



My Maclay Families,

I have found wonderful things about different times of the year in Tallahassee. This weekend has been one of those. The weather is just right, and the Fall Fling this Friday night on campus warmed my heart to see and engage with so many of you I have missed seeing face to face for far too long. American writer Kurt Vonnegut wrote, “Enjoy the little things in life, for one day you’ll look back and realize they were the big things.”

Over the last three days, we’ve enjoyed the unveiling of a student art installation in the Upper School and another at SOHO Art Gallery, a Lower School Pep Rally on the field complete with performances at school and the game, astronaut and aeronautical demonstrations, over 300 burgers/hotdog grilled out, a dunk tank, countless smiles and hugs, and the Battle for Meridian under the Friday Night Lights that just slipped away from the team at the end of an amazing game. I’m so glad we can get back these little things because they add together to make so much more. This year has been an exciting one so far, and I can’t express how much I look forward to sharing some firsts in the school’s history over the next few months with you as we roll out our new Strategic Plan and the resulting initiatives for students, programs, and facilities.

As we launched this school year, the Center for Academic Excellence was able to temporarily move into its new home on campus. We plan the final renovations this upcoming summer, and once we finalize the construction at the beginning of the 2022-23 school year, it will mark the end of the iTHINK Campaign. Over its five-year span, more than \$15 Million will have been contributed by our remarkable and generous community, with every dollar given through this campaign put to use enhancing the experience of our current students and generations of Maclay students to come. We are already planning our next ambitious projects, and I’m personally excited about what is in store for our students and community.

We have been continually monitoring our numbers, behaviors, and protocols regarding COVID within the school and surrounding community. Based on the trends and data we see, we believe it is time to begin our rollback of some of our protocols. As I have shared before, every policy related to COVID safety we have and the changes we make will be measured not only by student and faculty safety but by its impact on the quality of education in our classrooms and on our campus. I have asked the Upper School administration and faculty to finalize detailed protocols to begin giving options in limited settings on campus for Upper School students beginning on October 13th. There are settings on campus when masks will still be required, specifically those where younger students are intermingled with Upper School students indoors. The US will be communicating the details of the protocols as we approach the 13th to their families, and we will also take the opportunity to speak with the students so everyone is supportive of each other’s choices, so we can remain focused on keeping a strong and healthy community.

We will focus on launching this change in the Upper School on the 13th, then begin studying the Middle School policies with what we learn from that change, and then continue to the Lower School. I am encouraged by the downward trends in many of the numbers, but this is by no means us dismissing the seriousness of keeping our students and our faculty safe.

As the weather begins to cool and we look forward to Fall activities, I hope you share my excitement for a school year that has traditions returning that provide opportunities to remember those who have gone before, those who are by our sides, and those who we are working for...our leaders of tomorrow.

An author that shaped my development stated, "What is easy to do is also easy not to do." So, let's keep doing the little things and see the big impact we can make!

Yours,  
James



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