VIRGINIA BEACH FRIENDS SCHOOL

Knowledge. Character. Community.

Head of School Report

School Committee Meeting – April 14, 2020

Overall Summary:
As to be expected, Covid-19 has ruled our worlds for the last month. As of Friday, April 10, the school will have been in distance learning mode for five weeks. With this said, all teachers, students, and parents have seemingly gotten into a better rhythm with distance learning. The school wide survey that was sent out to families (previously shared with the SC) was helpful by allowing us to react to parent and student feedback based on the early distance learning experiences. One of the main areas of concern was families struggling to find balance and rhythm with the new academic model. Keeping this in mind, the school has and continues to try and simplify.

The school continues to take a number of steps and be responsive to parent/student feedback as we all continue to navigate the pandemic. Most recently, VBFS has created a Distance Learning Hub as a main link on the school's website when parents land on the homepage https://www.vbfschool.org/distance-learning-resource-hub/. The reasoning behind the creation of the link was to establish a central resource of information for parents with regard to all things related to our distance learning platforms and protocols.

Along with the new distance learning link, the teachers and Galen continue to be very responsive to parent/student feedback addressing issues of scheduling and workload. The school has had two professional development days since the start of distance learning. Both days were aimed at creating the most efficient, simplified distance learning program possible that maintains the school's academic standards, but at the same time, realistically addresses the complexity of distance learning and its inherent challenges. In doing this, master schedules with imbedded Zoom links have been sent to all families. These schedules have allowed parents and students to have easy access to links and the timing of classes to better schedule their weeks and hopefully, alleviate some household stress. Plus, Friends teachers are going above and beyond from a communications standpoint consistently making themselves available to students and parents with and effort to elevate stress.

Dee Talbert, school counselor, continues to regularly meet with students and parents via Zoom addressing the host of issues brought on by COVID-19 from the lack of face-to-face contact to distance learning stresses to cabin fever being felt by students and their parents. Dee, along with all teachers, are actively listening to students helping them to stay connected to our community beyond just Zoom meetings.

Looking beyond just Zoom meeting engagement, everyday our teachers are learning more and more about distance and online learning. For every educator across the nation, we are all back in our first year of teaching as so much is new for so many. With this in mind, VAIS (Virginia Association of Independent Schools) has been an incredible resource for the Friends teachers and administrators hosting weekly Zoom calls with peers in related fields across Virginia. These calls have given Friends School and insight to what other schools are doing to address the pandemic. And, the calls have allowed us to benchmark our distance learning program to others. What we

continue to discover through these calls is that Friends School has done an exceptional job creating a distance learning and virtual admissions experience at a rapid-fire pace with a small staff and fewer resources compared to many schools in Hampton Roads and across Virginia.

Finally, Friends School continues to receive very positive feedback for our overall response to the pandemic because of the exceptional work being done by everyone. Friends teachers continue to do a brilliant job fostering community from a distance, despite the many challenges and obstacles we are facing in the light of our new reality. And, because of this, our school continues to shine! This is best highlighted by a recent Instagram post by Dr. Charlene Hudson, parent of David (grade 9), Sarah (grade 5), Eve (grade 4), and Luke (grade 2). Charlene posted on her Instagram page that David has taken to making medical face shields with his 3-D printer and donating them to local medical professionals who are on the frontlines dealing with the pandemic. This is Friends School in action!

Admissions and Social Outreach Update:

As of April 15, the school should have 87 enrolled students for the 2020-21 academic year.
Total Enrollment Goal for 2020-21 = 127

Prior to COVID-19, VBFS had strong momentum moving into the spring enrollment season. The enrollment goal before COVID-19 was 132-140. The pandemic has pulled a number of prospective parents back from looking at the school until there is national clarity on what the fall academic year will look like.

Despite this, Friends School has and continues to be creative hosting virtual Facebook live Q&A sessions with the Head of School and Admissions Director, along with Facebook live tours. The Facebook Q&A had 298 views and the virtual tour had 1,600 views.

Plus, our First Adventures at Friends director, Sarah Combs, will hosting a Cook with Friends on Facebook Live for community members with the attempt of keeping the First Adventures at Friends enrollment momentum going. Below is the first email promoting the event.

VBFS Parents,

This summer (and fall) we are launching our First Adventures Program for grown up and me Toddler - age 5, but we want to be an added resource to your at-home schedule and family building time now!

Join First Adventures instructor, Sarah Combs and her family, as they host their at-home cooking show for your kids to participate! This is not intended for toddlers only; let's get all of our children toddler thru 12th grade involved (parent guidance based on educational level and kitchen heat usage).

This will be a LIVE event on Friday's at 11 - so tune in to our Facebook page - or come back and participate when it suits your schedule best!

Each week there will be a new recipe with ingredients lists available the start of the week, prior to Friday's show!

So go here this Friday at 11am to Cook with Friends! If you can't make it at 11, no problem! Just use the same link to replay the video.

And if you don't have the ingredient list on hand, no worries (we know groceries are tough to get these days)! Just join the Facebook Live to watch all the fun!

This week's kitchen goodie will be Chocolate Chip Banana Muffins.

Ingredients include (exact portions available on FB event page):

- *Avocado oil (or any flavorless oil like coconut or veg)*
- *Sugar*
- *2 Eggs*
- *All-purpose flour*
- *Baking Soda*
- *Baking Powder*
- *Milk*
- *Vanilla Extract*
- *3 ripe Bananas*
- *chocolate chips*

We can't wait to cook with you!

Academics:
See attached.

Development (summary only, full report to be given by Jim Metcalfe at SC meeting):
Results as of 3.31.2020:
Raised to-date: $295K
Budget is: $265,000, looked to stretch to $324K prior to COVID-19. As we will not be able to do our end of year Annual Fund push, we are likely to come in just shy of $300K.
% to Budget: 113% to goal

Annual Fund:
- $274K of the $295 is Annual Fund, no restricted

Annual Fund % Participation:
We would like to provide some trend numbers on our participation rates. Please note this is for direct giving to the Annual Fund (up and above buying a ticket to an event or bidding on an item at Founder's Day). We have made great progress!

Participation Rate			
School Year	17/18	18/19	20/21
Parents	13%	42%	56%
Faculty	8%	47%	77%
Meeting	12%	23%	31%
Total	11%	37%	52%

Buildings and Grounds:
During the mandated school closure, VBFS has remained open each day from 10:00 to 2:00 with Roberta Watt sitting at the main desk fielding phone calls, gathering mail, and addressing any issues that might come up on campus.

Candice and Mike continue to go to school for full-days multiple days of week to continue the "business of running a school."

Since the Governor's stay-at-home order, all Friends teachers have been directed to work from home and only come on campus when absolutely necessary. And, anyone coming on campus must obtain permission from the HOS or CFO prior to doing so, sign-in and sign-out in the main office upon arrival and write down what classroom they are going to, along with who they come into contact with during their time on campus. This is all in the event that in the worst-case scenario a community member who has been on campus contracts the virus, the school can track where they have been on campus.

Also, a new sign has been placed at the Laskin entrance highlighting Summer Camps, First Adventures at Friends, and Now Enrolling.

School and College Counseling

Our Seniors are continuing to prepare for the transition into their college careers. There are two students planning to attend James Madison University; one student attending Guilford, and the fourth student attending either Elon or Guilford (final decision will be made by May 1st).

There have also been accepted to Roanoke, George Mason, and Old Dominion University.

In recognition of their achievement, Kristin Barclay is working on getting "2020 VBFS Graduating Senior" signs for our seniors to put in their front yards.

<u>COVID-19 - Collective Trauma</u>

It has been very challenging to support our families during this reporting period. COVID-19 has changed everything about the way we function on a daily basis. Our seniors are struggling with the acceptance that their senior year has ended in such an abrupt manner. They are grieving the loss of what was supposed to be a major "rite of passage" in their lives.

Our students, in general, are struggling to adjust to distance learning in the midst of a pandemic. Many students have family members that work in the medical field, and they are living with the fear of their parent or other family member becoming ill. There are also financial stressors that have suddenly impacted families. It is taxing for our students to stay focused and show up every day prepared to learn. Parents and teachers are working very hard to help support our students while facing their own fears and realities related to distance learning and the pandemic. Dee has met with parents, students, and staff members individually via zoom to offer support and attempt to try to provide motivation as we continue to work through each day.

Mike and Dee are currently working with the Quaker Youth Leaders to develop some community activities in an effort of lifting everyone's morale – we have discussed having a spirit week for students, a community zoom charade game day, and an introduce your pet advisory day. Hopefully, we will be able to get the community interested and excited to participate.

<u>End of Year</u>

Although we will not be having the annual awards ceremony (at least not in the same way), Dee will be sending out the National Honor Society applications to the candidates after the Easter break. Students will still a apply in the same manner and acceptance will look good for their college applications.

Athletics and Special Programs

I. Summer Camp

A. All summer camp programs are STILL live!

1. We are still marketing summer camps
    a) There is a ton of foot traffic via Google Search Engine, Facebook, and MyActiveChild Blog site; parents are just hesitant to sign-up right now given the stay-at-home order by the Governor.

2. Payment schedule has been adjusted for families

a) We are now only requiring families to pay a 10% deposit up front for summer camp due to possible financial burden during the pandemic.

3. Have made contact with all external summer camp organizations; they are all also in holding pattern until more information comes out on COVID-19

a) Two of the four organizations are capable of transitioning camp programs to virtual learning platforms.

4. Contingency Plan is being developed in the event that social distancing order is still in place come the start of summer camp.

a) This could see core teachers helping out to teach refresher courses for MS/US students via a virtual platform.

II. Athletics

A. Working with the admin team to continually revise the attrition list to begin planning for sports teams for next year. We are hoping to be able to field the following teams:

1. MS Girls Volleyball (Fall sport)
2. MS Boys Basketball (Winter Sport)
3. MS Girls Basketball (Fall Sport)
4. MS Co-ed Tennis (Spring Sport)