



NOTES FROM SPARTAN LANE

John Thorsen, Head of School

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January 7, 2021

We have seen a somber start to the New Year, yet we are pleased with how the first several days have unfolded on campus. I am at a loss for what to share about the horrific events that unfolded at the Capitol yesterday. This is a difficult time for both adults and children, and we cannot minimize the impact that this unrest has on young people. Our country has overcome much over our long history, and it is worth thinking about the words shared in the Pledge of Allegiance:

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Our primary work is to listen to our students and reassure them that they are safe. If you have concerns about your child, please do not hesitate to reach out to one of our talented and capable counselors and we will partner with you. You may also be interested in one or more of the following resources: [these tips](#) for talking to children about trauma; [this PBS article](#) on helping younger children deal with violence in the news; and an [NPR segment](#) on talking to kids about violence in the news.

In other issues of health and safety, the spike in COVID-19 cases in Northeast Georgia is very real, as we have experienced it in our school community. Our numbers from the two-week holiday (24 cases) surpassed our numbers for the preceding four-and-a-half months of school (23 cases). The updated chart shows 46 total cases; the most recent positive case will be counted in the month of January. As you know, these numbers represent our students and employees only. There has also been an increased number of positive cases among parents.

Athens Academy Monthly COVID-19 Case Count 2020-2021

	Based on 1,100 students & faculty/staff						
	PS Students	LS Students	MS Students	US Students	Teachers	Non-Teaching Staff	Athletics Staff
Aug '20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sept '20	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Oct '20	0	1	5	0	0	5	1
Nov '20*	1	0	0	2	0	1	0
Dec '20*	1	1	11	6	3	4	0

*One of the Nov. cases was over Thanksgiving break. Twenty-three of the twenty-six Dec. cases were over the holiday break.

Please continue to help our teachers and community operate in person by following our protocols and taking care of one another. We do have a number of at-home learners at this time, and we appreciate that families are making decisions for the betterment of the community. A conservative and healthy approach to this virus makes all the difference. If there are any health concerns, please do not come to campus so we can continue to mitigate the risk of transmission. We need everyone's help in this important work both on and away from campus.

There will be the inevitable sniffles and colds as we return to school, which is normal for this time of year. These symptoms alone will not relegate someone to a long quarantine, but we do need to be mindful of potential exposure and COVID-19 symptoms. We will continue to partner with you and do our utmost to keep our community healthy and safe.

Our book drive continues through next Friday, January 15. If you have gently used books appropriate for children ages 3-16, please send them in with your student so we can brighten someone else's day. If you have more books to donate than your child can carry to school, please contact your division office to arrange a time to drop them off. Thank you!

Next week we are excited to share performances by magician and inspirational speaker Jason Michaels for our Middle and Upper School students during the school day on Thursday and Friday, via Zoom. Then at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, we will host another virtual presentation of Mr. Michaels' performance geared to any Pre- and Lower School families who would like to watch. We wanted to start the New Year with a little magic, and we hope everyone enjoys the opportunity.

Thank you again for your continued support of our amazing teachers, students and school community. Now more than ever, our work with one another validates the value of independent education and community. Let's make 2021 a positive year for each and every person on Spartan Lane.

Stay healthy and go Spartans,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Thorsen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being more prominent than the last name "Thorsen".

John Thorsen
Head of School