



Message from the Head of School
Date Sent: Dec 17, 2021

Dear Belmont Hill Parents,

As we officially head off to break at the end of today, I want to start by wishing all of you a wonderful holiday season. I hope that your winter break will afford some time for rest and reconnection with your families. I marvel at the effort and commitment of your sons as they navigated exams with all that has gone along with ramping back up to normal this fall. While their collective success has been clear, we are also paying close attention to their stress and mental health. As a faculty, we are in continual conversations about how we can best support them as they emerge from this pandemic chapter of their lives.

We also continue to monitor the emerging realities of the Omicron variant arriving in the United States. While we remain confident in our ability to navigate this next chapter of the pandemic, it is an important time to remind all community members to be as safe as possible over the break in terms of masking and other choices. We all know that our ability to remain in a normal school model depends on the powerful sense of working together that has brought us this far. **I wanted to alert you that we have decided to remain masked indoors across campus, including all athletic practices and competitions, at least until our second set of PCR testing results return on January 11.**

Once we receive this data, we hope to return to our current model during the second week of January but will remain open to adjusting course as needed. We already know that masking will likely be required in our interscholastic competitions during our first week back, and we are starting to see meaningful increases in COVID-19 cases in our area. We also know that there will be a substantial amount of travel in our community this break, and we want to have enough time to capture any related exposure in our testing program. We will return to a "Grab and Go" lunch during this period, with a plan to return to traditional lunch as soon as possible. In this model, boys will be eating indoors in smaller groups across campus. In addition to being concerned about safety, we know that positive test results can lead to a ten-day absence from School and athletic competitions at a minimum; we are doing our very best to mitigate that concern for our boys and their families.

Although we have seen a small number of cases on campus in recent weeks, when we analyze all of the testing we have done this year, our positivity rate has been a remarkably low 0.001%. We have made a major investment in this infrastructure, and we continue to believe it is a vital part of a program that has allowed masks to be optional on the academic side of our campus. Additionally, we will now be requiring COVID-19 boosters for the boys who are eligible. Given the varying age dynamics involved, we have yet to put a firm date on this requirement, but we urge you to pursue this additional precaution as soon as possible for your son. We know that vaccination power may be waning for a number of our boys, and boosters will give them the best chance of staying healthy and keeping school operations as normal as possible this winter.

As we forge ahead through this winter together, I want to thank you in advance for all of your patience and support. We continue to balance our commitment to safety with a desire to have the experience on campus to be as normal as it possibly can be for your sons. So far, we have accomplished a great deal together, but we also know the winter will present new challenges. We remain ready to pivot and adjust as needed. We look forward to having everyone back together on campus in a few weeks and supporting the boys as thoughtfully and comprehensively as we can for the remainder of the year.

Sincerely yours,

Gregory J. Schneider

Ronald M. Druker '62 Head of School