



February 9, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are now just about one month into the second semester and more than two weeks removed from the beginning of our intake testing process for winter session boarding students. As February moves along quickly, we are splitting our vision between doing the best we can in the moment, and also turning our attention to firming up our plans for the spring session. With what follows, we would like to add to what we shared on Sunday with some additional thought about how things are going this winter. From there, we want to share our current thinking and plan for how we will approach school when we return from Spring Break. We are looking forward to an opportunity to join as many of you as are able on a [webinar](#) scheduled for Thursday, February 11, at 7 p.m., to elaborate on what we touch on below. (You can submit questions ahead of the webinar [HERE](#).)

### **Winter Session**

As you know, we started classes virtually for all students on January 13, and have since moved to our concurrent model with just over two-thirds of our students beginning this session on campus and slightly less than one-third of our students attending school remotely. This shift has us operating with roughly 250 students attending school in person and 115 students attending from off campus. As expected, the winter is proving to be more challenging than the fall, but we feel good about how we are managing our way through these challenges.

***Concurrent Model*** - We have worked hard to learn from experiences we had in the fall in our concurrent model with both boarding and virtual students attending class simultaneously. While the mode remains challenging, our faculty are continuing to do their very best to connect with both boarding and virtual students across different time zones. All students and teachers are experiencing different mixes of boarding and virtual students in the winter than we did in the fall, and we have built in more openings for connection, afternoon programs, and student activities outside of class. We are mindful of the fact that we are likely to have some number of students attending school virtually through the end of the year. Thus, keeping the line open about how things are going for both students and teachers will continue to be important.

***Intake and Surveillance Testing*** - As I noted earlier in the week, we made our way through three rounds of intake testing for all boarding students and employees working on campus between January 21 and February 1. We administered well over 1,000 tests in the process and had just four students test positive -- all four were isolated as soon

as we had the test results. Two of the four students who tested positive had no close contact with anyone on campus. The other two students did have some close contact with peers, and this led to a total of 15 students needing to quarantine for the 14-day period of time the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Department of Public Health (DPH) continue to recommend. We are aware of the fact that CDC and DPH have offered alternative quarantine approaches. It is also true that CDC and DPH indicate that there is a modest increase in risk of transmission when the 14-day period is shortened. Our approach will continue to err on the more cautious end of the quarantine recommendation spectrum. If these guidelines evolve, our approach will follow suit. All community members who test positive, or are determined to be close contacts, will be able to return to school on campus in accordance with these isolation and quarantine guidelines, and in conjunction with approval from our Health and Wellness Center. As a reminder, you can access our isolation and quarantine protocols [HERE](#).

We are currently in the middle of three consecutive days of testing all students who are living on campus. While what follows this phase will be determined by how that testing goes, we are planning to return to our routine surveillance testing regimen where all boarding students and employees working on campus will be tested at least weekly through our departure for Spring Break on Saturday, March 6. We will continue to emphasize the importance of masks, preferably the KN-95 variety, which we have made available to all who are on campus. We appreciate all of your help in ensuring our students adhere to our risk-mitigation protocols and control what they can in trying to avoid contracting the virus, or becoming a close contact of someone who tests positive. To be clear, none of this is easy, and all of us have probably experienced COVID-19 fatigue of some sort or another. Nonetheless, we need to expect high levels of compliance with these protocols and have made that clear to the whole community. The more vigilant we are, the more likely we are to stay healthy and intact on campus.

***Spring Break*** - As you know, classes will run through the end of the day on Friday, March 5, and boarding students will be departing for Spring Break gradually between Saturday, February 27, and Saturday, March 6. We will remain on Spring Break through Wednesday, March 24, with hope that students and faculty members alike will have an opportunity to pause and recharge before we head into the spring. As we have noted in our past two letters, we are eager to partner with any student and family who does not have a place to go during this break. If you have not already, please be in touch with Associate Head for Student Affairs [Andrea Heinze](#) as soon as possible so that we can coordinate with you. There will be no school-supported cultural or athletic trips of any kind during Spring Break.

### **Spring Session**

We are moving forward with plans to implement a boarding/day/virtual mode for the spring. While we hope and have some reason to believe that COVID-19 circumstances will evolve for the better over the course of the months ahead, we are sharing plans with you based on a notion that circumstances remain comparable to what they are now. In other words, we may choose to pivot in a different direction if circumstances improve or decline as winter turns to spring. Throughout the year, it has been our feeling that the spring might be our least restricted window of time, and we are hoping that proves to be the case. Here is our current thinking:

***Boarding/Day/Virtual Mode*** - As we approach the one-year mark of COVID-19 dramatically altering all of our lives, we are mindful of all that we missed last spring. We are also mindful of the fact that some of our students have not been on campus since we departed for Spring Break in March of last year. Thus, we want to construct a

mode for the spring that allows day students to commute to and from school each day, if they choose to do so.

- **Boarding Students** - As has been the case through the year, all students wishing to board may elect to do so provided we have space to accommodate these requests. The same restrictions we have been operating under from the start of the year will be in place. In other words, all boarding students will move to campus after going through intake testing and will not be allowed to leave campus at all unless doing so for a school-sanctioned trip of some kind: athletic game, field trip, etc. In sum, boarding students should move in expecting to remain on campus until we depart for summer vacation.
- **Day Students** - We will only be allowing students who are contractually enrolled as day students to commute to and from school in the spring. The school's expectation would be that day students are in their primary residence with minimal interaction with anyone who does not also live in that residence. Beyond that, our hope and expectation is that day students who are commuting in the spring drive to and from campus, and spend as much time on campus as they would like, and that the school traditionally permits. Day students may not be involved in any activities outside of school from the time we begin transitioning to campus in late March through the beginning of summer vacation.
- **Virtual Students** - As has been the case all year, all boarding and day students may elect to attend school virtually in the spring.

To be clear, all students who are contractually enrolled as boarding students may choose to board or attend virtually. All students who are contractually enrolled as day students may choose to board (space permitting), commute, or attend virtually. With this in mind, please complete [THIS FORM](#) by Saturday, February 20, indicating whether your child would like to attend school in the spring as a boarding student, day student, or virtual student. We would like to settle campus housing for the spring before we leave for Spring Break on Saturday, March 6.

Finally, I would like to again emphasize the importance of ensuring that your child has a place to go within 24 hours of being notified of the need to do so for a health and safety reason. This would include testing positive and needing to isolate, being a close contact and needing to quarantine, or in a circumstance where the school would need to close the campus. We are grateful to all of you who have responded so quickly over these past couple of weeks when your child has needed to isolate or quarantine off campus. We share this thought now simply to underline that this will continue to be our expectation in the spring. Thanks so much for your help.

***Spring Session Tuition Adjustments*** - In the event that a student attends school in the spring either virtually or as a boarding student (space permitting) when contractually enrolled as a day student, tuition adjustments will work, as follows:

- Boarding student choosing to attend virtually in the spring - \$5,550 credit
- Day student choosing to attend virtually in the spring - \$1,700 credit
- Day student choosing to attend as a boarding student in the spring - \$3,200 fee

As has been the case in the fall and winter, financial aid will be available to any student and family who have demonstrated need and would like to move from day to boarding status for the spring session.

***Reentry from Spring Break*** - As we have in the fall and winter, we will ease into

school on campus when Spring Break ends in the following manner:

- Saturday, March 20 - While Spring Break does not end until Wednesday, March 24, it is our expectation that any student electing to return to attend school as either a day or boarding student in the spring begin a quiet phase on Saturday, March 20 - restricting movement, laying low, and taking extra care to avoid any COVID-19 contact.
- Thursday, March 25 and Friday, March 26 - Second semester classes will resume in our virtual mode for all students on both days.
- Sunday, March 28 - First test administration for all students planning to attend school in person. All boarding students living more than one hour from school will move into single rooms on campus to quarantine. All day students and boarding students living within one hour from school will be expected to quarantine at home. We are considering the feasibility of asking boarding students who will need to move in on this day to test at home ahead of coming to campus for this first test.
- Monday, March 29 - Friday, April 2 - All classes will be taught virtually during this week as we move through intake testing. We are still working on plans for Saturday, April 3, and may hold some version of classes on that day. There will be no afternoon programs during this week.
- Wednesday, March 31 - Second test administration for all students planning to attend school in person.
- Friday, April 2 and Saturday, April 3 - All boarding students who are in quarantine at home will be permitted to move to campus at assigned times on one of these two days following a second negative test result.
- Monday, April 5 - Third test administration for all boarding and day students who will be on campus by this time. We will gradually transition to in-person classes, afternoon programs, community spaces, and eating in the dining hall over the course of this week - depending on how our testing goes. We will resume Saturday classes beginning this week.

We appreciate that many in our community will be observing religious holidays (Easter and Passover) during this stretch of intake testing and that our protocols will interfere with your ability to celebrate those holidays in ways you are accustomed to doing. Unfortunately, we do not feel able to get our students onto campus safely after Spring Break and allow in-person students to attend religious ceremonies and family gatherings that would increase the odds of COVID-19 exposure. We will revisit this position only if circumstances improve appreciably by the middle of March.

***Interscholastic Athletics*** - We continue to be in steady dialogue with our ISL peer schools about competing interscholastically in the spring. While plans have not yet been developed, and a lot will likely change over the next two months, we are currently planning to be involved in ISL athletics this spring. We anticipate that these plans will develop further before the end of February, and we will share them with you as they materialize. One will need to be a boarding or day student in the spring to compete in interscholastic athletics.

***Winter Term in the Spring*** - In our communications over the past few months, we had hoped that there might be a way to simulate Winter Term at some point in the spring. We looked at a range of models, when we might place it in the spring, and how it might work with COVID-19 restrictions likely to be with us. Ultimately, we have determined that trying to replicate Winter Term in the spring will not work. The travel, field trips, and hands-on nature of these terrific courses simply do not mesh with masks and physical distancing. So, sadly, we will not be scheduling an abbreviated Spring

Term at the end of May. In its place, we will find time for community activity in the spring that can be done safely on our campus -- fun and immersive as the weather gets better and better.

***Late May, Lawn Ceremony, and Prize Day*** - Our original schedule for 2020-2021 called for classes ending on Tuesday, May 25, for sixth-formers, and Friday, May 28, for third-, fourth-, and fifth-formers. Our Lawn Ceremony was scheduled for Sunday, May 30, and Prize Day, our graduation ceremony, was scheduled for Memorial Day (Monday, May 31). While these plans are still developing, and will be subject to any Massachusetts gathering restrictions that might be in place in late May, we do want to provide a firm Prize Day date to class of 2021 parents and guardians. Here is how we envision the year finishing:

- Wednesday, May 26 - Saturday, May 29 - Second semester classes will end at some point during this window of time.
- Sunday, May 30 or Monday, May 31 - We will hold an abbreviated version of our Lawn Ceremony on campus for all students and faculty members. The tentative plan is to confer prizes to underclassmen, celebrate spring accomplishments, and have a festive day or two on campus.
- Tuesday, June 1 - Friday, June 4 - The class of 2021 will have a "senior week" of fun activities on and off campus (we hope). The classes of 2022, 2023, and 2024, will gradually complete their final assessments and exhibitions of learning, and be free to depart for summer vacation once all of their work is turned in.
- Saturday, June 5 - SAT testing date for any returning student who would like to take the SAT on campus.
- Sunday, June 6 - Prize Day. We are still in the early stages of determining what and how we will run this event on campus, but unless we are prohibited from doing so, we will hold an on-campus graduation ceremony for the class of 2021 on this day. We have pushed the date back to ensure that parents and guardians can attend after all underclassmen have departed for summer vacation. All members of the class of 2021 will leave campus with their families on this day and after the ceremony is over. It is our firm hope that boarding, day, and virtual students in the class of 2021 will be able to attend this ceremony in person.

Before closing, I do want to take this moment to repeat what I hope sounds like a familiar refrain thanking you for bearing with us through this challenging and unpredictable year. I do not know that we have ever before appreciated time together on our campus as much as we do now, and our commitment to having the best experience we can for the balance of winter and all of the spring is absolute. This has been a group effort from day one, and we are so fortunate to be part of a community pulling for one another in the ways that we have.

Again, we hope you will be able to join us for Thursday night's webinar at 7 p.m. We will look forward to staying in touch.

Best,

John R. Packard  
Head of School

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