



February 5, 2021

MBS Family,

We are encouraged that the number of coronavirus cases voluntarily reported by Mountain Brook Schools students, faculty, and staff has continued to trend downward in recent weeks. As of today, we have only 21 positive cases and 85 close contacts across our school district. That is considerably lower than our numbers pre-Winter Break.

As we have communicated throughout the semester, our decision concerning the continuation of virtual Wednesdays at our secondary schools would be based on our numbers in those schools. We have met with teachers, students, parents, and administrators to assess the pros and cons that have surfaced since the virtual Wednesday was implemented in October. Our goal was to gain a comprehensive overview so that we can continue to create as many favorable outcomes as possible.

Below are the benefits and challenges presented by virtual Wednesdays that arose from numerous conversations.

Benefits

- Provides useful prep time for teachers who are managing traditional and virtual students
- Creates opportunities for collaboration with colleagues and students
- Improves emotional health of teachers and students
- Allows teachers and students to form stronger relationships
- Allows students time to catch up on work and sleep

Challenges

- Loss of face-to-face instruction time
- Lack of structure for some students
- Lack of supervision for students during the day

While maintaining many of the advantages above, we will begin in-person instruction on Wednesdays starting Feb. 17 at Mountain Brook Junior High and Mountain Brook High School. Students will report to school with a late start time of 11 a.m. This will allow teachers time to plan for traditional, virtual, and quarantined students while providing students time to catch up on work

within a more structured schedule. Elementary schools will continue to follow their existing schedule.

Every adjustment creates its own set of benefits and concerns. This one will be no different. Nevertheless, our teams at MBJH and MBHS are working to create the best environment for our students, teachers, and community. For instance, we will ensure that our schools accommodate students who need to arrive earlier on Wednesday mornings due to their parents' work schedules.

MBS remains committed to creating a safe and healthy environment for all students and employees. Our teachers are continuing to reinforce masking, distancing, and good hygiene practices, while our custodians clean our buildings thoroughly on a daily basis. Additionally, we are asking for your continued assistance in observing the following:

- Use the [MBS Symptom Check Tool](#) daily.
- Keep your student at home if they are sick.
- Contact your school nurse if your student tests positive for the coronavirus or has been exposed to a positive case.
- Talk to your student about the importance of the Big 3: masking, distancing, and good hygiene.
- Avoid large group social gatherings.

If you need to get tested for the coronavirus, [Interim Healthcare](#) is offering testing Monday through Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. If you need to report a positive case or possible exposure over the weekend, you can text or call the MBS COVID-19 Weekend Call Line at **205-703-1298** to connect with a school nurse who can provide guidance. It is very important that you report coronavirus activity so that we have reliable data to aid our decision-making.

On another note, MBS has established a partnership with UAB Health to provide coronavirus vaccination opportunities for all MBS employees. This process will include the first and second doses of the Pfizer vaccine administered at a designated time on UAB's campus. While we are still waiting to learn the specific day and time, MBS employees should be assigned a vaccination appointment within the next few weeks. This is very exciting news.

MBS is continuing to monitor coronavirus data for our school system and county, and will continue to follow guidance from our public health and government officials throughout the second semester. Our chief priority is to make informed decisions that prioritize the health and safety of our school community while ensuring the continued provision of an effective, challenging, and engaging education.

Thank you for your patience and understanding during this unpredictable season, and thank you to all those who helped us determine the next step in our reopening.