

# MILTON ACADEMY

—DARE TO BE TRUE—

Dear Milton Academy Families,

I hope you are safe and well, and that you are finding time to enjoy the summer, unusual as it may be. I write today to update you on important work taking place at the School, focusing on Milton's planning for the fall.

Faculty, staff, and administrators are working intensely this summer on two key areas: preparing our campus for the 2020–2021 academic year in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and determining the steps we must take to create an anti-racist environment at Milton. While our society grapples with systemic racism, we must address critical issues of racial injustice within our own institution, and improve and advance the School's commitment to anti-racism, diversity, and inclusion. As part of this effort, we are working to develop a transparent, action-oriented plan to address and respond to incidents of racism and bigotry at our School, including microaggressions, and are establishing benchmarks for measuring our progress. We will provide more information prior to the start of school.

Below, we share important updates on our planning for the coming school year in response to the pandemic.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Two primary principles guide our planning for returning to campus for the 2020–2021 academic year: the health and safety of our community and providing our students with an exceptional educational experience. Health and safety are paramount as we adjust our programs and campus with the central objective of having all students engaged in as much live teaching and learning as possible.

We recognize that some students may be unable to return to campus for all or a portion of the school year—and any student or adult who shows symptoms of illness will need to stay away from classrooms and shared spaces until they are healthy. Be assured that the School will serve any students remotely who are not able to or choose not to come to campus during the academic year. We are also prepared to shift to a fully remote learning environment if necessary.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Guidance from multiple expert sources, including government and public health officials, as well as initial guidance released last week by the Massachusetts Commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, continues to inform our planning. We have engaged Boston-area medical professionals to advise our approach to COVID-19 testing, broadened our care and consulting agreement with Boston Children's Hospital, and—in collaboration with other independent and boarding schools—commissioned guidance from Environmental Health & Engineering (EH&E), an environmental health and safety firm, to ensure that our protocols meet best-practice standards.

While specific guidelines will be issued to all families at the end of July, the following health and safety approaches will be adopted as part of our opening of School:

**Social distancing** will be required. Each division will implement age-appropriate modifications in accordance with state guidance, including the following:

- Face coverings and physical distancing will be required
- Students will be grouped to provide a dynamic learning environment while limiting potential exposure
- New classroom layouts, furniture, and technology will facilitate physical separation and support remote learning
- Large assemblies and events will be conducted remotely
- Dining halls will not be used during lunch periods; students will eat in classrooms and/or in pre-assigned locations
- Buses will introduce new protocols, including seat spacing, to meet all distancing requirements

**Hygiene**, including hand sanitizing and washing, will be expected and built into schedules; additional hand-sanitizing stations are being placed throughout campus

**Cleaning** will be expanded beyond existing daily cleaning and disinfecting protocols to regularly include additional sanitization

**Air circulation protocols** that incorporate COVID-19-related ventilation and filtering recommendations will be in place

**Health monitoring**, in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, will be required daily of all employees and students

**COVID-19 testing** will occur regularly for employees and students, with increased frequency in the residential program; protocols will respond to evolving public health guidance

**On-site health services** changes will be implemented for the academic year.

- Isolation rooms are being identified for each division in the event a student becomes ill
- Faulkner Health Center is being renovated to separate any students presenting with COVID-19 symptoms from others; Upper School counselors will relocate to a different building on campus
- Medical staff, faculty, and staff have started specific health and safety training around COVID-19

## **ACADEMIC PLANNING**

The unique makeup of a K–12 school with three academic divisions, and an Upper School with boarding and day populations, makes Milton an incredibly dynamic, special place. It also requires deeply coordinated, thoughtful planning. This will result in differences regarding how we carry out our program for the coming year. While Milton's mission of providing students the best educational experience possible remains institution-wide, our execution must be flexible to support the size of each division and the range of our students' developmental ages.

Faculty and staff across all three divisions of Milton are working to address several possible scenarios. Each division is coordinating and providing professional development resources to all

faculty members to ensure that teaching and learning continues unabated, regardless of whether it is in person, remote, or a hybrid of the two.

### **Upper School**

The Upper School's plans for the fall include the following elements:

- A scheduling model that will:
  - Accommodate a range of possible scenarios, such as students learning in person on campus; students learning remotely; some students learning in person on campus while others, by choice or necessity, are learning remotely
  - Provide opportunities for students learning remotely to join on-campus classes in real time
- Courses redesigned with particular focus on the importance of:
  - Providing clear structure, objectives, and expectations for all students
  - Offering a flexible experience for students regardless of their circumstances
  - Inspiring joy, creating energy, and building community
  - Beginning a process of recognizing and dismantling white supremacy culture through anti-racist and anti-bias curriculum and teaching
- A sense of connection to the School and peers, no matter the scenario

The Upper School Deans' Office will share additional logistical information during the week of July 6.

### **Boarding Program**

Plans for the residential life program, in line with expert guidance, will include the following:

- Smaller groups within each dormitory
- Limited off-campus travel
- Modified dining arrangements
- Quarantining prior to moving onto campus, in accordance with guidance for boarders from the CDC and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

### **Middle School**

The Middle School is designing a program specific to the needs and stages of development of middle-school students. The planning team is focused on:

- Maximizing time on campus for all students
- Organizing each grade into smaller student cohorts to achieve physical distancing
- Maintaining the academic integrity of the Middle School program, including a recognition of students' diverse learning styles
- Providing consistent norms and routines
- Attending to the community, social/emotional, and diversity, equity, and inclusion elements of our program
- Emphasizing the importance of physical activity

## **Lower School**

The Lower School is making a number of changes that will allow faculty to shift seamlessly between different modes of learning; in general, the team is:

- Maximizing time on campus for all students
- Organizing the day around classroom-based groups and experiences
- Increasing staffing in each grade and/or classroom
- Using the latest academic research to inform decisions about necessary curriculum changes, social-emotional learning needs, and the incorporation of physical activity during the pandemic
- Revising our remote-learning program by looking at student work, and feedback from parents and teachers
- Looking carefully at diversity, equity, and inclusion work as a key part of next year's program

## **SPACE AND TECHNOLOGY PLANNING**

Across all divisions, intense space and technology planning is occurring to support the academic plans outlined above.

Age-appropriate learning technology will be used to support hybrid-learning scenarios, including various learning platforms, in-classroom cameras, video, and/or online conferencing technology. These changes are being made in line with curricular considerations as well as observations and feedback gathered from the last school year. We are also ensuring that every faculty member has the necessary technology to teach their classes remotely, if required.

## **NEXT UPDATE**

You will receive a comprehensive overview of our fall plans in late July. This timing is deliberate, to ensure that our approach reflects the best available information in the midst of this evolving pandemic. In August, we will also offer opportunities for families to virtually engage with each division so that we can answer any questions you may have.

While there is no doubt that achieving an optimal learning environment during a pandemic presents a challenge, we look forward to welcoming your child this fall and anticipate that the modifications we are making will support our program. I thank you sincerely for your partnership and patience during these challenging times. Our community remains strong and committed to your children's future.

Best wishes,

Todd B. Bland  
Head of School