



February 7, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Later this week we will be sending a comprehensive update regarding the winter session and plans for the spring. However, I wanted to touch base today about some recent developments with our COVID-19 testing and contact-tracing protocols.

On January 25, I wrote to all of you at the front end of our intake testing protocol window with results from the first round of testing for employees and students. I noted that we had two positive results in our student testing, and zero positive results with employees. Since that time, all employees and students have gone through two additional rounds of testing, and we have begun our surveillance testing program: 75 tests per day, six days per week. Here is where we are as of this afternoon:

In the two subsequent rounds of intake testing for employees and students, we had two additional students test positive. The more recent case involved a student who tested positive on February 1, and we determined there were 11 students who were close contacts. All of them were placed in isolation or quarantine in either the Health Center or at their homes. While in quarantine, three of them tested positive, and this has led to additional contact-tracing steps we are still following up on.

In the meantime, five additional students have exhibited symptoms and received care in our Health Center. Where appropriate, isolation and quarantine measures have been put in place, and we administered additional testing. To date, none of these five students have tested positive.

Finally, I want to also share that two employees have tested positive in the past few days after a spouse/partner tested positive. Currently, we have no reason to believe that either of these employees had any close contact with students.

With all of this in mind and an appreciation for the anxiety that comes with positive test results, we want to share the following:

1. Our positive test rate continues to be under 1% with the possibility of this growing to 1.5% or so depending on how some of the currently symptomatic students ultimately test.
2. We have expected positive test results and anticipate that we will continue to experience a small number of positive test results through our departure for Spring Break on Saturday, March 6.

3. As outlined in my January 25 letter, we are planning to be in touch with parents and guardians of any student who tests positive or is determined to be a close contact. We will work with those families to support them in any way we can. We are not planning to be in touch with all of you every time we have a positive case, but we will provide periodic updates of this sort about how things are going.

In terms of steps we will be taking over the next few days, I offer the following:

1. We are planning to test all students who are currently on campus on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of this week, in order to determine if anyone else has the virus and is asymptomatic.
2. We will be moving all in-person classes that are not able to meet with each class member six feet apart from one another to an all-virtual mode through Wednesday of this week.
3. We will pause or move to a virtual mode with all afternoon programs that meet indoors and are not able to maintain six feet of physical distancing. All outdoor afternoon programs will continue to meet, as scheduled. This plan will remain in effect through Wednesday of this week.
4. We will be doubling down on risk-mitigation reminders, including the importance of wearing masks, especially KN-95 masks, physical distancing, avoiding close contact with others, and practicing good hygiene.
5. I will emphasize at the beginning of Chapel on Monday that our current circumstances require us to tighten our approach. We will not allow persistent and willful lack of compliance with risk-mitigation measures. From this point forward, if students are not wearing masks outside of their dormitory rooms, with particular concern about being unmasked indoors, they will be warned once. If this happens a second time, we will require the student to go home for the balance of the winter session. There are a great many on campus who are working hard to adhere to all risk-mitigation protocols. We need a substantially greater number in the community to join those who are doing their part to keep all of us safe and healthy.

As I noted above, we will be in touch with a more comprehensive update by the middle of the week, and we will be able to share more about how things are going during our webinar scheduled for Thursday, February 11, at 7 p.m.

For now, thank you for your ongoing support, and please be in touch if you have any questions.

Best,

John R. Packard
Head of School

See what's happening on our social sites

