



A Message from Head of School Ben Williams

Dear Cate Families,

We have elected to further adjust our plans to return students to campus. A combination of heightened levels of COVID-19 transmission in Santa Barbara County and demonstrably strained medical care facilities in the area make it prudent to delay the recommencing of our programming here on the Mesa.

Our new schedule contains the following intentions:

- We will return students to campus for in-person learning on **Saturday, March 6, and Sunday, March 7.**
- We will hold to our plan to **begin our distance learning programming with our Martin Luther King Day celebration on Monday, January 18.** And we will add an additional **three weeks of distance learning to the already planned two weeks of virtual instruction,** taking us to **Friday, February 19.** Additional details about virtual programming will be shared later this week.
- **Spring Break will begin on Saturday, February 20, and will run for two weeks, until Friday, March 5.** Such timing allows us to limit on-boarding and the attendant quarantine constraints to a single time (as opposed to the two required if we were to return students, send them home for break, and return them again), gives Santa Barbara County infection rates time to decrease, and allows for the area hospitals to address the needs of the community amidst this current surge in cases, and gives students and faculty a break before we enter the final stretch of the academic year. Details, including an updated travel information form, are forthcoming.
- **The winter trimester will conclude at the end of March,** meaning there will be nearly three weeks of on site, in-person instruction before the marking period closes.
- **The spring trimester will begin in April** and will last nine weeks until Commencement on the Sunday, June 6.

Our intention when we resume campus programming in March is to run the full array of activities and

endeavors that distinguish life on the Mesa. Our performing and visual artists will get back to work, our public service program will re-engage the community off the Mesa, our hikers and surfers, and climbers and mountain bikers will take advantage of the natural resources of the Central Coast, and our athletes will return to the playing fields, the courts, and the pool. While the California Interscholastic Federation, which oversees high school athletic competition, has yet to issue its plan for the remainder of the school year, we intend to proceed with the expectation that our teams will be able to compete and will prepare for that hopeful eventuality. That has been the story of our year after all: planning, preparing, and adjusting.

No doubt you will find in this missive a combination of relief - given the health and safety concerns that we all share - and some degree of disappointment. All of us on the Mesa are experiencing the same emotions and reactions. We all know the value of the experience for students on this campus and postponing that experience even for a little while is difficult to bear. But we began the year with a commitment to safety that we will not abandon, even if it means the loss for a period of time of the experience we most want for this community.

Mindful that this decision may place an inordinate burden on certain students and families, we have created **a petition process for those who feel they need to be on campus to complete their course of study**. We are thinking particularly of students who do not have reliable internet access or students who are in times zones that make it impossible to participate in our programming. In such situations, we will consider allowing students who qualify to return to campus and undertake our distance learning program on site. Inquiries relating to such considerations should be directed to Erin Hansen, our Director of Student Life, by the end of this week at erin_hansen@cate.org. We will respond to any outreach so that we might learn more about students' particular needs, and to discuss next steps. Any students granted a waiver to return will begin quarantine on campus on Saturday, January 23.

We imagine there will be a number of questions as a result of this change in school schedule, so we plan to hold [a Zoom call](#) for all interested families on **Tuesday, January 19, at 5:00 p.m PST**.

In the meantime, thank you for your patience, your flexibility, and your support. This year has forced us all to be agile in previously unimaginable ways. And yet we have consistently met the challenge together and have built our momentum in a year filled with constraints. 2021 holds lots of possibilities, we expect. We just have to get through this bumpy start to the smoother trail that lies ahead.

May this note find you well and hopeful.

Servons,
Ben



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