

Dear Cate Families,

We have come to the end of another productive week on the Mesa. A month ago such an assessment might have seemed unlikely and overly optimistic. And yet here we are, pressing forward, learning and teaching online. It's not what we'd prefer, but we'll take it. Ginger said to me the other day that there are two very problematic words we ought to avoid from now on: "should" and "normal." Both carry unhelpful and unreasonable expectations.

Better just to enjoy the many things we did together this week: some great classes and advisor meetings, an [outstanding Servons Speech by Will Anderson '20](#), a Cate assembly online, and the news that a local gray fox has recognized an opportunity in the student absence from the Mesa and taken up residence in the Johnson Library. Apparently the couches are quite comfortable for all manner of critters.

Continuation of Online Learning

There is news on a host of fronts to share, some of which has already trickled out in various forums and communications and some which has not. Perhaps most notably, we have made the decision to continue our virtual programming through the end of the trimester. This is a decision we worked hard not to make, but conference with the County of Santa Barbara and the stipulations in place by the Governor of California make it impossible for us to pursue any other path. This is deeply disappointing news for all of us, but we will most assuredly make the best of it. And we continue to make plans for a community celebration to end the year and honor our seniors and the year we have experienced together.

Packing Student Rooms

Our discussions with Santa Barbara County have yielded some good news. We have gained permission to allow families to access the Mesa beginning Saturday, May 1, to pack student rooms. For safety and health reasons, this process will be carefully choreographed, but we are hopeful that it allows a significant number of students to get their gear. Here's how we expect the process will work:

- There will be two time slots available each day during the month of May: 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., including Saturdays and Sundays.
- Due to County restrictions, no more than 16 families can be on campus at any one time, spread out over our eight dormitories (no more than two families per dorm).
- We will have boxes and tape available in each dorm. Families are expected to pack and clearly label anything that needs to be stored.
- Items to be stored should be left in the room. We will move them to storage.
- Visits will be scheduled in advance via an online form. We'll also have a designated email address for questions.
- Families will be asked to complete a health screening questionnaire prior to arrival. The questionnaire will be emailed to them after they've scheduled an appointment.

- We'll have nurses on hand to perform in-person screening upon arrival to campus.

Wade Ransom is overseeing this effort and will send sign-up information and further details next week.

Parent-Teacher Conferences & Family Week

Also arriving shortly are directions on how to sign up for conferences with teachers, advisors, and counselors for the Family Week program we announced in CommuniCATE. This sustained opportunity for communication is the best means to ensure that we are supporting our students effectively, guiding and challenging them appropriately, and meeting their needs and interests in this new medium of learning. Engagement is our goal in this trimester, surety in the face of so many unknowns, and reasonable cognitive momentum. The extent to which we can partner towards those very ends will surely be impactful for our kids.

To that end, both you and your students can visit our [Virtual Learning Guide](#) for updates on how we are assessing student work, the metrics we are using, and the means we are taking to eliminate potential concerns about long-term negative impacts on student performance stemming from this online trimester. As we note in the document, we are looking at the adjustments relating to this pandemic as a multi-stage mitigation. Though we have intentionally given up some academic momentum in the short-term, we are building our program forward to be responsive necessarily to new starting points, especially in sequential courses. And we will use the time we have in the coming school year to patiently build our progress and bring students thoughtfully and with appropriate pacing to where they need to be.

We also intend, as part of the Family Week experience, to offer a series of master classes built expressly for Cate parents, so that we can all enjoy the unique nuances of an online synchronous class. These opportunities might be preferable, in fact, to those we offer on campus because there won't be any students present to prevent us parents from joining the discussion. These will be scheduled at times that won't conflict with teacher conference times.

Finances and Tuition

I will close with a message from our Board of Trustees. We have been carefully studying the impact of this time on our students and families and specifically Cate's responsibilities in the face of this unexpected new context. Like everyone else, we are doing our very best in an environment that limits us, in some cases - like in delivering our educational program - quite dramatically and conspicuously. As we always do, we are prioritizing our people in this downturn, allocating resources to best support the people - employees and students alike - who comprise this community.

In that same spirit, and to honor the investment our families have made and continue to make in Cate, our Board will meet next week to determine appropriate refunds for the third trimester. Specific information about the scale of the refund and how the return of funds will be enabled is coming shortly.

Thank you for your continued support and your partnership throughout the school year. We never

know what awaits us when we begin our annual journeys. Though none of us would have imagined the particular turn of events we are now facing, we probably can't deny that there are moments even in this awful new challenge that are memorable and wonderful. And someday soon, we'll be able to share them with each other. No doubt we are all looking forward to that moment.

Servons,

Ben



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