

Dear Lower School Families,

The weeks leading up to the start of a new school year are amongst my favorite. As teachers return to campus to prepare for the first weeks, excitement is palpable. Classrooms and hallways are abuzz with discussions about opportunities and possibilities, there is evidence of the intention and care that goes into setting up the classroom, and anticipation of eager, joyous, curious students filling the hallways and classrooms is prevalent.

This year, we've been thrown a few curves. There are considerations and decisions that we have never before faced in preparing for the start of a school year. The Lower School faculty are amongst the most dedicated, flexible, adaptable, and creative group of people with whom I've ever worked. Regardless of the circumstances and challenges, one thing that I know to be true about these remarkable professionals is that they will welcome all students back to school with open arms and hearts – as they do every year.

Many of you joined Mr. Milford in a [webinar](#) about what the launch of school will look like, focusing on the additional factors that we have considered and the measures we are implementing to ensure that safety of our students and faculty. Mr. Milford also discussed Maclay's Concurrent Virtual option. I want to follow up by sharing a few details about how each of these is likely to play out in Lower School.

## **On-Campus Learning**

### **Cohorts**

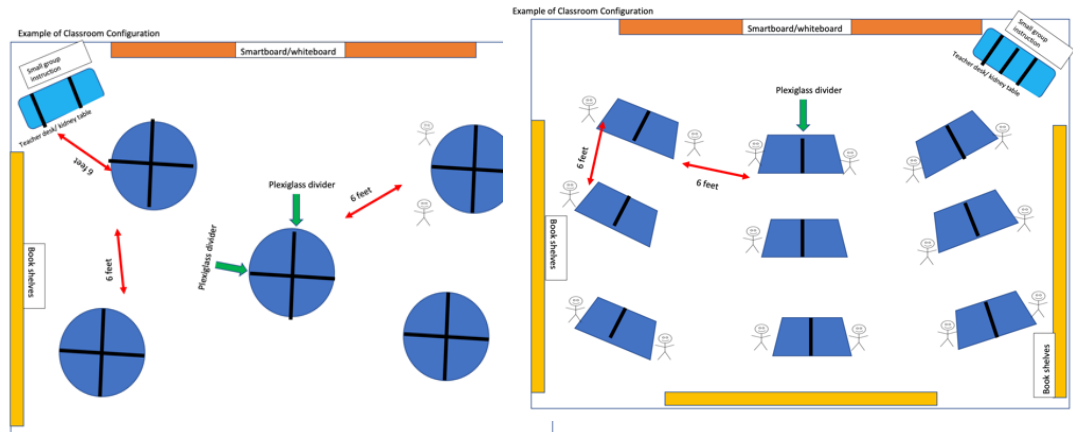
- As students in Lower School (PK3 through 5<sup>th</sup> Grade), are already assigned to a homeroom class, the cohort model is a natural fit. We have adjusted schedules so that cohorts do not intermingle at any point throughout the school day (8:10 -2:45).
- Instead of having students travel to various Special Areas classrooms, the Special Areas teachers will travel to and teach in each homeroom classroom.
- The Dining Hall and Cartee Gym will be set-up to accommodate spacing students in K-5<sup>th</sup> 6 ft apart from each other for lunch.
- During recess, each homeroom class will remain within a defined "zone."
- Conditions permitting, we will take advantage of our beautiful campus for "brain breaks" and, at times, instruction.

### **3 W's – Wear your face-covering! Wash your hands! Watch your distance!**

- All PK3 – 5th Grade students (except those with medical exemptions) will wear face coverings while inside. We fully expect that students will need to be reminded as they do with any new routine or procedure. However, we know that students are adaptable and that within a few weeks, wearing a face covering in school will just be "a thing we do." If your child has not worn a face covering for any length of time this summer, there are a couple of things you can do to begin building this habit before school starts:
  - For our youngest learners, have them wear face-coverings for increasingly longer periods of time at home.

- Select face coverings that fit well and are relatively covering. In the short period of time that the faculty has donned face-covering, we each have a preference as to what works best for us. If one style is not comfortable – try another.
- Invite your child to participate in choosing patterns or colors. Students will not be required to wear a uniform specific covering; however, we do ask that all face-coverings be school appropriate and not contain political statements/images or questionable language, phrases, or symbols.
- If you have any questions about medical exemptions, please contact Nancy Anne Teems, Director of Health Services. [nateems@maclay.org](mailto:nateems@maclay.org)
- Frequent hand washing has always been encouraged in Lower School. The shift this year is that we will spend additional time teaching proper handwashing techniques and allow time in the schedule for students to wash their hands before and after eating and upon entering the classroom at the start of the day and after recess. Hand sanitizer dispensers are being installed near building entrances and in the hallways.
- In some ways, social distancing and working with Pre-Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade students may seem mutually exclusive. We are committed to encouraging social distancing as much as feasibly possible – given our class sizes and room sizes. Additionally, developmental considerations impact how social distancing will be addressed across grade levels. As you can imagine, it is far more feasible to expect older students to maintain 6ft from each other than expecting our youngest learners to do so.
  - PreK
    - “Micro” cohorts – grouping 3 or 4 students together for a period of time (two weeks perhaps) during which those students will rotate through centers together, complete activities together, etc.
    - Rest time – as face coverings should not be worn during rest time, we will place rest mats 6ft apart.
    - Snack and lunch – we will do our best to ensure distance between students during snack and lunch, utilizing outdoor space and the “big room.”
    - PE classes will be conducted outside.
  - Kindergarten
    - “Micro” cohorts – grouping 3 or 4 students together for a period of time (two weeks perhaps) during which those students will rotate through centers together, complete activities together, etc.
    - Rest time – as face coverings should not be worn during rest time, we will place rest mats six feet apart.
  - Kindergarten – 5th Grade
    - PE classes will be conducted outside.

- Reconfiguring our classroom furnishings to allow for maximum social distancing. There isn't enough available floor space to have a full class of students seated six feet apart at tables or desks. When students are seated within 6 ft. of each other there will be a polycarbonate divider between them. This will provide a "layer" of protection while allowing students to collaborate and engage in partner work.



- Arrival and Dismissal
  - Arrival -
    - PreK Students will be dropped off in front of the PreK building as usual. There will be a couple of differences to keep in mind. Parents will need to unbuckle their children so that PreK staff does not have to lean into cars as much. Students will put their face coverings on before entering the building.
    - K- 5 Students
      - First Day of School: Students should be dropped off in front of Lower School** where we will have a team of LS faculty ready to greet them and guide them to their classrooms (and carry their supplies). Parents should remain in cars. We will ensure that students get to take the first day of school photo and share the photo with you. Those photos are precious to so many of us.
      - Second Day of School and beyond: Students should be dropped off between 7:45 and 8:10 at the entrance to the Dining Hall.** LS Faculty will direct students to their cohort in the Dining Hall or Cartee Gym. At 8:10, LS homeroom teachers will begin collecting their classes from the Dining Hall and Cartee gym.
  - Dismissal –
    - We are staggering dismissal time to reduce traffic density.
      - PK will begin dismissal at 2:30
      - K- 5<sup>th</sup> will begin dismissal at 2:45

## **Concurrent Virtual Classroom (CVC)**

The primary goals of the Lower School Concurrent Virtual Classroom are 1.) to keep students connected to their teachers and their classmates, and 2.) to provide access to the instruction and learning opportunities that occur on campus. This will, of course, look different for our younger learners than our older learners. The Maclay Technology Department has equipped all Lower School Classrooms with the capability of offering a Concurrent Virtual program. To get a sense of what this experience will be like, take a look [at this short video](#).

### **A 1-month Commitment**

A number of you have inquired whether students can opt-in and out of virtual learning or be virtual students for part of each week. Students who are quarantined because of a COVID exposure can opt to participate in the virtual program while they are in quarantine and return to campus after the quarantine period. For all other circumstances, we are asking Lower School families to commit to virtual learning for at least one month at a time. There is significant additional - ongoing - planning and preparation that will go into the Concurrent Virtual Program in Lower School; asking for at least a one month commitment will help us streamline the planning and preparation in several ways, allowing us to provide the best experience as possible for all virtual learners.

### **Schoology**

For those of you not familiar with Schoology, it is Maclay's Learning Management System. Students and families in 4<sup>th</sup> – 12th grades currently use Schoology. In August, all LS families (PK – 5<sup>th</sup>) will be connected to Schoology. Schoology will be the hub where meeting links are shared, where completed student work and tests can be uploaded, where written materials will be shared, etc. We will provide Schoology training to all LS families.

### **Daily Schedule**

Virtual learners will have access to and follow the same schedule as on-campus learners. Lower School homeroom teachers will share their class schedule with all families prior to the start of school. There will be a few times during the day, when virtual learners will take a break from their screens, including recesses, lunch, and PE.

### **Materials and Supplies**

Virtual learners will need access to a desktop or laptop computer or iPad, a headset with a microphone, and distraction-free place to do school. Teachers will prepare virtual learning kits, containing any supplies a student will need for the duration of a two-week period, including math manipulatives, science materials, workbooks, notebooks, art materials, etc.

Planning for the start of the 2020 -2021 school year has been a novel experience. Using the knowledge and guidance of experts, we've come up with a robust plan. As circumstances necessitate, we will remain flexible and responsive. Although there we may be certain what or

how circumstances may change in the coming weeks, we are certain that all Lower School students, those on campus and those learning from home, will receive the best we have to offer.

By the beginning of August, we will send out information about “Back-to- School” events, a Distance Learning Handbook and class lists. If you have any questions about either the return to campus or our Concurrent Virtual program, please reach out (phone 240-422-5610 or email [sbakerlapp@maclay.org](mailto:sbakerlapp@maclay.org) or join me for a Lower School Q and A Zoom session on Tuesday, July 21 11:30 -12:30.

Topic: Lower School Q and A

Time: Jul 21, 2020 11:30 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3718903615>

Meeting ID: 371 890 3615

One tap mobile

+19294362866,,3718903615# US (New York)

Fondly,

Susie