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Dear Grand Peak Families,

I am so excited to welcome you to the 2021-22 school year! A year in which we hope resembles those "normal" years in education before the infamous March 2020 shut down where education and our lives were greatly impacted. Before I share with you the COVID-19 guidelines that everyone is curious about, I wanted to formally introduce myself to those of you I have not yet had the privilege of meeting.

My name is Nicole Parker, and I am proud to be a GPA Bear! This is my 15th year in education and my second year as an administrator at Grand Peak Academy. I consider Colorado my home; however, I was born into a military family so we moved around quite a bit before we settled into Colorado Springs in 1998. I hold both a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Education and received my Colorado principal license in 2015. I am married, and we love raising our two boys in this area where we both have family members close by. My oldest son will also be attending GPA this year as a Kindergartener!

This summer, we welcomed aboard a new assistant principal, Caitlin Casai. Caitlin is joining us from another District 49 school in this area. Amanda Ralston was hired as our Dean of Students. She may be a familiar face and name to you as she is joining us straight out of one of our very own Kindergarten classrooms. The three of us spent a lot of time together this summer planning for the upcoming school year. We all have big visions and goals for GPA, and I look forward to seeing them all come to fruition. Personally, I am impressed by their talents, knowledge, and dedication to our community. I look forward to you meeting and working with them this year as well!

Also this summer, we updated our Kindergarten playground and added shade, labeled our carpool lanes in a brighter way to ease the pick-up process, and hosted a summer read camp that was designed as a way to boost skills before the 21-22 year begins.

Now, the Covid-19 information for this year in reference to masks, cleaning/disinfecting, social distancing, quarantines, and gatherings.

Local Control

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment has made it clear that the ultimate decision-making should rest at the local level, as we know and have learned what's best for the well-being of our students and staff. Accordingly, while we'll stay deeply cognizant of recommendations and guidelines made by national, state, and local health agencies. We will also institute protocols that maximize the benefits to our community. Our guiding principles will continue to be health, safety, and normalcy.

Masks

We will no longer mandate or require that masks be worn by any of our students or staff; however, we respect every individual's right to wear a mask if he or she desires.

Cleaning/Disinfecting

We will continue to institute focused cleaning protocols in our school buildings, with associated emphasis on student and staff hand washing and sanitizing.

Social Distancing

We will no longer strictly institute measured distancing between students, staff, desks, and workstations. Instead, we will teach students the life skill of maintaining a comfortable distance between themselves and others.

Quarantines

Only positive COVID-19 cases will need to quarantine. We will not quarantine based on exposure to a positive case. Our approach to COVID-related illness will mirror our approach to any school-related illness. If our staff or students feel sick or ill, please stay home. When they feel better and their symptoms have cleared, please return to school.

Gatherings

We are excited to be returning to buildings, events, cafeterias, common areas, and gymnasiums that are filled with students, staff, and volunteers, without concerns or limits on numbers of individuals sharing the same spaces.

We recognize that mandates and requirements may change, and we'll be prepared to react flexibly as needed. I look forward to helping us return to the environment that we know is optimal for student health, well-being, growth, and learning.

Summers seem so short, but I hope you had a chance to rest, relax, and do something you love. I recognize we all feel differently about the year starting so soon - some anxious, some are counting down, some long for a few more days. But one thing will be the same. You all have a dedicated staff excited and ready to welcome your children next week with wide open arms and hearts. They have already been working tirelessly to prepare!

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for trusting us with your most precious asset(s). We will not always be perfect, but I can promise you that we strive to be our best daily.

I look forward to meeting you this Friday night at our whole school Back to School event. Please see a previous communication with this specific information.

Please reach out if you need me.

Sincerely,
Nicole Parker, GPA Principal



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