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GRACE - Covid Protocol Update

1 message

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GRACE

Message from the Head of School

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Dear Grace Families,

I am writing to you today as the school year approaches, and the COVID situation in New York and beyond remains fluid. The New York State Education Department stepped into the void created when NYSDOH backed off issuing guidelines for schools. The Delta Variant has made these guidelines more restrictive than we had hoped. With their recommendation we have developed the plan below for the opening of school.

1) As I said in an earlier letter all eligible students and adults must be vaccinated in order to be permitted to come on campus on the first day of school. Anyone who becomes eligible for a booster shot will be required to get that booster to retain access to the campus. Parents and caregivers wishing to register their vaccination with the school should upload their proof of vaccination [to this secure dropbox](#). Parents and caregivers are required to still bring proof of vaccination with them for the first few weeks of school.

2) Students in JK-Grade 6 will need a negative COVID test in advance of their first day of school. The school has arranged access to testing that will charge the cost of the test to the family's medical insurance. Please visit [this link](#) to set up a TeleMed visit and COVID PCR Test with BackToWork Solutions (BTW). You will need to register with your insurance information, and there will be no out of pocket expense for any Grace families testing with BTW. Medical Technicians with BTW will be on campus, at the 86 Fourth Avenue Gym, from 8 am to 11 am, on Tuesday, Sept. 7 and Wednesday, Sept. 8. Children will be able to choose either PCR test: lower (shallow) nasal swab or cheek swab.

If you wish to use another test provider, other than BackToWork, please make sure to upload a copy of your child's test results [to this secure dropbox](#). Tests must be PCRs administered in the Tri-state area and administered within 72 hours of the first day of school. All test results must be uploaded before 5 pm on the day before the first day of school. Any students whose test results are uploaded after 5 pm Wednesday, Sept. 8, will need to stay home on the 9th. There will be regular pool testing of unvaccinated students similar to last year where parents will be notified in advance.

3) Everyone will be required to wear a mask while indoors regardless of vaccination status so long as the transmission rate as [shown on the CDC website](#) for New York County is "Substantial or

High.” The only exception will be during lunch where unmasking will be permitted while eating at the table. Grade 11 and 12 students will be allowed to go out to lunch. Masks will be worn by everyone who is standing in the dining areas. Masks will be worn during indoor PE or sports, and students in Grades 7-12 can be unmasked in outdoor sports and PE.

4) The school will follow the open window, MERV filter, hand washing, disinfecting etc. protocols that were in place last year.

5) There will be no hybrid teaching this year. If there is a positive case among vaccinated students, there is no need for the other students to quarantine. Vaccinated students who have been exposed must get a COVID test 3 to 5 days after exposure. For students who test positive there is a 10-day isolation period. We will send work home to that student via Gracenet (Grades 4-12) or SeeSaw (JK-Grade 3) as we would in the case of any illness, and teachers will schedule meetings as needed over Zoom with the individual student. For unvaccinated students who are exposed, if the students both the positive case and the primary contacts were correctly and consistently masked when within 3-6 feet, they would be tested, and if negative the primary contacts can return to school following a negative test. If a whole class needs to quarantine then that class will go remote for 7 days, and there will be a one day prep period for the teachers to make the schedule changes required to teach remotely as there was last year. Students can return after 7 days with a negative COVID test.

6) Lunch: Our rules for lunch are based on the circumstances of today and may change as the situation changes to be either more restrictive or more open. As we begin the year, students at the High School will have a buffet lunch, our pre-covid norm. Students in Grades 7 and 8 will have family style lunch. Students in 5th and 6th grades will have family style lunch on separate sides of the dining room with the divider closed. In JK-Grade 4, students will order box lunch in advance through the Nutrislice app as they did last year. Each week two grades per division will eat in the dining room with the divider closed, the remaining grade will eat in the classroom to allow for distancing and to decrease chance of infection spread.

7) Parent access to the building: At the beginning of the year parents will be allowed in the building if they are vaccinated plus two weeks, fully masked until 8:45 a.m. JK-K parents can drop off in the classrooms, and Grade 1 parents can do the same for the first two weeks of the year. All other parents can say goodbye to their children in the yard or on the ground floor. Parents who need to be in the building for a meeting or an appointment may remain in the building for those meetings. We plan to have parent nights at school, and, if things are as they stand today, everyone will be fully masked except for the social hour part of the meetings. We will favor outdoor social events. For the fall sports season, we will not have spectators for indoor contests. (The Grade 5 and 6 teams will not have games against other schools until their age group can be vaccinated but will have intramural sports.)

8) Chapel: For the beginning of the year we will not be welcoming parents to Chapel in the Lower School and Early Childhood in order to appropriately distance the students. Hopefully, that will change as the year goes on. We will record Chapel for parents to view and post it on the website. For the same reasons we will be holding two Half-School Chapels on 9/15, which will be livestreamed, for JK-Grade 6 and Grades 7-12.

Not COVID related, we have been told by the Church, who are the owners of 80 Fourth Avenue, that they will have to do Local Law 11 work and set up a scaffolding beginning on August 30, which will limit our access to the 10th Street Play Yard. Fortunately, we will have use of the yard for drop-off and pick-up. They will allow us to use Huntington Close, the grassy area to the west, which is much smaller. We recently applied to close 10th Street again this year, and we are waiting to hear back from NYCDOT. We will try to take as much advantage of our outside space as possible while the good weather continues.

There is always the possibility that we could be forced to go fully remote by a citywide health crisis, but that seems very unlikely at this time. There is also a possibility that the Delta surge will

wane quickly. We will be responsive and flexible as things change. Our plan is to have school for every student every day while keeping everyone safe.

George

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