

Executive Summary

Salem Academy Charter School's mission is to educate the City of Salem's diverse student population. Through a unique integration of college preparatory classes with service to the community, the school graduates informed, articulate and proactive individuals of strong character.

In the midst of the pandemic, having taught all remotely for the end of school year 2019-2020, we celebrated reaching success on our mission as 100% of our graduates were accepted into college. It was a wonderful moment to realize that neither pandemic, nor remote teaching, nor lack of normal social events kept us from meeting our goal.

We are approaching the coming year with the same positivity, dedication to our mission and commitment to each student and family that we serve. We will offer our students a robust curriculum of rigorous courses to prepare them for college. We will find a way to teach about the value of service, even as doing that service becomes more difficult due to closures and difficulty with communication. We will reach out and engage with every student without fail to make sure that we do not lose connection with any of them.

We have reviewed the three options given to us by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education a few months ago. We have eliminated an all-in return of our students to the building. It is not a feasible option, due to space constraints¹, high school course realities and staffing issues. It is our best judgement that we all need to be prepared to teach remotely and to build a vibrant, engaging, high level distance learning curriculum for our students. We believe that we will all be teaching remotely for a significant part of the year, regardless of what approach we decide on by this August 14th deadline.

We see the different needs of our high school students and our middle school students. Consistent with our values, we are working to achieve our key goals:

- To keep everyone as safe as possible we have committed to 6 foot distancing at all times for everyone in the building
- To create a system that is flexible, able to pivot quickly and provides consistency for all with a focus on depth of teaching
- To provide our students with consistent, clear expectations for both hybrid and distance learning
- To continue to build deep relationships with our students, through a variety of connections, outreach and supports.
- To keep our community informed and aware of what is happening at the school both overall and with individual students
- To welcome our new students in person, especially our sixth graders who are brand new to our community

¹ See Appendix in [Comprehensive Reopening Plan Fall 2020](#) for more information about facilities.

We believe that our best educational choice right now is to begin remotely for everyone, then gradually bring back our students, grade by grade. This will give us time to test our systems, our communications, our ability to screen and ensure everyone is healthy and all of the other factors involved in running a school during a pandemic. We envision all of grades 6, 7, 8 and 9 being back in the school using the hybrid model by mid-November. At that time, we will reassess how our systems are working and determine if we will continue the hybrid, remain all remote or continue to function with middle school learning through a hybrid model and high school learning through an all remote model.

We have reviewed the medical and scientific studies and recommendations, particularly those from Harvard and believe that their metrics make sense and that bringing students back to school can be safe with the right mitigation measures in place, following specific guidelines and protocols. At the same time, we will be monitoring the progress of the virus and determining each week whether we will return to all remote, or continue with our hybrid plan. In addition to using key metrics, our decision to be in-person will be based on our ability to staff the building appropriately with teachers, administrators, and nurses.

Additional steps taken to prepare for the challenge of 2020-2021:

- Ten days set aside at the beginning of the year to train staff in health and safety protocols, our specific models, new technology, and best practices for remote learning,
- Establishment of student and family orientations related to health and safety protocols, our specific models, and expectations for remote learning,
- Increased staffing to enhance our ability to meet the needs of our students in mental health and college counseling,
- Assessment of facilities; identified needed upgrades for ventilation; increased number of sanitizing stations throughout the building, and
- Procured PPE equipment for staff and students.

The pandemic has affected the whole world, we share in the concerns for those who have been so terribly impacted by this disease. We are grateful to have raised enough funds to be able to assist over 70 of our families to get through these tough times. We think of those who have passed, of our staff and students who have lost loved ones and we want to be a safe place for them to heal and be able to learn in spite of the trauma they may have faced. We are continuing to work on our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts; we will continue to develop our Social and Emotional Learning programs and we will build an on-line and in person culture of Responsibility, Empathy, Assertiveness, Cooperation and Honesty. We will engage with our students in respectful and positive ways while making sure they know we are with them on this difficult journey and will not give up on them.