



November 19, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As we close in on our first extended break of the year, I am glad to have this opportunity to check in with all of you about the past few weeks and the finish to our fall season. Your children and our students have done extremely well in every respect since arriving over Labor Day weekend. It is hard to believe that Thanksgiving is already upon us and the winter season will kick into gear when we return at the end of this month. We are looking forward to a smooth transition to more indoor activity over the colder months ahead, and we would like to share some updates to our health and safety protocols with this shift in mind. It has been so much fun to have our whole community on campus reconnecting, renewing friendships, making new connections, and knowing one another in ways that have been so difficult for the better part of two years now. While we continue to be subject to some forces beyond our control, we remain determined to do all we can to maximize our ability to run our whole program safely throughout the winter and into the spring.

Let me begin by trying to capture some of what has made these final few weeks of fall so much fun on our campus:

- For the first time in more than 20 months, we were treated to live theater with an exceptional performance of *Clue* on the main stage in our Center for the Arts. The directing was superb, the actors were wonderful in every way, the set design and layout were professional grade, and the audiences were magnificent. With more to come on the main stage and throughout the Center for the Arts as the year moves along, *Clue* got things off to a terrific start!
- We enjoyed a well-deserved Head of School holiday spanning Monday and Tuesday of last week. It was fun to share that news with the school in Chapel, and to see lots of students and faculty members find some time to shift gears as we all caught our collective breath. The campus was pretty quiet last Tuesday morning!
- This past Saturday and Sunday marked the final weekend of our fall season and there were too many exciting moments and events to count. Tri Nguyen '22 shared his photography exhibition with all of us in the Bowers Room in the Center for the Arts. The exhibit will be up through the end of the week and is well worth the trip. Our athletic teams competed in their final games and competitions this past Saturday. I noted in Chapel on Monday that our teams at all levels played hard and well right to the end. This was especially true of most teams that knew Saturday would be the final game of their season and were not playing for a place in a New England tournament -- great spirit in heavy abundance. Our girls and boys cross-country teams placed 5th and 8th, respectively, in the Division III New England championships with Kata Clark '25 and Alex Tobias '22 winning their races. While I suppose it is possible this feat is not unprecedented in school history, I cannot recall a time when we had first-place finishers in both races. Congratulations to Kata, Alex, and their teammates for a great season!
- Our **field hockey** and **boys soccer** teams both earned New England tournament bids as the #2 and #1 seeds, respectively, and played first-round games on Wednesday. True to form, they both won and are now on their way to hosting semifinal games on Saturday afternoon here on campus. We are hoping that some vacation plans might be delayed just a bit to ensure we have great Brooks School crowds at both games. We are also hoping both teams will win and advance to New England championship games on Sunday.

In sum, it has been an emphatic finish to a full fall season and program that we are so pleased to have enjoyed together. As we turn to winter and confront the reality that COVID-19 cases in New England are currently and unfortunately trending upward again, we want to highlight some updates to our health and safety protocols that you will hear about via different communications as we keep going forward. As always, we anticipate that conditions will stay somewhat fluid and we will be prepared to adjust to whatever circumstances we confront. As noted above, we are planning to remain fully in-person and run our whole program through the winter months.

To begin, I want to reiterate and emphasize the substantially higher safety level we have achieved by having 99 percent of our community fully vaccinated. The data continues to underline the enormous difference in COVID-19 vulnerability between those who are unvaccinated and those who are vaccinated. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) points out that average daily cases are six times greater in the unvaccinated, and average daily deaths are 12 times greater. We indicated in late August that we would be following CDC recommendations about boosters as the year moved along, and have taken the step of requiring employees without approved exemptions to get a booster when eligible and before we return from March Break. Currently, those who are under 18 have not been approved for boosters, but if and when that does occur, we will be following CDC recommendations. We expect to be able to hold vaccine booster clinics on campus for students who need help securing an appointment later in the year and will update this planning as the winter moves along.

As I noted in my last letter, we will be testing all students and employees upon our return to campus following Thanksgiving Break. This testing will take place on Monday, November 29, for employees and boarding students, and on Tuesday, November 30, for day students. We anticipate having all of those results back by the end of the day on Wednesday, December 1. Clearly, the more we do to stay safe and well while away from school during the break, the less likely we will be to have positive test results when we return. With under three weeks of school between Thanksgiving and Winter Break, a positive test result and the required 10-day isolation period that follows will wipe out most of this window of time for anyone who does test positive. Thanks in advance for all you can do to help ensure your children and our students return to school in good health as we move into December.

It is our hope that we will get through our reentry testing after Thanksgiving Break without incident. We will be requiring masks indoors while we await those test results and until we believe returning to our current mask-optional approach in some indoor spaces can be done safely. In addition, we are in the process of consulting with our Independent School League (ISL) peers about winter athletic protocols and will have more to share on this front as we get closer to competing with other schools in December. For now, we will stay the course with our protocol asking that all unvaccinated people refrain from being inside any Brooks School building unless we have granted an exception. All people attending indoor athletic events will be required to wear a mask.

On the subject of masks, the combination of the colder months ahead and the fact that we come and go from campus more frequently in December and January does have us inclined to encourage community members to err on the side of wearing masks when not feeling well for any reason. Our messaging will be simple and straightforward: The more we do to take care of one another's health and safety, the greater the likelihood that we will remain whole and fully intact through the winter.

Before closing, I would like to emphasize that we are incredibly excited to be returning to campus following Thanksgiving Break. Last year, we moved to a virtual mode for two months before getting back to in-person school in late January. We missed much of what is special about being at Brooks at this time of year: our first snowfall, winter afternoon programs and interscholastic athletics, the holiday season and spirit, Lessons and Carols, and then Winter Term in early January. To have all of this programming and time together in our sights is a lift. We are going to do all we can to continue having a full and safe school year with our whole community physically together on our campus. Your help with that effort is deeply appreciated.

Finally, as we release our [Impact Report](#) on annual giving, I want to thank all of you for the support you shared with the school during the 2020-2021 fiscal year. In what was an incredibly complicated budgetary year, there is no question that your support made a difference in allowing our school to stay whole and deliver all that was within our reach during the heart of the pandemic. Again, many thanks.

I wish all of you a wonderful beginning to the holiday season and far more unscripted time with family and friends over the week ahead. We will look forward to staying in touch. As always,

please do reach out with questions or if we can help in any way. Take good care.

Best,

John R. Packard  
Head of School