

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Students,

I am pleased to report that we have come up with a new testing plan that gives us confidence in moving from Phase 2 to Phase 3. Our plan will be to welcome boarding students back to campus on October 10 and 11.

The Initial Problem

We ended up opening in Phase 2 rather than Phase 3 for two reasons:

- Tempus told us that the turnaround time on their PCR testing had gone from 48 - 72 hours to 7-10 days.
- We were unable to get a Sophia 2 rapid antigen testing machine from Quidel because the machines were reallocated to nursing homes.

We were able to replace Tempus as our testing company for the initial screening of all members of the campus community, and we were able to locate a Sophia 2 machine, but we were told by Quidel that we would not be able to get the testing supplies for the Sophia 2 until sometime in October, and we still do not have a clear sense from Quidel of when we might get those supplies. We have been working for weeks to identify a rapid antigen testing replacement for the Sophia 2 machine but ultimately have been unsuccessful, so we went back to the drawing board with the testing plan and have come up with a new approach that is even stronger than our initial plan.

The Solution

Tempus has addressed its turnaround times and is now delivering results, on average, in 1.84 days. The Tempus tests are PCR tests which are the most reliable diagnostic tool available. Our new plan is to substantially increase the amount of testing that we do, particularly for our boarding students, and thereby reduce the likelihood that the virus could be spreading in the dorms without our knowing it, which might lead to our having to go entirely virtual. Our plan would be to:

- Use Tempus to give every boarder a PCR test every week.
- Spread the testing out over multiple days so that a sampling of students from each dorm would be tested throughout the week rather than on one day.
- Test a representative sample of the non-boarding community (day students, faculty, and staff) every week using Tempus as well.

There are several reasons that give us confidence in this approach:

- By testing every boarder every week, we minimize the likelihood of an outbreak developing before we can contain it.
- The turnaround time for Tempus is fast enough that we can minimize quarantine times while we wait for results to come back.
- False negative and false positive rates with rapid antigen tests (like the Sophia 2 analyzer) are high enough that we would be relying on follow-up PCR testing even with rapid testing capability in place, so having fast turnaround on the PCR test is even better.
- Every boarder will have a local guardian in place so we will be able to isolate any student about whom we have a concern.

Of course, keeping all members of our community healthy depends on more than just testing. We are also relying on all members of our community to uphold the expectations set forth in our Social Compact. Unfortunately, this past weekend a number of students attended a social gathering without wearing masks and without practicing physical distancing. We do not believe that these students intended to put the health of anyone in our community at risk, but the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic is that we all depend on the actions of others to keep us healthy. As a result, these students will enter a two-week quarantine period during which time they will not be permitted to attend classes in person or participate in the afternoon program. Jed Wartman sent a note to all students last evening reminding them of the importance of adhering strictly to the terms of the [Social Compact](#). Our ability to remain in school in person and keep our community healthy depends on it.

In preparation for our move to Phase 3, we will test boarders on October 6 and 7 and have them move into the dorms on October 10 and 11. We hope this will give families time to make arrangements to be in Byfield for our testing dates and would still give our students six full weeks in the dorms before we break for Thanksgiving. Jed Wartman will follow up soon with an email to boarding families with further details on testing and move-in but I wanted to share this good news with all of you as soon as possible.

Looking a bit further down the road, we are planning for a virtual Fall Family Weekend that will involve 30-minute conferences with your students and their advisors, as well as a variety of virtual programming related to our DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) work, college counseling, and more. Look for more specific details in a future issue of The Governor's Call.

I am so grateful for the patience you have all shown over the last several months as we have worked to develop plans for reopening the school this fall. Thank you for your support.

My best,

Peter

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