Hello Flagstaff Academy Families,

The ever-changing COVID pandemic continues to throw curveballs at us as we are trying to reopen Flagstaff Academy. We have always promised to be nimble and responsive to new information that impacts the safety and health of our students and staff.

Recent data involving outbreaks in schools and group programs is contrary to past guidance that children do not spread COVID. Even professional sports leagues with vast resources are seeing outbreaks in their “bubbles” that were designed to insulate their staff and athletes from infections. In addition, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) guidance for how we respond to cases and outbreaks in schools is complex and burdensome, creating major obstacles for operating a school in person with any continuity or feeling of safety once cases are identified. As this was a major question from our Town Hall, this guidance document is attached. Finally, the lack of access to widely available and fast-turnaround testing limits our ability to proactively identify cases and isolate before an outbreak occurs.

The St. Vrain Valley School District has just released an update to their families indicating that they are holding off on returning to school under their hybrid model, and are moving toward a virtual learning model through September 2020. Several other area school districts, including Denver Public Schools, Adams 12 School District, and Jefferson County Public Schools, are starting with a remote option and delaying their start dates as well. We were already working on developing the plans for our Reduced Capacity Campus hybrid model based on input from our families that we received late last week. We have continued to reach out to a number of families who have not responded to the reduced capacity survey to gain the most accurate picture possible.
As I stated before, we have both students and staff that we must factor into our plans. We have been receiving input from our staff members on their ability to work in person, or those that may have circumstances that require accommodations covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act or are deemed to be at high-risk for infection or complications from COVID. These legally protected accommodations have an impact on our staffing plans that cannot be overlooked for a safe return to a quality academic environment. Like many families, the movement of surrounding school districts to remote learning models also impacts our teachers, as those with children in neighboring districts are now caring for a child at home.

Flagstaff Academy will be considering a shift to our Small Group Support model for the start of the school year. Small Group Support is for our students who need additional support such as special education, academic intervention, English language learners, and other at-risk factors while most learners are working online daily. A plan for our Small Group Support model would be made with the intention of returning students to campus when it is safe. Regardless of the instructional model, we are exploring alternatives for connecting with our students to start out the school year on a positive note.

As we have just received this information, we will be actively looking at the impacts of this shift for our families and staff. We will be providing a more robust, online instructional program than the spring. We are using federal coronavirus relief funds to bolster our technology and online instruction delivery resources, as well as training staff in new, engaging online instruction and lesson planning practices.
We understand the impact these shifts have for our families, especially those working families and our students who need the most support. We are working on alternative solutions for childcare and supporting our families at home and will communicate soon.

We share the frustration of this constantly moving target and the impact it has on families. But please know it is only out of an abundance of caution and care for the children and adults in our building that we are being so thoughtful in our approach.

Thank you for your patience, flexibility, and understanding of this extremely complex situation.

Wayne Granger
Executive Director