



Dear St. Michael's Parents and Families,

Today marks the end of the first week of the 2020-2021 academic year at St. Michael's. We give thanks to all of you, our families, and to our dedicated and hardworking teachers for a successful start to the year. Your sons and daughters are very happy to be back, despite the challenges of doing so virtually. We are very happy to be with them again.

Our planning group met this past week, as we do each week, to review the local County and statewide data trends with COVID and the implications for a return to campus. At present, the current trajectory of the virus locally, if it continues as such, bodes well for initiating our hybrid mode of learning (i.e., students at home and students on campus) on Monday, September 14. If these trends get significantly worse prior to the scheduled hybrid start, or at any time this year, then we will move to, or stay in, distance-learning mode until it is reasonably safe to return to campus. In the case of any change to our academic schedule, I will notify families immediately by email.

In the interest of continued transparency with our decision-making, there are three measures that we continue to monitor closely each week. These metrics help us assess the presence of the virus locally and, therefore, the respective likelihood of its transmission on campus: the number of reported cases in the County, the rate of positivity in the County, and the rate of transmission in the State (R_T is not available at the County level). Hospital capacity is another strong indicator of how well, or not, the community is managing the pandemic, and this is another data point for us to consider as well. This final data point, hospital capacity locally, is also trending in the right direction at present, another point of good news.

With regard to these more recent COVID-data trends, Arizona currently has the second lowest transmission rate in the U.S., at .83, and new cases in the State are falling. This is good news. There are still, however, a high number of COVID-positive tests each week in Pima County, despite a more recent downward trend statewide as well. For St. Michael's to re-open under acceptably safe conditions for hybrid learning, we are looking for new overall COVID cases in the County to remain on a stable downward trend for two consecutive weeks (or for overall cases to be at or under 100/100,000 for two consecutive weeks), a rate of positivity at or below 7%, and a statewide rate of transmission between .50 and .70, or better.

Here is a summary of these same key data points from the **most recent, completed** data from Pima County:

Benchmark	Reasonable Return Range	Current Status
Cases in County (Time)	Two weeks of decline	One week of decline, to date
Cases in County (Numbers)	$\leq 15/100,000$ for two weeks	14/100,000
Test Positivity	Between 5-7%	9.1%
Transmission Rate	$\leq .70$.83

No single metric drives our decisions. The composite trajectory, or the community trend as a whole, is most important to us. The Covid Management Plan that we have in place is comprehensive and tailored very well to the St. Michael's community, but high levels of community spread from beyond our own four walls can and eventually will overwhelm the best of plans.

Trends around the country and the world have also shown us the costs of re-opening too early and the ensuing wisdom of waiting for sustainable control community-wide. For a reasonably safe return to campus, we want to see, as the Pima County Health Department and the experts in our planning group strongly recommend, these data points continuing to show a stable downward trend. There is no scenario in which we or any other school, anywhere, can consider a no-risk scenario for a return to campus at any time this academic year; we are working to ensure minimal risk and minimal spread.

With all due respect for the decisions that other local public and independent schools have made for themselves, I firmly believe that we are doing the right thing for the short- and long-term health and safety of the students, teachers, and families in our care. We have some of the best scientific and medical minds available within the St. Michael's community, and the within the broader community of COVID research and practice, working with us to assure, as best we can, this long-term goal of keeping everyone healthy. I am very grateful for their tireless service to the school community.

As a final note for now, please keep an eye on your email on Monday of this coming week for a message from Tracy Holsinger, our Director of Communication, regarding your family's decision for your child / children for the scheduled September 14 hybrid start.

With all good wishes for a restful weekend,

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