



August 25, 2021

Dear Families,

I hope that you have thoroughly enjoyed your summer with family and friends, explored new adventures, learned something new, and spent quality time in a familiar or new place. I have enjoyed all of the above and am especially grateful for the time I spent with family, including my soon to be 80-year-old father and friends on Martha's Vineyard, one of New England's summer jewels—vibrant sunshine, sand, and beaches.

To kick off this new school year, I pause and salute you - our families - for your unwavering commitment to entrusting us to provide your child(ren) with equitable high-quality teaching and learning experiences each and every day especially during an unprecedented 20-21 school year due the COVID-19 Pandemic. We greatly appreciate your continued and unparalleled flexibility, agility, and grace as we get ready to navigate through yet another school year with COVID-19.

As such, we are busy preparing for full-time in-person school for all PreK-12 students, starting [Tuesday, September 7, 2021](#). As you might imagine, we will resume in-person learning while adhering to a comprehensive set of critical health and safety requirements as we firmly believe that "students benefit from in-person learning, and safely returning to in-person instruction is a priority" (CDC). As such, this year we'll continue to follow the [CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Schools](#) as we safely reopen PHA.

In this update, we attach for you the following information:

- PHA's Restorative Reopening [Multi-Layered COVID Safety Approach](#)
- PHA Restorative Reopening [Back to School COVID-19 FAQs](#)

Vaccination Information

As you may know, the CDC suggests concurrently implementing layered or multiple prevention strategies to protect the unvaccinated, including teachers, staff, and other members of their

household. In an abundance of caution and care for our younger students, [we have required all of PHA faculty and staff to be vaccinated or participate in mandatory twice-weekly COVID testing](#). Our faculty and staff have eagerly provided their vaccination cards and, as of today, [nearly 75% are fully vaccinated](#). We are grateful for the immense care for self and members of our school community. Yet, our community is still at-risk until we can achieve increased vaccination rates for our students over the age of 12, of whom only about 15% are currently vaccinated.

The American Academy of Pediatrics urges that all eligible individuals [\(anyone 12 years or older\)](#) receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Please be reminded that children 12 years and older are able to get the [Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine](#).

Below please find information on Somerville and Cambridge COVID vaccination sites. You do not need to be a resident of those cities to access vaccination.

- [Click here](#) for walk-in vaccination clinics in Somerville.
- [Click here](#) for walk-in vaccination clinics in Cambridge.

Widespread vaccination is a critical tool to increase herd immunity, to help STOP the pandemic and protect individuals from long-COVID, hospitalizations and/or deaths. Research shows that 99% of COVID-19 deaths are now occurring in unvaccinated people. It should also be noted that Black/Brown people, and in particular African Americans/Blacks, have the lowest percentage of vaccination in the country (approximately 40%).

As you may know, there remains [serious concern about this low vaccination rate](#). The data shows that there's significant hesitancy/refusal with the vaccine particularly in the Black/Brown communities and African American/Blacks who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. If you are still hesitant about the vaccine, I kindly invite and strongly urge you to watch the [This is a Serious Matter: Vaccine and Variants Issues and Questions Virtual Town Hall](#) from last evening, Tuesday, August 24, 2021, that was produced by and with my Sorority Sisters of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., moderated by Star Jones and featuring a panel of esteemed nationally renowned black women physicians: Dr. Patrice Harris, Dr. Ala Stanford, Dr. Sharrelle Barber, and Dr. Robyn Jones. These Black Physicians provide a snapshot of ongoing vaccine efficacy as well as real world information on vaccine effectiveness and, further, dispel many myths and conspiracy theories.

The uncertainty of this global pandemic along with its rapid changes and requirement of continuous pivots means that our plans and preparations are subject to change. The CDC guidance requires local governments to continue monitoring community transmission rates,

vaccination coverage, testing, and outbreaks to help them make decisions on the level of layered prevention strategies. We will continue to update you in a timely manner as new information emerges from the state and local departments of Public Health that may impact our community. Regular messages to staff and families will be sent via email and made available on our [district website](#).

Meanwhile, know that we are eagerly awaiting the arrival of new and returning students to the Prospect Hill Academy School for an incredibly exciting year of working, learning and growing together. We can't wait to see our gems, on [Tuesday, September 7th](#).

Sincerely,

Angela

Angela F. Allen, Ph.D.
Head of School