



March 2, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We hope all of you are well as we close in on Spring Break and an opportunity to first pause and then pivot in the direction of what we hope and think will be a great stretch at school between late March and early June. Our goal with this letter is to do two things: First, we want to cover some final thoughts about our winter session in the midst of this last week of classes. Second, and primarily, we want to update our plans for the spring. We are looking forward to having an opportunity to elaborate on those plans and answer some of your questions at the webinar we have scheduled for Thursday, [March 4, at 7:15 p.m.](#) We continue to be so grateful for all the support you have shared with the school in so many ways to this point in the year.

Before getting into some of the specifics, we do want to highlight that we remain on track to return to school after Spring Break in a boarding/day/virtual mode. While expressing anything with absolute certainty this year has been difficult, we do not envision a scenario or circumstance that would lead us to change course. All of our preparation has us moving in the direction of getting situated to hold school safely and effectively in this mode throughout the spring.

### **Winter Session**

As you know, when we were last in touch three weeks ago, we were dealing with a small number of positive test results and some contact tracing efforts aimed at controlling any community spread on campus. We also had a student test positive this past Saturday, which led to another round of contact tracing. In all of these cases, quarantine protocols for those determined to be close contacts proved to be very disruptive. At the same time, we had more than a two-week stretch without a student or employee testing positive, and have had very little winter illness in comparison to other years. Our positive test rate has been under 0.5 percent. This has a lot to do with the commitment our Health and Wellness Center, COVID-19 Task Force, and entire campus community has made to do our very best with safety protocols put in place to keep us healthy.

It is exciting to be poised to have more students able to attend school in person this spring than we have had in either the fall or winter. With more of us on campus together this spring, however, our collective engagement with our health and safety protocols will be all the more important to keeping us well. We know from our experience to this point in the year that adhering to these measures will increase the likelihood of having the spring we want to have.

The third marking period wraps up at the end of this week, and we will be posting

course comments and third-quarter grades for you and your child to have a look at over the break. Dean of Academic Affairs Susanna Waters will have much more to share about our Continuous Learning Plan and [spring academic schedule](#) during both Thursday evening's webinar and in subsequent editions of the parent newsletter.

With all of us closing in on the one-year mark of having our lives dramatically altered by COVID-19, we are feeling very good about how we have managed our way to this point in the year. The fall semester and winter session each had their own distinct challenges, but our faculty and students have found inventive and engaging ways to overcome the many obstacles they faced. There is a lot to be proud of as we take a break, and a lot to look forward to this spring.

### **This Spring**

After what we hope will be a restorative Spring Break for everyone, we will return to school later this month. Here is a [Spring FAQ](#) document that we hope will help answer some of your questions. Beyond that, we would like to share the following reminders and updates to our plans:

***Reentry Schedule*** - As a reminder, here is what we shared three weeks ago:

- Saturday, March 20 - We are asking all students who will be attending school in person this spring to begin a quiet phase on this date. In general, this means 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 - Students will begin to arrive on campus for the 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 will share the times when testing will be administered on this day in a separate communication. This [document](#) outlines all of our arrival testing information, including links to testing signups.
- Monday, March 29 - Saturday, April 3 - All classes will be taught virtually during this first week as we move through intake testing. We have not yet finalized our plans for Saturday, April 3, but some classes will meet that morning, with recently-admitted students joining current students as part of our virtual revisit program. There will be no afternoon programs during this week.
- Wednesday, March 31 - We will hold our 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 - We will hold our third test administration for all boarding and day students. It is our hope that this will be our first day with day students on campus as we begin in-person classes. We will move in the direction of beginning afternoon programs and using all community spaces more fully over the course of this week -- depending on how our testing goes.

***Boarding/Day/Virtual Mode*** - We appreciate the time all of you have taken over the past three weeks to be in touch with us and determine the best way forward for your child this spring. All of us know that the options we are offering have substantial expectations regarding safety protocols, and limitations on movement, interaction with

others, and liberties we enjoy under ordinary circumstances. Our goal is to have a safe and fulfilling experience for our students. To do that with confidence, we need those attending school in person to center their lives at school and on campus throughout the spring.

While our thinking will certainly continue to evolve depending on how infection rates, risk-mitigation strategies, and vaccine progress go over the next three months, here is where we are in early March:

- At present, we have roughly 70 percent of our students planning to live on campus, 20 percent of our students planning to commute, and 10 percent of our students planning to attend virtually.
- Boarding Students - All students living on campus should move in working on the assumption that they will be here for the balance of the spring. We will allow boarding students to take one elective absence in the spring provided the student affairs office approves the request and the student and family accept the reentry protocol. The protocol will involve quarantining at home, and a three-test sequence that will take 10 days to complete before the student can return to campus. Beyond that, boarding students will not be permitted to leave campus for anything other than medical appointments (that need to be in person) or school-sanctioned trips. We will wait until early April to make a decision about whether and how often we will allow parents and guardians of boarding students to visit campus during the spring.
- Day/Commuting Students - The expectations of students who will be commuting from home to school each day will be identical to students who are living on campus. In effect, this means that day student homes and the route to and from school are extensions of the school's campus for them. Day students will be permitted to be on campus as often as they would like and in ways that are in line with expectations we will have of all students attending school in person. All day students will have a designated "home base" for studying purposes during the day and evening for both virtual classes and to do their academic work. With the exception of dormitories, day students will have the same access to community spaces that boarding students will have. It is our hope that day students will elect to spend the bulk of their discretionary time on campus during the week and on weekends.
- It is also important to underline that the reference in our last letter indicating that 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" means precisely that. We do not want to be in a position where violations of this expectation are reported to the school, requiring us to follow up and potentially move an in-person student to virtual status. Thus, our request is that all commuting students think of themselves this spring as boarding students who happen to live at home, and appreciate that their time may be spent at school or at home only. Again, the rules for all students attending school in person will be the same. Here is our **Student Social Contract** for the spring.
- Virtual Students - We appreciate and support both the needs and reasons that have a number of students choosing to attend school virtually this spring. In addition, we recognize that each session this year has had a different percentage of students attending school remotely, and we will be prepared to stay fully connected in and out of the classroom to this spring's virtual cohort.
- Finally, as we indicated three weeks ago, all students who are attending school

in person will need to have a place to go within 24 hours of being notified of the need to do so for a health and safety reason. While we certainly hope there will be no reason to ask this of any of you, we appreciate your help in ensuring our ability to move in this direction should the need arise; many thanks.

***Interscholastic Athletics and Afternoon Programs*** - We are looking forward to participating in spring interscholastic athletics within the ISL when competition is scheduled to begin in mid-April. While this will not be a conventional ISL spring season, we want to be as involved as we can be in partnership with the other 15 schools we are fortunate to compete with year over year. Beyond [this letter](#), there is very little we know about how interscholastic athletics will unfold this spring. Yet, we are in position to offer the following about our afternoon programs, in general:

- We are aiming to begin afternoon programs on Wednesday, April 7, depending on how our intake testing goes.
- Our first interscholastic competition would be no earlier than Friday, April 16, and our final interscholastic competition will take place no later than Saturday, May 29.
- We are planning to offer a broad array of afternoon program options, and will continue to allow students to participate in more than one type of afternoon activity as we have throughout the year. The exception to this approach will be with most spring 1st team athletes, who will be expected to make a six-day commitment to that sport. There will a number of options for students interested in something other than a sport.
- We do not know how often we will be able to compete with other schools, nor do we know whether 2nd and 3rd team games will be possible. We do know that we will make every effort to provide interscholastic competition opportunities to all students who are interested.
- We will be working with our ISL peers regarding the possibility of having parents and spectators at interscholastic games. We do not yet know whether or when we will allow anyone to attend games played on our campus. We do know that we will make a concerted effort to film and record all games that are played and post them for parents and friends to watch.

***Late May, Lawn Ceremony, and Prize Day*** - We shared our tentative plan for the final few weeks of the school year in our letter three weeks ago, and want to take this opportunity to update where we are in our thinking. In general, the schedule has not changed:

- Friday, May 28 - Second semester classes and afternoon programs will end on this day.
- Saturday, May 29 - Monday, May 31 - We are continuing to plan to hold a version of our Lawn Ceremony on campus for all students and faculty members during one of these days. We are also hoping to have some fun all-school activities scheduled throughout this weekend.
- Tuesday, June 1 - Saturday, June 5 - We are making progress on “senior week” programming for the class of 2021 and are looking forward to pulling together a fun and festive finish for this group. Any member of the graduating class who is attending school virtually will be allowed to participate in “senior week” activities and Prize Day in person. We will have an intake testing protocol in place to ensure that can happen safely. 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. All returning students will be able to remain on campus to take the SAT on Saturday, June 5, if they choose to do so.

- Saturday, June 5 and Sunday, June 6 - As you know, Prize Day will be held on campus on Sunday, June 6. We will have the details and schedule for the day ready for all class of 2021 parents and guardians by the end of March. We are exploring the possibility of a Saturday evening event on campus for members of the class of 2021 and whatever number of family members and friends state regulations allow us to have in attendance. This would be followed by Prize Day on Sunday morning. While we are not sure what will be within reach, we will do all we can to ensure the weekend is special and celebratory for this year's sixth form and their families.

As was the case in the fall, we believe we have learned a lot through this winter session that will help us navigate our way through the challenges we may face in the spring. We are excited about the prospects and possibilities that lie ahead. From here, our focus will be on doing all we can both individually and collectively to ensure we have a terrific spring.

We will look forward to having some time with you during Thursday evening's webinar. As always, please feel free to reach out with any questions. Take good care.

Best,

John R. Packard  
Head of School