



Message from the Head of School

Date Sent: Dec 30, 2021

Dear Belmont Hill Parents,

I hope that you have had a wonderful holiday break with your families, and we are so eager to see the boys early next week. Our team has been continuing to review the pandemic landscape, consulting with our various resources, and tweaking our planning to be prepared for next week and beyond. While it is clear that Omicron cases are on the rise within our region, fortunately, most cases reported to the School have had mild symptoms. We hope this trend continues as we navigate the next chapter of the pandemic together. Our priorities remain safety and preserving the academic experience on campus first and foremost. Beyond that, we hope to continue offering the most complete Belmont Hill experience possible in the spirit of continuing to support the physical and mental health of our boys throughout the winter.

As was communicated on December 17, we will return to campus masked indoors (including indoor athletics) until further notice. The entire community will receive individual PCR tests on January 3 so we will have the fastest access to needed data related to isolation and/or quarantine. That said, we do not want to wait multiple days to begin in-person instruction and athletic practices, so quality masking on campus will be critical as we return next week. At a minimum, we will review PCR testing results for two full weeks before making future decisions on masking indoors. During this period, we will return to a vastly de-densified lunch experience and will refrain from gathering as a full community in the Hamilton Chapel in the spirit of taking reasonable steps to mitigate transmission possibilities. We have issued K95 masks to all of our teachers and they are available in our health office as well; we would recommend all of you to consider upgrading the masking quality for your sons. We continue to adhere to our three-ply minimum standard, but we know K95 or KN95 masks are best in the current environment. Finally, we are working towards offering a booster clinic on campus later this winter, and we encourage all eligible students to acquire boosters as soon as possible.

While the CDC has recently changed some of its isolation and quarantine requirements, the risk of time away from campus for students and adults remains very real. Our greatest concern during this next period will be extended absences as Omicron moves through our region. We have proactively re-assembled some of our more sophisticated technologies for zooming into classes as the absences become more substantial. We certainly appreciate that missed class time can be a serious source of stress for the boys. Additionally, we are prepared for faculty to teach remotely from home if appropriate. Finally, we continue to navigate an athletic conference filled with both boarding and day schools. We remain committed to preserving as much of a winter season as we possibly can while acknowledging we will need to adjust in ways that are in the best interest of the league. We expect regulations on masking, testing, and fan attendance may temporarily be in flux at individual schools.

We remain hopeful that the impact of Omicron on our campus will be swift with mild sickness, but we also know this could be a more disrupted period of time on campus. We remain ready to adjust more aggressively if data suggests that we should. I am grateful that we have had the resources to invest substantially in testing once again this year, so we can ascertain accurately what is happening in our community. I have such great confidence in our faculty and in our leadership team as we do our best to serve your boys.

As always, thank you for your continued support and partnership during these challenging times. We can't wait to get started again together on campus next week.

Sincerely yours,

Gregory J. Schneider

Ronald M. Druker '62 Head of School