



Dear GDS Community,

The start of school is just around the corner--August 13th (gold group) & August 14th (blue group)--and we want everyone to stay healthy and get ready to learn. I know that everyone has mixed feelings as we get ready to return to school: fear, excitement, eagerness to see friends, curiosity, and so much more. **Remember we are all in this together! We really are!!**

Our Division Heads have created a library of videos about the **First Days of School** to help navigate those questions you may have about what a school day looks like on campus during these unique times. Middle and Upper School videos are below and Lower School will be sending out their videos next week. Don't forget you can always visit our [reopening webpage](#) to find any past videos or information we've sent out.

TOPIC	MIDDLE SCHOOL	UPPER SCHOOL
Preparing for School	Preparing for School	Preparing for School
Arriving to Campus	Arriving to Campus- Middle School	Arriving to Campus- Upper School
During the School Day	During the School Day- Middle School	During the School Day- Upper School
Food & Drink	Food & Drink- Middle School	Food & Drink- Upper School
Leaving Campus	Leaving Campus- Middle School	Leaving Campus- Upper School
Open Campus	Does not apply	Open Campus- Upper School
Announcements	Announcements	Announcements

As we approach the start of school, some of our absence and return to school policies now apply. If your family is **planning any travel between now and the start of the school year**, we ask that you visit the [online attendance page](#) to complete the Travel Information form.

Also, if your student has recently tested positive for COVID-19, has recently come in contact with someone that tested positive for COVID-19, or is having symptoms of COVID-19, please visit the [online attendance page](#) to complete the COVID-19 Related Absences form. If you have any questions about the forms, please contact the Wellness Coordinator, Melissa Fayssoux, at mfayssoux@gastonday.org.

Throughout the 20-21 school year, we understand a number of students will be learning from home for all or part of the school year. This could be because:

- a student is ill
- is following return-to-school policies
- or family choice

Students learning from home will be marked as “Present- Learning From Home” in OnCampus for attendance purposes. Students are able to learn from home at any point during the school year with parent permission. Parents are expected to complete the Learning From Home form on the [online attendance page](#) in order to notify the school when a student is learning from home. Lower School families, please contact [Heather Wynkoop](#) for details or visit our [reopening webpage](#) for more information. If you are planning to have your student start virtually at the beginning of the year, please complete this form by **August 10**.

So we go into the new school year well prepared. And, we know from last year, that we are able to move swiftly and effectively to a virtual learning platform if we have to. Public health officials will guide those decisions. **We have done our best to be ready for anything.**

I can't wait to see everyone on campus. As always, if you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, please feel free to reach out to us at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard E. Rankin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

Richard Rankin, Jr.
Anderson Davis Warlick Head of School