



My Maclay Families,

Homecoming week is always so much fun. Having the students show their school spirit and talents through dress up days, service projects, musical performances, cookouts, games, pep rallies, and finally the return of our annual Homecoming Parade this afternoon. Last year had its challenges but it also allowed us to spend the time necessary to build an exciting plan for the future, strengthen our professional development and faculty so we are even stronger this year; and there is so much to celebrate moving forward. I've enjoyed seeing many of you at events on campus or around town and it has been refreshing to feel the positive energy as the school goes along.

The Upper School began its modified mask-optional protocol this Wednesday. At the same time the Upper School was working through the final details of returning to mask-optional, the Middle School leadership was working in the background to prepare for our next step. The Middle School is a unique division in that many of its students have been able to be vaccinated but a portion cannot. Therefore, on Wednesday, October 20th, the 7th and 8th grade classes will both go mask-optional, however, the 6th grade policies will remain the same for the time being. Middle School parents will be receiving details of the opt-out process soon.

Over this last week, I've asked the Lower and Middle School divisions to work through the logistics and impact of moving to mask-optional with our population that cannot be vaccinated, all students under the age of 12. We are under no assumptions that once the vaccine is approved for 5-11 year olds, that everyone will immediately get the vaccine. However, we do feel a responsibility to provide reasonable accommodations to those who are immunocompromised or have other conditions that raise their risk level. As we feel the weight of this concern, we also acknowledge practically all data we watch to measure risk of community spread, serious illness, or death have been falling and continue to do so. Therefore, we are actively working through the adjustments and considerations we need to in order to move the rest of the school to mask optional. We are very interested in the potential approval of the Pfizer vaccine for the 5-11 year-old age group as this would be a variable in our planning process moving forward. I'm excited to take this next step and we will take the next one as soon as possible.

I personally look forward to the day that I do not have to place so much emphasis on COVID related issues in my letters home to you. There are so many other things to talk about. One item was released earlier this week and you may see it in the media. The largest gift in the school's history was received in the late summer and we have now established a set of Academic Merit Scholarships for rising 9th graders and will be launching an Academic Competition Series next year. All of this is made possible by the generosity of those who believe in your school, the work we do, and the vision ahead. It is truly an exciting time to be at Maclay. Thank you for the role you each play in this wonderful community.

I hope to see many of you tonight at our Alumni/Homecoming football game, next week at Donuts for Dudes, in car line, or in the bleachers or sidelines of the competitions on our very active campus. I appreciate everyone being our 'allies in calm' as we all seek to have a safe, stable, healthy, and encouraging environment for our students and your children to thrive.

Proud to be your Head of School,

James



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