



Timothy J. Seeley
Head of School

George Stevens Academy November Report

It is hard to believe we have already arrived at November!

Covid Update

To date, we have had four positive cases on our campus. These have resulted in about 75 close contacts, and a very small number of students needing to quarantine. So far, we have had no instances of transmission on our campus. In addition to the mitigation measures we are employing, some of that good fortune is also attributable to the fact that well over 90% of the adults who come to campus every day to work with students are vaccinated, and about 75% of our students.

I am hoping we can continue to use the tents we have set up as outdoor classrooms even as the weather gets colder, at least for a while. We plan to see if, with two sides up (which means they will still be considered outdoor spaces), and propane heaters, they can be made warm enough to hold class, at least until the really cold weather.

As the weather gets worse, lunch becomes a problem. Thus far, we have had everyone eating outdoors, in two lunch periods. Since our cafeteria is too small to fit everyone with proper spacing, we will need to use other indoor spaces as well, including the gym and hallway where our locker rooms and some classrooms are located, to provide places for students to eat. This poses a problem, since the gym and those classrooms are in use during one of the lunch periods. We will solve this by going to a single lunch period, which will make the gym available, and eliminate the issue of noise in the hallway during classes. This plan poses some logistical problems for serving lunch, but our staff is confident we can make the whole thing work.

Academics

We have come to the end of the first quarter. In our block schedule, students take four classes each semester, so they are halfway through their first set of classes. While there certainly have been some growing pains for all concerned, I think it has gone well. The benefits of this sort of schedule, where students only need to concentrate on three or four classes, rather than six or seven, and teachers have a reduced number of students to work with each semester (since they are working with only half of their students at any one time), will be felt over time. The block schedule also enables our most ambitious students to take eight classes a year.

State Testing

This is the first time we have had to do fall testing for the Maine DOE. While I understand the desire for students to take these tests, as an educator, I hate the disruption and loss of class time. In addition, they fall relatively close to when the PSATs are given, so our juniors miss multiple days due to testing.

Mental Health and Well-Being

I don't need to tell all of you that this year has proven much more exhausting and wearing than I think any of us anticipated. Most people were not fully recovered from last year's stress and anxiety, and so began the year at less than 100%. This is true of both students and adults. Teachers report more students struggling than usual, and our counseling program is already at capacity; and there is more need than we are able to meet right now. We are thinking hard about how to respond and be helpful, and have been gathering data from adults and students on their experiences this year. Our people are so conscientious that they push themselves to their limits and beyond; we have to help them also take care of themselves so they can last the entire year.

Fall Athletics

We have had another successful fall season. Our volleyball team was Class C runner-up, losing to a very strong Washington Academy team in the state finals. Given that the team has only been playing a varsity schedule for five years, it is a remarkable achievement. The boys' cross country team came in second in the state, and we had the number two runner in the state for the girls. Girls soccer made it to a prelim game in the tournament, and the boys made it to the quarterfinals. The golf team was in the regional tournament.

Thank you for all you do for the children of your town.

Respectfully,



Timothy J. Seeley
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