



My Maclay Families,

As we embark on a new school year, one that has many similarities to the tumultuous beginning of last school year, I've thought deeply about how we can best serve you in these times. I was reminded of a familiar and calming voice from my youth. As I grew through my adolescent years, I spent many days on the farm with my grandparents. The things that rooted them were their faith, their family, and their work. I would not be who I am today without the touchstones they instilled in me. One of the memories I carry with me is Paul Harvey speaking on the radio...yes, a radio with dials on it! Harvey's distinctive voice, delivery, and pauses made for a predictable and comforting voice during the ups and downs of life. One quote I recall from Mr. Harvey is, "In times like these, it helps to recall that there have always been times like these." As my team and I approach this year, our commitment remains to be steady, consistent, responsible, and resilient partners and provide an experience here on campus where children can feel safe, challenged, and that they belong.

To that end, we have continued our focus on controlling what we can control and spending all our time refining and adjusting our plans as new information is received to give our families choices in how they engage with Maclay. In relation to COVID-19, we have spent the last 16 months observing, studying, documenting, and adjusting according to how COVID-19 impacts our community. For over a year, we have followed a robust and proactive set of mitigation protocols that saw us through last year with no spread here on campus, while the flexibility and expertise of our faculty allowed for the best uninterrupted educational experience for our students. We were able to adjust those protocols slightly in the spring and summer, and we continue to prioritize those protocols that have been tested and have worked well for us.

There have been a few questions asked over the past weeks, and I wanted to share the information I can on these. These answers are intended to inform you of Maclay's procedures and practices. We are experts on what happens on our 100 acres with our students. Any connection to other schools or any content in the media or at the legislative level is only engaged with when necessary. We are focused on providing for you, our families, and we plan to stay laser-focused on that goal.

**Question: What will the Mask Policy be this school year?**

We are committed to a safe learning environment as well as allowing our parents to have choices regarding their child's engagement with the school. We have made several adjustments over the summer to arrange classes in response to the recent increase in Covid cases. We have Mask Preferred classes in the Lower School and have brought back our Concurrent Virtual Classroom for some grades. As a final step to offer protection and choice, we are adding clarity to our face-covering policy for the opening of school.

***Our Maclay Student Mask Optional Policy is as follows:***

As all our students are minors, we are committed to adhering to each family's desire for their child's face covering. To track and ensure our partnership with each parent, we are following an opt-out procedure. The default expectation of students in all grades is to be masked indoors when unable to properly distance. However, any family may opt-out of the mask requirement if/when they determine it is safe for their child to do so. The opt-out permission should be an email sent directly to a child's homeroom teacher in the Lower School or the Dean of Students in the Middle ([dean@maclay.org](mailto:dean@maclay.org)) and Upper School ([hbas@maclay.org](mailto:hbas@maclay.org)) from the parent's email account we have on record. Without this communication, the faculty will hold each student accountable for wearing face coverings indoors.

***Our Maclay Employee Mask Policy is as follows:***

The expectation is for all employees to be masked if engaging with students indoors and unable to properly distance. In the classroom, a teacher may remove their face covering when appropriate for educational purposes. For example, when a phonics lesson is being given in a classroom. It is important to remember that these protocols are subject to change based on new information.

**Question: What will the school do differently in terms of Contact Tracing and Quarantining?**

This answer is simple, NOTHING HAS CHANGED in terms of these protocols. Family responsibility and our proactive stance on these practices are the MOST IMPORTANT tools in our arsenal to combat the spread of COVID-19 in our community. We have all of these protocols listed at [www.maclay.org/COVID-19](http://www.maclay.org/COVID-19) but in short, below is how we handle a COVID-19 case.

From the time of either symptom onset or the ‘swabbing’ of a positive COVID-19 test (whichever is earlier) we take a snapshot of the previous 48 hours from that point. Within those 48 hours, we determine who was within 6 feet for over 15 minutes. We use our attendance system, student, parent, teacher interviews, and sometimes our cameras to help determine proximity and timing. If anyone is determined to be within 6 feet for over 15 minutes, they meet the criteria for a “Close Contact Exposure” and are automatically quarantined\* from school. Whether you have a face covering on or not has no bearing on whether you must quarantine.

The \* is there because the Department of Health allows for two exceptions. The first exception is based on vaccination status. Once you are 2 weeks past your last COVID-19 vaccine shot, AND if you are asymptomatic, you are not required to quarantine. Note: if you are symptomatic or test positive for COVID-19, regardless of your vaccination status, you must quarantine. So, the assumption that the vaccine is a 100% “get out of quarantine pass” is not true. However, there is no doubt the vaccine protects you AND gives you more options. I’m very encouraged with the results of the vaccine and it is clear, due to the latest data, that the vaccine is the best pathway to reduce the impact of COVID-19. There are sites across the Leon and the surrounding counties that make obtaining a vaccination extremely simple.

The latest detailed guidance from the CDC regarding quarantine protocols can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>

The second exception is based on your previous COVID-19 positive test result if you are unvaccinated. If you test positive for COVID-19, a 90-day countdown begins, and you are treated exactly like a vaccinated individual in terms of the quarantine protocol.

Both of these exceptions are based on your immune system’s ‘memory’ of how to combat a future infection. As time goes along and more is learned about antibody persistence and efficacy, these time frames and protocols may change. We are in constant communication with the Leon County Department of Health and will adjust these as directed.

**Question: When will you quarantine an entire class or grade?**

This was a question that floated around a good bit last year as well. Because of the protocols we put in place last year and are continuing this year, it would take multiple simultaneous infections or a unique circumstance within a group to cause an entire cohort to be quarantined. For example, as our classrooms are set up, no one student is ever within 6 feet for over 15 minutes with every member of the class; therefore, the close contact test would not apply to the entire class. We set up our classrooms last year to maximize spacing between students in as many environments as possible and this was key to our success. We will continue this in the upcoming year.

**Question: What are the protocols for parent access to campus this year?**

As we ended last year, we were looking forward to lifting the restrictions on parent access to classrooms. Unfortunately, due to the rise of COVID cases, we are returning to our protocols from last year in this regard and hope to relax those as soon as possible. There have been questions about vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals and how vaccination status relates to campus access. We will likely keep our protocols in place and approach all visitors equally and not separate access based on vaccine status. In short, we will default to the ‘safest’ protocol regarding visitors to our campus.

**Question: What are the changes from last school year to this year.**

I’m sure I will leave some out, but the notable ones are:

I’m giving the opposite answer to this question because this is important. The way we respond to and monitor verified COVID-19 cases in our community has not changed at all. We have a great system in place that outperformed others last year, and we are continuing everything in our response protocol. The vaccine is a change from last year. The vast majority of adults on campus are fully vaccinated and have been since the spring. This will help keep the classrooms going if a COVID case is associated with a classroom or team.

We will have a more robust security presence on campus and more traffic control at the

exit drives during dismissal. The first few weeks of school are always challenging as we navigate new schedules. Each division will send out specific arrival and pickup information. I thank you in advance for your patience as we all settle into the school year. My standard recommendation has not changed. If you are picking up your Lower or Middle School child(ren), if you arrive on campus 10 minutes after dismissal, most of the traffic will have cleared, and you will have a much faster trip through the carline. We pull over 400 cars through campus within 25 minutes, and if we all get here 15 minutes before pickup, we will all experience greater delays.

As Mr. Harvey shared, we are not facing challenges for the first time, each challenge is different, but we are resolved to not stop trying our best to offer our families the best educational experience possible. The last few weeks have been a storm of information, legislation, and opinions. We promise to keep focused on what we do best here on our campus and care for your families as best we can. We look forward to seeing you on campus soon, even if it must remain in carline for a little longer.

Yours,

James Milford



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