

Dear Parents,

I hope this message finds you and your family healthy and relaxed. From the looks of my social media feeds, it seems that families are enjoying overdue vacations, reconnecting with loved ones missed during the pandemic, and engaging in some fun and fulfilling summer activities. I know that we also need those treasured lazy days with no particular schedule, catching up on sleep, and enjoying our own neighborhood communities. I have already enjoyed a wonderful trip to California with my adult children, and I'm looking forward to my annual Kiawah anniversary week (32 years of marriage this year) late in July. Whatever it is you are up to, I'm happy for you!

This time of the summer is always a "slow news" period at school, but it has been fun to see some students at Camp Cannon and others taking advantage of the athletic workout offerings. I'm just touching base with a few July updates as I do each year. This letter is LONG, but it is full of good information. Grab a drink, settle in by the pool or on the porch, and give it a read!

I'm sure you read each and every communication from the school with great interest this past year, and I know everyone is wondering what to expect in August as it relates to Covid protocols. The school leadership team meets regularly through the summer, and we will communicate decisions in early August. Our goal is to provide as normal of an opening as possible for our students while navigating any important safety concerns. Division-specific communication will follow, as close to the start of the year as possible, to include the most current thinking about the details in our day. On **August 10th**, along with important grade-level information and advisory placements, you will receive specifics about any potential protocol changes in middle school.

Style Guide

It is our practice to forward the most updated Middle School Style Guide (formerly named Dress Code) with this letter every summer before the fun back-to-school shopping begins. Each year, the guidelines undergo analysis and conversation with both students and faculty in order to provide a framework that accommodates realities of fashion and comfort for a successful school day. We have a student "workplace" that includes students from age 4 - 19, faculty, staff, and other adult visitors, so we ask that everyone dress for the task at hand each day as part of the larger community using these gender-neutral guidelines.

Click [here](#) to find the 2021-2022 updated version, with a few minor changes from the previous year. Last year was the year of flexibility in dress, and we learned a few things. We loved that kids had the choice to wear Cannon t-shirts all year, and we will continue with that for the foreseeable future! Rather than designate a specific length on shorts, skirts, and dresses--mid-thigh has become an almost unattainable fashion goal-- we are asking for adequate coverage. What does adequate coverage mean? It means that kids should be comfortable standing, sitting, bending over, engaging in physical activity, participating in a science lab activity, and walking up stairs, just to name a few things. Despite the allowance last year, we will no longer permit yoga pants, leggings, sweatpants, athletic skirts, gym shorts, etc., as students struggled with understanding the "gray" of the guidelines.

Dress guidelines are not meant to cause stress, but we do realize that for a middle schooler with a changing body who wants to dress in fun and fashionable clothing, thinking about what to wear is challenging on a good day. We simply ask that kids and families do their best to stay within the guidelines while honoring the need for individuality and choice.

We are able to use the PE locker rooms once again, so all students will be required to change into the designated Cannon PE uniform. If you have not already ordered, please click [here](#) to order the Cannon School PE uniform by July 19th. If ordered by July 19th, the uniform will be magically delivered by the good folks in the Cougar's Den to your child's advisory during the first few days of school. If uniforms are not pre-ordered, students will need to purchase directly from the Cougar's Den once school begins; however, quantities will be limited. Due to supply issues around the country, it is best if you can pre-order the uniform, but we will definitely be understanding in August with students whose uniforms are delayed. Students should bring athletic shorts and a Cannon shirt until their order arrives. Three-sport athletes who pop into PE just two times per year--February and May--do not need to order a PE uniform; those students will simply need to dress to participate in physical activity either indoors or outdoors during those time periods.

Before advisory placement information comes to your email inbox on August 10th, we wanted to give you an update on our faculty changes so that you know a little about our amazing new teachers before the lists are posted.

Faculty Updates

6th Grade

We are excited for Stephanie Ranson, our sixth grade history teacher for the past 17 years, who left Cannon to pursue her interest in belongingness work. Stephanie's impact on our community has been impressive, and she will be greatly missed by her students and colleagues. Her passion for learning through service, her creation of Let's Talk lunches, her work in building our relationship with Special Olympics of Cabarrus County, and her interest in rethinking social studies curricula have all left a long-lasting impression on our school.

Arianna Bonner will join us next year to teach sixth grade History and serve as a sixth grade advisor. Arianna joins us from Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School in Charlotte, where she has been teaching for the past five years. Arianna was a grade-level lead, the Humanities and Arts Department Chair, a member of the school leadership team, and the site coordinator for their summer program. In addition, she knows of Cannon through her work with her school's Model U.N. and Debate programs.

She recently participated in the Charlotte Teachers Institute, which is an amazing educator development program formed in partnership with Davidson College and Johnson C. Smith University. She holds a B.S. from Appalachian State University in Social Studies Secondary Education and a minor in Political Science, so it is no surprise that she loves the mountains! Her references say that she is creative, loves building relationships, has a growth mindset, and has exemplified great leadership skills. In her free time, Arianna likes to hike, run, paint and draw. She enjoys working with the youth at her church, where she also serves as a board member of several committees.

7th Grade

Cathy Diehl, who has served for many years as our seventh grade English teacher, has decided to step back to part-time status for family reasons. We are so thrilled that we were able to offer Cathy a position in our arts department, where she will officially launch a creative e-magazine to showcase student work in the middle school. She will offer this elective for both seventh and eighth grades, and we can't wait to see this unfold!

Emily Nash will join us as a seventh grade English teacher next year in addition to serving in athletics as the Cheerleading Program Director. Emily is leaving Harris Road Middle School, where she has taught both sixth and seventh grade English. At Harris Road, she has served as the AIG ELA School Lead, the PTSSO Teacher Representative, and as a mentor for new teachers. She also has experience in fourth grade at Patriot's STEM Elementary and at Bethel Elementary.

Emily holds a B.A. in Elementary Education with a concentration in Language Arts from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte where she was on the Co-ed Cheerleading Team, and she holds a M.Ed. in K-12 Reading from the same institution. Go Niners! She is also a National Board Certified Educator, holds a certificate in Gifted Education, and has earned Teacher of the Year accolades at two different schools. Her cheer experience includes coaching at Harris Road, Hickory Ridge, Victory All-Stars, and UCA. She has a passion for cheer, and she is excited to be able to both teach and coach here at Cannon.

Emily's references say that she is highly relational, stellar in the classroom, and does a great job with the joys and "crazy" aspects of teaching seventh grade. We also received several character references for her from our Cannon community, as she grew up in Concord and is active in the community in various ways. Right now, her free time is spent with her husband and her newborn baby girl!

World Language

Due to the growing numbers in our Chinese program, we added a full-time world language position to be shared across the school. Greg Walsh will join us to teach in both the Middle and Upper School Chinese departments, and he will join the Middle School faculty as a seventh grade advisor. Greg holds a B.A. in Chinese Language and Civilization and Political Science from College of the Holy Cross, and he holds an M.A. from Hunter College in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language and Adolescent Education. He has studied abroad in addition to attending the summer language programs at Middlebury College, and he has served in the STARTALK Program for several years.

Greg comes to us from Chaminade High School in Mineola, NY, where he created and designed the Chinese curriculum, implemented ACTFL standards, and moderated the Chinese and history clubs. Greg has also taught history in addition to his other numerous talents. Greg impressed us with his extensive expertise, his ability to connect with students, and his deep understanding of the work independent schools do to build relationships and inspire growth. His references described him as thoughtful, flexible, and collaborative, and they are very sorry to lose him due to relocation. Greg is thrilled to be relocating to the area to join his wife and son, who are already here in North Carolina. Emily, his wife, is an assistant professor of art history at UNC Greensboro. Elliot, age two, loves reading and playing with cars and is described as being "adorable." Greg enjoys hiking and running, cooking, reading, and rooting for the Mets.

Danielle Sandlof, our World Language Chair and Spanish teacher extraordinaire, will be out on maternity leave for the first trimester spending time with baby Annabelle and her big sister, Melanie. Veronica Grady, Cannon parent of Orietta and Thomas, will be the long-term substitute for Danielle's Spanish classes. Veronica is a native speaker who holds an undergraduate degree in Early Childhood Education and Bilingual Education from Universidad Latina de Costa Rica, and holds a Master's degree from the same institution in teaching English as a Second Language. She has nine years of experience teaching in both Costa Rica and in Cabarrus County, and we are so grateful that she understands the Cannon culture and experience.

If your child is assigned to Danielle as an advisor, you will be thrilled to hear that Kathy Olson will be filling in as the partner advisor for Danielle in her absence. She is adored by faculty and students, she is a highly relational person, and she is so excited to work with students so closely this year. She knows everything about anything at Cannon, so your girls are in good hands! Danielle is a little worried they won't want her to come back, but we know that the kids will really have TWO exceptional adults to shepherd them this year.

PE

Jamal Mitchell will officially join our PE team next year, replacing the position previously held by Rich Pente. Jamal has been part of the Cannon family for several years, serving as our Head JV Boys Basketball coach, and most recently as our long-term substitute for Kelli Waller. Jamal has impressed us with his love for young people, his ability to use the "coach approach" with students in his interactions in class, and his passion for athletics, physical education, and Cannon. He has been working with both lower and middle-school students this spring, and his colleagues gave rave reviews about his work.

Jamal holds a B.S. in Business Administration from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, where he was a basketball Team Captain and All-Conference Honorable Mention. He also holds minors in Economics and in Information & Technology Systems. Jamal played semi-professional basketball in Greensboro, and he also played professionally in Morocco! In his free time, he loves to spend time with family and friends, he loves to travel, and he enjoys exercise.

We remain grateful to Rod Rachal for stepping back into the middle school PE team as a fifth grade teacher. You may not know that Rod was originally hired as a Lower and Middle school PE teacher, and he has enjoyed working so closely with middle school kids again.

Middle School Teaching Fellow

We are currently in the process of hiring for our Middle School Teaching Fellow for the upcoming school year. At Cannon, the Fellows will help anywhere they are needed in the division, covering classes, attending field trips, and helping with last-minute absences. In addition, we as a school have committed to the growth of the Fellows through mentoring, opportunities to own classroom lessons and activities, and observing and shadowing veteran teachers. Each student in the middle school is likely to interact with the person in this position.

Friends, it can be a challenge to be a new teacher at Cannon, as the fear of the unknown can be unsettling to both parents and students. Please know that while we spend a great deal of time vetting and onboarding our new faculty, we also know that adults need time to adapt and adjust to the culture and expectations just as our new students do. We ask that you encourage your children to welcome our new teachers, and we ask that parents do the same. We were all new at some point in our time at Cannon!

The annual reminder about advisory placement...

The advisory lists will be emailed the afternoon of August 10th along with a grade-specific letter with information for the first days of school. When you receive the advisory lists, please understand the thorough and thoughtful process we engage in as a faculty to ensure our students are in the best possible position to succeed. We pair students with an adult to ensure a good match, and we also try to make sure the chemistry of the group is appropriate for all students. Due to the complicated nature of this process, we

will be unable to move students once lists are published. Because students travel throughout the day in different groups, they will have opportunities for social time with other students not in their advisories.

After surveying students and parents in sixth grade last year, we decided to pilot two advisories in seventh grade that are not split by gender. We will have three all-male advisories, three all-female advisories, and two all-gender advisories, as we honored what each child requested. We are excited about the potential for this for students coming from sixth grade who really enjoy multiple perspectives in their advisory groups. Should this succeed, we will offer the same choice for rising seventh and eighth grade in the future. We are trying something new (actually something we used to do), and we would love for all students to embrace this change in order to make each advisory group feel valued.

Your positive and excited reaction to your child's advisory placement will guide your child's reaction, and we appreciate the trust you place in us in getting just the right fit. Advisory is a great place to make new friends and get to know people in a different way. We have heard story after story of kids who have grown to love advisory groups and other students despite not being excited about the initial list.

As always, please encourage your child to welcome all of our new students. It can be a little frightening to enter a new school in middle school, and we want our new folks to feel at home. Some of our new friends have not been in a school building since March of 2019, and we can't wait to show them how we "do school" at Cannon! You never know where your next buddy will be found!

As always, please refer to the [Back to School page](#) on our website for anything you are wondering about for the start of the school year.

We all look forward to having the kids back in the building—but not before they have enjoyed what is left of the last few precious weeks of summer!

Thanks,

Carla



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