



## Head of School Report to the Board of Directors

April 20, 2020

Greetings Centennial Academy Board of Directors,

Shortly after writing my board report last month, all of our worlds changed as a result of COVID-19. What we initially thought was a two week school closure in order to enforce a mandatory self-quarantine has since resulted in an extended school closure for the remainder of the year and a shelter-in-place order for our state that has yet to be lifted. I am proud of how our community has been able to pivot during these unprecedented times and maintain an instructional learning environment via Cyber Academy. However, please note that my first priority is the health and safety of our scholars and staff. For your review, I have included pertinent updates below:

**Academics:** On Monday, March 16th, Centennial Academy launched Cyber Academy via Google Classroom. Teachers are now posting one assignment sheet which outlines the daily assignments for every subject for the week. This document along with additional resources are posted to Google Classroom. Scholars may also be asked to complete assignments on USA Test Prep, in their Coach workbooks or on external websites such as Khan Academy or Zearn. Assignments are only given Monday - Thursday with Friday as a make-up day or tutorial opportunity for scholars.

We have noticed that many scholars are not logging in to complete required assignments. In addition to teachers reaching out to scholars and parents directly, our Family Liaison, Social Worker, and Student Life Coordinator are all performing wellness checks. Parents have shared the struggles of having multiple children at home and managing competing priorities, working as essential workers and being unable to monitor their child's learning, or the challenges of serving as their child's "home school" teacher. We have hosted virtual Parent Chats, posted resources on our social media pages, and maintained weekly office hours in order to support families. Teachers are tracking participation via Infinite Campus and our current engagement numbers average 73%.

In order to address the digital divide that many of our families faced, Centennial staff organized two technology distribution days. Over 250 devices were safely disseminated to scholars; tablets for those in Kindergarten - 2nd grade and chromebooks for those in 3rd - 8th grade. Families also received information on free wifi services provided by Xfinity and the \$9.95/month essentials internet package offered by Comcast. We also delivered devices to families with transportation challenges and to those currently residing in shelters. However, we were still unable to reach over 100 scholars with an identified need due to families not reporting on distribution day or confirming delivery with staff members.

Centennial will be following guidance provided by the Atlanta Public Schools District regarding grades. Scholars will be held harmless for this period of distance learning and will either receive their final grade as of March 13, 2020 or their final grade at the end of the semester, whichever is the higher of the two. No scholar shall receive a grade of '0' or 'Missing' (calculated as a '0') for any assignments during the COVID-19 closure. Parents will be able to monitor their child's grades via the Infinite Campus Parent Portal.

Centennial will end instructional classes on Friday, May 15, 2020 and end of year activities will take place beginning May 18, 2020. Scholars will be invited to participate in a virtual field day, awards day, and class party. Presently, we are still working through the final details of an 8th-grade Commencement alternative. Our last day of school will be on Friday, May 22nd in order to provide our staff with a full week to adequately close out the school year. As an additional note, the state of Georgia has been granted federal waivers which allowed for the cancellation of end of year Milestones testing, TKES/LKES teacher and leader evaluations, and 2020 CCRPI accountability scores.

The leadership team will use the summer to plan for both in-person instruction and digital learning for the start of the 20-21 school year. The reality is that we have no guarantees for what July/August may hold for our community. It is equally important for us to plan for the possibility of intermittent closing throughout the school year. We are already thinking through advanced professional learning opportunities for staff on effective digital learning and purchasing additional technology devices and possibly hotspots to ensure access for all scholars.

**Personnel:** The Centennial Academy Talent Committee is still actively recruiting and hiring for the 2020-2021 school year. All interviews and sample teach lessons are now being conducted virtually. As a result of non-renewals due to certification or performance, teachers who have chosen to submit letters of resignation, prior vacancies, or promotions, we are seeking to hire 15 Kindergarten - 8th grade teachers. To date, we have successfully placed 8 new teachers including 2 who are

returning to Centennial Academy, 1 who is a resident of Centennial Place Apartments, and 1 who is a longstanding Centennial parent! We have also added a new Teacher Support Coordinator position which will allow our teachers new to Centennial to receive intensive and ongoing support, as well as mentoring.

Our new principal, Mr. Shaun Heckstall, has begun transitioning with the Centennial Academy leadership team. Professional development and leadership coaching dates have already been planned with EL Education and the first session kicked off last week with a focus on school improvement through building culture. Tomorrow, Mr. Heckstall will be formally introduced to the Georgia Tech CEISMC team. As we continue to build Centennial's STEAM pedagogy across disciplines, Mr. Heckstall along with 30 other Centennial Academy educators participated in Georgia Tech's virtual STEAM conference that was held today. I am proud to share that two of our heroes who are nearing completion of our one year Go-STEAM teacher partnership with Tech, Arts Integration Specialist Ms. Summer Blackmon and Science/Social Studies Coach Ms. Ashley Gladden, served as presenters in today's conference! Lastly, Mr. Heckstall will have an opportunity to engage in two upcoming focus groups with our expanded leadership cabinet and educator advisory council over the next two weeks.

As we continue to practice social distancing, it has become increasingly important for me to ensure that our Centennial Academy staff feel well supported as well. It has been a heavy burden for many of them balancing the new responsibilities of digital learning, teaching their own children at home, caring for loved ones, maintaining their households, and losing family members and friends due to COVID-19. We had a very successful virtual spirit week that lifted the spirits of scholars and staff and I have solicited the Educator Advisory Council to plan a virtual Happy Hour or Coffee Chat of some sort. Although we meet once a week as a full CA Academy, have smaller team/departments meetings, and remain connected via our staff GroupMe accounts, there have been quite a few staff members that have openly shared their recent struggles with depression and feeling overwhelmed. Our Human Resources Department has shared EAP resources and I have reached out to our partners at T2S Enterprises for adult tele-mental health support.

**Facilities & Operations:** While the building is currently not in use, the APS Operations Team will use this opportunity to get a head start on the HVAC SPLOST Project. In order to allow staff back in the building to remove all items and break down classrooms, we have to receive approval from the APS Facilities Team and Health Department. Our goal is to conduct this final step next week so that we can take advantage of this additional time. Although we have not received an updated construction timeline, we do anticipate that all work would conclude prior to the first day of scheduled pre-planning on July 27, 2020.

**Enrollment:** We currently have four scholars who are new to the mandated attendance zone with pending registration, 1 from Paris, 2 from Alabama, and 1 from Gwinnett. Due to COVID-19, all registration across the district is now handled at the APS Central Office. These scholars should be enrolled by the end of this week causing our enrollment to increase to 819.

Grade Level	Total	Grade Level	Total	Grade Level	Total
Kindergarten	80	3rd Grade	112	6th Grade	95
1st Grade	102	4th Grade	94	7th Grade	73
2nd Grade	89	5th Grade	97	8th Grade	73
				All Grades	<b>815</b>

My hope is that all of you are healthy and safe. Looking forward to the day when we can all meet in the presence of one another!

Warmest regards,

*Tequila Lamar*

Tequila Lamar  
Head of School