

Dear Overlake Families,

Welcome back to the second half of the school year. I hope Winter Break was a time to be with loved ones, to rejuvenate, and to prepare for the months ahead. As we begin the new year, I am hopeful 2021 will be markedly better for us all.

Last month, the Washington State Department of Health, along with Governor Jay Inslee's office, revised its guidance for schools during this time of pandemic. Their recommendations, [as linked here](#), provide more flexibility for schools to begin to bring back students to campus for in-person learning. Their guidance has shifted as additional understanding of the science behind the pandemic has developed, providing greater clarity into how to manage in-person learning.

Overlake's health and safety team has worked since the end of last school year to develop COVID policies and procedures that are in line with recommendations of the state and federal health authorities. In the fall we were able to use these procedures successfully in running our Middle School retreats and our athletics program. With the new guidance from the state and our belief that we can manage students and faculty on campus with minimum risk, we are beginning to move from *Overlake Online* to our hybrid learning model - *Overlake Combined*.

Beginning the week of January 18, we will begin to bring back in hybrid cohorts our fifth-grade students. We are starting with our youngest students since, as a group, they have not spent any significant time on campus, and the challenges for online learning are greater for them given their age.

As we move into February, our sixth-grade students will have opportunity to come back to campus in a hybrid format, joining the fifth graders on campus.

We are reserving Fridays in the coming weeks for various Upper School retreats, beginning with our seniors on January 29.

This pacing brings us to mid-winter break, where we will pause and assess the process thus far.

The decision whether to return to campus is personal and one that each family needs to make, as will our faculty and staff. There are no right or wrong answers with this decision, only the choice that is right for your family. Families who wish to remain fully online will be able to do so thanks to powerful cameras installed in all of our classrooms to enable students who are home to be able to livestream classes.

To summarize here are the on-campus opportunities for our various grades:

- 5th grade: Begin hybrid learning opportunity week of Jan 18
- 6th grade: Begin hybrid learning opportunity week of February 1
- 7th grade: no change to current schedule
- 8th grade: no change to current schedule
- 9th grade: Retreat on campus February 10 & 11
- 10th grade: Retreat on campus February 9
- 11th grade: Retreat on campus February 5

- 12th grade: Retreat on campus January 29

Join us January 13 at 6:00pm for a special Town Hall to learn more and ask questions about our next steps. Here is the link to the virtual meeting: <http://bit.ly/TownHall-Jan13th>

I look forward to beginning to have students back on our campus spending time with their teachers and one another in a safe manner.

Warmly,

Matt