



9/12/2020

Dear St. Michael's Parents and Families,

Our medical planning group, administrative team, and Board of Trustees met separately this past week to review the current Covid data in Pima County and to subsequently support the decision to open in hybrid mode beginning this coming Monday, September 14. Given the current trends with the key health metrics that we have been monitoring for months—number of cases, rate of positivity with testing, hospital capacity—the County is currently 'in the green,' signifying it is reasonably safe to proceed with hybrid learning.

With this decision we have also taken into account, as I noted last week, the recent recommendation from the Pima County Health Department (PCHD) encouraging schools to wait to open in hybrid, anticipating a significant spike in cases from Labor Day and the return to campus three weeks ago at the University of Arizona. At the same time, again as I noted in last week's email, we are implementing a comprehensive plan founded on proven mitigation practices and designed on a scale far more manageable than that of a large school system. Mrs. Erika Huff, R.N., our school nurse and point of contact with the PCHD, continues to engage in conversation weekly with County health officials, who know we are opening in hybrid mode this coming week and have in hand a working copy of our mitigation plan as well. As the year proceeds we will continue to practice this same transparency and open communication with the County for any and all Covid concerns in the St. Michael's community.

We remain consistent with our decisions to keep the health and safety of all within our care as the first priority. This means that our planning group and the medical professionals helping to guide our decisions will continue to meet weekly to monitor the same public-health markers. The St. Michael's community—staff and faculty, families and students—needs to be prepared to transition back to distance learning when Covid in the broader community begins to rise again to unsafe levels. As we have since March, we will provide as much advanced notice as possible when a transition from one mode to another is warranted. **Please note that a transition from one mode to another at any time will also require a 1-2 day interim, without scheduled classes, in order for our faculty to prepare learning materials and to adjust their instructional planning.**

In initiating our hybrid program this coming Monday, September 14, we will be conducting in-person classes on campus (for approximately 75% of students across K-8) and continuing with distance learning at the same time for students who have chosen to remain at home (for the other 25% of students). This is an enormously complex process for our faculty and staff, and I urge patience on everyone's part as we transition into this new hybrid mode, a first-time effort for St. Michael's School.

Our faculty are expected to adhere to and monitor the required mitigation measures for themselves and for their students at all times of the day, to prepare curriculum, to deliver engaging instruction, to assess for learning, and to effectively integrate and engage with two student groups in two different places at the same time. With these already complex demands on our faculty this year, they are of course also managing their own lives at home with their own families. At every opportunity you have, I ask that you recognize the enormous care and effort our faculty have made and are making with teaching and learning this year and offer your own gestures of gratitude.

In place of a video for families to explain the key logistics and requirements for this transition on Monday, our two division directors—in their separate emails to Lower and Upper School families—have, or will have, presented the most important details to get us started on Monday. We will have plenty of staff on hand as well on Monday to help answer questions.

Campus Health and Safety Reminders

1. Staying Home When Sick. Among the essential practices for minimizing and reducing the potential spread of the Covid-19 virus, as with all contagious diseases, is staying home when one is ill or when one is exhibiting any signs or symptoms of an illness. Please review the most recent SMS Covid Management Plan, attached, especially the section titled “Campus Health and Safety Measures,” beginning on page 11.

2. Daily Health Screening. Primary screening will start at home by parents and caregivers who know their child/children the best. Families should not send their children to school if they exhibit any Covid-like symptoms. We require families to screen their children daily for symptoms of Covid prior to leaving for school. We are relying on parents and families to be vigilant about any symptoms with their children. Nurse Huff is also preparing an electronic, web-based screening portal for families to begin to use within the next two weeks. Please notify Nurse Huff immediately in the event that your son or daughter exhibits Covid-like symptoms and / or if there is an exposure or confirmed case within the household.

3. Masks Are Required. An approved cloth mask or disposable surgical mask is mandatory for all students and staff on campus during the school day. Gator-style face masks are not permitted. Please review the most recent SMS Covid Management Plan, attached, especially the section titled “Campus Health and Safety Measures,” beginning on page 11.

4. Campus Access. As with all of our health and safety measures, limiting campus access only to employees will help limit the spread of Covid-19. As noted elsewhere, parents or anyone else will not be allowed to enter campus beyond the courtyard security gates. For all in-person inquiries, please go directly to the main office. Please review the most recent SMS Covid Management Plan, attached, especially the section titled “Campus Health and Safety Measures,” beginning on page 11.

5. Lunch, Snacks, and Allergy Awareness. Beyond Covid, we have a number of students in K-8 who have a variety of allergies, some mild and others life-threatening. Food allergies, peanuts and tree nuts in particular, present the most concern for us. It is with this same health concern in mind that we respectfully ask you to refrain from sending foods containing peanuts or tree nuts (e.g., almonds, walnuts, pecans, pistachio, etc.). For those classrooms with students who have a severe food allergy, Nurse Huff will work with the respective classroom teachers and students for increased protocols and safety measures.

Sincerely,
Brendan Sullivan
Head of School
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