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June 16, 2020

Dear Voyager Academy Community,

I am thrilled to be joining Voyager Academy on July 1, 2020 to serve as the new Managing Director and continue to build upon the solid foundations established by the Voyager team. I look forward to partnering with our entire community to inspire lifelong learning in every Viking and propel Voyager into the future to foster academic excellence, and social and emotional growth for all students. Developing a culture of excellence through curiosity, confidence, reflection, empathy, and integrity for all students and staff aligns well with my educational philosophy. Inspiring a diverse learning community that engages in rigorous, experiential, project-based learning that empowers students to become lifelong learners and changemakers is my passion.

The opportunity to utilize my business expertise and educational leadership skills to support Voyager's strategic plan and vision will be extremely rewarding. My collaborative leadership style and innovative school improvement initiatives involving all key stakeholders have contributed to fostering improvement in student achievement, expanding equity and diversity initiatives, and implementing systems and processes to improve instruction and school operations. I have also increased financial resources and reserves through grants and fundraising, implemented new strategic plans, expanded strategic partnerships, developed marketing and communications initiatives, and created a strong sense of community to propel schools forward.

## **Reopening Plans for 2020-2021 School Year**

We are at a critical point in time as we prepare for the upcoming 20-21 school year at Voyager. The world is dealing with the impacts from the unprecedented coronavirus pandemic and our country is reeling from social injustice and police brutality. As we embark on the planning process for the coming school year, I want to assure our families, students, and staff that their health and safety will continue to be our primary concern. Ensuring an equitable academic, social, and emotional learning program for all of our students will be the focal point as we plan for our return to school.

I have been partnering with state education leaders as well as other charter school leaders, and experts from the Department of Health and Human Services to plan for the safety and education of students and staff returning to school. As we begin to evaluate options for Voyager, it is important to gather input from all of our stakeholders as we craft alternative plans to address the uncertainty that lies ahead for our school community. In an effort to be inclusive and transparent in our process and communications, the leadership team at Voyager will be forming a Reopening Task Force to assist with guiding the plans for the future. The principals of each school will be asking for parent and student representatives to join the leadership team and Board representatives to partner alongside us as we evaluate the alternatives and possibilities that lie ahead. Additionally, the Reopening Task Force will be sending out surveys to get input from all stakeholders to help guide our plans moving forward. The Task Force will continue to keep all stakeholders informed throughout the process with regular communications and updates.

North Carolina has outlined their plan for reopening schools in their new guidebook, [Lighting the Way Forward](#) linked here for your reference. There are currently three main proposals outlined by the state that will be considered for the reopening of schools for the 20-21 school year; minimal social distancing with all staff and students returning to campus, moderate social distancing with limits of 50% capacity at school, and full remote learning off campus. The state will inform schools on July 1, 2020 which scenario should be utilized as the minimum requirements for our school reopening plan. School leaders will have the option to implement stricter requirements than the state recommendation if deemed necessary for the best interests of their school. All schools are required to submit a reopening plan which addresses 15 detailed requirements to the state by July 20, 2020. Some of the critical factors that will be included in the plan are outlined below:

- Student Health and Needs
- Employee Health and Needs
- Operations
- Communications

- Instructional Planning
- Issues of Equity and Excellence
- State and Federal Regulations and Guidelines

Although we are living through very uncertain times, I am confident that the COVID-19 health crisis will be tackled by incredibly bright medical professionals and scientists in the near future. As difficult as this has been, this public health crisis has transformed our educational capabilities in incredible ways and shown how quickly Voyager was able to pivot to a remote learning environment to respond to the crisis and meet student learning needs. We will continue to be prepared as we tackle this health crisis together and our community will emerge stronger with innovation, resolve, and resilience because of it.

### **Leadership Team Update**

The Voyager community will be welcoming two new school leaders to the team when we start the 20-21 school year. The Board has approved the interview committee recommendation and has appointed Tony Manning as the new Elementary Principal replacing Judy Cutts, who will be retiring. Tony brings a wealth of educational knowledge and over 20 years experience in the areas of school leadership, instruction, management and operations, accreditation, staff observation and coaching, and school expansion. The Board also approved the committee recommendation and appointment of Tracey Edler as the EC Coordinator replacing Melinda Chambers who is also retiring. Tracey is passionate about supporting our EC student population and is recognized as a teacher leader. She has experience in all grade levels and settings. Tracey is extremely knowledgeable about special education laws and compliance requirements. She has systems developed to monitor student progress and prioritizes student needs and family supports. Tracey ensures that all EC student needs and services are met to ensure student growth. We welcome Tony and Tracey to the Voyager leadership team and wish Judy and Melinda all the best as they begin a new chapter in their lives.

I am honored and thrilled to join Voyager Academy in July and partner alongside the dedicated team of educators, board members, students, and families as we embark on the future journey together. I will set up information sessions either in person or via zoom once the new year begins so that we can get acquainted. I look forward to getting to know everyone in the Voyager community and deepening connections in Durham so that all students have the opportunity to find their passion and thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

All the best,

Ellie