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Dear Brookline High School Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers,

I write with some important information as we begin hybrid schooling this Monday 11/9 at our 115 Greenough Street BHS location. While we continue to prepare for all facets of Monday's transition into hybrid (e.g., physical plant preparation, student training, curriculum and instruction planning, etc.), we are most excited to simply see and spend time in the company of students. BHS will look and feel different than usual, and yet it is the relationships between students and educators that most matter. Being in-person together, even within the constraints of a hybrid model, helps us build relationships and community. We look forward to building on the success of our mostly remote beginning, knowing this will be a mode within which students will continue to learn this year. All this to say: bring on the kids.

School Schedule

As promised, we have made slight adjustments to our remote learning schedule as we begin hybrid at 115 Greenough Street on Monday. Please find updated schedules for both ninth graders and tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders on the front page of our [BHS web-site](#). We previewed these schedules during Hub and Advisory yesterday (Friday 11/6) with all students in all grades. (I say more about our Advisory training below.) The changes are relatively minor: adding a second lunch period to increase safety and reducing the mask break period by five minutes in order to make time for the additional lunch and reduce time for students to gather.

Hal Mason and I will send this schedule to all students again on Sunday 11/8 in the late afternoon or early evening. These weekly communications will continue so that students know in advance about special schedules due to holidays and so that we, as high school leaders, are simply checking in with our most important clients: BHS youth. (We might also toss a TikTok or two out into the world...)

Hybrid Start at 115 Greenough Street for 10th-12th Graders: Monday 11/9

As mentioned, yesterday in ninth grade Hub and tenth through twelfth grade Advisory, students viewed, heard, and asked questions about a slidedeck devoted to changes to BHS given COVID-19 and our shift to hybrid. High school deans worked hard to develop this presentation with feedback from our OLS leadership team, nurses, and assorted staff.

We addressed the following general topics: staying home when feeling sick; proper wearing of masks; mask breaks and hand hygiene, travel through hallways and in stairwells; social distancing; staggered transitions between classes; eating and lunch; bathroom usage and breaks; student IDs; arrival and dismissal. This coming week we will have a strong administrative presence throughout the 115 location to support both our ninth graders as they experience cohorted travel (between OLS and 115 Greenough Street) and our tenth through twelfth graders. They will hear from us regular, consistent, and urgent messages about social distancing and staying safe via mask-wearing, hand hygiene, and various other routines and behaviors.

We need your help in emphasizing these messages. As you know, one of our school mantras focuses on the need to balance the freedom we provide with the responsibility we need and expect from our students. We ask that you discuss what this means in a hybrid model that depends on individual and collective responsibility so that we can sustain in-person learning. We need families to discuss how students will spend their free blocks, to avoid any gatherings during or after the school day or on weekends, and to understand that masks, social distancing, and hygiene are foundational health and safety expectations. Our experience with First to Return Students and Hybrid at OLS over the last two weeks tells us that students will struggle to remain socially distant and that we must persist in reminding, striking a balance of patience and impatience. We need also recognize that many students are simply starving for time with peers.

What Students Need to Bring to School

Given school will be different in many ways, we need students to come prepared with several items. We understand some of these asks will raise adolescent (and perhaps adult) eyebrows; we also firmly believe students should have all of these items when they come to school this week:

- two masks that include multiple layers of fabric (no gaiters, bandanas, balaclavas or valved masks);
- personal hand sanitizer;
- a charged chromebook or laptop and charger;
- headphones (with mics are preferred, if possible);
- a sit upon (a towel);
- and their course and school materials.

Breakfast and Lunch

Breakfast will be distributed in our school cafeteria beginning at 8:00. Students coming in for breakfast can pick up their breakfast and...

Lunch will be distributed in two locations at 115 Greenough. Students will pick up their lunch and take it outside to eat. Only in cases of serious inclement weather will we have designated indoor spaces for students to eat. We are asking students to bring a towel or other "sit upon" so that they have somewhere to sit outside. We know that not everyone is excited about being outside all the time for meals-- please understand that this is one of the most important parts of our safety plan-- when students have masks off to eat, everyone is safer being outside of the building. We know this will not be the case every day-- but for as many days as we can, we will have all meals eaten outside of the walls of the HS.

If you have not done so already please create an account and use the new Food Service Ordering app. Parents will need to set up an account at onlineordering.linq.com. Instructions are available on our website at <https://publicschoolsofbrooklineschoolnutrition.com>

Hybrid Start at 115 Means Beginning of Cohorted Travel

Now that our 115 Greenough Street will begin hybrid on Monday, our ninth graders will have a fuller, in-person elective, world language, and wellness education experience. For the past two weeks, ninth grade students have mostly been Zooming into their electives either from home or from our OLS Auditorium. To be clear, Performing Arts classes will continue to function in a remote format; this is firmly in line with DESE guidance. Individual performing arts teachers will reach out to their students regarding specific plans for classes next week: 11/9-13.

Within Hub yesterday, Advisors reviewed our Cohorted Travel Model. Because the town removed the bridge near White Place, students will now be supervised in their travel along Route 9, to Cypress, and then onto Tappan and our 115 Greenough Street campus. We are grateful to the Traffic Department for their support with Jersey barriers to protect students and to our Brookline Police Department for their crosswalk supervision and caretaking of our ninth graders.

Remote Staff Decisions and Communications

Over the last few weeks we have been working hard on our staffing plan in preparation for our transition to hybrid. This includes responding to requests by a small percentage of Old Lincoln School and 115 Greenough Street teachers and staff who need to work remotely for a variety of documented reasons. As a result, we will have some teachers and staff working remotely. These educators will reach out to parents and guardians to share information and plans. For the most part, we will supervise and support students who are connecting with their teachers via Zoom in our Schluntz Gymnasium. Students may also access such classes from home if that works best for them and for you as parents and guardians. Within the Schluntz there will be desks six feet apart, helpful adults, and access to bathrooms and plenty of hand sanitizer.

I recognize that having a small percentage of teachers working remotely on a part or full time basis will raise concerns for some, especially as hybrid prioritizes in-person learning. A few thoughts on this:

- We wanted and needed to retain our high quality educators and staff: excellent teachers and staff members are Brookline High School's not-so-secret sauce.
- Some of our courses must be remote to align with DESE guidance (e.g, Performing Arts).
- Teachers who are working remotely will find various ways to connect with and support their students. We will monitor how this is working and where we need to modify to best help kids engage and learn.

If students have questions or concerns about any of these arrangements, they should start, where possible, by checking in with their teacher. The next step would be to contact the relevant curriculum or program coordinator. Whether fully in-person, hybrid, or remote, our faculty, staff, and administration is committed to taking care of our students and teaching them well.

10th to 12th Grade Cohorts

As you likely know, our high school hybrid model features three cohorts of students: two hybrid cohorts and one remote cohort. Students and families received an email on Monday 11/2 indicating their hybrid cohort. This information is also available on the parent portal on the student detail page. The cohorts are balanced between “MT” (Monday/Tuesday) and “RF” (Thursday/Friday), along with the cohort of students remaining Remote. Almost all classes will operate with sections of 12 or fewer in-person students. Room assignments have been shifted to achieve the goal of keeping cohorts largely together.

Learning Models

It bears repeating that Brookline High School is not part of the district’s Remote Learning Academy. This approach made and makes great sense of our K-8 schools. At BHS, students who opt to learn remotely remain in our classes, with our teachers, and with their peers. A key component of our model is flexibility, both for students (and teachers) who temporarily need to stay home sick or quarantine and thus receive remote instruction with the same teachers in the the same classes, and to allow students more flexibly to move back into in-person instruction as conditions warrant and families become more comfortable with community conditions and safety precautions. I do not think we have made any of our jobs easier with this approach, and yet I believe it is right and best for students.

Back to School Night, Phase Two: Educator Videos on 11/12

Phase two of Back to School Night will happen this week on Thursday 11/12. This will be an asynchronous experience featuring videos teachers will make and send introducing themselves, discussing their courses, and sharing key information about student engagement and effort thus far and as we change to a hybrid model. We believe this approach best supports equity of access and consistent information-sharing. It is hard to write about Back to School Night as a remote experience given the energy, excitement, and enthusiasm our annual open house event generates. I will miss the in-person-ness of Back to School Night and hope we can return to this approach in 21-22.

Phase one of Back to School Night happened “way back” on Thursday 10/29, when Brookline High School leaders hosted a WebEx meeting for all parents, guardians, and caregivers where we shared information about our physical plant readiness, our health and safety practices and expectations, and our educational program as we shift to hybrid. A recording of this event is posted on the BHS website.

Okay, I need to write some more emails and then have some weekend. Thanks for your continued support of our students, faculty, staff, and administration. I am proud of and grateful for our school community’s efforts thus far and know there is plenty more work ahead for all of us.

Sincerely,
Anthony Meyer
Head of School