



A Message from the Head of School

Dear Park Families,

We are all experiencing the ongoing crisis in many ways, and the effects range from the deeply personal to the societal; it impacts the immediate time frame and the distant future; and we share concerns regarding physical and mental health and financial security. For many of us, Park is at the core of our daily experience, and the community is a source of connection, continuity, and continuing optimism. I am grateful to our students, our families, and our faculty and staff for such commitment to our school.

I write to you today to share some of the work that our administrative team and Board have been engaged in regarding both short- and mid-range planning, mindful at all times of Park's long-term well-being. Specifically, I'll address the remainder of the school year, summer plans, fall 2020, a new advisory group, and the school's finances.

As I mentioned last Friday, the most recent directive issued by the State of Maryland instructed schools to remain closed through the end of this academic year. Our distance learning program will continue with ongoing updates and enhancements, and special considerations for the way the extended duration of our time away from campus and inability to be together will affect us all. We are also deep into planning a number of end-of-year events that are so integral to our school culture and experience — Graduation, 8th Grade Closing Ceremonies, May Day (today!), Athletics Breakfast, and more. We know that none of this will be business as usual, but we are committed to recognizing and celebrating each of the students involved in these milestone events — even if we are doing so remotely or with appropriate social distancing.

With regard to Park Camps — we have determined there will be no on-campus programming this summer. At the same time, we know that many families are eager for activities that will engage and enrich their children over the summer months. I'm happy to share that our faculty has been hard at work imagining opportunities for remote summer learning and connecting. Please expect to hear more about our programs in the coming weeks.

Perhaps most importantly, we have begun actively planning for the 2020–21 school year. As we learn more from public health experts and local authorities over the course of the coming months, we'll be in a better position to make decisions about both the schedule and format for the next school year. This spring, our teachers have gained invaluable experience in running our distance learning program, and they will continue to work tirelessly to prepare for any possible scenario ahead.

To help guide our thinking with regard to returning to campus, I have created the *Return-to-Campus Advisory Group* made up of representatives of our administrative team, our Board of Trustees, and distinguished members of the public health and medical communities.

Almost all members of the group are current Park parents, including our public health and medical advisors, and they share with you a strong desire to reopen school in the safest possible manner.

Tom Inglesby, M.D., Director, Center for Health Security of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
Brian Garibaldi, M.D., Director, Johns Hopkins Biocontainment Unit
Betsy Berner, Current Board President
Amy Millin, Incoming Board President
Greg White '81, Trustee
Kevin Pearson, Trustee
Tim Pickering, Trustee
Stacey Kumar, Incoming Parents' Association Board President
Dan Paradis, Head of School
Priscilla Morales, Associate Head of School
Joan Webber, Director of Finance and Operations

Recognizing that public health guidance will likely not allow us to enter next year in a fully "normal" way, we know that we must be open and flexible to a range of possibilities for what school will look like in the fall. This includes models that toggle between or blend on-campus and remote experiences; fundamental shifts in behavior (e.g. adequate physical distancing) and hygiene; and, in some cases, limits put on certain activities, events, and pursuits. I want to assure you that all of our actions will be governed by two commitments: respecting the science, and welcoming students back to campus. Please know that as we gain greater clarity from public health officials, I will keep you fully informed with our plans for the fall.

In addition to the attention to our people and program, we are equally mindful of the financial strain on Park families, as well as on Park as an institution, resulting from the public health crisis and the economic downturn.

We are carefully considering how we can best respond to the financial challenges that many in our community are facing, and we continue to encourage any family that is experiencing financial difficulties to [reach out to us](#) directly. Our families' evolving circumstances are part of the Park community's financial ecosystem that we seek to keep healthy and strong. The school's budget model is built on a combination of revenue from tuition and programming, a draw on the interest from our endowment, and annual giving to The Park Fund by generous donors. All of these elements are vulnerable during this crisis. An expanding number of families are requiring an increasing amount of financial assistance; our endowment is negatively impacted by the downturn in the economy; and our donors' capacity to give is adversely affected, even though the desire to do so is strong.

Seventy-five percent of the school's budget goes to salary and benefits for our employees, our most valuable assets. From the beginning of this crisis, I have made it clear that we would do everything possible to support our faculty and staff with the resources that are accessible to us. To that end, the school applied for the federal loan that was made available to businesses with up to 500 employees — part of the government's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), an aspect of the sweeping Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Park was approved for the loan and has been provided funding in order to pay its employees during the COVID-19 crisis. The school has reviewed revised government guidelines, most recently this week at a meeting of the full Board of Trustees, to ensure that any use of the funding would be in full compliance with federal standards and expectations. Using the funds for our payroll will maintain employment for our faculty and staff.

We, of course, are aggressively managing other aspects of our finances, and making careful choices that best support our robust program and our families. Our Board of Trustees is fully engaged in their fiduciary responsibilities — being responsive to immediate concerns and taking measures that best prepare Park for the extended effects of the current health and financial crises. What I know with absolute certainty is that all of us that comprise the Park community — students, teachers, parents, alumni, Trustees — will extend ourselves in extraordinary ways to ensure that the school thrives.

Park was founded in an era of trial and tumult in education. It fulfilled an important need in the Baltimore community and represented true advancement in the progressive education movement. Throughout our history, our community of devoted educators and families, our growth mindset, our commitment to inclusion, and our ability to innovate and lead have all contributed to the continued success of our school and will serve us well in the weeks and months ahead.

Thank you for all you do. And I look forward to keeping you posted on all of our developing plans.

Sincerely,
Dan