August 8, 2023

Dear Parents/Guardians and Students,

It has been a beautiful summer, and I hate to “put a damper on it,” but it is time for the annual Head of School letter to signify the start of the school year is around the corner. This is the 2021st opening of Foxcroft Academy, as we just finished a fantastic year celebrating Foxcroft Academy’s Bicentennial. A few more items will need to be finished with our “Lip Dub” project and the Student Council time capsule, and then we will have more than adequately marked this time in history. In my letter, I will introduce our new staff, provide some updated information concerning the physical plant, and introduce our goal for 2023/24.

I want to announce new members of the Pony Herd. Not so new is Donna Newhouse returning to the Social Studies department after a year of teaching at MCI. A strong teacher-leader and popular with the students, we are very grateful for her return. Jessica Ellis will be joining the Math department replacing the departing Michael Orcutt. Jessica spent last year as a Special Education teacher at FA. Amy Leighton, a long-time Educational Technician, will be a Special Education teacher replacing Mr. Straine. Erin Boyer, a long-term substitute in the Social Studies department last year, will join the English department replacing Ms. Rublee. Ariel Worthing has become the Assistant Residential Life Director and will assist Jon Pratt who will live in the dorms and serve as the Residential Life Director. Ann Marshall and Kashif Spencer will be joining us as Special Education Ed. Techs. At the time of writing this letter, we are still in the process of filling a Special Education teacher position, a study hall monitor position, and part time and full time positions in the cafeteria. Please help us to make all these new employees feel welcome.

There are no significant changes to the physical plant except for the bathrooms. The often locked Music Wing bathrooms will become unisex single bathrooms for students who wish to use a private bathroom. Keys to these bathrooms will still need to be signed out from the Main Office. The bathrooms next to the Pride Student Center will now become public bathrooms. All bathrooms/locker rooms will have installed vape detectors. There have been reports that a handful of students have been vaping in bathrooms, and steps are being taken to end that practice. These alarms also detect cigarette smoking.

A point of emphasis this year will be ending student cell phone use during the school day. As communicated in my June newsletter, cell phones must be turned off and out of sight during the school day. To mimic standard employment practices, students will be allowed to check their phones at lunchtime, not to make phone calls. If students want to use their cell phones to contact their parents, they can come to the Main Office or Mr. Tim Smith’s office to gain permission. Violations of this rule will
result in having the phone taken away for the day. Repeated violations will result in an escalation of consequences. For a student to use the bathroom during class, the teacher may require students to leave their phone on the teacher’s desk or another designated area. The desire is to have the students focus on their academics and not their phones at school.

Six years ago, the Foxcroft Academy faculty did its summer reading on the 2016 edition of Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance by Angela Duckworth. It discussed the importance of students learning to persevere through difficult times and situations. Duckworth writes, “Grit matters more than talent in achieving success,” summarizing the importance of students not giving up in the face of adversity. It is being reported by educators around the nation that students post-pandemic have generally lost their Grit. Along with myself, the staff at Foxcroft Academy has also noticed the loss of Grit in our students. It will be one of our goals to help students regain their Grit to succeed in life. Parents can help students develop problem-solving skills by encouraging them to be their own advocates, having the students accept the consequences of their actions, and supporting the students to not give up in the face of challenges. Aside from knowledge, high school is when students sharpen their Grit, a major attribute for someone’s success. A school is a safe place for students to develop their Grit skills, for if they do not learn these skills now, they will have to learn these skills later in life, where the consequences may be dire. By working together, our students will develop their own “Grit.”

I look forward to seeing new and Class of 2027 students on Tuesday, August 29th, and all students on Wednesday, August 30th.

Ride-On Ponies,

Arnold Shorey

Attachment