



*September 22, 2020*

Dear Upper School Community,

The weather is about to change as we hit the solar checkpoint of the autumn equinox, and I want to remind us all of some things that will be peculiar to Gill this year. As you know, we are keeping classroom doors and windows open in order to over-indulge in fresh air, and we will do so as far into the calendar as we can. We do not anticipate holding outdoor classes in the dead of winter—as was the case in 1918, and about which you may have read recently—but we will keep air flowing as much as possible. Thus, this year, even more so than in years past, autumn will be a time for sweaters and fleeces and coats. As temperatures dip, we encourage parents to continue to hold the line on layers, to continue to be skeptical when teens say, “I’ll be fine once I get to school,” and continue to hand them jackets and pullovers on their way out the door.

As for our responses to the virus, we are pleased that families have supported the school in all the measures we have undertaken to keep contacts at a minimum, keep transmission at bay, and keep our doors open. Now that we are entering our fourth week of classes, it is also a good time to remind ourselves that, were we to have an outbreak, it is possible that we would move to distance learning. As you know, fortune favors the prepared, and we want to be ready on both sides—to keep on-campus measures in place as long as possible and to move to virtual classes as soon as necessary. Our teachers continue to train in these many eventualities.

Lastly, we continue to see almost daily incidents that roil our national feelings. Even as temperatures cool down, the political climate will continue to heat up into November. We encourage families to continue to foster open discussions at home even as we hope to model measured conversation in our classrooms. We reiterate our mission, especially as we prepare students for a meaningful life, by remembering that our goal is teaching students how to think, not what to think; how to build an argument, not tear down an opponent; and how to embrace change in a year with very few precedents.

In these interesting times, may our hearts and words show the same equilibrium as the days and nights.

Warm regards,

Joel