



Maclay Upper School Families,

This year has started out as a grand adventure for all of us. I can't express to you how similar and different it feels on campus. The excitement of the students, the relationships with faculty, and the focus on making sure each student feels they belong is all the same. However, the inability to see smiles behind masks, the physical distance between friends, and the complexity of the virtual classroom fits the description of one of our Upper School teachers, "It's like teaching on Pluto!" Even with all this disruption, my heart was full after hearing our faculty brag on the ways our students were positive, doing great work, and so very happy to be back with their community. As a faculty, connecting and working with our students is what we love, so we are back in our element.

As you know, we are working continually to adjust our protocols and procedures to be the most responsible, appropriate, and excellent learning environment in the region. Based on our experience with students, the data available, and the past four months of work with COVID cases on campus, we will be making a slight change to our phased-in approach to the start of the school year. In our work with the local emergency management team, the Department of Health, and seeing what has happened with the 18-22-year-old population on college campuses around the country, we are going to go very slowly with our Upper School return to campus. Our Upper School students are engaging, responsible, and very bright. They are also extremely mobile, active, and much more social than students in our other divisions. Because of this and the recent COVID cases in our community, we are going to delay the return to full capacity for a minimum of two weeks in our Upper School, with the plan to return to 100% on Tuesday, September 8th.

I'm personally disappointed to have to make this adjustment because I know how hard my team has been working and how much they enjoy having our students on campus. We know that once our students reach their freshman year, their social group and opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities increase exponentially. To ensure our entire school stays safe and can continue its great work, we want to be very cautious in Upper School which has the greatest external exposure as well as a significant connection to the other divisions through family and community.

We feel confident after observing Pre-Kindergarten and Lower School at full capacity that Middle School is ready to be back at 100% capacity on August 25th as planned. We are excited to have our Middle School students on campus and continue to refine our protocols and welcome all students in 6th through 8th grade.

With the Upper School, we will follow the Blue/White Teams outlined in the chart below. This will simply be a continuation of the program we are currently

following. Again, we acknowledge that these extended modifications in the Upper School can cause frustration and inconvenience. If this plan creates a hardship for your family, please contact Mr. Beamer to discuss options.

Our commitment to you remains to provide an uninterrupted education where being on campus is preferred but not required.

Please let us know if you have any questions about these changes or any protocols going forward. We will be releasing additional information regarding athletics and quarantine protocols in the upcoming week.

James

[Upper School Phase-In Extension](#)



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