



A Message from Head of School Ben Williams

Dear Cate Families,

We held a faculty meeting on Thursday and each of the advisors of students new to Cate “introduced them” to the community. It is a ritual that distinguishes the beginning of every school year, a reminder of the remarkable people who join this community each fall and contribute meaningfully to it thereafter. Even in a year such as this one, when so much seems different, the reminder that certain critical things haven’t changed – like the captivating character of the people in this community - is reassuring and affirming.

The day ended fittingly with a Servons Speech by Jasmine Ross '21, who took us through her unique and captivating journey to understanding, self-assurance, and self-love. Personal and powerful, her remarks reveal an appreciation of education as a lived experience and identity as one of its most important outcomes.

Such moments this week are reminders of the unique dynamics that we enjoy on this campus when it is activated by students and provide ever greater incentive to renew those meaningful interactions here on the Mesa. **All indicators toward our intended return dates for students remain positive and we are finalizing plans for our scheduled on-boarding beginning on Thursday, September 24.** County infection rates are falling, critical tools to assist in our safe operation, like 4 Abbott ID NOW rapid testing instruments and one Quidel rapid analyzer are on the way to us, our Mesa Clinic is fully operational, and 200 Adirondack chairs, which will be placed throughout campus to allow for plenty of outdoor lounging as well as outdoor instruction are arriving as I write.

We are all deeply appreciative that so many of our families participated in the [Question and Answer Zoom call we held last week](#). Below are clarifications on some of the issues raised in that session dealing primarily with health and safety practices and protocols.

The Mesa Clinic

The Mesa Clinic is a supplemental facility that we installed over the summer that contains 10 individual rooms with their own bathrooms, HVAC units, and Wifi. It is staffed 24 hours a day by a nurse trained for COVID-19 care with potential staffing increasing depending upon occupancy.

Students sent to the clinic will have tested positive for COVID-19. In such a circumstance, the parents of the student would be informed and – should they be capable of doing so – may come to campus to pick up their student and take them home.

Standards of Care

Students in the Clinic will be monitored 24 hours a day. In addition to any treatment of symptoms, students will have their temperature, blood pressure, heart rate, respiration, and oxygen saturation monitored through the day and night. Any change in status or reduction in oxygen saturation – both indicators of the virus' potential advance – will result in transfer to a local hospital.

Caregivers

All medical staff working with students in the clinic and elsewhere are either licensed RNs or MDs. All are fully trained in working with COVID-19 and many bring extensive hospital experience to their work on the Mesa.

Testing

We will be using two different types of testing. The gold standard is the PCR test, which requires the nasopharyngeal swab. The turnaround time on that test is 72 hours. We will be administering PCR tests to all of our students when they arrive on campus and at intervals thereafter. We have already tested all faculty and staff at Cate and returned all negative results. We will test the adult community regularly from this point forward. We also will have 5 rapid antigen analyzers that respond to analysis of a subject's nasal swab sample. This is called an antigen test. These rapid testing instruments return results in 15 minutes or less. And though the accuracy rates are quite high, they are not as universally reliable as the molecular PCR test. We are using two types of rapid testing machines, one manufactured by Quidel and the other by Abbott.

Specific testing accuracy data of those machines and the PCR test is as follows:

- **Antigen Tests**

- [Quidel Sofia](#)

- *Sensitivity 96.7% **Specificity 100%

- [Abbott ID NOW](#)

- *Sensitivity $\geq 94.7\%$ **Specificity $\geq 98.6\%$

- **Molecular Test**

- [Merso Labs](#)

- RT- PCR (RNA amplification)

- *Sensitivity 98-99%

- **Specificity 100%

- *Sensitivity=Accuracy (low false negatives)

- **Specificity= Identifies right disease (low false positives)

Our intention is to broadly use rapid testing to conduct surveillance testing, which is done on a regular basis simply to assure community health. And we will use the PCR test specifically with individuals who are symptomatic or those who, through our contact tracing, have been revealed as

having interacted with someone who tested positive for the virus.

In cases of a positive antigen test, we will place a student in the Mesa Clinic and administer a PCR test to confirm the result.

Positive Testing Protocol

Per CDC guidelines, students who test positive for COVID-19 and go through the required minimum of 10 days in the Mesa Clinic or at home will require medical clearance to return to the community. After being devoid of symptoms for at least 24 hours, they will have to be assessed by our medical staff as safe to return.

We may use testing to assure such safety, though we are mindful of the research and the data to date that shows that a person who has had and recovered from COVID-19 may have low levels of the virus in their bodies for up to 3 months after diagnosis. This means that the person who has recovered may continue to have a positive test result, even though they are not spreading COVID-19. Our goal in this analysis will be to protect the health of the community and assure that a student who is no longer contagious may leave the Mesa Clinic when it is safe to do so.

Face Coverings

Visitors on the Mesa will be required to wear face coverings at all times. Students on the Mesa will be expected to wear face coverings in all indoor spaces and outside in common and high traffic areas. Some reasonable exceptions apply to this rule, like showering, physically distanced exercising, and eating.

Visiting Campus

To start, we will operate as a closed campus and will provide further guidance on-campus visitation soon. All families coming on campus must wear a face covering at all times and, at least for the fall trimester, may not enter any buildings on campus. While it will not be possible for families to take students off-campus through October, our policies and practices will evolve according to the scale of the viral threat and consistent with State and County guidelines.

Dashboard

We are working on a very simple dashboard that will provide details on Cate testing results, county numbers, and operating standards. As noted in [our handbook addendums](#), we will adjust operational practices in response to the scale of infection rates and potential threats to student health and those adjustments will be visible in the dashboard.

No doubt you are all eager to see school underway if only to escape these long missives from the Head of School. I, too, look forward to a change of topic and ultimately the opportunity to have a conversation, mask to mask.

See you all soon.

Servons,
Ben

Return to Campus Plan

Handbook Addendum



www.cate.org

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