



My Maclay Families,

As the Tallahassee winter continues to yo-yo us between the 30s and the 70s on the thermometer, we have been enjoying a semblance of normalcy here on campus. I continue to consider us lucky, due to the hard work of everyone involved, to be in school and continuing our uninterrupted experience. All of us have sacrificed more than we knew we would or could over the last year, and even though the price has been high, I'm so proud of what has been accomplished. Considering the Presidents' Holiday coming up, I'll use a quote from Teddy Roosevelt on this topic, "We must dare to be great, and we must realize that greatness is the fruit of toil and sacrifice and high courage." We have and are currently living through a time that will be studied by future generations, and I hope as we write our story, it is marked with courage, compassion, resiliency, and our generation can be referred to as one of the greatest because we were courageous in the face of unique challenges.

My faculty are finishing up a couple of days of parent/teacher conferences and professional development. Thank you for connecting with my team and supporting them throughout this year. Changing some of the fundamental assumptions about education and how we 'do school' has been challenging. However, looking at other schools, districts, and regions, my crew has proven to be superlative professionals. I'm very proud of them.

As we enter into our last three months of the school year, the spring 'event' season is calling, and we have been finding ways to honor many of the traditions we believe are important. As we move through this pandemic, learn more, and receive additional guidance, we will continue to adjust our protocols and be safe yet creative. As we look to next year, we are hopeful and expectant to move more toward the 'normal' we were used to, but do so in a way that is stronger, more informed, and better equipped for the world our students will be growing in and graduating into.

There are some updates I wanted to briefly touch on as we move forward and I will make sure to keep you informed as we continue through this extraordinary year, plan for a robust summer program, and launch a 21/22 school year stronger than ever.

- We have taken the next steps in our Strategic Planning Process. This is a year-long process and Design Teams have been formed with students, parents, faculty, and board members to work over the next two months on long-term objectives that are relevant and responsive to our mission and community. This process will be completed by the end of this school year, and we will transition into our new Strategic Plan this summer. The four areas of focus guiding our discussions are:
 - Advance Our Regional Leadership Through Innovation and Partnerships
 - Enhance the Student and Parent Experience Through Investments in People, Place, and Program
 - Expand and Enhance Our Community Through Diversity, Inclusion, Equity,

and Accessibility

- Build a Resilient and Sustainable Model for the Future
- Congratulations to our National Merit Finalists, NASA Astronaut Challenge Finalists, and our Basketball and Soccer District Champions. Competitions on all fronts are continuing and Spring sports have started as well. And to Emmie, who placed first in the 4-H County Tropicana Speech Competition, returning champion I might add...good luck at regionals!
- Our annual Senior Countdown dinner will take place on campus on an upcoming weekend. We are excited to continue this tradition to honor those who are so close to completing their Maclay campus journey.
- 12th grade graduation exercises have been scheduled for the morning of May 20th. We are excited to have our 2016 Distinguished Alumnus, Dr. Deryk Jones back to speak to our 2021 Senior class about dedication, service, and giving back to the next generations.
- We were excited to see the recent CDC guidance on quarantine practices as it relates to those who have received the complete series of vaccine shots. Moving forward, this will build resilience, and better predictability for our community as the vaccine distribution continues in the months ahead.
- We are excited to have completed the hiring of our entire senior academic team for next year. We have also been working through the design process for the "old" science building which will become the new home for the Center for Academic Excellence, the hub and home for ensuring that our innovation in education stays at the forefront of the national conversation.
- Next Thursday, February 18th, we will host a Giving Day in support of the Maclay Fund. We are so thankful to each of you who have already donated to the Maclay Fund and hope that on this day, you will know how much we appreciate your support and contribution to the work we are doing on campus. More information can be found at [Maclay.org/givingday](https://maclay.org/givingday).
- Enrollment contract rollover is Monday. Your child's enrollment contract for this current year will automatically roll over to next year unless you instruct us to end or hold your commitment for enrollment for the 2021-22 school year. This notification must be made to Michael Obrecht, Director of Admissions by Monday, February 15, 2021. Otherwise, your contract will renew for next year and we will continue our journey together.

One of the conversations we have spent a great amount of time on inside the school is one of mental health. We have been focusing on our students and ourselves as we know that relationships are central to our resiliency in this time of distance, isolation, anxiety, and uncertainty. I want to share with you the same encouragement and guidance we have relied on for almost an entire year, and it has seen us through. Beyond the standard meditation, exercise, sleep, proper nutrition and maybe a healthy hobby or two that helps you disconnect with your routine that you hear about; we have found the most important item to ensure you focus on is strong connections and relationships. These could be those you work with, family, or friends. This is part of the reason we believe in-person school is so important – it provides all of us the opportunity to connect.

Please continue to take great care of yourselves. I'd love to say that I do this perfectly all the time, but when I get discouraged, I remember that Thomas Jefferson exhorted some friends once, "when you feel you are at the end of your rope, tie a knot in it and hang on."

Stay safe, get more rest, eat some veggies, and wash your hands!

James



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