



August 4, 2021

Dear Students, Parents, and Guardians,

As we move within one month of students beginning to return to school over Labor Day weekend, we are getting more and more excited about the 2021-2022 school year. We could not be more eager to dive into the opportunities we will have to know, live, and work with one another in and out of classrooms in ways that build community and foster belonging. To be closing in on the beginning of a school year with far fewer restrictions than we were confronting one year ago at this time has us confident about the opportunities we will have to forge and further connections and relationships with all of you. To do all we can to get off to a great start in early September is our goal.

In late June, we shared an early look at the coming year with a great deal of optimism about being fully in person and operating without the types of restrictions that challenged us in the 2020-2021 school year. We indicated that all students and employees would be required to receive a final dose of the Pfizer, Moderna, or Johnson & Johnson vaccine by August 20. We knew then that some of our students would need to begin the vaccination process upon arrival at school and we are making arrangements to do that for those who do not currently have access to the vaccine. We also indicated that we would consider exemption requests, and our [vaccination policy](#) that was sent to all of you in July indicated how and under what circumstances exemptions would be approved.

In the six weeks or so that have elapsed since last being in touch, we have all witnessed the sharp increase in COVID-19 cases in the United States driven by the Delta variant and primarily in areas of the country where vaccination levels are low. While the current public health circumstances have given us some pause about returning to school without any restrictions, we are determined to hold school safely and fully in person in about one month's time. To that end, there are three larger points I would like to emphasize ahead of sharing some updates:

- COVID-19 Vaccination - At this point in the summer, a substantial majority of students have been fully vaccinated and a number of others are underway in completing the vaccination process. We will be following up with all students and families we have not yet heard from over the days ahead. **We want to underline that no student (or employee) will be allowed to return to school in early September without proof of vaccination or an approved exemption.** It is increasingly clear that the vaccines are safe, effective, and critical to operating on campus with as few restrictions as possible. Thank you if you have already shared vaccination information with the school. If not, here is how you can be in touch with this information: First, you can upload vaccination information into Magnus, the student health portal. Second, you can email the Health and Wellness Center at health@brooksschool.org with your vaccination status. Third, you can complete this [exemption request form](#) for our review. We need this information by Tuesday, August 10.
- We are continuing to move forward intent on holding school fully in person and without the physical distancing limitations we dealt with in 2020-2021. We are planning to run our whole program on campus and there will not be a virtual or remote option for students in 2021-2022.
- While vaccination levels in Massachusetts are among the highest in the country, we are staying in touch with all public health agency updates, and are contemplating how those guidelines and recommendations apply to our school and campus. In the past week, the

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) updated its guidelines for the coming year. Beyond emphasizing the importance of vaccination, DESE offered an updated view of masking and testing. At this point, we have not made a final determination on how we will begin the year with regard to wearing masks and administering testing, but we can offer the following: First, no one will be required to wear a mask outdoors. Second, unvaccinated community members will be required to wear masks indoors. Third, we are planning to be mask-optional indoors for all vaccinated community members. Finally, we are planning to require routine testing of any unvaccinated community member, and are considering what role, if any, testing should play in our risk-mitigation effort for those who are vaccinated. We will have the capacity to test both symptomatic and asymptomatic community members at any point.

As has been the case since the pandemic's beginning, there are a number of unknowns and it is likely that circumstances will continue to evolve over the next month. We intend to stay in touch with all public health guidelines in ways that make sense for our school and how we operate. Our decision-making will aim to ensure our ability to operate fully and safely within what continues to be an evolving public health context.

At this point in the summer, you have received a range of information from our student affairs office, academic affairs office, athletic department, and Health and Wellness Center, among others. With what follows, I would like to provide a few updates and the links to those communications in order to be sure that you have them within reach. We also hope those of you who are available will be able to join us for [tomorrow's webinar at 7 p.m. EST](#) when we plan to answer some frequently asked questions and elaborate on some of what we have shared over the past month. As always, please be in touch with us directly with any specific questions you have. The more we remain in touch over this next month, the better positioned we will be to start well when students begin arriving on Friday, September 3.

Here are some updates and links to earlier communications:

[Student Affairs](#) - On Monday of this week, you all should have received [“What You Need to Know for the Start of School”](#) from Andrea Heinze. This includes arrival schedule dates and times (updated [HERE](#)), our updated dress code for 2021-2022, and a packing guide for those of you wondering what you should and should not bring with you to campus in early September. We will touch on all of this information during tomorrow's webinar and look forward to answering any and all related questions.

[Academic Affairs](#) - Earlier in the summer, you began receiving information from our academic affairs office regarding this year's academic schedule and course assignments for 2021-2022. Classes are scheduled to begin on Tuesday, September 7. You can access the 2021-2022 school calendar [HERE](#). In the meantime, thank you for joining us in this summer's All Community Read, *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah, and for ordering textbooks as outlined in the [July 15 letter](#) from Susanna Waters.

[Dormitory Assignments](#) - We continue to work on student housing assignments and will have more information about where boarding students will be living as we are able to finalize those plans over the next few weeks. We are in the process of working to get all dormitories updated and ready for students to begin moving into them in the midst of a very busy summer of campus projects. We will not be in the position we were in one year ago when we needed to make a number of modifications in dormitories to accommodate far more boarding students than we are accustomed to having.

[Off-Campus and Weekend Permissions](#) - We are finalizing updates to the 2021-2022 Student Handbook and are currently planning to allow boarding and day student off-campus permissions in a manner similar to how we were operating prior to the pandemic. This means that boarding students will be allowed to take weekends and sixth-form day students will have driving permission, provided their parents or guardians have given them permission to do so on our general permission form. Furthermore, we are not planning to restrict activities students are involved with off campus and outside of school. We do need to indicate that we reserve the right to change course with some or all of these permissions that allow for movement and interaction beyond our campus if public health circumstances lead us to feel our ability to maintain a health and safety standard on campus is compromised. In addition, we are still evaluating whether we will allow unvaccinated students with an approved exemption the same access to these permissions and outside activities.

[Interscholastic Athletics and Afternoon Programs](#) - We remain on track to begin Independent School League (ISL) competition on Saturday, September 25, after a typical fall preseason

schedule for athletic teams at all levels. It is our intention to participate fully in what we hope will be a traditional fall schedule of ISL interscholastic games. At this point, however, we are mindful and appreciative of the need for all member schools to determine their own course of action with their school communities. Thus, we will continue to plan for a full interscholastic athletic season and make adjustments, as necessary. As we noted in late June, we are planning to offer some of the part-time afternoon program options that we introduced this past year and were of interest to students not playing on 1st teams. We will share these options with students as August moves along.

Visitors and Vendors - In addition to planning for a full return to in-person school this fall, we are making plans to hold events on campus for parents, guardians, alums, prospective students and families, and invited guests. It is our hope that we will continue to feel confident in our ability to host all visitors safely, and will be asking for compliance with the same campus health and safety protocols expected of students, employees, and campus residents. This will also be true for all vendors with whom the school does business. In sum, any unvaccinated visitor or vendor representative who is 12 years of age or older and does not have an approved exemption will not be allowed inside of any school building on campus. Any visitor between the ages of five and 12 will be expected to wear a mask when indoors. We will not require masks for visitors under the age of five.

Campus Projects - If you follow [Brooks School's Instagram](#), you have perhaps seen video of the demolition of what was the school's Alumni House, Dalsemer Room and Frick Dining Hall, in order to clear the way for a new admission office building that we will start work on shortly after students begin arriving in early September. There has also been an enormous amount of work done underground in order to address infrastructure improvements we needed to make before beginning construction and completing our work on Main Street. While there is finishing work still to do, we have also opened our new main entrance and are hopeful that all of you will arrive via this new and impressive way in when school starts early next month. We continue to be excited about the prospect of experiencing these improvements with all of you and will share updates about traffic patterns and such as we get closer to the end of the month.

I suspect all of us hoped that the pandemic's trajectory would not be spiking in the way that it is on a national level at this stage of the summer. We take great comfort, however, in the fact that the vaccines students and employees all have ready access to are holding up exceptionally well in blunting even the Delta variant's impact. It is abundantly clear that those who are vaccinated constitute a tiny fraction of those who are currently being infected by COVID-19. Thus, our push to ensure students, employees, and all who are eligible and frequent our campus are vaccinated is rooted in the school's belief that this is the most important step we can take in order to hold school safely in 2021-2022. So, again, please be in touch with us as soon as possible if we are not yet aware of your vaccination status. Thank you.

We will have an opportunity to address a great deal of what this and other summer communications have covered in tomorrow evening's webinar. Yet, please do be in touch with us directly at any point this month with questions that are certain to emerge as we move closer to getting school underway. We are eager to get off to a terrific start this fall and rediscover so much of what has been out of reach for what will have been 18 months by the time we are together again. For now, I hope you enjoy all that August and the balance of the summer has in store for you and your families.

Take good care and we look forward to staying in touch.

Best,

John R. Packard
Head of School