



Message from the Head of School

Date Sent: Tuesday, Oct 12

Dear Belmont Hill Parents,

It feels wonderful to write to you now more than a month into the School year feeling like we have found a rhythm that seems far closer to normal than we have had in a long time. It was fantastic to see so many parents on campus for two Back to School Nights as well as for Homecoming. It has been invigorating to have parents back on our sidelines cheering our boys on in such positive ways as well, so thank you for your support. The boys have been phenomenal in doing their part with indoor masking, our new lunch paradigm, and generally giving us a great effort as we transitioned back into our regular schedule. Our team has been monitoring the running of daily life on campus while also keeping an eye on the pandemic landscape around us.

We have been so pleased that through our baseline and then ongoing surveillance testing, we have recorded just two positive cases and still no evidence of COVID-19 transmission on campus thus far. We have no doubt that our 100% adult and 99% student vaccination rates are driving this success. Many of our teachers have now become eligible for COVID-19 boosters as well. Recently, the State issued new guidance that indicates a November 1 extension of the indoor mask mandate with the opportunity for school communities with vaccination rates greater than 80% to move away from indoor masking for vaccinated students as of October 15. As we begin to contemplate the realities of weather changing as well as our desire to progress towards normalcy on campus, we are excited to continue moving forward on this continuum. As always, we must balance safety measures against the needs of the boys to socialize and connect more comprehensively.

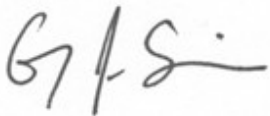
With that as our backdrop, we are introducing a phased approach to a return to normal on campus. The first phase will be to allow masking to become optional for vaccinated students indoors in most areas of campus as of Monday, October 18. Un-vaccinated students will remain masked indoors for the foreseeable future. While we know that our boys are eager to return to hot lunches in the Dining Hall, we have decided to prioritize the learning experience by allowing the boys to see faces and engage more completely in class discussions. Anyone on campus, students and adults, will be supported in masking if that is their choice. Additionally, we will have a number of faculty members who will require masking in their individual classes based on their unique circumstances during this first phase. The boys should continue to bring a mask to School every day, and we know they will respect these requests. Additionally, we will remain universally masked when we gather as a school in the Hamilton Chapel during phase one. Masks will continue to be required on all buses and masking will be required indoors for visitors to campus. **It is also essential that all students continue to report any symptoms/illness to the Health Office before coming to school and that they make our Health Office aware of any COVID-19 cases or direct exposure risk in their families.**

As part of this progression, we expect to baseline test our entire community for the two weeks after masks become optional (Monday, October 25, and Tuesday, November 2) as well as when we return from Thanksgiving and from Winter Break. We may require indoor masking upon return from our breaks until those testing results become clear. We have also ordered a large number of rapid antigen tests to be deployed on campus for symptomatic students as needed. We will continue to track and enforce strict close contact protocols for all students and employ masking and testing in those cases as is recommended by the CDC and the Board of Health. We should not be surprised to see some breakthrough cases in the weeks ahead, as well as the arrival of winter colds, but we remain confident that the impact of these cases should be minimal.

We will also monitor local data and guidance leading up to October 18 and beyond. We remain open to altering and adjusting our approach as needed; we know staying flexible and nimble is paramount. Assuming all goes well with phase one, our goal would be to target a return to our Dining Hall during a second phase. We hope to get to phase two before the holidays if possible, but we are not adhering to a rigid timetable in this regard.

Throughout the pandemic, we have balanced our safety protocols against the risks that continue to exist for the boys' mental health stemming from social isolation. We also want the learning experience to be the best it can possibly be. Please feel free to reach out to Donna David, our Director of Health Services, if you have any questions related to these changes. We remain grateful for your trust and support as we have navigated through these unique times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "GJS", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gregory J. Schneider
Ronald M. Druker '62 Head of School