



December 30, 2021

Dear Members of the Brooks School Community,

I hope all of you are enjoying this holiday season and are on your way to getting 2022 off to a great start. We are looking forward to our return to school on Monday of the coming week, and wanted to provide an update to all parents, guardians, students, and employees in an effort to get back to working with one another as safely as possible.

As a fully vaccinated community, we continue to be very confident in our ability to maintain a healthy campus with similar protocols to those we have had in place throughout the year. Clearly, the Omicron variant has changed the COVID-19 landscape for the time being, however, and we want to do all we can to help everyone at Brooks stay well. This letter focuses on doing all we can to return to school safely. Once we are back on campus, we anticipate pandemic conditions will continue to evolve, and we will make subsequent decisions about how we are holding school with both the community's health and safety and our commitment to being fully in person squarely in mind. Unfortunately, we continue to be confronting circumstances that make medium- and long-term planning extremely difficult.

Here is where we are with our plans for doing our best to ensure a safe return to school on Monday, January 3, 2022:

- We are returning to work and school, as scheduled. Employees and boarding students will arrive on Monday, January 3. Day students will arrive for classes in the morning on Tuesday, January 4.
- We continue to strongly encourage employees and students to take a covid test (antigen (rapid) or PCR) at some point between Thursday, December 30 (today) and Sunday, January 2. The hope is that all employees and students will have a negative test result from a test administered during this window of time by the end of the day on Sunday, January 2. Please let the Health and Wellness Center know if you have tested positive at any point during Winter Break, or when getting tested at home during this window of time.
- As indicated earlier in the year, we are requiring all employees to get COVID-19 vaccine boosters no later than early March. Many have already done so. In addition, we strongly encourage any student who is eligible (currently age 16 and up) to get a booster as soon as possible. We are planning to require boosters of all students once our whole student body is eligible. It is clear that boosters provide added protection against the Omicron variant.
- In addition to self-screening while at home and before returning to campus, we are planning to administer both an antigen (rapid) test and a PCR test upon arrival at school on Monday, January 3, in the case of employees, boarding students, and any day students who can come to campus to test. All day students who cannot get to campus to test on Monday will need to arrive early on Tuesday, January 4, to test before proceeding to class. As of this mailing, we are still working on securing antigen (rapid) test supply for Monday and Tuesday. Regardless of whether we have sufficient antigen (rapid) test supply for all employees and students, we will be administering PCR tests to everyone, and select antigen (rapid) tests to some who have not been able to test over the previous four days. We will make these decisions based on test supply and after a brief conversation about one's travel during Winter Break. As soon as our antigen (rapid) test supply arrives, we will be administering those tests to all employees and students. Again, it will be extremely helpful if all employees and students can test at some point over these next four days.

- We ask that all parents or guardians driving boarding students back to school remain on campus until your child confirms that they have cleared our testing protocol and have been given permission to move into their dormitory. **Our capacity to have students in isolation on campus is extremely limited.** The expectation is that any student who tests positive will go home or somewhere off campus to isolate as soon as is practically possible.

Student Testing Plan

- All students are to proceed directly to the Athletic Center when they arrive on campus on Monday or Tuesday for testing before entering any other school building. Masks should be worn over the nose and mouth at all times while in the Athletic Center for testing.
- Boarding students and any day students who can come to campus will test between 1 p.m. and 8 p.m. on Monday, January 3. Testing will take place in the Athletic Center. Please sign up for a testing time [HERE](#). If your plans require that you arrive before 1 p.m., please be in touch with Andrea Heinze so that we can coordinate testing. Once cleared by our Health and Wellness Center staff, students will get a wrist bracelet allowing them to proceed to dormitories and other school buildings.
- Day students who are not able to get to campus on Monday will need to arrive between 7:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday morning to test. This testing will take place in the Athletic Center and should be done before going anywhere else on campus. You can sign up [HERE](#).

Employee Testing Plan

- All employees will test between 10 a.m. and 12 noon on Monday, January 3. Please sign up for a testing time [HERE](#).
- Prior to testing on Monday morning, we ask that all employees do all they can to practice physical distancing to the extent possible, and wear masks over the nose and mouth in all indoor spaces.

Masking - We will be requiring masks over the nose and mouth in all indoor spaces. In an effort to decrease any COVID-19 transmission, we will be asking everyone to wear KN95, N95, or surgical masks instead of cloth masks for at least our first week back on campus. We will have surgical masks available for students and employees.

Isolation Protocol Change - Earlier this week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated its isolation protocol for anyone who tests positive for COVID-19. You can access this [HERE](#). We will be adhering to this approach, which calls for a five-day (as opposed to a ten-day) isolation period following a positive test result. In an effort to err on the side of caution, we will also be requiring a negative antigen (rapid) test result on day five before permitting a student or employee to return to campus. If a student or employee tests positive on day five, that student or employee will remain in isolation and retest every 24 hours until getting a negative test result. The Health and Wellness Center will coordinate this reentry testing.

Winter Term - Classes will begin at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, January 4, as directed by teachers. We will not have Chapel to start the day that morning. At present, we have not made any changes to our Winter Term programming, travel plans, and so forth. These plans could be subject to change, however, and we will provide updates as they materialize.

Dining Hall - All meals will be “Grab and Go” until we have received all of our PCR test results -- probably by Thursday, January 6. We will be limiting seating in the dining hall and ask that boarding students and employees try to eat elsewhere in order to ensure there is space for day students. To do the best we can at spreading out whenever we are eating indoors is the goal.

Winter Athletics - While there have been no changes to our interscholastic athletic schedule as of this mailing, we anticipate being in a day-to-day mode when it comes to competing with other schools. Testing results and the overall health of our school and the schools and teams we compete against will likely ebb and flow. This will have some bearing on our ability to compete. That said, we are committed to doing all we can to maintain our winter interscholastic program and will provide updates as they materialize.

I am confident that we all wish we were not confronting the current challenge this stubborn pandemic has presented. Yet, we continue to believe our vaccination requirement, testing approach, and health and safety protocols can keep all of us safe and intact as we continue to hold school in person on campus. Thank you in advance for the part you will play in helping all of us have a healthy and fulfilling winter.

Have a Happy New Year, and we look forward to getting Winter Term underway on Tuesday

morning.

Best,

John R. Packard
Head of School