



David J. Beare

Head of School

May 20, 2020

Dear Middlesex Community,

I write to you having just filmed a graduation speech for our seniors, who will soon be gathered in viewing parties with their families and friends to celebrate the completion of their Middlesex experience. I am very proud of what these students have been able to achieve in our classrooms and labs, our fields and courts, our performance spaces and art studios – in so many areas of our busy school lives.

Spring at Middlesex is an opportunity to celebrate the current year's achievements, to be sure. It is also a time when we shift some of our focus to the possibilities of the coming fall and welcoming our next generation of Middlesex students. In this letter, I hope to give you a sense of just how fruitful this spring has been for all of our students, as well as offer some insight into our planning for a safe reopening of campus next fall.

One of Middlesex's defining qualities is our comprehensive notion of excellence, and this spring, it has been inspiring to see our students find innovative ways to stretch themselves, with the support of a faculty that is as responsive and energetic as ever. Indeed, this spring has been prosperous in so many ways. Over the last two weeks, 235 Middlesex students have taken over 600 AP exams, and early reports back from those students reflect their appreciation for the extensive preparation they received from teachers and peers alike in their synchronous, online classes. The College Office, meanwhile, has been galloping at its usual vigorous pace, meeting one-on-one with students while completing a remarkably successful college admissions cycle: Nearly 50% of our seniors have been admitted to their first-choice college, and over 80% of seniors have been accepted to one of their top-five choices. And though it will be difficult to part with our extraordinary class of 2020, a record-setting yield in our own admissions season will bring a particularly exceptional group of new students to Middlesex next fall.

We've also posted seven full Chapel Programs, infusing our learning program with weekly reflections from faculty and senior leaders. The art scene at Middlesex is flourishing as well, as evidenced, in part, by the recent online publication of our literary and art magazine, *The Iris*, which is filled with over 70 pages of student poetry, fiction, and art. This week also marked the opening of a spectacular exhibit of works by our AP Studio Art students. Please follow this link to [the art exhibit](#).

When I first visited Middlesex, I was struck, as I'm sure you were, by the School's profound sense of community and the quality of the personal connections that are forged here. It's a feeling that's palpable from the moment you join the Middlesex family. This extended period of social distancing has tested the durability of every community's interpersonal connections. During a time when connections are difficult—yet as crucial as ever—you won't be surprised to hear that our community has both sustained its relationships and deepened those bonds.

The connections begin, as they always have, in our small classes, where live, online meetings allow our students to discuss, debate, laugh, and learn with and from each other. Teachers continue to be available for extra help sessions, and one-on-one meetings continue with advisors, college counselors, coaches, athletic trainers, school health counselors, and academic support specialists. Small groups meet regularly outside the classroom as well: Students are gathering online to gaze at the stars through our remotely controlled telescope, athletic teams are meeting to watch movies, review film, and share training programs, and dorms are gathering for trivia contests and games. These modes of collaboration grow organically from a program specifically designed to cultivate healthy connections.

As robust as our online program has become, we are eager to bring the community back to campus. To that end, a task force of school administrators is meeting daily to plan for the opening of school next fall. Our mantra and overarching goal is to “open school safely,” and to achieve this, we will be complying with the health and safety measures that have recently been issued in Governor Baker's Reopening of Massachusetts plan. At this stage, the governor's plan does not have guidelines set for schools, but his overall message about the opening of offices and

the economy was a positive one, and we will have more clarity about the state's requirements in the coming weeks. Our school health team is also in close consultation with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

Given the unpredictable nature of COVID-19, one of the School's primary goals is to remain agile by planning for several different scenarios that may come this September. Regardless of how school opens in the fall, Middlesex will:

- Keep the health and safety concerns of students, faculty, and staff at the forefront of our decision making.
- Maintain academic excellence and the overall quality of the Middlesex experience.
- Invest in our rich, vibrant community and support the diversity of backgrounds, strengths, and interests each member of our community brings.

Our primary objective is to safely open and welcome students back to campus in the fall in a "hybrid" model that would flexibly allow both in-person and online learning. For this hybrid scenario, we are developing clear testing, tracing, isolating, and screening protocols. We will also carefully manage the density of our community in classrooms, dorms, the dining hall, and other buildings through adjustments to our daily schedule as well as physical reconfigurations of key locations on campus. We are also committed to maintaining our athletics program, and the heads of every ISL school are meeting regularly to review options for interscholastic sports. In every on-campus scenario, Middlesex will offer a stratified athletics program to meet the needs of every level of athlete.

We are confident that these and other adjustments to campus life will allow the School to reopen safely while maintaining our core community values. We understand, too, that some students, whether through travel restrictions, health considerations, or other impediments, may need to continue a portion of the school year online. We are committed to supporting those students and to delivering a robust program that allows all students to learn and connect deeply with the School, even from afar.

We will keep you closely informed, and you can expect another communication in June, followed by regular updates throughout the summer as our plans solidify and more information emerges about the course of COVID-19. The Middlesex Board of Trustees will be meeting with school administrators throughout the summer as well, and we intend to announce a formal plan for the opening of school in the second half of July. The School Opening Task Force, a group we call Team 2020, is proceeding with optimism, innovation, and flexibility. Reopening campus will have its challenges, but we feel confident that we will continue to preserve the strong emotional ties that bind us together, regardless of the structures we must use to achieve that goal.

A positive outcome for me of working from home during this pandemic is that my wife and I have been able to connect online with good friends whom we have not seen in years. It's easy to lose sight of important connections in the regular routines of a busy, modern life, but we have taken this opportunity to reach out to people who are important to us. I hope that your family has also found time for reflection and connection in the unexpected space and time of being home.

Again, congratulations to the great class of 2020, and I look forward to welcoming new families in the fall.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David J. Beare". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

David J. Beare
Head of School