



RANDOLPH-MACON ACADEMY

Thank you to all the parents and guardians who were able to join General Wesley and some of the R-MA leadership team for the Parent Zoom Meeting on Wednesday evening. It is of great value to us as we plan for the variables of the 2020-21 academic year to understand your questions and concerns. Thank you for sharing with us. We apologize that we did not get the chance to answer each question in full in the meeting so we are sending this follow-up with the hopes of answering them as best we can at this moment in time. As we all know, the recommendations and guidelines around the pandemic change frequently so we must remain flexible.

Though we cannot answer each question individually, we hope that by consolidating questions around similar topics that we will be able to answer your concerns.

If the Governor of Virginia closes schools again in the fall, why would R-MA, as a private school, have to close also?

The Governor has the authority to close both public and private schools. Because we're a private boarding school, some of the safety concerns that apply to large public day schools are not applicable to us. In many ways, we are more analogous to a college or university, with students and faculty living and working on campus. There are exceptions, of course -- teachers who live off campus and a small percentage of day students. But, we believe the Governor's direction to colleges and universities is the one most applicable to us. We will strive to make that clear and, if possible, remain open with our students on campus. Several Virginia private schools did this during this spring for international students who could not return to their home countries and these students were restricted to campus. We are not aware of a single instance of a Virginia private school student contracting the virus when they remained on campus this spring.

If R-MA plans to restrict the boarding students to campus for their safety, what will be the expectations of day students and faculty or staff who live off-campus?

We cannot provide an environment completely free of risk. Though our day students, faculty, and staff who live off campus may increase the risk of infection, they are a valuable part of R-MA. Day students will be screened daily, upon entering campus, as will any adult who enters the campus, including those that live on campus. More detailed guidance will be provided as the school year approaches.

Additionally, R-MA cannot operate without fuel, food, and other supplies that will be transported onto campus by non-R-MA personnel. What we will do is strictly limit access to campus, carefully screen all who enter the grounds, and limit contact with vendors and others who must enter campus for a limited period of time.

All of us face some risk no matter where we are. This is true for your children even if they remain in your home. We believe our campus, professional team, and processes will afford you and your child the best combination of excellent education and safety. We won't be perfect, but no system operated by human beings will be. Our program will be as good as we can make it and we'll constantly work to improve.

What will be the safety protocols and will they apply to parents who come to visit?

Thank you for raising this concern. To be clear: when we adopt a safety protocol, it is for the well-being of all -- parents who come to campus, staff and faculty, and of course our students. If the social distancing and safety measures we've discussed are still necessary in the fall: all here will follow them. If you are not comfortable with your child complying with the procedures we're advised to implement by medical authorities at the CDC and Virginia Department of Health, we'll be happy to talk with you before you finalize arrangements for your child's attendance. Again: this will be for everyone's safety -- including your child's.

If R-MA is doing virtual learning for the international students, can domestic students whose families are not comfortable sending their children to school keep their children at home and have them learn virtually also?

We believe the central value of an R-MA education occurs on campus and results from interaction between students, staff, and faculty. We're committed to returning to that boarding school culture (even the aspect shared by our day students during their time on campus) in every way the civil authorities allow. If we cannot convene on campus, we have shown that we can execute the academic plan with distance learning, but that is far from the ideal learning environment. Keeping a student away from campus while on-campus learning is going on would defeat many of the values R-MA seeks to deliver to her students. If the campus is open, parents should send their students to campus. No changes to the attendance policy are planned.

Parents who pay for boarding and then elect to bring their children home while the campus remains open to students will still have to pay boarding rates. Day parents who elect to keep their child at home may only have the distance learning option if we are required to use it (because the campus is closed).

Questions regarding conducting SAT and changing course offerings were asked.

We have no plans to change our course offerings at this time. We plan to give our students the same quality education they have always expected of R-MA.

There will be SAT testing at R-MA on August 29th. The students will be seated at least 6 feet apart. The number of students in a classroom will be adjusted. R-MA has a maximum testing limit of 60 students. As a certified test site, R-MA will be required to take students from outside R-MA. There will be measures in place to guarantee the safety of all test-takers.

Student life outside the classroom is just as important and we had questions regarding the boarding life.

Will the dorms still be two to a room and will students who travel from other countries have additional quarantine requirements?

As in past years, parents can purchase a single room for their child if they desire to do so, while supplies last. Otherwise, students will board two to a room. Most colleges and universities are following this model and we plan to do so as well.

We plan to screen all students prior to their arrival on campus using CDC and VDH guidelines that are in place when August arrives. International students will board and attend classes as they have for several decades, following the same protocol required of U.S. students.

We will require whatever quarantine level and duration the USG, CDC, and VDH require when classes resume.

What will the screening procedures be for anyone coming onto campus?

We will use the existing technology to address this concern. Currently, that entails a questionnaire and temperature check each morning. This is the procedure for entering most major medical facilities in Virginia. If other procedures are developed and mandated prior to resumption of classes, we will implement those as well.

We will certainly ask for all information about a person's potential exposure to someone with COVID-19 as the CDC and VDH mandate, and expect that our families will comply with protocol.

What are your hygiene and safety measures that will be implemented and expected?

All persons on campus are expected to wear a mask when indoors or in contact with another person, therefore masks must be worn while in Academy buildings and dormitories, unless in their own rooms. They may be allowed to remove the mask when outdoors depending upon the circumstances. The masks must meet CDC guidance. We are planning to have masks available for a reasonable price to purchase on campus as well as permitting a personal supply. We are developing more specific guidelines for the fall.

There are currently no plans for students to wear gloves, but we will comply with CDC guidelines if this should become necessary.

We will expect students to comply with these safety requirements as we expect them to comply with all safety requirements implemented for the safety of our students on campus.

We have added approximately 24 hand sanitizing stations to the buildings and will place more once we determine where the greatest need is. During our orientation meetings, we will continue to emphasize the need to wash their hands with soap and water.

Parents are understandably concerned about the mental health of their children in this world which presents unknown challenges of isolation and anxiety. Our Licensed Clinical Psychologist, Dr. Richards, assures parents with these words.

Individual therapy will be available for students on campus. We will also be providing additional information and training on how to manage continuing to distance socially. These will include topics like hygiene, as well as self-care (emotional wellness, using mindfulness, managing anxiety). If indicated and there is an interest, we can also implement group therapy sessions in a safe and healthy way to encourage cadets and students to share experiences and learn from each other.

While we must follow social distancing guidelines for the safety of all, allowing students to express their feelings about the reality we find ourselves in is an effective way of helping them process this very unique experience. Individual therapy will be available on campus to assist students in addressing the anxiety they may experience due to the physical isolation, as well as any other mental health concerns.

How will the use of bathroom facilities be modified?

Housekeeping will continue to clean these areas daily in the boys dorm and throughout public buildings on campus. Students will be encouraged to touch the fewest surfaces possible. We may establish procedures/schedules/rotations that limit the bathroom capacity at any one time in order to reduce the opportunity for exposure. We plan to keep students healthy, and urge them to report any symptoms immediately to avoid spreading germs through bathroom facilities.

If the boarders are staying on campus, how will they get their laundry done?

Laundry services already exist with a laundry business in town. We will continue with this service and expect all students to use it. We are researching the ability to have laundry appliances available on campus for student use.

Athletics generated a number of questions which included when they might start, what various sports might look like, and how we will keep our athletes safe. Coach Sullivan has answered the questions asked.

We will start sports when we feel it is safe for all involved. We will err on the side of caution to ensure safety for our athletes, coaches and officials. Furthermore, we must and will follow standards set by the appropriate governing bodies.

As of now, swim relays are a moderate risk sport. Individual swimming is considered a low risk sport. The number of people in the pool area is an issue and would be a factor in intramural size or meet size in a competitive setting.

Weightlifting will be allowed using the guidelines established by our governing body in regards to social distancing / amount of people in the room at one time. To offset these guidelines we can offer weight room workouts more than once a day to allow our students to lift if they wish to.

As of now, a Physical Examination form is required each school year dated after May 1 of the preceding school year and is good through June 30th of the current school year. These are limited at this time due to the delay in routine-care appointments. If this requirement is adjusted, we plan to follow our state athletic association plan, which will be released in July.

The safety of our students, coaches and officials will be paramount. Each decision we make will follow this guideline. It is up to the individual coach to have their games filmed and shared. A number of teams already do this through team managers. It is a great idea!

Another area important to many of our students is cadre camp and whether we plan to hold cadre camp. Chief Lusson has supplied the following explanation.

1.) If we are back on campus at the beginning of August, our plan is to still conduct cadre camp. At this point, we are still shooting for 5-14 August. There may be certain things we are unable to accomplish, due to whatever the social distancing requirements are at the time, but we will make it work!

2) If we do not come back early at the beginning of August for the 5-14 August camp, but simply start the school year at the end of August, AFJROTC would take the first few closed weekends and put the cadre leadership team through a modified cadre camp.