



August 19, 2020

Dear Students, Parents, and Guardians,

As we move within two weeks of our first day of classes on Monday, August 31, all of us at school are increasingly excited about beginning the year. The tents have been assembled, the grounds have held up nicely despite less rain than usual over the summer, and we are into the final stretch of readying the campus for the return of faculty members and students. We will begin our work together as a full faculty tomorrow, and this preparation will extend into all of next week. It will be great to be together again, working in the direction of getting this atypical school year off to a terrific start.

When we first announced our plans to return to school on campus in 2020-2021 just eight weeks ago, we anticipated being in a considerably more certain state at this stage of the summer than we find ourselves. With this letter, we want to share where we are with our ongoing planning as clearly and transparently as we can. Our goals have not changed. We are pursuing a model that we believe gives us the greatest chance to both deliver on our mission and ensure a high degree of community safety. As we stay this course, there are still challenges and variables ahead that may well require us to pivot in yet another direction in order to address whatever we find ourselves confronting. However, I want to emphasize that the focal points of our work together continue to be delivering an exceptional academic program in any mode, getting boarding students onto campus and into dormitories safely, and realizing a campus life experience that feels like our school at its best.

Before getting into this week's front-of-mind considerations, I do want to acknowledge how grateful we continue to be for your patience, engagement, and the aspiration we share about having our students on campus in as full and robust a program as current circumstances permit. We have appreciated the conversations we have been in with a number of you over the past two weeks as you have weighed the options and tried to make the best decision you can for the fall. We are determined and committed to doing what we believe is essential work in ways that support our students in and out of the classroom during this unprecedented time -- in person or remotely.

Here's where we are with our current thinking and planning:

**COVID-19 Testing** - In our last letter, we shared the good news that we had secured a testing plan for both students and employees who will be on campus. The goal of this testing regimen is to achieve a high degree of risk mitigation as we work especially hard over the first two to three weeks of in-person school to establish the "bubble" we

have referenced in earlier letters and webinars. In addition, we will use this testing provider to continue a random testing protocol over the balance of the fall. A critical piece of the testing regimen centers on how quickly test results are made available to us. Our last letter indicated the results would be back to us within 36 hours of tests being administered. A more recent update has extended the time frame to 48 hours. In ways that are consistent with practices employed by states and municipalities across the country, we have set a 72-hour threshold for ourselves. In other words, if our testing provider indicates to us that testing results will not be available within 72 hours or less, we will not proceed in the direction of having students back to campus. We will get some feel for how this works when employees go through an initial round of testing next week.

A related question centers on what will be the school's plan when a community member tests positive for COVID-19. We are anticipating this will happen. For purposes of clarity, we will use Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) terminology, as follows:

**Isolation** - Isolation separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick.

**Quarantine** - Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick.

First, at the initial test the expectation of all who are tested is that they remain in quarantine until the result is available. If a student or employee tests positive in this first round of testing, that person would begin a period of isolation away from campus and outside of in-person contact with anyone on campus. Anyone who tests positive would eventually be permitted to return to campus in accordance with [these CDC guidelines](#). This link reads, "isolation and precautions can generally be discontinued 10 days after symptoms onset and resolution of fever for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medications, and with improvement of other symptoms."

Second, in the case of a community member testing positive in the second round of testing, or at any point thereafter, the person would immediately enter isolation. The school has asked that all students have a place to go within 24 hours in the event of a school closure or health emergency. Thus, all students would go home, or to the residence families have designated for this type of circumstance. Any employees who tests positive would be expected to go home immediately. Here, too, we would allow a return to campus in accordance with CDC guidelines.

Third, there will be a contact tracing protocol in place, and some number of community members could find themselves needing to quarantine as a result of contact with someone who has tested positive. In this case, the student or employee would need to quarantine for a two-week period. The expectation here will be that this quarantine period would take place at home, or at the residence families have designated for this type of circumstance. Between space in our Health and Wellness Center and an arrangement we are making with a local hotel, we will be able to temporarily quarantine any student needing the better part of 24 hours to be picked up.

Finally, we have been asked under what circumstances would we close on-campus operations and shift to an all-virtual mode. We do not have a particular number or threshold of positive cases in mind. However, we will make this shift if local health agencies and/or our best judgment about holding school safely on campus feels compromised in any way. In particular, if we were in a situation where a substantial

number of community members needed to be in quarantine as a result of contact tracing, we may determine that holding school on campus no longer makes sense. In sum, we will be closely monitoring community health, and we will not hesitate to move to an all-virtual mode for everyone, if need be.

**Housing** - We offered boarding and virtual places in the fall to all boarding and day students to give you as much choice as we felt we could in the midst of this pandemic. On the other side of conversation with many of you about that decision, we are pleased to now be in position to plan accordingly. In particular, we will be reaching out to all of you who are planning to live at school this fall in an effort to determine campus housing. While we did not know ahead of time how many students would want to live on campus with an understanding of our need to engage in risk mitigation protocols that will be new and challenging for all of us, we did plan for the possibility that more students than usual would opt to be on campus. With a number of dormitories and residential facilities on campus to work with in order to meet the roughly 35 additional beds we have needed to add, we are putting these contingency plans into motion. In the case of dormitories, we will be converting some large single rooms into double rooms, and large double rooms into triple rooms. This will add about 20 beds across the 10 dormitories we currently have. The additional 15 beds or so will be added in current faculty residences, including the Head of School's home. After spending the first half of our married life living in dormitories at Brooks, Kim and I are looking forward to the opportunity to have some students live with us!

In this process, we have been especially mindful of health and safety considerations regarding the density of our residential buildings. The plan we are rolling out will comply with guidelines aimed at ensuring student safety in all of our dormitories. Furthermore, we want to emphasize that the dormitory beds we are adding are in buildings and rooms where we have employed similar approaches in the past to meet various enrollment levels. Aside from using campus residences that have more than ample space to work with, we are not employing any unprecedented approaches to housing students. Finally, we would also want to note that campus density, in general, will be at its lowest level in a long time, with more than 20 percent of our students attending virtually, and a number of employees continuing to work remotely. In sum, we have not and will not compromise health and safety in any residential space. If you have questions about our approach, please let us know.

Two final points about moving in and campus life: First, we want to remind everyone that we are no longer allowing students to drop off belongings ahead of arrival dates beginning on Thursday, September 10. Second, we want to include a copy of the student social contract all students attending school on campus will be required to sign and comply with when school is in session this fall. You can find it [HERE](#). If this raises any questions for you, please let us know.

**Afternoon Programs** - In our last webinar, we shared the overall framework of our afternoon program and the ability we will have this fall to give students more options than we are typically able to provide. Director of Athletics Bobbie Crump-Burbank and her team are continuing their work to design a program that will allow students to participate in a traditional fall sport or offering six days each week. Alternatively, students may opt for a traditional fall sport or offering four days per week and pair that with one of what will be many offerings that will include winter and spring sports, arts options, and some new ideas faculty members are eager to try with groups of students. There will be blended offerings for students attending virtually. These programs will begin on Monday, September 21.

**Opening of School** - With just 12 days standing between us and our first day of virtual classes for all students on Monday, August 31, we wanted to include a copy of the schedule for that week in this letter. You can find it [HERE](#). We will get started that morning with Chapel and then move into classes and some orientation activities for new students through the week. Our hope is that new and returning students alike will get acclimated together in this mode ahead of our plan to begin welcoming boarding students to campus on Thursday, September 10. It is possible that we will extend virtual classes for all students beyond Saturday, September 12, if doing so helps us mitigate risk during our entry to campus. In this case, students living on campus would attend all classes virtually as they begin to settle in. It is also possible that students living on campus might attend some classes virtually during one of three class meetings each week depending on the size of the class, the classroom, and any other factor associated with our ability to comply with physical distancing protocols. We look forward to sharing more about the opening of school with all of you during webinars we are planning to hold next week.

**Quarantine Expectations** - All students who are attending school on campus should be planning to begin their quarantine on Thursday, August 27. The degree to which we are all vigilant in this effort will have much to do with our success at getting off to a good start on campus with our testing protocol on Thursday, September 10. Our quarantine expectations are that we limit our interaction outside of our homes and immediate family members as much as we possibly can, and that we wear masks and practice physical distancing in all situations where these practices are called for. You can find an overview of what one can do while in quarantine [HERE](#).

Over the next week, you will be hearing from us a few times with updates and requests for information:

- We will share a much more detailed update to our afternoon program plan and schedule of offerings. In this communication, we will be asking students to indicate what they would like to do in the fall.
- We will send information about the housing process. This will include asking boarding students for information about preferences. We do not anticipate being in position to meet all housing requests, but will do our best to meet as many as we can.
- We will start the process of scheduling arrival times and dates for the first round of our COVID-19 testing beginning on Thursday, September 10. In this communication, we will also ask students to indicate if they will quarantine at school or at home after this first test.

Before closing, I want to again indicate that we are looking forward to webinar opportunities we will schedule next week with questions you may have about this letter, or lingering questions you still have from previous communications. In the meantime, we want to invite you to share any questions you have with us [HERE](#). In addition, you can always check our [Returning to Campus](#) page on our website for regular updates and current information. While we have not always been positioned to answer every question we have received, we have been able to refine our approach to reopening with the help of what has been on your minds. We look forward to hearing from you.

I want to finish where this letter started, and that is with an emphatic statement about how excited we are to get the school year underway. While there are lots of uncertainties continuing to push us in ways we would rather not be pushed, we are certain about our enthusiasm for bringing the 2020-2021 school community together

for the first time on Monday, August 31. The chance we have to begin anew with a distinct, talented, and unique group of people we all will be better for knowing is perhaps greater this year than it has ever been. The opportunities to forge and further relationships as we take good care of one another are vast. In some way, shape, or form, we will all be having more new experiences than we are accustomed to having as a school year gets underway. I hope this gives all of us some collective comfort and confidence in a mode that none of us can claim to have much experience in. We will learn together, adapt together, support one another, and find our way to realizing our mission in the process. I know we will be ready and do well in any mode and with whatever comes our way. To be part of such a community leaves me feeling incredibly fortunate.

We will send our next update to all of you on Wednesday, September 2. Until then, please take good care.

Best,

John R. Packard  
Head of School

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Brooks School  
1160 Great Pond Road, North Andover, MA 01845

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