

MILTON ACADEMY

—DARE TO BE TRUE—

Dear Milton Academy Families,

I hope you are well and finding time to enjoy your summer during these dynamic, challenging days. I write today with important updates about the 2020–2021 academic year.

Your patience during the course of this summer is sincerely appreciated, as we've worked diligently to prepare for a variety of fall scenarios that support a safe educational and workplace environment for our entire community. This year has taken an emotional toll on all of us. Families across the country and world also carry understandable anxiety about the academic year.

The coming school year will look unlike any other in the history of Milton Academy. It will require us to remain flexible and resilient, and to adjust in the face of external factors beyond our control, but we are committed to working together as a community to provide our students the best experience possible. We thank you for your trust in us.

As we adjust our program and transform our campus—with the goal of having all students engaged in as much live teaching and learning as possible this year—the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff remain paramount. We have followed a set of guiding principles as we've considered the most appropriate way to safely reopen our unique K–12 school's three academic divisions for boarding and day students.

Through ongoing consultation with public health and medical experts, close review of guidance from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and in recognition of recent public health studies and successful school reopenings in other countries, we believe the most appropriate approach for Milton's upcoming academic year is a phased return of our students to campus.

We will invite students back to campus in the following ways, which will be outlined in detail via divisional communications that you will receive later today from your child's principal; please note that we will offer a robust remote-learning program for those who cannot or prefer not to return to in-person classes.

Lower School

- Lower School students will return to campus the week of September 7
- Students will return in small groups over the course of three days, before beginning the academic program the week of September 14
- Students will be grouped into cohorts that do not mix with other cohorts; two-teacher teams will be assigned to each cohort

Middle School

- Middle School students will return to campus the week of September 7
- Students will return by grade level over the course of three days, before beginning the academic program the week of September 14
- Students will be grouped into cohorts that do not mix with other cohorts; teachers will move among grade-based cohorts

Upper School

- Remote orientation programming will begin for Upper School students in early September
- Upper School students will start classes learning remotely, beginning on September 14
- Our current plan is to have day students return in cohorts in October, and to have boarding students return as soon as it is safe to do so
- We will provide an update to all families no later than September 28, following necessary, continued evaluation of our return-to-campus plan, based on evolving expert guidance and local incidence rates

Starting with a smaller, initial on-campus population and phasing in larger numbers of students and adults over time will allow us to begin the year with a de-densified campus, as recommended by experts. This approach ensures that students and adults are given time to adjust to new health and safety protocols and expectations in a lower-risk environment.

In addition to requiring daily attestation of health, social distancing, and masks, we will test all on-campus students, faculty, and staff. These processes and protocols must be well-executed, and we must react quickly to circumstances that cannot be anticipated at this moment while maintaining stringent health and safety standards. A gradual increase of students on campus will enable us to do this properly. Given our make-up of day and boarding students, and our proximity to a dense urban area, our structure is inherently permeable and careful consideration is critical. For all divisions, we will continue to consistently monitor and review the situation with outside experts to ensure that our campus remains safe as external and internal factors continue to evolve.

We have developed our Upper School program in a way that strives to maintain interactions among boarding and day students, delivering a meaningful, equitable educational experience for all. This begins with bringing together all Upper School students—day and boarding—online to set norms and provide opportunities to get to know one another in the small groups that will form the basis of our academic program. The Upper School communication that follows this update will provide additional details.

These critical decisions have been recommended following careful and exhaustive work by our planning task forces and approved by the Board of Trustees and me. Our three divisions have spent this summer preparing to execute our academic programs in on-campus, hybrid, or fully remote scenarios; our faculty have all engaged in professional development specifically designed for remote and hybrid learning, and curriculum has been modified accordingly. We are therefore prepared to deliver an excellent education, regardless of circumstance.

In addition to the divisional updates that you will soon receive from your child's principal, you may find additional details about our health and safety measures and academic programs, as well as a detailed FAQ, on [Milton 2020–2021](#).

I invite you to join your child's principal and me for a division-specific virtual family forum later this week, where we'll walk through our plans. These forums, broadcast via Zoom webinar, will be recorded and available after the sessions conclude for those unable to attend.

The restrictions placed upon us by this pandemic have altered the experience our students will have for this coming academic year, whether on campus or remote. As we face this challenge together, we must dedicate ourselves to building an even stronger community: one that prioritizes safety in an uncertain world, and teaches our students—in these most difficult of times—a resilience they will carry with them throughout their lives.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this effort as we prepare for the year ahead. We will remain in contact in the coming weeks, providing additional updates if the dynamic situation requires us to further adjust our plans.

Sincerely,

Todd B. Bland
Head of School