



April 29, 2020

Dear Members of the Asheville School Community,

At the beginning of this school year, I interviewed every faculty member and student on our campus. I asked them to tell me their life story. I then asked them a series of other questions to investigate further my understanding of their Asheville School experience. One of the things I asked every person was “What is your favorite aspect of Asheville School?” It was interesting that virtually every single person responded the same way. Each of them said that the community of the school was what they appreciated the most. This was the answer that I would give if I were asked the same question. As I have traveled over the last eight months visiting with alumni across the country, everyone has expressed how important the community of the school was to their experience as a student here. They also noted that Asheville School and the friends they made in their time here continue to be a part of their daily lives years and decades after they graduated.

COVID-19 has been so insidious to Asheville School because it has so dramatically affected our ability to gather as a community on our campus. Since spring break, we have been a virtual online community. While the learning process has continued, we must be honest that it has not been as fulfilling on a personal nor community level. We pride ourselves on the high quality of the relational teaching that occurs in our classrooms, on our fields, on our stages, and in our dorms. We all miss being together on our beautiful campus in the mountains of western North Carolina. It is just not the same living in a virtual community, and Zoom does not replace a traditional classroom. We are a place that values human interaction and engaging one another in the “here and now.” We are a place where every member of our community is both known and loved.

One of the realities that we must begin to accept is that the coronavirus will be with us for some time. While I pray that a vaccine is quick in coming, until that day we will have to be very aware of the presence of the disease among us. However, we must find ways to continue to live our lives. An objective look at Asheville School is revealing in this regard. We must recognize that the age of our students makes them the least vulnerable populace to the dramatic medical effects of COVID-19. The campus is generally closed and insular. We are limited in our interactions with the larger community outside of our campus.

Asheville School can and will reopen in the fall with a full boarding and day program and will endeavor to remain operational all year. We will do it in a way that is both safe and healthy. There will be some areas of school life that we will need to modify to reduce the risk of illness. We will introduce some new traditions that will replace old traditions that present too much risk. What I can promise you is that it will all be in keeping with the fundamental school value of community building. We will be the same Asheville School that has meant so much to so many.

I have appointed a special task force on planning for the opening of school in the fall. This working group is comprised of faculty, administrators, parents, and medical professionals. They are working with me to put in place protocols that will facilitate a safe reopening of school in the fall and a plan for operations throughout the entire year. They will focus on both health concerns and a commitment to maintaining the special community that has existed at Asheville School for over 120 years.

Asheville School has experienced many disruptions since the founding of the school. Through pandemics, world wars, cold wars and national crises, our school has both survived and ultimately prospered. We are in a period of incredible disrupt and challenge. We will come out of this even stronger than we were going into it. I have been lifted by the outpouring of support during this time from our alumni, parents, friends, and especially students. Everyone is committed to our school. The incredible support we received from so many individuals for Blues Unite giving day on April 16, 2020, is a testament to the strength of the Asheville School community.

I am so excited for the opening of school in the fall of 2020. I can't wait to stand on the porch of Mitchell, at the top of those iconic steps, and welcome back to campus returning students to tell them how much I missed them. I will also be excited to greet for the first time so many new students who will come to know the incredible joy of attending Asheville School. It will be a glorious day indeed.

Go Blues!!

Dr. Anthony H. Sgro '84
Head of School