



March 25, 2020

Dear friends,

It has been the most difficult and unsettling few weeks in memory as the scope of the COVID-19 epidemic has become manifest, but as I write to bring you up to date about Commonwealth's response to the pandemic, I remain heartened by the calm and patience, creative thinking, and readiness to adapt shown by members of our community.

I hope that all of you are finding ways to weather this crisis and to help others who may not have the wherewithal to adjust to this radically changed world. Accounts I have heard of responses by students, teachers, and alumni/ae confirm that the school continues to make a difference in ways big and small. We invite you in the coming weeks and months to [share your stories and news](#) with each other and with us. Keeping alive the connections of family, school, and community will sustain the resilience we all need in the coming weeks and months.

Commonwealth students and teachers are now in the middle of what has become a spring break in name only. Our last day of classes was March 12, and our building is currently closed to students, faculty, and staff. To our knowledge, no teachers, staff, or students have shown symptoms consonant with coronavirus infection. We appear to have been well served by everyone's willingness to take on the range of practices recommended to limit the spread of the virus, and by luck.

We have committed to continuing to support all of our faculty and staff, as well as those in food service and maintenance who are employed by outside companies. Our Student Life team has already reached out to families to offer support for any facing undue stress and challenges, and it will continue to work to offer academic and emotional support when we resume community life online.

We have announced that we will not reopen the school for in-person classes at least until April 13, and we have also canceled school events through that date. I fully expect that we will stay closed beyond then, but we are following along with many of our peer schools in making that decision on a rolling basis.

We will, a few days after the end of spring break, open Virtual Commonwealth, an online school that we are putting together with the help of classrooms.cloud. We look forward to sharing further details about this new venture, as well as our long-term plans (to the extent we can make them) with you in the coming weeks.

I've been asked how long we will be closed, or what will happen in the future. We don't know, but I liken our approach to the story of the nighttime journey along a rugged path that a walker takes up with only a lantern. He knows the general direction he wants to go, but he can see only the few steps ahead lit by the lantern, so he makes decisions as the path comes into view, trusting that those little decisions, added up, will get him to his destination. This is uncharted territory for us all, and we will rely on the collective wit and spirit of our students, teachers, staff, trustees, parents, and alumni/ae.

Until then, as always, I welcome any questions, concerns, and advice. Your support, in all the forms it takes, means a lot to Commonwealth.

Yours,

Bill Wharton  
Headmaster



[The Commonwealth School](#)  
151 Commonwealth Avenue • Boston, MA 02116 • (617) 266-7525

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