

Aug. 7, 2020

Dear Seven Hills Families,

As the beginning of the 2020-21 school year rapidly approaches, I write to make you aware of a couple of changes in our re-opening plans.

Hybrid Remote Learning Option/Sports and Extra-curriculars

After a good deal more discussion, we have decided that students who choose the Hybrid Remote Learning Option WILL be allowed to return to campus (or off-campus venues, where applicable) to participate in after-school athletics or extra-curricular activities. We have also extended the decision deadline. Any families who wish to choose the Remote Option should submit this form by Sunday, August 9 at 8:00 p.m.

To view and complete the form, log in to your my.7hills.org account and click School Forms Online from the upper navigation. The form can be accessed by clicking on a student's name.

Soft Opening for Our First Week Back (August 17 – 21)

For reasons that I hope will be self-evident, we have decided to do a "soft opening" for our first week back. Our hope is to give our students and you, their families, as well as our faculty and staff ample time to learn and adjust to all the new routines we have put in place for this year. In addition, we have just been informed of a slight, COVID-related delay in the delivery of some of our desk shields, which are an important part of our safety plan. We will have all of those we need for our Lower School classrooms in plenty of time, but the 1200 or so we have ordered for the Middle and Upper Schools will not arrive until August 17.

Accordingly, we have developed the following schedule for the soft opening.

The orientation for new families will occur as scheduled on **Monday, August 17**. See the [new family orientation schedule](#).

1. In our **Lower Schools**, Doherty and Lotspeich, for the first two days (August 18 and 19), we will **reduce the size of classroom cohorts**. Students with last names beginning with A through M will have their orientation on Tuesday, August 18. Those with last names between N and Z will come on Wednesday, August 19. Thursday, August 20 will be the first day with all in-person students on campus. This schedule will give all of our students and their families a chance to learn and adjust to new routines for drop-off, temperature screening, mask wearing, social distancing, handwashing, lunch, pick up, and aftercare, where applicable.

2. In the **Middle and Upper Schools**, we will begin, for the first four days (August 18-21), **in remote learning mode**. Students will be at home, and we will provide all of the divisional, grade level, and classroom orientation with which we normally begin our school year through videoconferences. For the first hour of each day (8:20-9:20), we will provide orientation, over ZOOM, by grade-level and/or by advisory. This will give us a chance to set the tone for the new year, introduce the new students and teachers, and review all the usual beginning-of-the-year routines. It will also provide ample time to walk students through all of the new safety protocols and answer their questions.

For the rest of the day, we will run abbreviated classes over ZOOM, using the Swivl technology. This will give teachers a chance to orient their students to all of their classroom routines, course goals, and expectations for the year. It will also enable all of our students an opportunity to experience remote learning and to see how it will feel if we have to pivot to it at some point this year. A schedule for the opening four days is [here](#). Athletic practices and games (if permitted) WILL run during this opening week.

iPad Distribution

To prepare for this remote soft opening in Middle and Upper School and to assist those families in the Lower Schools who have chosen the hybrid remote option, we will need to distribute iPads to all students in grades 6-12 and to those in grades 1-5 who will be attending remotely. You can pick up your child(ren)'s iPad(s) next week at the following times/locations: Upper School students:

Upper School carline (8:00-10:00 a.m.)

Middle School students: Middle School carline (8:00-10:00 a.m.)

Doherty/Lotspeich students (Gr. 1-5): divisional office (9:00 to 11:00 a.m.)

Finally, as promised in my note last week, I have also included the link to [Stay Safe 7Hills](#), a new page we have created on the website to consolidate the information we have sent you over the summer.

It was nice to see so many of you at the divisional ZOOM meetings on Wednesday and Thursday. I hope that those meetings, the divisional reopening booklets, and the new website page will help clarify all the new procedures we have put in place.

I apologize for any inconvenience caused by this change in the opening week schedule, but with so much at stake, we want to give our teachers, our families, and most of all, our students ample time to get comfortable with these new routines. In the long run we believe this will make for a much smoother transition back to school.

This will be, it is already clear, a highly unusual school year. It will call for patience and flexibility on everyone's part. On behalf of our faculty and staff, I want to express our appreciation for your support and understanding as we try to provide a rich and engaging educational experience under these challenging - and constantly shifting - conditions.

I look forward to seeing you soon and wish you and your children a great school year.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Garten". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

Christopher P. Garten,
Head of School