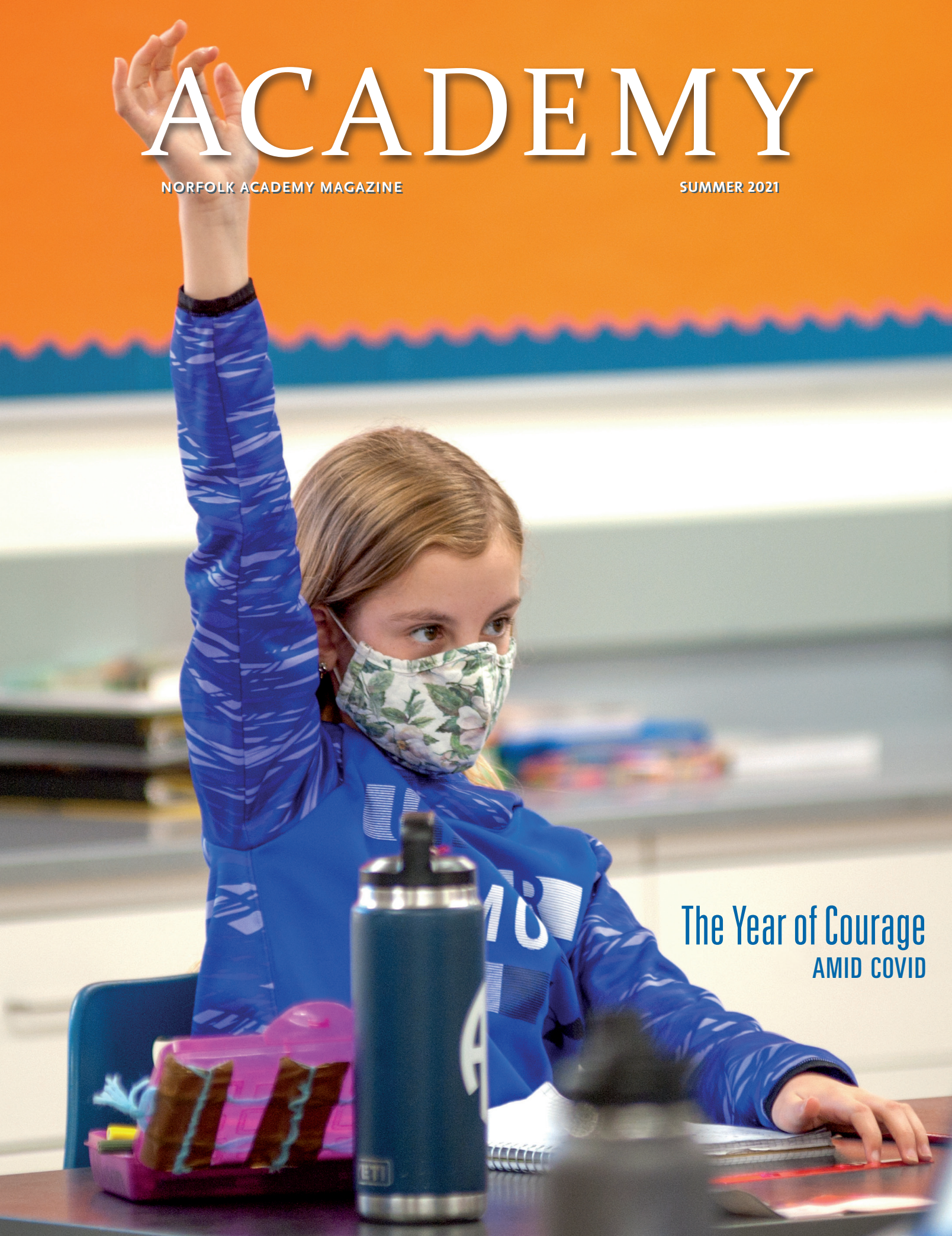


ACADEMY

NORFOLK ACADEMY MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2021

The Year of Courage
AMID COVID



SUMMER 2021

HEADMASTER

Dennis G. Manning

ASSISTANT HEADMASTER FOR DEVELOPMENT

Dr. Grayson Bryant

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Esther M. Diskin

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Kim Yager

EDITOR

Esther M. Diskin

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Mike Connors

EDITORIAL BOARD

Ruth Payne Acra '86

Chad Byler

Jeff Danielson

Beth Manning

David Rezelman

Jennifer Rodgers '97

Toy Savage '71

Gigi Cooke Tysinger '87

Sean Wetmore '86

Charlotte Zito '99

PHOTOGRAPHY

Steven Goldberg '04

Stephanie Kalis

Woody Poole

Kim Yager

DESIGN

RiverBend Design & Lyons Graphics

Norfolk Academy admits students of any race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, color, and national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, color, and national or ethnic origin, or any other basis prohibited by federal or state law in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, employment policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic or other school-administered programs.

COVER: Allie '27 is ready with an answer.

[CONTENTS]



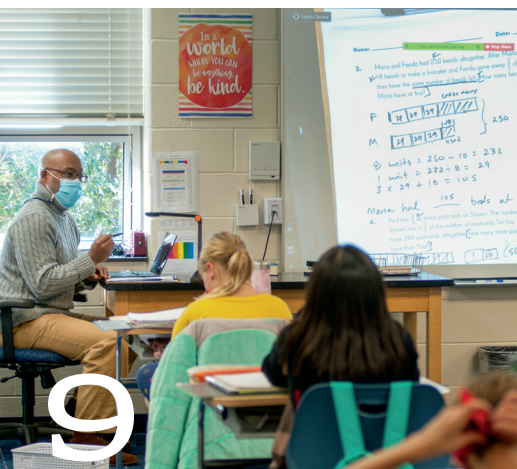
4 FIGURING IT OUT
A Mantra for Hybrid Learning

8 BUCKET DRUMMING & GENIUS HOUR
Resource Teachers Get Creative

9 STUDYING INDEPENDENTLY & MISSING FRIENDS
The Distance Learning Experience

10 A PIONEERING STEP FOR SAFETY
Surveillance Testing
Winning Against Covid-19: A Numbers Game

14 LUNCH OUTDOORS
Brown Bags On-the-Go



I6 SEMINAR DAY 2021
Students Explore & Soar with Poet Kwame Alexander

I8 FROM THE CHAPEL
Pushkin

20 EXPLORING DIVERSE VOICES
in the English Department

22 BATTEN LEADERSHIP PROGRAM
Pandemic Pursuits? Nothing Better
Than a Surprising Book Box... and a New Desk

24 CLASS OF 2021
Graduation on the Gridiron

26 STUDIO & STAGE
Dance Team Chases the Sunshine
Radio Play to the Rescue

30 IN THE GAME
Masks, Training Camps & Go Bulldogs!

32 ALUMNI SEMINARS
Big Zoom Audiences: Commemorate Coaches
& Explore American History

33 CLASS NOTES
Class Notes
Alumni Profiles
In Memoriam
Parting Shot



DENNIS G. MANNING
Headmaster

The Year of *Courage Amid Covid*

What a year it has been for all of us — so many lives lost in our nation and the world; so much upheaval in our daily routines; and such a demand for selflessness and sacrifice. And even as I write this letter — weeks ahead of the time when it will land in your mailbox — a lingering sense of uncertainty remains, even as we feel our nation, and possibly the world community, turning the corner at last on the Covid-19 pandemic. It is tempting to look only ahead to brighter days, to close the door on a dark chapter without a backward glance, but it is through reflecting on our *Year of Courage* that we can gain perspective and ask ourselves the question that is at the heart of education:

What have we learned?

We learned what it looked like to put one of the school's core objectives into daily practice: "To foster a sense of responsibility for service to others, first through respect for self and then for every other member of the community until unselfishness of thought and action becomes habit." Day after day, everyone in the Bulldog family demonstrated selflessness in practice. Students and parents quarantined to keep others safe. People showed patience, as many tasks took extra time, from uploading assignments to Canvas to waiting in line to pick up lunch and eat outdoors in all sorts of weather. Through it all, our students continued to reach out beyond the campus, carrying out service projects to support partner organizations in the community.

We learned and lived "the necessity for judicious experimentation with the new," another of the school's central objectives. From the first day, when we launched into school with document cameras and Zoom to connect our learners at home with their classmates, we felt the power of ingenuity in our classroom practices. Inventiveness was the order of the day for our athletics and arts, from athletic training camps to our radio play and videotaped dance shows, which premiered online. While we couldn't travel, our foreign language students connected online with students overseas, and our Batten Fellows provided virtual tutoring to elementary school students at Tidewater Park and to students in refugee families.

Above all, we learned that anything is possible when we work together. I remain profoundly inspired by, and grateful for, the support we received in our unstinting effort to accomplish our goal of daily in-person and distance instruction. We received invaluable guidance from members of the Bulldog family in the medical community. From across the country, alumni, grandparents and parents of alumni, and friends of the school contributed to our Academy Fund, helping us and cheering us on every step of the way. Above all, our students came together as one united Bulldog team, led by our teacher-coaches, to support one another.

Together, we are, indeed, Bulldog Strong! ♦

OPPOSITE: Third Grade Teacher Tom Etheridge and Andrew '30 work on a reading comprehension check-in.

Bulldogs Prevail:

IN-PERSON LEARNING AMID A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Even as Covid-19 closed schools across Virginia in spring 2020, forcing an emergency transition to distance learning, Norfolk Academy administrators and faculty began intense preparation for a safe return to in-person learning in the fall. Two plans — “Bulldogs Safe and Strong: Plan for Reopening” and a Distance Learning Plan, “Bulldogs Online: Learning and Teaching (BOLT)” — provided the framework for that return to the campus.

- Masks, physical distancing, and saliva testing.
- Teachers at the front with Zoom and brand-new Hovercams.
- Athletic training camps and arts on video.
- Innovation, front and center.



“The necessity for judicious experimentation with the new,”

a signature point from the Norfolk Academy Philosophy & Objectives, never felt so vital as it did in Norfolk Academy’s *Year of Courage*.



"Figuring it"

Plans are essential for the success of any bold and complex venture. Norfolk Academy started the year with two detailed written plans for safe, in-person learning during the pandemic and for keeping learners at home connected to the classroom. Yet before embarking on a full-scale launch of the school year, a scouting expedition seemed the wisest course of action. Study Skills Camps in late July 2020 was that exploratory venture.

Sixth Grade Teacher Phil Call, who led one of the camps, recalls the myriad questions at the start of the camps: Could the students even keep their masks on properly? Could they stay socially distant? Would they be able to concentrate on the work? What would lunch and recess look like with social distancing? Even with 20 students spread out at tables six feet apart in the

so that students who were working from home, whether as long-term distance learners or due to two-week Covid-19 quarantines, could find what they needed to keep on learning.

Collegiality was both a survival skill and an inspiration. During grade level meetings and in office conversations, teachers shared tips about ways to set up a Canvas page elegantly, coordinate assignments, or create fun exercises to give younger students a brain and body break as they changed subjects. “When they are getting squirmy, it’s time to pause,” said First Grade Teacher Jackie Evelyn. “They need to be comfortable and confident to do their best learning.”

Masks, which were worn throughout the day except for short, outdoor “mask breaks,” posed a challenge to expression. “Boy of the Day is one thing it affected the most,” Evelyn noted. “We typically work on eye contact, fluency, and expression. That was hard to do with a mask!” Teachers rely on facial expressions to indicate focus, interest, and understanding — all of that had to be communicated through the eyes. And for many teachers, it was a year of “could you repeat

out.”

A MANTRA FOR HYBRID LEARNING

Lower School multipurpose room, some worried that “it’s going to be dangerous,” Call remembers. “After doing the camp for a week, I could attempt to assuage concerns. I felt the school had it figured out.”

“Figuring it out” became one mantra for the year in hybrid learning, as teachers and students shared strategies for learning safely and successfully — from big ones, like how to use a Hovercam adroitly to show the teacher at the lectern and then flip the camera to show the entire class or spotlight individual students — to little details that made a difference, like how to make Zoom links and assignments easy to find on Canvas, the school’s online learning management system.

Some of the innovation built upon principles of education, well understood by teachers: Students learn best when material is presented with a high degree of organization and at a central location. Everything — or nearly everything — was uploaded to Canvas, a process that often had faculty working through the weekends,

that?” as students who typically speak quietly had their voices further muffled by a mask.

Given the challenges to expression and the limitations on movement, the arts and activity were important outlets for younger students, Evelyn observed. The first grade made art projects on Fridays, many involving simple items that students learning from home could obtain, like pharaohs’ collars made from paper plates and origami.

Dance and kinetic learning — essentially exploring academic topics through movement — expanded dramatically in the Lower School, in addition to daily P.E. classes. Topics for lower elementary grades included ancient Egypt, the rainforest, geometry, and African kingdoms. The sixth graders had a total of 14 weeks of dance lessons, culminating in a “Flash Mob” performance in Wynne-Darden Stadium. Dance Master Elbert Watson, who worked with Dance Instructor Suzy Gunn ’01 to develop the new curriculum, noted, “Because movement was restricted in classrooms and hallways, students were afforded the liberty to not only express themselves and explore

Building bridges between students on campus and

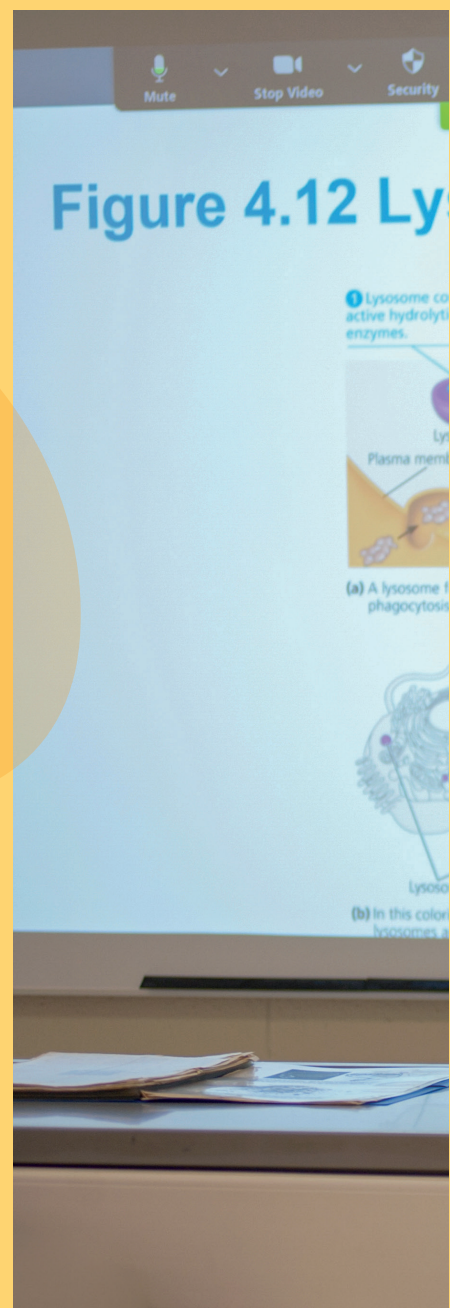
space and their bodies in new ways, but also to create new neurological pathways that would not have been tapped if students had not been challenged in this way.”

Forging and sustaining relationships, central to the school’s approach to learning, comprised one of the year’s biggest challenges. In addition to masks and physical distancing, which sometimes made even in-person interactions a bit stilted, teachers worked intensively to build bridges between students working from home, whether long-term or for a few weeks due to mandatory quarantines. “Community is what makes Norfolk Academy special,” said Dr. Natasha Naujoks, Upper School history teacher and director of International Programs. “That is what has suffered for the long-term distance learners. We are delivering quality instruction and academics, but it is hard to replicate the intangibles in a virtual context.”

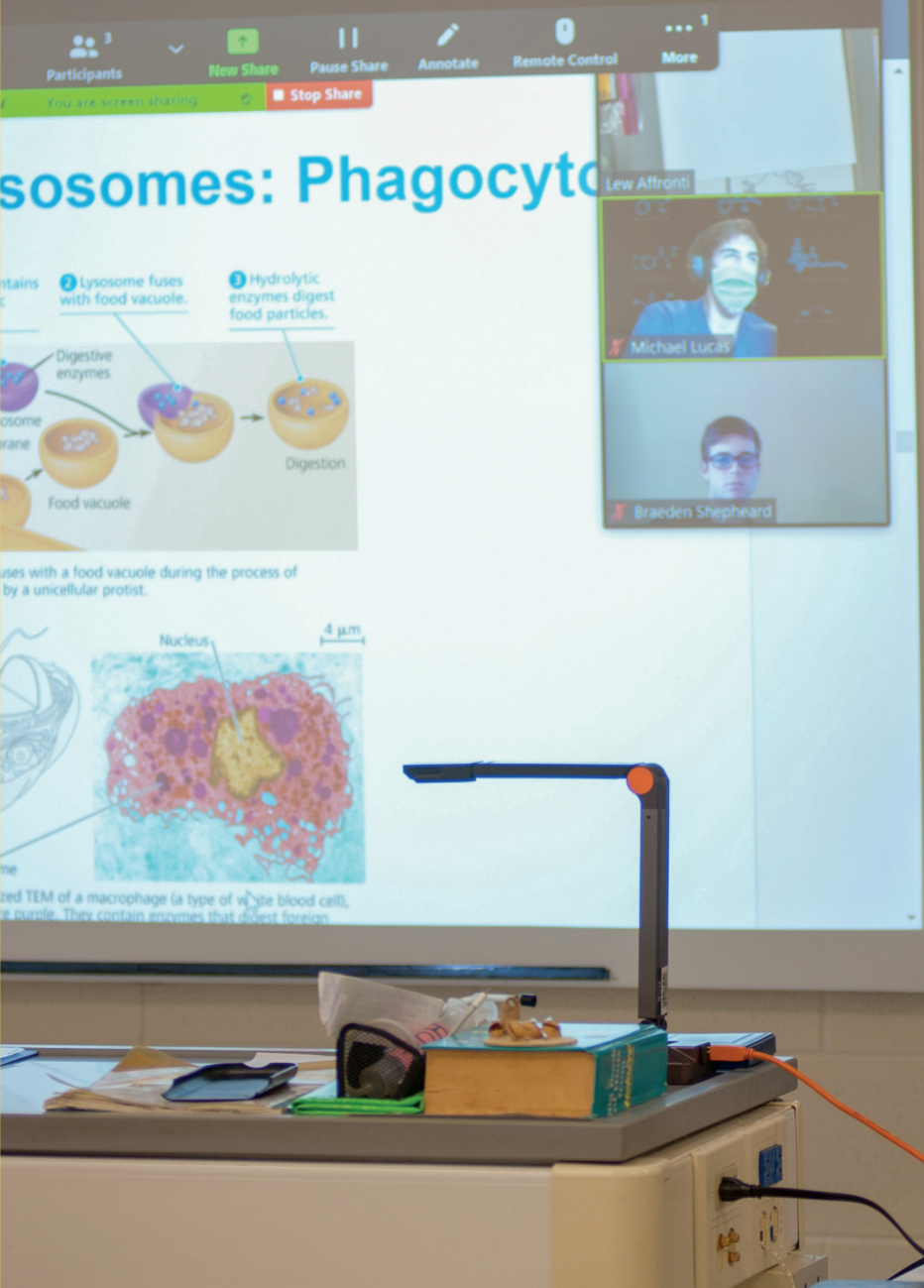
Naujoks, who served as a co-chair of the Distance Learning Task Force with Call and Upper School Math Teacher Steven Goldburg ’04, noted that many teachers would use a “virtual buddy” system, pairing a distance learner with an in-person partner. An expansion of the school’s Bring Your Own Device program meant that every student in grades 6–12 had laptops; whether using FaceTime or popping on a pair of headphones to Zoom with a partner, these one-to-one connections had character-building benefits. “It fosters a sense of mutual responsibility and accountability,” Naujoks observed. Call added, “Some students are very shy onscreen in a classroom,” so the distance learners needed to talk to teachers or peers individually to share their thoughts comfortably.

By the end of the year, as vaccination rates sent Covid-19 cases plummeting in Hampton Roads, more students returned to in-person learning, and quarantines were increasingly rare. A sense of normalcy began to return, and full faces appeared, as masks could be removed for outdoor activities. Still — from the yearbook’s title, “Covid Edition,” to poems like “Haikus on a Pandemic” in the school’s literary magazine — the grueling quality of accomplishment in the *Year of Courage* was undeniable. “It is amazing what you can withstand,” Evelyn observed. “It is amazing how you rise to the occasion.” ♦

Esther Diskin is Director of Communications.



at home.



TOP: A challenge for all teachers, like Sixth Grade Teacher Jason Kastrounis, was figuring out how to sustain relationships with students through masks and social distancing. **CENTER:** Upper School Science Department Chairman Lew Affronti leads a lesson for both in-person and online learning students. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Leanna '31 enjoys a good book. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Sixth Grade Teacher Phil Call, pictured here in class, also led a Study Skills Camp that served as preparation for the school year.

Bucket Drumming & Genius Hour

RESOURCE TEACHERS GET CREATIVE

Think for a moment about Home Depot buckets — the plastic, orange objects that store paint brushes, brooms, and other household repair items. Music probably isn't the first thought that jumps to mind. But last fall, Lower School students received lessons in bucket drumming, courtesy of Music Teacher Becky Peterson. On warm October days, classes migrated to tents set up outdoors and serenaded one another by rhythmically banging the buckets with drumsticks.

How and why did Home Depot become part of the music curriculum? Creativity — which was on display in every resource class last year, as teachers adapted lessons to fit the many measures Norfolk Academy implemented to keep its community safe amid Covid.

One safety protocol at school was the limiting of student travel. That meant resource teachers did not have their own classrooms. They taught in the homeroom teacher's room or took the class outside.

Early on, Stephanie Cress, who taught computers, realized she needed to read the room once she walked in. Sometimes, students had been sitting a while and needed a livelier lesson. But lively couldn't mean boisterously loud — doors and windows stayed open for air circulation and teachers didn't want to disturb nearby classes. So teachers scoured the internet, talked amongst themselves, and peppered social media groups with questions, trying to pick out the best lessons given the circumstances. "You have to think outside the box," Cress said.

In normal times, singing and stage productions are the staples of Peterson's music classes. Alumni might fondly recall the *Three Piggy Opera*. But studies show singing can spread the virus farther than speaking — even with masks on. That meant singing during classes was out. So, Peterson did her research. Bucket drums and Boomwhackers (plastic tubes tuned to various musical pitches) are just two ideas she found that engaged students. "It has to still have vibrance. It has to still have excitement," she said.

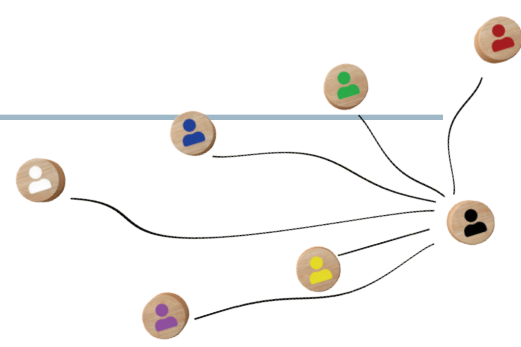
In addition to the traditional resource classes, Lower School students took a class called Genius Hour. Similar to the popular television show *Shark Tank*, students created and pitched ideas for projects they worked on during the year. This strengthened their research skills and their public speaking to deliver the presentations before classmates and "judges" — teachers recruited from other divisions to provide feedback. Lower School Director Michelle Alexander introduced the course, and several teachers helped teach it across all six grade levels.

While resource teachers look forward to conditions returning to normal, they see a Covid-19 silver lining in how they worked together so well amid challenging circumstances. "I think it has brought the community closer," Cress said. ♦

Mike Connors is Digital News and Social Media Specialist.



LEFT: Lower School Music Teacher Becky Peterson leads sixth graders through a lesson on bucket drumming in October 2020.



Studying Independently & Missing Friends

THE DISTANCE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Well before the 2020–21 year started, school leaders recognized that returning to campus for classes would not be possible for every student.

With that in mind, Norfolk Academy devoted resources to bulking up the Distance Learning program that it implemented late in 2019–20, as schools across Virginia were ordered closed. Most notable, Academy installed HoverCams, state-of-the-art cameras, allowing students at home to become part of lessons: The combination of laptops, projectors, and HoverCams allowed a student's Zoom image to be projected on the big screen while an image of the class could be shared with the student at home.

Distance Learning constantly evolved, as teachers and students learned how to make effective connections. William Chung '27 sees Distance Learning as a valuable skill because more and more professionals are working from home at least part-time, a trend that seems likely to continue even after life becomes more normal. "You need to learn how to adapt to your new environment," William said. Studying from the "office" in his bedroom let William spend more time with family, and he didn't have to deal with small nuisances, such as carrying a heavy backpack. However, there were downsides. He missed friends and occasionally lost focus if someone else was cooking or watching television. "You have to have the mental resilience to stay on track," he said.

Areen Syed '24 learned how to take better notes and study more efficiently in Distance Learning. She liked being able to sleep later and never having to worry about accidentally forgetting an assignment at home. The lack of regular, direct interaction with friends also led her to value those friendships more, and after vaccinations began, that growing loneliness brought her back to campus for the last few months of 2020–21. "I missed seeing all of my friends," she said.

Kristen Tan '22 prized the independence that Distance Learning offered, including the small things, like the freedom to sit crisscross on her chair or stand for a stretch during class. When she wrote essays, she read sentences aloud to make sure that the writing



Fifth Grade Teacher Reggie Cole teaches students online and in the classroom.

sounded natural, and she sometimes talked herself through the steps in math problems. She also enjoyed the freedom to eat whatever she wanted for lunch. Sometimes she raised the culinary bar. "If I am feeling extra productive, I will meal prep over the weekend. Noodles, rice, or salmon," she said. "That gives me a base, and then I'll put different sauces on it, like a soy-based sauce one day, and an olive oil and parmesan sauce the next day." Yet, she notes, it was difficult to hear classmates during discussions, unless the teacher repeated what they said. She also missed her friends. "That's the biggest thing," she said.

Fifth Grade Teacher Reggie Cole made a point to include Distance Learners in discussions, and address them the same way he addressed students in the classroom. But one negative was that he couldn't read students' emotions as well through a computer screen. He needed to keep an extra eye out for subtleties. "Your radar has to be up more," he said. Distance Learning can be a challenge for students because it requires them to be more independent. But by fifth grade, as they're growing up, that can be a positive, he said. "I think it sets them up to be able to handle more mature responsibilities." ♦

Mike Connors is Digital News and Social Media Specialist.

A Pioneering Step for Safety: Surveillance Testing



My point of view was that we wouldn't open unless it was safe in an absolute sense. I asked myself, "Would I be comfortable walking the halls all day under the plan we've put in place?" RUSTY FRIDDELL '69, NORFOLK ACADEMY TRUSTEE

For an entire school year, Norfolk Academy pursued an approach to Covid-19 safety unlike nearly any independent or public school in the nation: surveillance testing of the entire on-campus community.

On a biweekly basis, students, faculty, and staff delivered their samples for testing — during the first weeks, a nasal swab, and for most of the year, a tiny tube of saliva. The scope of the initiative can be measured in one astonishing number.

29,586 tests.

Surveillance testing was used in combination with myriad other measures to create a safe learning environment. But surveillance testing was the one extraordinary measure that put the school at the forefront nationally, and it allowed in-person learning to happen on campus throughout the year without closures due to outbreaks.

It also made Norfolk Academy's data central to an important study of Covid-19 in school settings conducted by Dr. Jonathan Zenilman, an infectious disease specialist at Johns Hopkins University, who was on a team of medical advisors guiding the Academy in its decision-making process. "The level of commitment by school leaders was extraordinary," Zenilman said. "I was surprised at how fast the leadership became conversant in infectious disease epidemiology. They really got it!"

There was no instruction manual that pointed the way toward any part of the re-opening plan, including comprehensive testing. In fact, when a group of trustees began meeting on Zoom with Headmaster Dennis Manning and Assistant Headmaster for Business Jeff Martin '87 in the spring of 2020, the school was finishing the year in distance learning. Everyone was sequestered at home. Cases were spreading throughout the world, and reliable tests were not widely available. "There was debate about whether we could be in school. Period," Martin said. "We were looking at uncertainty about infection rates, dangers to kids, spread in schools."

As spring gave way to summer, the debate continued to swirl. While many safety initiatives

moved forward, and the school assembled a larger medical team that also included local pediatricians Fred Fink '73, Paige Frazer '89, and Dana Ramirez, the question of testing remained a thorny one.

In the ongoing meetings of trustees and school administrators, one insistent and well-informed voice shifted the discussion in the direction of surveillance testing as an absolute necessity for a safe reopening. "Rusty Friddell deserves a lot of credit for the power of his persuasion," Manning said emphatically. "He spent hundreds of hours researching the issue, and he found Dr. Zenilman, who helped convince us."

For his part, Friddell, who graduated from Norfolk Academy in 1969, does not deny the "hundreds of hours" contention, but he gives a good measure of the credit for his marathon stamina in concentration to his education. "It was a novel, interesting, and important problem," he said. "It was instilled in us at the Academy to like a steep learning curve."

The ultimate objective was clear, Friddell said. "My point of view was that we wouldn't open unless it was safe in an absolute sense. I asked myself, 'Would I be comfortable walking the halls *all day* under the plan we've put in place?'"

Friddell was frustrated by the lack of trustworthy sources of information about Covid-19, but Johns Hopkins University was regularly posting well-sourced articles and accurate data about cases, so Friddell began making emails and phone calls to experts there. Eventually, with some connections from other trustees, he contacted Zenilman. In the course of exchanging emails and hours of Zoom calls, a friendship arose, one beyond practical collaboration. Friddell appreciated Zenilman's expertise, broad-minded approach, and creative problem-solving. Zenilman, for his part, was deeply impressed by Friddell's willingness to immerse himself in all of the details. "Rusty spent countless hours trying to identify testing providers," he said. "And the school was willing to spend a lot of money on testing."

Together, the two men convinced the leadership team that testing was the one way, the only way, to

truly understand the school environment. Manning was deeply moved by Zenilman's own commitment to the school — he donated his medical consulting fees to support the school's financial aid fund.

By mid-August, a plan had taken shape. The headmaster sent the school community a message: Norfolk Academy would conduct comprehensive testing and allow students back to campus in phases, starting with grades 1–3. Students who tested positive would remain home and quarantine — joining their classes as

distance learners if they felt well enough — and those who tested negative would return to the classrooms.

By September 21, all grades were on campus, and the school moved into a cycle that would be followed for the entire year — continuous Covid-19 testing (see “Winning Against Covid-19” on page 13). By January, adults on campus were receiving vaccinations, and the school eventually offered vaccination clinics for students, first for age 16 and older, then for 12 and older. Still, the testing continued.

Zenilman thinks Norfolk Academy's pioneering approach will provide an important model heading into the upcoming school year, as schools across the nation bring back students, many of whom remained in distance learning for the entire year. “I think testing will remain important,” he said. “Schools are semi-closed environments. You need multiple strategies.” ♦

Esther Diskin is Director of Communications.



FROM LEFT: Students, faculty, and staff provided saliva samples every two weeks. Rusty Friddell '69, a Norfolk Academy trustee, forged a friendship with Dr. Jonathan Zenilman of Johns Hopkins University as the two worked to guide the school through the pandemic. **BELOW:** Anita Pozin, who organized NA's Covid testing program, gets help from her husband, Glen Pozin.



Winning Against Covid-19: A Numbers Game

During the last school year, Norfolk Academy conducted almost 30,000 tests, enabling the school to find and isolate cases swiftly, preventing the spread of Covid-19.

How did a school become a successful mini-testing lab? It turned to Director of Summer Programs Anita Pozin. She, in turn, relied on faculty and staff who donated their time before and after the testers donated their spit. "This could not have been done without an army," Mrs. Pozin said.

Throughout the year, all students who wanted to learn on campus, faculty, and staff were tested roughly every other week. At first these were nasal swabs, but soon switched to saliva-based samples. On testing days, Mrs. Pozin typically arrived on campus by 6 a.m. and stayed past 5 p.m. But testing days were hardly the only ones when her army was hard at work.

A Brooklyn-based company, Mirimus, provided the test kits, analyzed the saliva samples, and relayed the results back to Academy, typically in less than two days. But the test kits did not arrive from Mirimus ready for distribution. When students received their kits, the items were in a bag with alcohol pads and a tube that guided the spit into a tiny vial. However, Mirimus mailed all those items separately, so several staff members helped assemble the bags — which came in bulk orders of up to 10,000.

More necessities: Printing bar codes with student numbers, grade levels, and birthdates, and scanning them — sometimes 1,400 at a time. Mrs. Pozin's husband, Glen Pozin, helped with this assignment.

Then there were the logistics. Mrs. Pozin gave up part of her holiday breaks to create forms so families could schedule their testing times. And when testing took place outside of school hours — the first ones were in August, before classes began, and

another round was in early January — teachers and administrators came in to keep the process clean and orderly.

When testing was done during school, Middle and Upper School typically tested during free periods, while Lower School came into the multipurpose room in waves, roughly 10 minutes apart. In those 10 minutes, nurses, staff, and teachers collected vials and cleaned tables. They also watched for online learners, who sometimes dropped vials off if they wanted to return to on-campus classes. "It was all moving very quickly," said Torie Porter, Academy's head school nurse. "A well-oiled machine."

There also were the moments that required extra attention, like when young students inadvertently tossed a vial in the garbage, and someone had to dig through the trash.

More work after testing was done: Mirimus tested the samples in batches of 24, so the team had to package the vials into dozens of containers for shipping. And they were under deadline pressure — everything was mailed via FedEx, which ships only a few times each day. When Mirimus notified Mrs. Pozin of results, she contacted Jeff Martin '87, Assistant Headmaster for Business, who started the process of contacting families and contact tracing.

Throughout the year, Mrs. Pozin lost sleep worrying about whether every student was accounted for and every vial scanned. But she found a silver lining in working with so many different staff members, many of whom she wouldn't come across in her job running summer and enrichment camps. And most important, students could come to campus for classes the entire year. "It was stressful," Mrs. Pozin said. "But it was totally worth it." ♦

Mike Connors is Digital News and Social Media Specialist.

29,586

tests done this school year

2

weeks: the frequency students were tested

2

the number of days to get test results

10,000

test kits assembled by staff per shipment

1,400

student labels created and scanned at a time

10

minutes between waves of student testing

Lunch Outdoors

BROWN BAGS ON-THE-GO

Numerous unsung heroes helped Norfolk Academy remain on campus fulltime throughout the 2020–21 school year, staff who performed yeoman’s work behind the scenes. Among those heroes: The men and women in the Refectory.

In a typical year, the school’s tradition of family-style meals, where students and faculty eat together, distributing food from serving bowls and sharing conversation around the table, creates an environment of fun and valuable bonding. But Covid-19 health and safety restrictions made the traditional approach impossible.

Instead, the Refectory staff packaged every meal individually in brown bags — 7,000 meals every week of the school year. Students picked up their meals and ate at spots around campus, from the Pit to the playgrounds, even on chilly days, only staying in their classrooms when the weather was truly awful.

For Meriwether Godsey, the company that provides meals daily to Academy’s approximately 1,200 students, Covid-19 posed a challenge and an opportunity to innovate without abandoning core values about healthy eating. Started in 1985, the company buys from local growers and providers as much as possible to reduce its carbon footprint and serve seasonal ingredients.

Christian Huynh ’03 oversees Meriwether Godsey at Norfolk Academy as director of dining services. He has worked in an array of roles in the food service industry, and he drew on that experience to continually innovate.

As the year was unfolding, Huynh explained exactly how his 16-member staff was completing the herculean task of feeding an entire campus while maintaining social distance and safety protocols — about 7,000 meals each week — 6,400 lunches, including about 70 for students with specific needs. Plus 600 breakfasts for faculty and staff. “It’s been about taking care of the community,” Huynh said. Even with the challenge of preparing and bagging thousands of meals each week, the staff maintained its focus on the nutritional needs of individuals. They prepared gluten-free offerings and meals for

students with allergies; a vegetarian option was available every day.

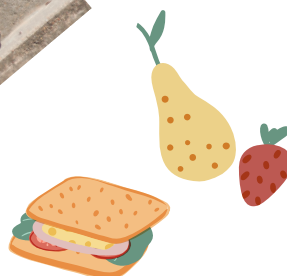
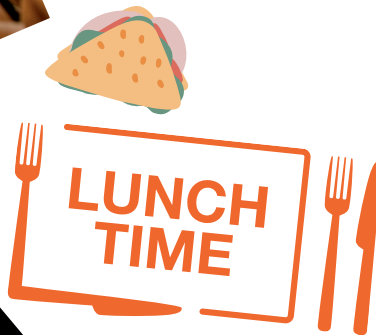
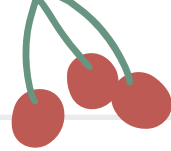
Schedules were adjusted from the norm. Part of the Lower School ate about 11:15 a.m., with the rest of the Lower School closer to noon. Middle and Upper Schoolers ate after that, finishing about 1 p.m. For Lower School, Refectory staff delivered meals to classrooms by cart, and classes then picked a place to eat. Older students picked their meals up at spots in the hallways, and then often headed to the Pit and other outside locations. The Meriwether Godsey staff made dramatic adjustments to their operations and schedule to accomplish the task:

- To maintain social distancing, servers were assigned to specific teams. For instance, some handled cold meals, others handled special meals. The breakfast team arrived by 6 a.m. The lunch team arrived by 6:30 a.m., at least 30 minutes earlier than in the past.
- Part of the Refectory turned into a preparation area, with thousands of individual bags. Each night, bags were sorted out, with dietary restrictions or allergies labeled.
- Kitchen areas were cleaned and sanitized at least three times each day, whenever someone walked away from that area.

Huynh often did not leave campus until 6 p.m., making for 12-hour work days. “I’ve got a really good team here,” he said. “They all are genuinely caring.” ♦

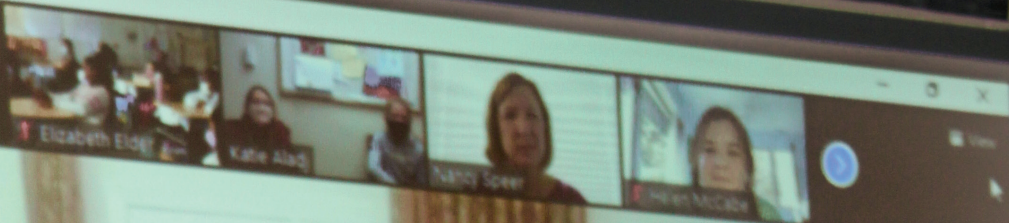
Mike Connors is Digital News and Social Media Specialist.

Refectory staff served 7,000 meals every week of the school year, preparing every meal individually in a brown bag and delivering them to classes. Students often ate outside at spots around campus.

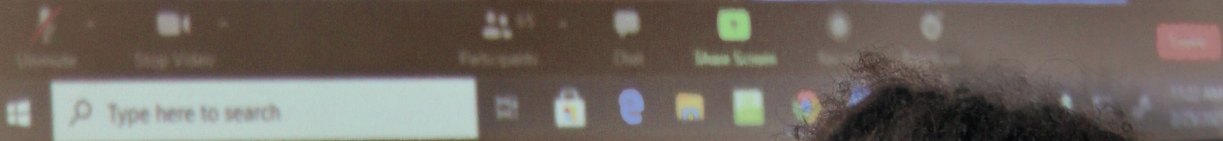




Zoom Meeting



Kwame Alexander



BRIGHTEN YOUR ADJECTIVES



SEMINAR DAY 2021

Students Explore & Soar with Poet Kwame Alexander

In 2008, after his second daughter was born, Kwame Alexander started the poem that is the text for his Caldecott Medal and Newbery Honor-winning book, *The Undeclared*.

In writing the poem — which he said took him one hour to put down on paper, and a decade to turn into a published book — he was harnessing the power of words to travel the arc of history for African Americans, from the tragedy of slavery to the triumph of President Barack Obama's election. He covered the achievements of Black Americans across the spectrum, from activists and artists to entrepreneurs and orators, and took the words of Maya Angelou as his inspiration, "We may encounter many defeats, but we must not be defeated."

The book, a *New York Times* bestseller, was the heart of the *All-School Seminar 2021: Issues in Social Justice* on February 25, with discussions as well as poetry and art projects inspired by it; faculty spent a professional development session to prepare for the seminar. After classroom readings of the book in advance of the day, there was great anticipation for the author's "arrival" on the Zoom screen. He delivered two truly unforgettable sessions, one for Lower School and one for Middle and Upper School.

Through both sessions, the bestselling author's exuberance, curiosity, and unstinting passion for reading and writing came shining through. "I am a writer, so I try to make the world better one word at a time," he said, before asking students, "What's *your* thing? Use it to make the world better."

Corey Brooks '22, vice president of UNITID Club, asked Alexander to describe himself in the style of a stanza of his poem. After a pause to reflect, Alexander replied, "I am not fazed. I am unshakeable, man!"

He told stories that had helped shape his perspective in terms of being determined and unstoppable in the face of barriers, several of which came from his time at Great Bridge High School in Chesapeake. After graduating from high school, Alexander went on to study with poet Nikki Giovanni at Virginia Tech and write 35 books, which have won numerous awards.

For Lower School students, Alexander offered insights that suited his younger audience. He told them that one of his favorite books as a child was *Fox in Socks* by Dr. Seuss. He revealed his excitement at getting up every day to write from 7 a.m. to noon in his writing studio, where he keeps "a blender to make smoothies."

As part of Seminar Day, students wrote poetry inspired by *The Undeclared* and created art projects. Students created origami cranes as an homage to the cranes that are featured as a symbolic motif in the book, which many students said they interpreted as a message of freedom and the ability to soar.

Yet, several Lower School students said they were most deeply moved by the starker pages of the book, which examine the slave trade, the 1963 bombing at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, and the Black Lives Matter movement. "I am African American, so I see the world a little differently," said Kasei Montgomery '28, "It feels good to see more about my history."

Both she and her fifth-grade classmate Emma Clark '28 had chosen "unlimited" as the word from Alexander's poem to spark their own original acrostic poems. Kasei's included the lines, "Losing no hope in what they are trying to achieve/In the moment; no trying to prove others wrong." Emma wrote, "Undeclared/Never lets someone stop them from doing something they believe in/Lives life freely and uncontrolled."

In his presentations, Alexander repeatedly emphasized the joy he feels at the chance to be a writer. "It is sacred work we're doing, when we are writing for young people." ♦

Esther Diskin is Director of Communications.

Bestselling author Kwame Alexander spoke virtually with students in all divisions on February 25, 2021, addressing issues in social justice.

From the Chapel: Pushkin



ON FEBRUARY 28, DURING BLACK HISTORY MONTH, FRANK MERCER IV '21 DELIVERED THIS STIRRING CHAPEL TALK THAT OFFERED HIS PERSPECTIVE ON TEACHING BLACK HISTORY, THROUGH THE LENS OF RUSSIAN POET ALEXANDER PUSHKIN. FRANK, WHO HAS STUDIED RUSSIAN FOR SEVERAL YEARS, LEARNED ABOUT PUSHKIN FROM A CONVERSATION WITH DANCE MASTER ELBERT WATSON.

How do we define Black history? Is it a series of stories about slavery confined to a 28-day month? Is it a two-hour seminar on what the Black experience is really like? Or is it, as one student described, teachings about oppression and suffering while ignoring the lessons of Black agency, and global connections with Blackness?

In light of our current socio-political climate, the need for unconventional Black stories to be integrated into our history lessons is at its highest. We need to dismantle the idea that the only thing people of color have been doing for the past few centuries is fighting for their basic human rights and protesting white patriarchy. People of color are much more than that. It's important for us to tell other Black stories because hearing Black stories not only sparks inspiration in the minds of Black students, but it imbues a sense of pride in our history.

Black history is not limited to Black American history because of the shared experiences with those from the African diaspora. Black history isn't just about all of the bad times we've been through. It's about integrity, leadership, achievement, and determination.

Today, I would like to share with all of you my experience as a Russian literature and language student. You may be thinking, what does Black History Month have to do with Russian literature and language? To answer that question, I'd like to tell you about Alexander Pushkin, who is considered to be the founding father of the modern Russian language. Pushkin bridged the gap that existed between spoken

and written word, creating an improved Russian language that is analogous to the spoken word. He is often compared to Shakespeare, but I believe this comparison does Pushkin's influence over the Russian language a slight injustice. Pushkin wrote, "No Russian man of letters except me can count a Negro among his ancestors."

Pushkin was the great-grandson of an African enslaved man named Abram Hannibal, who was brought to imperial Russia as a boy, adopted and educated by Peter the Great, and went on to become a highly educated Russian general. While Pushkin was alive, his poems were often read to African immigrants upon arrival to Russia, as a signal of acceptance. Pushkin was not ashamed of his enslaved grandfather nor was he ashamed of his own Blackness.

Pushkin before his death wrote a 30-page novel titled *The Negro of Peter the Great*, in which he talked about his experiences as a Black man in Russia and dissected how his great-grandfather's legacy was crucial to his poetry. However, one thing that he did not credit to his great-grandfather was his ability to utilize Russian swear words alongside eloquent French-derived words.

To summarize Pushkin's writing style and the Russian language he created, I offer a comparison to a quote by Mark Twain. Mark Twain said, "My works are like water. The works of the great masters are like wine. But everyone drinks water." Within this analogy I believe Pushkin's poems to be box wine. Accessible yet sophisticated.

Pushkin was an activist who fought for people's freedoms and rights with the power of his words. In one of his poems, Pushkin wrote, "There is no happiness in this world,/Only peace and freedom."

Pushkin is often compared to the Black American poet Langston Hughes for his singular integration of rhythmic patterns into his writing. In Pushkin's critique of America he wrote: "All that is noble, unselfish, everything elevating the human spirit is suppressed by implacable egotism and the striving for... comfort — Negro slavery amidst culture and

freedom; genealogical persecutions in a nation without nobility..." Both Russian and American history are connected by Pushkin's African roots. He raised the discussion of access to privilege and power for Black people. Pushkin was considered to be the ideal Russian and without Pushkin and his Blackness, Russia is not the same Russia.

Black History Month should be taken as a reminder to continue engaging with Black history in order to properly understand the present Black experience. That history extends beyond hardships, including a plethora of successes and achievements to be celebrated. This year, it also follows a tumultuous period during which racial justice calls reached an apex. As this month-long spotlight during February comes to an end, I beg you to continue learning from and about Black leaders and their accomplishments. As Carter Woodson, who launched the first celebration of "Negro History Week," the precursor of Black History Month, said, "Those who have no record of what their forebears have accomplished lose the inspiration which comes from the teaching of biography and history."

I'd like to conclude by sharing some lines from Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, a novel written in verse.

Что наши лучшие желанья,
Что наши свежие мечтанья
Истлели быстрой чередой,
Как листья осенью гнилой.

Translation:

*Sad that our finest aspiration,
Our freshest dreams and meditations,
In swift succession should decay,
Like Autumn leaves that rot away.* ♦

Frank Mercer IV '21 served as president of the Tunstall Student Council. He will attend Duke University this fall as a Robertson Scholar.



Alexander
Pushkin



Exploring Diverse Voices

The “Summer of Racial Reckoning” has created a heightened sense of urgency for teachers across the country to introduce more BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) authors into English curricula. Educators are developing a deeper appreciation for the racial inequalities that have brought us to this moment of social change. We also know that diversity encompasses a variety of identifiers — including race, gender, ethnicity, wealth, religion, sexual orientation, and ability — and English teachers at Norfolk Academy have been reflecting on the need for increased representation in terms of race and in the broader sense.

These recent and ongoing changes are part of a trajectory toward inclusivity that spans decades, one that still encompasses traditionally taught British and American authors — Mary Shelley, Shakespeare, and Emily Brontë on the British side; Emerson, Dickinson, and Twain on the American. As an English Department faculty, we continue to read widely and consult with each other, with our school librarians, with counterparts at other independent schools, with

Gaines’s *A Lesson Before Dying* and a unit on “change makers” that enables students to choose a book that appeals to them. In the eighth grade, students have participated in “reading circles” (small group discussions) around one of two books: Renée Watson’s *Piecing Me Together* or Mitali Perkins’s *Bamboo People*. In 2014 the seventh grade introduced the memoir *Warriors Don’t Cry* by Melba Pattillo Beals, about her experience as one of the Little Rock Nine, and a few years later added *Before We Were Free*, a work of historical fiction by Julia Alvarez that explores life under the Trujillo regime in the Dominican Republic.

Sophomores continue to study *Wuthering Heights*, though now they consider its social commentary in connection with the Japanese-British author Kazuo Ishiguro’s dystopian fable *Never Let Me Go*. Sophomores still read *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and they learn about the troubling history and complexity of the N-word by reading a powerful essay by Randall Kennedy. Students also watch Marlon Riggs’s *Ethnic Notions*, the groundbreaking documentary on the

Over the course of the 2021–22 academic year, Norfolk Academy will be examining the reading and English curriculum from first grade to senior year. **TOP:** English Department Chairman Ari Zito. **BOTTOM:** Lauren ‘22 in Speculative Fiction class.

in the English Curriculum

college professors, and with alumni as we discover and rediscover literature that will benefit our students.

Over the course of the 2021–22 academic year, the school will be examining the reading and English curriculum from first grade to senior year — a review that will involve scrutiny of how our youngest students learn to read and develop a passion for it; how students build versatility at reading different types of material, from literature to textbooks to persuasive essays; how wide reading promotes students’ effectiveness and eloquence as writers; and the array of literature that students explore during their journey at Norfolk Academy.

The rationale for an increasingly diverse curriculum is two-fold: 1) it gives students in under-represented groups a chance to see themselves and their cultures in great books that merit close study for their artistic and social value, and 2) it broadens everyone’s perspective, making all students, especially those who may not have much experience with historically excluded groups, more informed, compassionate, and prepared for the future.

Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* has been a mainstay of the ninth grade for decades. The ninth grade recently added Ernest

history of Black stereotypes in American popular media. They devote a unit to Harriet Jacobs’s classic narrative *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

As for juniors and seniors, they take semester-long classes together, a recent initiative that forges closer bonds between the two classes and offers students the chance to explore more varied literature in their final years of high school. The books they study include authors who identify as Black, Asian American, Latino, and Native American. While certain courses focus on the experiences of particular groups, many other courses include diverse voices that will help our students understand the literary achievements of people who were left out of curricula for centuries and whose experiences will broaden students’ perspectives and inspire them to serve justice, as our school’s mission calls on all of us to do. ♦

Ari Zito is Chairman of the English Department.



Pandemic Pursuits?

NOTHING BETTER THAN A SURPRISING BOOK BOX... AND A NEW DESK



The Literacy Fellows of the Batten Leadership Program study information and communication in all of its forms, considering how, at their best, the many different kinds of literacies (print, digital, economic, media, and more) work with social and economic power to give everyone a chance at an empowered life. To that end, we have studied books like *The Other Wes Moore* by Wes Moore, *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain* by Maryanne Wolf, and *Fire in the Ashes: Twenty-Five Years Among the Poorest Children in America* by Jonathan Kozol, finding that our very own Hampton Roads was also a fascinating area to understand and analyze. In addition to these scholarly pursuits, Literacy Fellows have been working closely with the Boys & Girls Club at Tidewater Park Elementary for seven straight years, strengthening the reading and writing skills of students in their afterschool program.

When Covid-19 shut down in-person instruction last spring for Norfolk Academy and for Tidewater Park, we were at a loss for what to do. In the past, Literacy Fellows have held a writing club in the afternoons at Tidewater Park, and we have published three books featuring their elementary school students' writing. The writing club was a place and a time where Literacy Fellows helped students with homework, shared workbooks and chapbooks we created (Star Wars and Black Panther books were very popular), and brought books for Tidewater Park students to read.

Judith Dunkerly-Bean, an assistant professor of literacy at ODU, has been an inspiring mentor for the Literacy Fellows program, and she gave us the idea for the Book Box Project. Dr. Dunkerly-Bean based her idea on the popular online personal styling service "Stitch Fix," where customers give their clothing sizes and style preferences to a personal stylist from the site who assembles an outfit that then gets mailed to the customer. With her blessing, we took this idea and ran with it.

The first step in our Book Box Project was to get information from Tidewater Park students about what kinds of books they wanted to read. Responses ranged from very vague hints, "I just want books that are fun," to very specific directions, "I want the second Harry Potter book." Each book box was carefully selected by the Literacy Fellows, and we drew from an increasingly large collection of gently used books to which the Lower, Middle, and Upper Schools have all contributed generously. Curating those

choices and decorating the boxes (complete with a personal note to each student and some handmade journals that Literacy Fellows learned how to make) was a joy to see.

Annalee Marling '23 shared about this work: "It has been fun to see what kids are reading and to play matchmaker and figure out what book to pair with them."

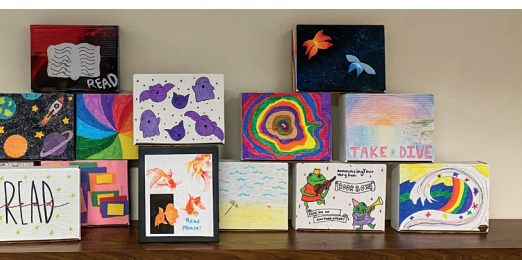
Literacy Fellow Blake Brown '21, who will be attending Duke in the fall, created one box that had a bovine theme and playfully involved musical theater: "Coming up with ideas for decorating the boxes was fun. I could harness my crazy imagination for something positive. Who thought a moosical (a cow musical) would be a useful way to decorate a box?!"

In addition to the work the Literacy Fellows program has done with book boxes, the Engineering, Design, and Innovation (EDI) Fellows built desks for students at Tidewater Park Elementary who wanted them. With students Zooming with teachers and doing all their schoolwork from home, they needed good desks. EDI Fellow David Smythe '22 made more than 20 desks and provided door-to-door delivery. Customized designs added to the excitement; if a student wanted a desk that was painted black and then had a purple crown and purple letters that said, "Queen Nala," then that's what David Smythe built.

Both the desk program and the book box program are looking to expand. The Literacy Fellows have already reached out to students attending An Achievable Dream, a nonprofit organization that partners with public school districts to provide greater resources and an enriched curriculum to children in underserved communities. The Literacy Fellows received more than 100 requests for book boxes from elementary school students in An Achievable Dream's Newport News and Virginia Beach locations. The first set of book boxes was delivered to the students in March, and a second set was delivered before the end of the school year — just in time for summer reading!

Thanks to the generosity of Norfolk Academy students, who donated books during book drives throughout the year, the Literacy Fellows will have distributed around 200 book boxes this year. ♦

Dr. David Kidd serves as an Upper School English Teacher and Director of the Literacy Fellows Program.



Fellows of the Batten Leadership Program continued to serve the outside community during the pandemic. Among their projects, Literacy Fellows built and filled book boxes to provide reading materials for public school students.



SOARING ON SOCIAL MEDIA



In November 2020, Jennifer Permenter '21 got the green light from faculty to launch @nabattenleadershipprogram, a student-run Instagram page that highlights the Batten Leadership Program. The page quickly gained more than 350 followers. For Permenter, who will attend Cornell University in the fall to study engineering, the idea started with her desire to share what she was learning as a Chesapeake Bay Fellow:

When I was in 10th grade, I created a Chesapeake Bay Fellows Instagram page in an effort to educate the general student body about environmental topics. The page launched that year, with posts roughly once a month, offering specific research to enlighten followers.

Early in 2020–21, I proposed taking the page to the next level by highlighting all five programs within the Leadership Program. Upon receiving the go-ahead from program directors and the Communications Team, I

organized representatives from each program, and collectively we gathered content and refined the overall page.

Content is added to the page at least once a week, providing information on both projects the Fellows are undertaking and the brainstorming that goes on in meetings.

As the school year closed, Jessica Ezieme '22 took the lead in handling the Fellows page. I hope that the page continues to shed light on the enjoyment Fellows share through their hard work.



Graduation





*The most
unstoppable senior
class of all time...*

ELLA DEANS '21
CO-VALEDICTORIAN

*Can we get a quick
three-clap?*

BLAKE BROWN '21
CO-VALEDICTORIAN

2021





TOP: From left, Olivia '25, Sarah '25, Taylor '25, Eliana '26, and Graham '25.
CENTER, FROM LEFT: Sophie '23, Madalyn '22, and Keira '22 were three of the Norfolk Academy Dancers in 2020–21. The group performed three shows that were recorded and edited before premiering on the school website.
BOTTOM LEFT: Olivia '25 leads a row of dancers. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Keira '22.



Dance Team Chases the Sunshine

Madalyn Mejia '22 is a talented captain of The Academy Dancers. But even she needed time to get used to the unusual form her forte took amid a pandemic.

During the 2020–21 school year, the dance team produced three shows: *It's Gonna Be a Bright, Sunshiny Day*; *One Moment in Time*; and *Alice in Stevie Wonderland*. They debuted not in Johnson Theater but on Academy's website. And they came together through practices, and the actual performances, involving masks and social distancing. "It was definitely difficult to adapt," Mejia said. The keys to the team's success were ingenuity, flexibility, and the team concept.

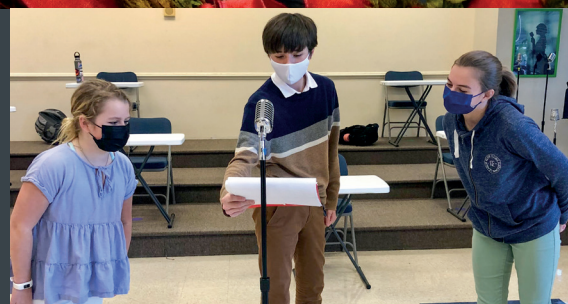
Fine arts in 2020–21 operated on the same calendar as athletics. That meant brief "training camps" in the fall with formal practices beginning in November. During the camps, dancers were grouped by age level, with Middle School students on one set of days and Upper School students on the others. That created more open space, but Dance Master Elbert Watson still adjusted his customary teaching approach. He took time to focus on conditioning and kept everyone separated even when they worked on the same techniques.

Those creative modifications proved beneficial. Fewer dancers each day meant more time for one-on-one help. It also meant dancers got to know each other better. "This shared experience has brought us closer," Mejia said.

While they were bonding, dancers were also getting used to a new concept. Since safety protocols prevented audiences in Johnson Theater, a team needed to record and edit the performances so they could appear on the school website. With guidance from Rob Fleenor, director of audio-visual services, students shouldered these responsibilities. Nate Ternes '21 and Averell Stith '22 handled lighting for the first show, *It's Gonna Be a Bright, Sunshiny Day*. Dance Instructor Suzy Gunn '01 handled sound playback, while Jasy Nelson '21 and Elizabeth Taddeo '21 took positions behind the video cameras. That same group, with Taran Jeevan '23 behind camera #3, helped with the second production, *One Moment in Time*.

The video team met weekly to discuss editing ideas, which Nelson and Taddeo executed. While unusual, filming had a benefit, Mr. Watson said. Shows could reach a larger audience, because they could be shared on social media and watched multiple times. Mejia agreed. "It was really exciting and fulfilling to know we were going to create something that could be shared with others," she said. ♦

Mike Connors is Digital News and Social Media Specialist.





Radio Play to the Rescue

Throughout the spring of 2020, with the Spring Play abruptly canceled, Drama Teacher Caroline Bisi spent her time coaching student singers and musicians in a way she had never imagined — on Zoom.

Working from their homes, the students recorded instrumental and vocal pieces for the annual “Be Someone” concert, creating polished performances with Bisi’s guidance. Some completed a multitude of “takes” before getting to the final version for release on social media.

As Bisi coached them, she was pondering and researching the drama options for the next school year, and she was receiving calls and texts from actor friends, as theaters nationwide closed their box offices and turned out the lights. What would Covid-19 mean for drama?

Shortly after the students returned in the fall, she at last had her breakthrough, inspired by students’ growing enthusiasm for podcasts and a tough reality. “When it came down to it, we couldn’t be onstage with a bunch of people and singing was banned,” she said. So she took the show offstage and into the realm where the voice is king: radio.

It’s a Wonderful Life: A Radio Play, a modern reboot of the beloved classic starring Jimmy Stewart, was the school’s Covid-year Winter Musical, and it posed exciting challenges for the 36 students who participated as part of the cast and crew. “They couldn’t rely on their faces and bodies to help their expression,” Bisi observed. “They had to dig deep into the characters, and then express it with just their voices.”

Covid-19 restrictions were in place throughout rehearsals. Cast members

came in small groups for each scene, reciting lines at microphones spaced six feet apart with the sound crew at a table. Masks stayed on even when reciting lines for the recording. “We tested five different types of masks to see which didn’t muffle the sound,” Bisi said. “This play was definitely an opportunity for the sound and editing crew to shine.”

Graham Webb ’21, who played the lead role of George Bailey, rode the roller coaster of his character’s journey from the depths of despair to a newfound, joyful appreciation of his value to his community. The work was far more grueling than he had imagined, testing his emotional and physical stamina. “I would sit in my car after practice and just breathe,” he said. “It gave me a new appreciation for acting. I had been comfortable in my acting in the musicals. This opened my eyes to noise and sound a lot more.”

To plumb the range of emotions that the show demanded, Webb would envision the events in the drama happening in his own family, including the bankruptcies and deaths included in the angel’s portrait of life in Bedford Falls if George Bailey had not existed. “I was telling myself it was real,” Webb said. “That is what it took to convince people through sound and sound only.”

The play premiered on the school’s website and social media, and it can still be enjoyed there (Fine Arts, Theater and Dance tab), along with *Casting in the Time of Covid* — a comedy about the challenges of auditioning on Zoom. ♦

Esther Diskin is Director of Communications.

The Academy Players performed the school’s first radio play early in 2021. **TOP:** Graham Webb ’21 was one of the dozens of performers in *It’s a Wonderful Life: A Radio Play*. **BOTTOM LEFT:** From left, Graham Webb ’21, Christopher Asuncion ’21, and Erin Clayton ’21. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Claire ’26, left, Austin ’25, center, and Addie ’25.



Masks, Training Camps & Go Bulldogs!

ATHLETICS COMPETITION PROVIDES A RETURN TO NORMALCY



As temperatures dipped and snow fell last winter, Norfolk Academy Football Coach Steve Monninger noticed a boost in morale around campus. The mood around the halls was brighter, the conversations had more pep. After about nine months, athletics — specifically athletics competitions — were back. “At a time when teenagers needed to have a sense of belonging, friendships, smiles, laughter, we got it,” Monninger said. “It was a weight that was lifted off the students, a release to be able to wear the blue and orange.”

Academy’s return to athletics competitions was a long and winding road, one that involved countless hours of meetings and planning among school and athletics leadership and a task force that included medical experts. It also required support from the entire school community. “I’m really proud of how we’ve handled this, from our students to our parents to our coaches to our administration,” Director of Athletics Chad Byler said.

The road back started shortly before classes resumed on campus, with a summer exercise program in Wynne-Darden Stadium. Upwards of 40 student-athletes typically arrived on campus for each hour-long session. Among the safety measures: They had to register online at least one day in advance; conduct a thorough self-screening and state they had no Covid-19 symptoms; park in assigned spots; have their temperatures checked before they exited

cars; clean and wash their hands before walking onto the field; stay 15 feet apart at all times; and wear masks before and after workouts and during breaks.

In a typical year, fall teams are competing about the same time classes begin. But in the Year of Covid, the Tidewater Conference of Independent Schools, of which Academy is a member, postponed all athletics for the first few months of the year. The TCIS also shortened seasons, with winter sports running from November into January, flanked by about two months each of fall and spring sports.

To prepare student-athletes, the Academy Athletics Department created “training camps.” During these sessions, teams practiced together for a few weeks, wearing masks and keeping social distances apart. Organizing such practices was not easy. Katie Roberts, head rowing coach, had about 60 student-athletes for her camp. Since typical training for competition was impossible with social distancing, she turned her focus to fitness — burpees, push-ups, and rowing on machines that were well spaced out on the outdoor basketball courts. The necessary adjustment turned out to be a blessing in disguise, allowing her to sharpen her focus on the health, safety, and well-being of her student-athletes. “It caused me to take a step back and consider what is really important,” Roberts said.

Once training camps ended, winter regular seasons began. While some schools around the state took an aggressive

approach, jumping right into full competition, and others canceled sports altogether, Academy's approach fell in the middle. Student-athletes and coaches were still required to wear masks while practicing. And the emphasis was on intramurals rather than interscholastic competition. That approach proved both popular and successful. Student-athletes enjoyed competing against schoolmates and there was almost no evidence that the virus spread during the season, even with student-athletes being Covid-19 tested as often as once a week.

Given those results, Academy expanded its fall offerings. Many teams still played intramurals, but there was more interscholastic competition. The success continued — again there were few indications that sports spread the virus, and NA teams won more than 80 percent of their games.

The spring season was run almost as normal, with teams playing a full slate of

games and advancing into postseason play. "We've tried to adjust to what the virus has given us," Byler said. He heaped praise on many members of the school community who devoted time and energy throughout the year. Many school staff members volunteered to monitor locker rooms to make sure protocols were followed, and check in the limited number of spectators allowed to attend games.

In addition, Head Athletic Trainer Antoinette Bailey and Athletic Trainer Joe Ingraham faced a major challenge. In a normal year, their room can be a hub of social activity, as student-athletes with bumps and bruises visit to say hello and get the medical help they need. Such activity requires closeness and contact. As a result, Bailey and Ingraham needed to be extra careful, constantly washing their hands and keeping their room and equipment clean. They also had to check up on student-athletes who stopped coming by because they were

understandably concerned about social distancing. Bailey said she reached out more to such students and took added time to observe them from afar.

That required a lot of extra effort, but it was worthwhile. Bailey points to the varsity football team's first game — a Saturday afternoon win over Nansemond-Suffolk on February 20 that was in fact the first varsity football game in the state of Virginia in 2021 — as encapsulating the joy this year brought. "That day was so uplifting, the joy of watching kids compete again and the reminder for adults of how much we love what we do." ♦

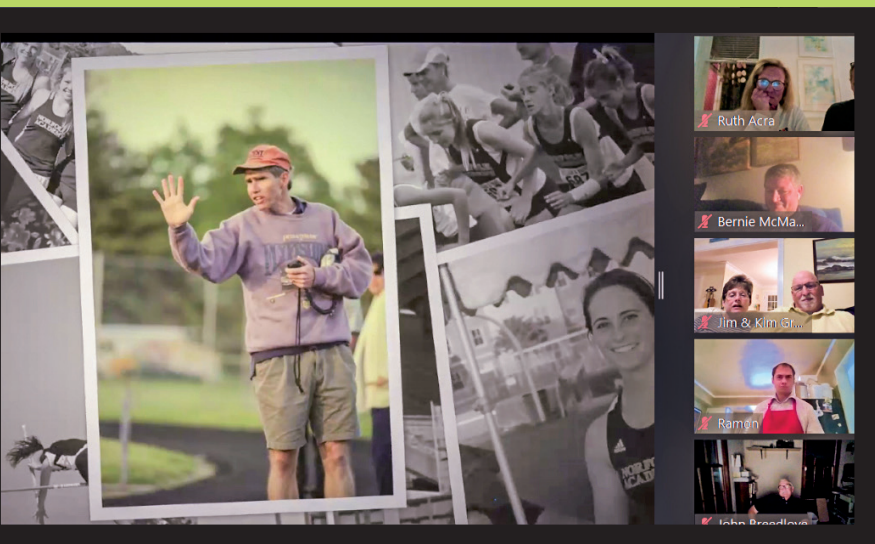
Mike Connors is Digital News and Social Media Specialist.

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM: Coach Ryan Tucker guided the varsity boys lacrosse team to the TCIS championship in spring 2021; Sierra Gilliard '21 sets up the ball during the fall 2020 season; Lee '22 evades a tackle. **BELOW:** Rowers, wearing their masks, bond together as a team.



BIG ZOOM AUDIENCES

Commemorate Coaches & Explore American History



Virtual alumni seminars in the *Year of Courage* continued to pick up momentum, even following a tremendously successful run in the spring of 2020, when the pandemic halted all activities on campus. The fall began with seminars to pay tribute to three legendary teacher-coaches who passed away in 2020:

- Tom York, who won 13 TCIS championships as varsity football head coach and served as athletic director for four years
- Ken Lampert '72, who coached track and cross country for 130 straight seasons over 44 years, earning nine state championships and 86 TCIS championships
- David Trickler, who was the director of athletics for 22 years and led the Bulldogs to two state championships in basketball

Those seminars attracted many generations of Bulldogs, and they stayed on the Zoom for hours to share often humorous anecdotes and more serious stories of the lasting influence that these

More alumni seminars are planned for the 2021–22 year. Follow the school's social media for announcements and check your inbox for invitations.

teacher-coaches had on their lives. Many noted that the coaches cared for them like family members. Sayings that they coined, like Coach Trickler's "It's a great day to be a Bulldog," and lessons they taught, like Coach Lampert's laser-like focus on details or Coach York's ability to shift swiftly from stern to comforting in response to a player's needs, still reverberate today.

The second part of the year brought two seminars that focused on civil rights and protest music, both organized by Upper School Math Teacher Tom Duquette. The first one explored James Baldwin's essay "My Dungeon Shook" from *The Fire Next Time*, which featured a reading of the essay by Chazz Woodson '01, paired with an interpretive dance by Elbert Watson.

That seminar, which had more than 100 registered participants, used the full capacity of Zoom discussion features with a shared video and breakout rooms for small group discussions led by faculty members.

The final seminar, on American protest songs of the Vietnam era, combined a listening tour with a discussion. Led by Toy Savage '71, Middle School history teacher, the discussion began with tough questions: Does protest music work? Does it accomplish its stated goals to spur change?

The selections investigated over the course of the night included Vietnam protest classics like "Blowin' in the Wind" by Bob Dylan and counter-protest songs like "Okie from Muskogee" by Merle Haggard. The group also listened to songs reflecting the current Black Lives Matter protests, such as "I Can't Breathe," the 2020 hit by H.E.R. (the persona of Gabriella Sarmiento Wilson). The evening's exit song was a Duquette favorite, "We Americans," by the Avett Brothers. ♦



SMILES

*Joy — masks off outside.
Playing at recess in spring.
We laugh together.*

NORFOLK ACADEMY

1728

1585 WESLEYAN DRIVE
NORFOLK, VA 23502

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Norfolk, VA
Permit #67



Stay Connected!

Join the conversation and be in touch with us.

 facebook.com/NorfolkAcademyBulldogs

 [@norfolk_academy](https://www.instagram.com/norfolk_academy)

 [@NorfolkAcademy](https://twitter.com/NorfolkAcademy)
[@AthleticsNA](https://twitter.com/AthleticsNA)

 [Norfolk Academy](https://www.linkedin.com/company/NorfolkAcademy)

 757-461-6236

