



A Message from the Mesa

Dear Cate Families,

As I write, our teaching faculty is engaged in department meetings to ensure a cohesive and compelling launch of next week's student orientation and our distance learning program, our Health & Safety Committee is running through various scenarios for testing and quarantine to be sure our opening plans meet the state and county guidelines, and our Board of Trustees has just completed its most recent review of our opening intentions. In the coming week, you will receive detailed handbooks designed to make the transitions first to learning remotely and later to arriving on campus seamless. In the meantime, I want to reiterate our intentions with respect to opening that we reaffirmed this week.

Return to Campus Date

We will welcome students back to campus between **September 24 and 28**. The exact schedule of return will be included in the newly revised opening plan that we will distribute next week, but seniors will be the first to arrive, beginning with prefects and teaching assistants..

COVID-19 Testing

We intend to adhere to our expectation that students will be tested for COVID in the ten days prior to their coming to campus. We appreciate, though, that some of our families are facing challenges in accessing such testing. If that is the case, we ask that you contact our Director of Health Services, [Natalie Jackel](#), so that we can assist you or make any necessary accommodations. More information specifically on our guidelines and expectations for testing will be sent to all families along with resources to help secure testing in advance of arrival. Students will be tested again when they arrive on campus and at intervals thereafter.

Transition Plans

We will adjust distance learning programming while students and families are traveling to Cate to allow us all to focus on the important work of getting settled on campus. Once here, students will go through a quarantine period in keeping with CDC guidance. During the quarantine period we will continue our distance learning program with boarders connecting from their rooms on campus, the expectation being that we will transition to in-person instruction once we have met the standard for ensuring sustainable community health.

Day Students

Day students will experience a similar on-boarding, even though they will not be living on campus. They will be tested on campus prior to the arrival of boarding students and once their quarantine period ends will go through an orientation designed to familiarize them with the augmented standards for community health and the specific expectations that accrue to them. When our distance learning program resumes after the boarding students arrive on campus, day students will connect from home, making the transition to on-site learning once the quarantine period for boarders has been satisfied. We will expect day students during the quarantine period to adhere to the same standards of quarantine that boarders will meet.

For all of us on the Mesa and off of it, that moment when we are finally at liberty to begin or resume our Cate journey is what we have been waiting for. And it is close now. I am reminded, in the face of that nearly realized ambition, that education is both an expression of human possibility and a means of structuring it. Our Return to Campus plan is an example of a future we have worked hard to construct.

Contingencies

There are variables that could still impact our plans or force further adjustments. The first is the Governor's standards for opening school in California. Currently, we can open for in-person classroom instruction when Santa Barbara County has been off the state watch list (meaning infection rates in the county are below a certain threshold) for 14 consecutive days. In a recent communication, the Governor suggested he may extend the standard to 21 days. While that policy adjustment would not in all likelihood delay our return to campus, it might compel us to continue our distance learning program for some period of time even with students on campus.

The State of California has not yet delivered the promised standards for boarding schools to open, so it is possible - though unlikely given that we meet or exceed all the other standards for schools and colleges – that we will find some expectation in those standards that we have not anticipated. And of course, we will keep a close watch on infection rates both in the immediate area and elsewhere so that we can minimize risk to all members of the community.

Optimists that we are at Cate, we believe all of these aforementioned variables will ultimately work in our favor, which is why we offer with this communication a [taste of all that awaits on this Mesa](#). As you'll note, the spaces and places captured in these photos are missing the secret ingredient that makes them so meaningful: all of you. We are looking forward to remedying that in the coming weeks.

Servons,
Ben

Booth Commons



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