

Dear Nueva Community,

As we continue to plan for the very best Nueva experience for all of our learners, faculty, staff, and families this school year, I'd like to provide an update, now that it seems like we will have the opportunity to bring students back to campus in the coming weeks. With a collective commitment from all of us to prioritize the health and wellness of all community members, including our faculty and staff, and an understanding that our learning models this year will inevitably continue to adjust to a constantly shifting landscape, we confidently believe that we have the ability to bring students back to campus purposefully, safely, and joyfully. This return to campus will be differentiated according to divisional needs, and it will be implemented in phases. Each division will soon share plans and will explain our carefully-staggered approach for returning to campus during upcoming parent coffees, e-blast communication, and town halls. For now, please allow me to highlight the work we have been doing in four key areas in order to make this return as safe, equitable, and student-centered as possible.

## **I. Health and Safety**

### **A. Pandemic Recovery Framework**

Our decisions are based on scientific evidence that allows schools in San Mateo to reopen their campuses if the county stays in the state's so-called red tier (tier 2) through the middle of next week. As most of you know, Nueva is already well prepared to comply with the county's requirements in the four pillars of its pandemic recovery framework: health and hygiene protocols, face coverings, physical distancing, and limited gatherings. We are also attending to a fifth area in our planning, which is our school culture.

### **B. Testing and Contact Tracing**

We are also finalizing plans for mandatory COVID testing of all faculty and staff returning onsite, one time per week at no cost to them. Moreover, we plan to implement this same robust testing service to each and every Nueva student returning for onsite instruction so that our entire community is assured of close and regular monitoring as we return to campus. We plan to prototype our testing procedures with each group, prior to our official return. When we scale up this program to the entire school, we will test more than 1,000 community members regularly with a 24-hour turnaround time target to receive test results. This will allow us to quickly isolate any positive cases and contact trace all possible physical connections.

## II. Learning and Teaching

### A. Nueva Flex

In terms of learning when students are back on campus, we will implement the Nueva Flex model that we began to prepare this past summer, an approach that enables simultaneous learning to take place when appropriate. In this model, our faculty and staff regularly address five questions as they plan and deliver a true Nueva educational experience:

- What is the learning?
- Where are the learners?
- Whom are they learning with and how?
- How will we know they are learning and/or have learned?
- What are the resources needed for this learning and these interactions?

Although this learning model is complex and requires high levels of teacher creativity and intentionality, we are confident our professional staff can achieve this with the right support. We know there will be challenges as we shift our pedagogy, systems, and structure to the Nueva Flex model, and we ask for your patience and continued support as we make this transition.

### B. Learning Groups and Staffing

For example, students and parents need to be aware that how students are grouped for certain learning activities will not be the same as before. In the lower school, we will have small, stable cohorts of students of no more than 15. In the middle school, we will divide each grade level into two halves and further divide these into “gem” groups so we can alternate on-campus time and avoid mixing across cohorts. In the upper school, we will use a combination of advisories, grade levels, and courses to creatively group students for time spent on campus. In all divisions, there may be a few types of activities, such as private music lessons, that will need to continue remotely for the time being to ensure safety for all.

We also ask for your patience and understanding with regard to some staffing implications that arise from this situation. A few faculty and staff members in each division will receive accommodations to continue to work remotely, due to personal health and family reasons. In the cases where a teacher is at home, we plan to make sure there are “teaching facilitators” in the classrooms with students to provide onsite support and in-person assistance. Lower school students and families also need to understand that lead teachers, associate teachers, and specialist teachers will be deployed in new ways to fulfill cohort requirements.

C. Calendar Dates and Adjustments

It is very important to know that Nueva will bring students back to campus in a staggered fashion so that we maximize safety and comfort for all. You might remember that in August, we indicated we would not return before the end of the first quarter, regardless of state and county updates. So, our youngest learners will be the first to continue to return to campus the week of October 19. Other groups will start during the following weeks so that onsite teaching and learning will begin for all students no later than mid-November (our oldest learners will return last). In the coming days, each division will share exact dates for each grade level and/or groups of students. It is also important to note that all groups will begin with half days and scale up to full days on certain days of the week.

Three additional calendar items need to be mentioned:

- First, we will continue to use Fridays differently from the other days of the week, in order to remotely offer special student programs, engage in ongoing teacher planning, and accommodate some special events in the coming months.
- Second, division heads will soon announce a couple of days in which we will suspend remote learning so that our faculty will have an opportunity to participate in additional training and orientation for the Nueva Flex model. Maverick Days are being planned for students on those days. Friday, October 23 has already been designated a professional learning day on the calendar, and it will also be used as a “no-student” day.
- Third, we are planning to engage only in remote learning the entire week after the Thanksgiving break, November 30 through December 4. Recognizing that Thanksgiving week usually involves lots of travel, we believe it is best for all community members not to come to campus for one week in order to minimize any risk of virus spread.

### **III. Support and Services**

Many community members have asked about various support services, and whether or not they will be provided when we return to campus. Our food service partner, Epicurean Group, will provide nutritious, individually-packaged lunches, and their distribution will adhere to safety requirements. Choice may be more limited, but allergies and other special needs will be accommodated as much as possible. For a variety of reasons, our transportation services will not begin right away and will only resume when we have a critical mass of students that can take advantage of this. We

# THE NUEVA SCHOOL

understand this might be an inconvenience and challenge for some families, and we will work to bring this service back as quickly as we can.

Nueva will continue to provide various ways of supporting faculty and staff who need childcare in order for these essential workers to do their jobs. We are already providing onsite care at one campus, and we are reimbursing employees for incremental costs associated with other childcare options they are utilizing. Please know, however, that the school's onsite after school care program for students will not resume at this moment in time. However, online after school enrichment activities will continue to be offered.

## **IV. Choice, Equity, and Community**

Although we anticipate most families will want to take advantage of in-person education, parents can choose to have students continue with remote learning if they are uncomfortable with returning to campus. All of us at Nueva are incredibly mindful of the fact that we will have students in the same groupings learning in different spaces, and we are committed to making sure there is equity and integrity in the educational experience for all. Our commitment to learn by doing, learn by caring doesn't stop just because of where we are.

Thank you for reading or listening to this important message. We look forward to bringing students back to campus and collaborating with all of you to make this transition as seamless as possible. We appreciate your patience, resilience, and support as we sustain the Nueva Way for all of us in the community.