VIRGINIA BEACH FRIENDS SCHOOL

Knowledge. Character. Community.

Head of School Report

School Committee Meeting – May 6, 2020

Overall Summary:
The month of May is Teacher Appreciation Month and the first week of May is nationally recognized as Teacher Appreciation Week. As a naturally optimistic person, I always look for the silver-linings in bad situations. One of COVID-19's silver-linings is the true excellence of Friends teaching staff has been put on full display. The VBFS faculty continues their top-notch online distance teaching. And for this, the Friends families and students have all been overtly grateful.

Since the start of the pandemic, the school has surveyed the VBFS community multiple times to gauge community response to the new distance learning platforms. After the first survey in late March, the school listened to community feedback and made appropriate changes to the distance learning curriculum and schedule. At the end of April, the school surveyed the VBFS population again (see attached survey results). The survey results are a testament to the strong work being done by Friends School's administration and faculty.

It's clear based on parent emails, feedback, and student engagement, the Friends faculty has risen to the occasion and the challenges presented by COVID-19. Between the curriculum created, the creativity in lesson planning, and the evolving use of technology to engage our students, the Friends faculty have earned a new-found respect from parents and students.

Even despite the challenges distance learning has created, VBFS continues to move forward on historic initiatives. Example being, the school was just awarded for the thirteenth year in a row the Pearl School Award by the Lynnhaven River Now Foundation for its work toward environmental excellence. Each year, Friends School has had to meet a number of environmentally sustainable benchmarks and curriculum criteria to be considered a Pear School recipient. And, each year, Friends School exceeds these requirements through the great work done by students and faculty members. There is no other better place to see this environmental excellence and stewardship than by looking at the Friends School Farm.

Walking on campus now in mid-May, the Friends School Farm is exploding with vegetables, flowers, and various plants. If you recall, the Friends School Farm including the greenhouse and garden beds, in a large part, have been expanded by the school's partnership with North End Juice located in Hilltop. Channing Miller, North End Juice owner, generously donated new garden beds and a hydroponic gardening system to the greenhouse. North End Juice has been using greens grown on the Friends Farm for the juices and smoothies sold at their store in Hilltop. Even though the Friends campus hasn't had

students physical onsite, Rachel Griffith, the Friends School Farm Supervisor, regularly sends video lessons home to students and parents about what is being grown in the garden. Plus, Friends parents have been invited to stop by the school and take-home vegetables grown in the garden beds throughout the months of April and May. These garden opportunities will continue all summer long.

As the school looks to the end of May and early June, the VBFS staff has been working with seniors and their parents to make sure these students have an appropriate conclusion to their time at Friends. The school has moved graduation from June 6 to Saturday, June 13 at 2:00. Currently, graduation is being planned under the guidelines of the Governor's Phase One social distancing regulations of no more than 10 individuals gathered for events. While we are preparing for this scenario, we are hoping by the time graduation rolls around, the 10-person limit will have been raised to 50. All social distancing requirements will be met during the event. And, we hope to make sure the students leave Friends feeling they experienced as much of a graduation as possible, despite finishing their high school careers in the midst of a global pandemic.

Finally, active discussions are underway with regard to what next academic year will look like for VBFS. The school is planning on running a combination of in-person and online summer programs. The start of the 2020-21 academic year is currently planned for Wednesday, August 26. During the summer months, all Friends teachers will be working and planning for an academic year that has the potential to phase in and phase out of distance learning depending on the ebb and flow of COVID-19. As always, we are hoping for the best and preparing for the worst-case scenario.

Admissions and Social Outreach Update:
As of May 6, the school has 86 enrolled students for the 2020-21 academic year.
Total Enrollment Goal for 2020-21 = 127

The school is ahead of where it was last year this time, even despite the pandemic

As of May 2019, we had 24 ES, 29 LS, 23 MS
Whereas, May 2020, we currently have 38 ES, 24 LS, 19 MS, 5 US

In the last week, VBFS has had one new application and over the las two weeks, the school has seen a dramatic increase in acquisition information from prospective parents via website inquiries.

Summer camp enrollment marketing has increased again as well.

Current prospective student Inquiries in the pipeline:

9 = Early School

3 = Lower School

3 = Middle School

Total Current enrolled	Projected New Enrollment
Cottage 14	19
Early School 11	6
Kindergarten 13	6
1st Grade 6	4
2nd Grade 8	4
3rd Grade 5	1
4th Grade 5	1
5th Grade 5	2
6th Grade 7	1
7th Grade 4	
8th Grade 3	
Seniors 5	
86	44

Academics:

Remote Learning

Since the last School Committee report, the school updated the end of year schedule after surveying students, parents and faculty again. The last day of regular classes and homework will be May 22. May 26-29 will be time for students to work one on one with teachers and catch up on any missing work in the Middle and Upper School along with some fun culminating activities like Field Day, Final Meeting for Worship, and a Friends Parade. From June 1-4, the school will be collecting school materials, computers, library books, and returning student belongings.

Also, we revised the remote learning schedule for Upper School students who seem to be struggling the most with the remote learning workload. After listening to feedback from teachers, students and parents, the school moved to having no more morning meetings on Wednesdays. Plus, the students now have a rotating day each week for catch-up work. On these days, students meet for morning meeting then after this is over, they have no classes and are free to work on getting homework or outstanding assignments complete. The rotating days off are Monday April 27, Tuesday May 5, Wednesday May 13,

Thursday May 21. Seniors will be done with a class May 8, if they have a C or above for quarter 4. If not, they will be expected to continue with work and classes with the rest of the Upper School.

This last week in the Upper School we have updated the late work policy to ensure students are completing work even if it is late. And, the school will be giving students an opportunity to redo one assessment in their final week of school if they want to raise their grade.

4th quarter grades

Given the unprecedented and challenging circumstances of this quarter, the administration has decided to implement a "Do No Harm" grading system for the 4th quarter. The school is developing the language for each division now, but the objective is to ensure that students are not negatively impacted by the circumstances of learning and living in these months that are beyond their control. Students will not receive a grade in 4th Quarter that is lower than their 3rd quarter grade. They can of course receive a higher grade if they earned it during this time.

Faculty

During our professional development day this week Mike and Galen met for a ½ hour with each faculty member. This was a check in. VBFS faculty have been awesome in their willingness to learn new ways of teaching, new technology, and support each and every student in their care. However, moving to remote learning brings a real sense of loss and uncertainty to all. They are tired. They are worried about what this means for next year, they would very much like to be in their classrooms with their students at Friends School.

Awards Ceremony/Graduation

We will be holding a zoom awards ceremony for Middle and Upper School students, parents and teachers on Wednesday May 27 at 6:30 and Thursday May 28 at 6:30 pm. Again, graduation will be held June 13, and we hope to include as many people in person with precautions, and allow others to Zoom in.

Hiring teachers for next year

The school has interviewed 4 semi-finalists for the Pre-K lead position using Zoom. They met with Mike and toured the school, interviewed with the assistant teacher, a group of parents and the hiring committee. In addition, they were expected to make a morning meeting video. We hope to come to a decision next week. Interviewing our semi-finalists for the Kindergarten Assistant and Cottage Assistant positions will also begin next week.

Meeting for Worship

Families continue to report how meaningful weekly Meeting for Worship is for their families, particularly those with younger children. This month during meeting for worship, we celebrated Earth Day, listened to poetry and created poetry about home, listened to a Faith and Play story about Quakerism and teachers. Our final Meeting for Worship is Wednesday, May 27.

Galen's Transition

Galen has begun working with Sandra Fink, the new Academic Dean, on a weekly basis to ensure a smooth transition as she departs. They have already begun preparing a more coordinated back to school supply list, and summer enrichment expectations and opportunities. We hope to have the schedule and professional development opportunities in place before Galen departs.

Thinking ahead

We are no different from any other school in this country. We must be thinking about what school will look like next year; and we are. As an admin team we are each on 1-5 Zoom calls or webinars with Independent School leaders or partners each week. We are preparing for all the scenarios. And, we will be expecting our teachers over the summer to continue to build their skills with technology and in the virtual realm so they can be prepared for remote learning in the future. As a small school we are uniquely positioned to continue to provide the devoted care and engagement with each student and family even in times of remote learning and new safety restrictions.

Development:

We continue to view fundraising through the COVID-19 lens. In general, many schools were starting to open their fundraising efforts this past week with #GivingTuesday. This was a nationally recognized 'holiday' typically held on the Tuesday after Black Friday. However, in this new landscape, non-profits got together and forged a #GivingTuesday, specifically during the hard-hit COVID timeframe. Friends School decided it was time to make an authentic ask due to the following reasons:

- No ask had come since Founders Day
- The school still needed to raise ½ of the $5,000 match from Dr. David Young

The result was $2,658 and an increase in participation for parents, faculty, and Meeting.

Results as of 4.30.2020:

Raised to-date: $298K
Budget is: $265,000, looked to stretch to $324K prior to COVID-19.
113% to Budget

Annual Fund:

- $274K of the $298 is Annual Fund, no restricted!

Annual Fund % Participation:

Updated % numbers are below. We are seeing a positive trend.

Participation Rate			
School Year	17/18	18/19	20/21
Parents	13%	42%	65%
School Committee	incomplete info	67%	100%
Faculty	8%	47%	93%
Meeting	12%	23%	35%
Total	**11%**	**37%**	**62%**

Budget and Finance:
Budget and Finance report presented at School Committee meeting.

Buildings and Grounds:
During the summer months, a number of buildings and grounds projects will be underway. The primary focus of these projects will be aimed at cleaning carpets, waxing floors, and fixing any classroom issues that came to light during the 2019-20 academic year.

School and College Counseling:
All seniors have committed to their prospective colleges. Final results are…

- Two attending James Madison University
- One attending Elon College
- One attending Guilford College

There is of course much uncertainty about what that attendance will look like this fall depending on what college and universities determine their opening policies will be based on COVID-19. Dee will continue to maintain contact with these institutions in effort of helping our students prepare for fall admittance.

On Friday May 1st, (Decision Day), for all high school seniors, the faculty participated in a neighborhood drive through parade to each of the senior's homes to honor them. Signs were placed in their front yards, and they were given their cap and gown while staff members blew their car horns and cheered for them. It was a wonderful show of community spirit. The seniors are definitely grieving the loss of their senior year and all the perks that go along with being a senior. The drive-by graduation celebration clearly means a great deal to both them and their families.

COVID-19 - Collective Trauma
The challenges of remote learning have continued during this reporting period. Students have worked to adjust and there has been progress, but it is a difficult balancing act, both emotionally and academically. Teachers have and continue to work to eliminate stress as much as possible while preparing students for success in the coming year. It has been quite the adjustment for everyone, but the energy continues to be positive and reassuring.
Dee conducts standing weekly sessions via Zoom with students and teachers who are experiencing the most anxiety and/or stress. She meets with other students and parents bi-weekly as needed. Dee has made multiple referrals to community-based play therapists and/or child mental health specialists. She feels confident that our community is receiving a great deal of mental health support.

End of Year
Three candidates for National Honor Society candidates were selected and informed of their selection and provided with the application to apply. Only one chose to do so and her application will be reviewed by a panel of three teachers. If approved, she will be inducted during an end of year ceremony.

Special Programming and Summer Camps

Summer Camp

We are proceeding forward with Summer Camp at VBFS under the Phase 1 guidelines outlined by the governor:

This means, there will be 9 students to 1 teacher per summer camp (until we are moved into the Phase 2 category; will re-evaluate if opening up more camp slots is a safe option).

Jason is working with Candice and Mike to help get updated policies and procedures out to current and prospective families with regard to measures the school is taking to ensure the safety of staff and students during Summer Camp with regard to COVID-19.

Toddler Fun at Friends Summer Camp is a definite go at this point. Only need about 3 more full-time registrations to be maxed out under Phase 1 protocols.

Summer Camp (6yr. - 12yr.) has yet to fill up as expected; working with Tamra and Kristin to get a marketing push out to the community letting people know we are still open for registration.