

Dear Overlake Community

As we head into the December break and get ready to turn the calendars from 2020 to 2021, I wanted to provide you with insight into the planning we are doing in regard to returning students to campus in the new year.

Before doing so, I want to thank our entire Overlake Community for all that we have collectively done in supporting each other these last ten months. I am sure 2020 will figure predominately in history given the countless challenges and tragedies this pandemic has sown throughout the world. But through all of this, I continue to see people in our community reaching out to one another to provide support and care in these uncertain times. Our Owl community is special and keeping it intact despite our distance at the moment is of great importance to all of us.

When we turn the page to 2021, I anticipate new opportunities for us to begin the second half of the school year much differently than the first half. Even with cases of COVID-19 spiking now, there is a glimmer of respite from this pandemic with the arrival of vaccines. I have also learned recently that the Washington State Department of Health will soon be providing schools with additional recommendations based on new, adjusted metrics that will help schools begin to plan for the return of students to campuses. Several independent schools in the area, including The Bush School, Seattle Academy, University Prep, and The Northwest School are also framing out their reopening plans.

We too are working on a set of plans that would start to bring students back to campus later in January at a slow progression throughout the second semester. This progression will be incremental with careful, measured steps along the way with opportunities to adjust and pivot as needed when the virus dictates such changes. We have developed a variety of health and safety protocols which have been tested during the fall athletics practices and the Middle School Retreats earlier this year. We learned a great deal from running these activities and will put these lessons into play in the second half of the year.

As to what reopening will look like in late January, I don't have all of the details as of yet, but I am working on them with the Health and Safety team. What is important to remember is late January is our potential starting point, and we need to remain cautious and ready to pivot either direction based on what is occurring in our community in regard to the virus at that time. Continued patience and flexibility will be vital in the coming months.

I am sure all of this information will spark many questions which I look forward to hearing and hopefully answering at the Town Hall we have scheduled for Wednesday at 12 o'clock. Here is the link to join us virtually: <https://bit.ly/TownHall-Dec16th>. If you can't make this time, we will record the meeting and provide a link for it on our website.

If you do have questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to me.

Warmly,  
Matt