

The Cambridge School

THINK WELL • LOVE RIGHTLY • LIVE WISELY™



August 10, 2021

Dear Cambridge Family,

We hope this communication finds you and your family experiencing a measure of renewal as we approach the beginning of a new school year. There is a lot of excitement filling the halls of our campus as we watch the ongoing transformation of our facility, welcome new faculty and staff into the Cambridge vision, reconnect with those who've been on our team for years, and dream together as a leadership team of all that God will continue to do in our midst as we enter a new academic year. We are blessed to have such a mission-aligned and committed faculty and staff who genuinely delight in the good work which God has prepared in advance for us to do at The Cambridge School (Ephesians 2: 8-10).

And, we are equally blessed to have a wonderful community surrounding us amid all the challenges of the past 18 months. Thank you for the many ways you have encouraged, supported and prayed for us through this difficult season! For the diversity of opinions out there, one thing we all share in common is our heartfelt gratitude that the school was able to remain open and in person all through last year by God's grace.

Like many of you, we headed into the start of summer with encouraging signs of reopening all around us, optimistic that the worst of COVID was behind us and that masks would likely be optional for this upcoming school year. So, this most recent K-12 universal indoor mask mandate for all schools, public and private, was unexpected.

As you can imagine, there has been a lot of prayer, seeking counsel, and deliberation among the board and administration, and much intentionality about how we will launch this school year in light of the COVID pandemic's residual impact on society, especially as we are now confronted with complications from the Delta variant. After 18 months of this pandemic, we are all weary, and there is no shortage of opinions, both in our larger society and in our local school community.

Not surprisingly, parents, faculty, staff and board members, all of whom believe strongly in the values and mission of the school, have arrived at very different conclusions regarding the mission-impact of requiring masks indoors. Therefore, you can rest assured that the full spectrum of viewpoints on how mask requirements align or don't align with our mission was represented robustly and taken very seriously at every stage of our discussion around this issue over the past few weeks. The same is true with respect to "the science." Just as the wider scientific community includes respectable professionals who reach different conclusions on the relative merits of mask mandates, particularly for younger children, there are parents, faculty, staff and board members who fall on both sides of the issue.

That said, we do not have the privilege of making this decision based solely on what we as a school community would do were we allowed to make this decision for ourselves; the governing authorities have spoken clearly and loudly that all schools, public and private, must require masks indoors for all students and adults regardless of vaccination status for the time being. In fact, they have sent clear, direct, and forceful communication to private schools specifically stating that we do not have the authority to make masks optional. Therefore, this mandate must be weighed in the various reasons for and against requiring masks indoors.

The mandate brings two important considerations to the calculus that would not be present in the absence of the mandate: first, one of our biblical callings to respect authorities over us, and second, the possible consequences of not obeying the mandate.

Regarding the first point, we are not called to blindly follow all government mandates. However, as this one does not violate our core Christian principles, our calling as a school community to respect the governing authorities weighs in favor of complying with this particular mandate. Of course, as individuals in a representative government, you are welcome to voice your support or opposition to a particular policy to the appropriate authorities (which, as a reminder, is NOT the school).

As to the consequences, we have consulted with various professionals, legal and otherwise, whom we respect, and it is their clear counsel that failing to follow the mandate will expose the school to risks which threaten the long-term viability of the school. This is particularly true for a young, private Christian school with limited resources like ours—the very same school that you have come to love and so many have labored to build.

Therefore, the board, in consultation with administration, has decided that on balance, the right thing to do in this case is follow the current mandate. This decision was unanimous among the board and administration members, despite the personal misgivings of some about requiring masks. And, it was unanimous because we truly believe that it is in the best long-term interest of our school community to follow the current mandate for universal indoor masking. We understand that individual families may disagree and may reach a different conclusion as they weigh the relative risks differently. However, given that the government mandate is in place, all students across all grades and all adults in schools (both private and public) are required to wear a mask when indoors until further notice. We urge you to comply and we will consider accommodations on an individual basis to the extent allowable by law.

Please know that this decision was made with much anguish, lost sleep, and a desire to serve you well as those whom we deeply cherish along with your children. We also believe that these short-lived inconveniences will, in short order, fall under the heading of: this too shall pass! COVID school will one day be a distant memory and we, along with you, will long for that day—together.

In the meantime, the good news is that there has been a considerable loosening of COVID protocols in the following ways which should improve the student experience considerably:

1. **There is no longer any cohorting or physical distancing requirement.** For many of our students, this will allow them to interact with the broadest possible group of students to strengthen friendships in their larger classes and with students in other grades.
 - Recess: Students will be able to play with their friends from other classes and grades
 - House: We will be able to have many of our cherished house events
 - Lunch: Students can eat with friends from various classes and grades
2. **Masks are not required outside.** This will allow for that face-to-face interaction outside and a break from wearing a mask while indoors. **Masks are not required at:**
 - Drop-off and Pick-up
 - In the courtyard
 - At recess; At lunch
 - Moving from classroom to classroom outdoors
3. **Parents are welcome on campus for:**
 - Morning Time
 - Memory Time on Fridays
 - Feast Days
 - Class Plays
 - Bringing in birthday treats

4. **DrOwl symptom screening is no longer required.**

- Instead, we ask that you self-screen for symptoms at home

5. **Additionally, we should soon have the option for rapid COVID testing available onsite** to minimize possible quarantines, absences, and disruptions to learning.

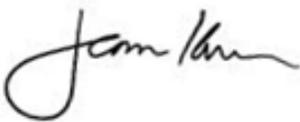
We will also continue additional cleaning, encourage frequent handwashing and good cough/sneeze etiquette, keep the additional handwashing and hand sanitizer stations throughout the school, etc.

We understand that this information may take some time for some of you to digest. We have simply had a head start in wrestling with these issues and processing them together. And, the intense process that we walked through together over the last several weeks might be likened to a furnace where the dross of our differences was submitted to the fires of intense prayer, consultation, and inquiry. What has emerged from the kiln is a unified board and administrative leadership team that firmly believes this is the best path forward for our community of faith and learning. We hope that you will join us as a unified community.

For those who have remaining concerns, we do understand. And, the place to respectfully bring those concerns is to our Assistant Head of School, Russ Kapusinski, as no one else on staff will be authorized to respond to communication around this topic during this busy time of year as we prepare to welcome your students back to school shortly. We hope to serve you in ways that you would deem helpful.

In closing, please remember this: the fact that people within our community who were applying and appealing to the same principles and values reached opposite conclusions about the best path forward should remind us to be humble and gracious to those with whom we disagree, even if we passionately believe in the truth of our position. We are all part of the larger Christian family, and as with most families, we don't always see eye-to-eye on everything. So, we ask that you please be gracious to everyone that is tasked with enforcing this mandate, and show them as much Christian charity as you are able for the sake of the greater, long-term good—our precious community and cherished mission of forming students to “think well, love rightly, and live wisely” for generations to come, beginning with your children here and now!

Soli Deo Gloria!



Jean Kim

Founder and Head of School

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and Administration