to the schedule.

While there are numerous benefits to the change in the weekly schedule, for our specials teachers who see all or just about all of the grade levels in the Lower School, this alteration placed an additional burden on their time and sometimes created unavoidable scheduling conflicts. To alleviate those scheduling challenges, alterations had to be made to the frequency of their meeting times, which will be as follows:

- **Physical Education:** All grade levels will meet twice per week.
- **Art:** Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students will meet one time per week; First through fifth grade will meet twice per week.
- **Music:** Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students will meet one time per week; First through fifth grade will meet twice per week.
- **Science:** Pre-kindergarten through second grade will meet one time per week; Third and fourth grade will meet twice per week; Fifth grade science is a core class and will meet with the same frequency as the other core subjects.
- **Library:** Pre-kindergarten through second grade will meet one time per week; Third and fourth grade will meet twice per week - once for coding, once for Library; Fifth grade will meet once per week for 60 minutes, which will alternate between Library and coding.

Class schedules will be made available to parents at the beginning of the school year.

Class structure:

The Lower School classrooms have been redesigned to accommodate six feet of space between the boys. The only exception to this is in the pre-kindergarten classroom, where plexiglass dividers will be used to provide more developmentally appropriate separation between the boys.

Based on the size of the classrooms and the need to maintain six feet of distance between the students, the maximum number of students in a classroom for the 2020-2021 school year will be 15. While on campus, the classrooms will function as “cohorts” or “bubbles,” meaning that each classroom will remain together throughout the entirety of their day without mixing with other cohorts.

Learning Scenarios:

There are two options for boys to learn this year - On-Campus and Hybrid Haverford. Both scenarios are detailed below.

Scenario 1 - Lower School On-Campus Learning:

Maintaining a safe and healthy environment for on-campus learning means that we will all have to work together as a community. Faculty, students, and families will need to respect and commit to following the guidelines, policies, and procedures put in place by making thoughtful and intentional decisions throughout the year.

While additional details about the school day will continue to be released as we near the opening of school, I have outlined many the parts of the day and what students/families can expect.

If your family opts to return to the physical campus, it is important that you review these modifications and expectations with your son in advance of the first day of school. We are excited to welcome the boys back to campus, but it is important to acknowledge that school will look different from what they remember before COVID-19.

Lower School Health and Safety Procedures:

Arrival:

Parents will be required to conduct “symptom surveillance” with their son each morning, and log their health status in the Magnus Health App each morning before arriving on campus. Students will not be allowed in the building until we have received notification that the health survey has been completed. The boys will also be required to have a face mask on before entering the school building. Additional information, including how to download the Magnus Health App, can be found on the [School's reopening website](#).

Parents are asked to remain in their cars during drop off and to wait until we have verified that the students' health survey has been completed. During the first few days of school, our pre-kindergarten parents are welcome to park in the lot and walk their son to the entrance of the Lower School, where they will be greeted and escorted to the pre-kindergarten classroom.

Students arriving by bus will be greeted at the front entrance of the Lower School and checked in to make sure that their daily health summary has been received. If a boy arrives at school by bus without having completed a daily health survey, parents will be contacted and the boy will be supervised by a member of the School's staff until the survey can be completed by the parent/guardian.

Morning Care:

Morning care will be provided starting at 7:30 a.m. each school day. The boys will proceed directly to their classrooms, where they will be supervised by a faculty/staff member until Morning Meeting/Homeroom begins at 8:20 a.m.

Classroom expectations:

Classrooms and learning spaces have been reimagined to adhere to the guidelines set by the state and by health authorities. You can read about classroom setup on the [School's reopening website](#). Classrooms will be sanitized at regular intervals throughout the day.

Per Governor Tom Wolf's directive, all students in the pre-kindergarten through fifth grade are required to wear face masks throughout the school day. The boys are expected to arrive at school with a face mask, and to keep their face mask on, except during times when teachers indicate that they can remove their mask.

Masks can only be removed during snack, lunch, and during face mask breaks when the boys can maintain six feet of distance. At this time, face shields are not an approved alternative to

face masks, although students are welcome to wear them and other personal protective equipment in addition to a face mask if they so choose.

In order to maintain six feet of distance, many of the routines that your sons have become accustomed to in the classroom have been redesigned or reimagined. While Morning Meeting, small group instruction, collaborative work, and flexible seating have allowed students to sit in close contact with each other and the teacher in years past, this year these classroom staples will exist, but will look different.

Desks will be physically separated from each other and students will be expected to maintain six feet of distance from each other and the teacher throughout the school day. However, using technology, creative classroom arrangement, and additional classroom tools and strategies, teachers will be able to maintain many aspects of the classroom even with the classroom setup looking different.

Hallways/Transitions:

The Lower School hallways will be clearly marked to indicate six feet of distance for passing, and, where necessary, will be one way. The stairwells will also be marked accordingly.

To limit the number of students in the hallways throughout the day, the Lower School schedule has been re-designed to limit and stagger transitions throughout the day. Additionally, aside from fifth grade science and physical education, the students will remain in their classrooms and the teachers will move from classroom to classroom, as necessary.

Hand washing/Sanitizing procedures:

The boys will be instructed on proper hand washing procedures and will wash their hands at frequent intervals, including, but not limited to: upon arrival at school, before snack/lunch, after recess, after any physical classroom transition, after any shared materials, after using the bathroom, and before departing school for the day.

Dress Code:

The Lower School dress code will largely remain unchanged, aside from the addition of a face mask, for the 2020-21 school year. Boys should arrive at school each day with a freshly laundered mask and school uniform. Please see the School's Reopening website for additional details.

Books and Supplies:

As in years past, the School will provide the majority of the boys' school supplies. Students will be provided with individual materials and supplies. Any materials that have to be shared will be sanitized after use.

We are asking that families provide a headset with a microphone for their son this year. It is preferable that the headphones have an earphone jack (i.e., not bluetooth) for use in school. Please label your son's headphones with his first and last name. If the purchase of headphones presents a hardship for your family, please contact Teresa Touey (ttouey@haverford.org).

Lunch/Recess/Snack:

As in years past, the boys should bring a healthy snack to school with them each day. They will have a scheduled snack break in the morning before or after morning recess. The boys will need to remain at their desk during snack time.

The boys will continue to have recess twice per day, with the goal of being outside as the weather permits. Recess times have been staggered to reduce the number of students on the recess field/playground equipment. Additionally, alternative spaces will be available for classes during recess times. The boys will be expected to keep their mask on and remain with their own class during recess.

As a School protocol this year, all students will eat lunch in their classrooms this year. The boys will be expected to remain at their desk during lunch. Students that are signed up for the School's Meal Plan will have a nutritious meal delivered to their classroom. Students are welcome to bring lunch each day as well. Please note that we are a nut-free school.

Specials classes:

Aside from the alterations made to the frequency of meetings with our specials teachers, the majority of our specials classes will take place in the homeroom classrooms. Our physical education classes will continue to meet outside or in the Field House; however, as opposed to previous years, the boys will remain in their classroom cohorts during physical education class.

Our specials' curriculums have been adjusted to accommodate this change, as well as to align with health and safety guidelines. Our library staff continues to work through protocols for safely distributing books to the boys via carts that will go to the classroom. Families are encouraged to continue to use online digital resources to check out books using MackinVia (available through our [Lower School Library website](#)) while we work through how to safely and efficiently loan physical books this school year.

Dismissal:

The Lower School will continue to dismiss at the following times:

- Pre-kindergarten/kindergarten: 2:30 p.m.
- First and Second Grades: 3:00 p.m.
- Third and Fourth Grades: 3:15 p.m.

Areas will be designated outside the Lower School along the carline for each grade level. Students will have to keep their face mask on until they are in their car and the car door is closed.

Parents must remain in their cars during dismissal. Please DO NOT park and walk to the pick up area, this will place you and our students/faculty at greater risk and will violate the no visitor policy that is in place to protect our community.

Brothers Program:

We will continue to host the Brothers Program for boys who have older siblings in the Lower School or other school divisions. Parents are welcome to pick up both their sons at the pick up time for the oldest boy. The younger sibling will remain in his classroom until the older boys' dismissal time, at which time School faculty will coordinate a meeting point and pick up place. Additional details will be shared closer to the start of school.

Aftercare/Enrichment:

Per Susan Zickler's note on July 27, we will not be hosting Aftercare for the 2020-21 school year. We are working to determine what enrichment opportunities could be available for Lower School families, but all enrichment opportunities will be virtual and thus take place once the boys arrive at home. **Therefore, all Lower School students need to be picked up at their appointed dismissal time. The Lower School building will close at 4pm each day.** This ensures that our students and teachers are out of the buildings and provide our facilities department enough time to thoroughly clean the classrooms and common areas each evening.

Learning Scenario 2 - Hybrid Haverford:

Our goal is to have school be safe for all students and that all students are able to attend classes on Sept. 9. We realize this may not be possible for everyone. We will be offering Hybrid Haverford as an option for students who need to remain home due to illness/quarantine and for families who wish to keep their sons in the virtual classroom in the fall. Our Lower School classrooms have been outfitted with cameras, allowing classroom activities to be livestreamed to the boys at home. However, our teachers' focus will be primarily on teaching their classes on campus. We cannot offer the same experience we did from March to June of 2020 if we are teaching on campus. However, we will provide access to classes and systems to keep our students at home as engaged as possible.

Schedule:

Students will continue to follow their classroom schedule and will be provided with a Google Meet link each day that will allow them to join the classroom for academic and specials classes. Students will also have access to Canvas, our learning management system, which will provide them with additional materials to support their learning in the classroom.

Attendance:

Students who elect to learn in the virtual learning environment are expected to attend their classes as scheduled each day. If students are ill and unable to attend class, a parent/guardian will need to notify the School and the teacher as they normally would.

Instruction and Class Participation:

The Lower School faculty has worked a tremendous amount this summer to adjust their curriculum and instruction in preparation for the 2020-21 school year. Canvas, our learning management system, provides additional materials and resources to students who opt to remain in the virtual classroom.

However, it is important to understand that teaching in the physical classroom and teaching in the virtual environment entail different approaches to instruction and classroom engagement. Therefore, families electing to remain in a virtual learning environment should expect that the instruction will be different from the spring, when we were all in a virtual learning environment.

Students will be able to livestream into the classroom, and teachers will work hard to make students engaging virtually part of the classroom, but the nature of the set up will likely result in a more passive learning experience for students at home.

Additionally, teachers will not be as available in the moment to problem solve any technology issues. In an effort to maintain connections with students opting to remain in the virtual classroom and to address individual questions related to instruction, the classroom teachers will arrange for individual or small group check-ins several times a week. A schedule of these check-in times will be available by classroom by the end of the first week of school.

Moving between the physical and virtual classroom:

We realize the difficulty in the decision this school year is presenting to our families. As you make your decision, please remember that consistency and routine are beneficial to elementary-aged boys, and to the teacher.

We also recognize that plans and circumstances change. In the event a family opts to return to the physical classroom and finds they would like to switch to Hybrid Haverford, or vice versa, the family must provide at least one full week notice of the change. This will allow your son's teacher and the administration to prepare your son to head into a virtual learning environment, or for the teacher to prepare the classroom for your son to re-enter the in-person learning space.

Given the amount of preparation that goes into preparing the physical classroom and the virtual learning environment, we kindly ask that families do not toggle back and forth between the two options unless absolutely necessary.

If a student is participating in Hybrid Haverford due to illness or quarantine, he will be allowed to re-enter the physical classroom once he has met the criteria outlined in the School's health and safety guidelines. Families will need to remain in communication with the School's Health Services team and a plan for re-entry post-illness/quarantine will be created.

Learning Scenario 3 - All Virtual:

In the event that a classroom, grade level, or the School returns to an all-virtual learning environment, parents and students will be provided with a detailed schedule for retrieving school materials/supplies from the School to facilitate virtual learning at home.

Should this take place prior to the start of the school year, Lower School families will be provided with information about and orientation to our new learning management system, Canvas. Finally, a detailed schedule outlining synchronous and asynchronous times for each class will be provided, as well as additional policies, procedures, and expectations related to the virtual learning environment will be made available.

What now?

Please take some time to digest all of the information in this letter. While it does not answer every question you may have about each of the options, it has hopefully allowed you to envision what the options available to you will entail and what you can expect from each.

Your decision is personal to your family, and we are here to support you. For our planning purposes, it would be most appreciated if you could let the School know which learning option you are most likely to opt into by completing [this form](#) before Aug. 15. We understand that you may change your mind as additional information becomes available throughout the month of August.

Regardless of the learning option that you choose, please take time throughout the rest of the summer to prepare your son for his return to school. Both learning options will require some preparation, whether it is getting used to wearing a mask for extended periods of time, preparing for the classroom, daily routines, and interactions with peers to look different, or conversely preparing a home learning space and working with our learning management system. While these decisions and changes may feel overwhelming and may cause some anxious feelings, the boys will take their cues from us adults. So, while we need to prepare them for the reality that the School will look different this year, it is important to also embrace the joy, excitement, and exhilaration that comes with the beginning of a new school year.

You can expect another communication in the coming weeks that will provide updates on the reopening of school and additional Lower School specific back-to-school information. While the preparation for the opening of school is unlike any in Haverford's history, I still feel the same optimism, excitement, and anticipation for the start of the year and the opportunity to reconnect with colleagues, parents, and the boys. Our families pivoted to Virtual Haverford with grace and confidence in March, and I have been proud of the way our faculty have engaged in summer professional development work and curriculum/instruction planning that will support the boys - regardless of what our learning environments look like this year.

The coming school year will feel different than years' past and will certainly present individual and collective challenges. However, I feel fortunate to be part of a community that will approach these challenges as opportunities to come closer together and reaffirm a commitment to growing together in learning and character.

Warmly,

Dr. Pam Greenblatt