



9/5/2020

Dear St. Michael's Parents and Families,

Thank you for your ongoing patience and support during these four weeks of distance learning. Please note that we will resume distance learning, as scheduled, this coming Tuesday, September 8, after the three-day Labor Day weekend. **There will be no classes this coming Monday, September 7.**

**We are preparing at present to transition to hybrid learning (students at home, students on campus) for Monday, September 14. For the 30 families who have yet to confirm your decision—whether to return to classes on campus on the 14th, or to continue with distance learning at home on the 14th—please do so as soon as possible.**

Our Planning Group met this past Tuesday to review the most recent County health data, and the key trends that I communicated to the school community last week (County cases, rate of positivity with Covid testing, hospital capacity, among others) have been reported in the 'green,' signifying it is reasonably safe to proceed with hybrid learning.

At the same time there has been growing concern over the potential for a Covid outbreak at the University of Arizona, now that the university has welcomed students back to campus. There have already been a number of reported cases connected to the university, as many as 126 on a single day this past week. The Pima County Health Department has since issued a note of subsequent caution about a return to in-person learning for schools in Tucson, anticipating that the impact of Covid spread at the U of A could push those health markers for the County back into the red. We, too, are monitoring very carefully what happens with the U of A, with the help and guidance of the doctors and medical experts in our planning group.

It was with concern for this same potential scenario at the U of A that the Chief Medical Officer and Deputy County Administrator, Dr. Francisco Garcia, recommended that County schools delay their plans for a hybrid return until they can effectively measure the impact. Dr. Garcia's recommendation is certainly justifiable when considering opening large, highly complex school systems. St. Michael's strengths in this regard, however, remain exactly what they are—a hybrid model with some students choosing to learn from home and some on campus, excellent facility support, and a strong and comprehensive mitigation plan with required masking and distancing. While Covid levels in Pima County, or any county, could be relatively high, prescribed mitigation measures for individuals and for communities have proven highly effective.

We know mitigation works. With more consistent community-wide mitigation efforts this past month, Pima County is now at 6 cases daily for every 100,000 population, down from 14 just a week ago and well below the one-hundred (100) high-end threshold mark the County defined last month. This data point alone represents a remarkable improvement and a reason to be hopeful that Covid trends locally will continue to improve.

We continue to apply expert experience and advice, diligence, and rigor with these critical decisions, keeping the health and safety of all within our care at the forefront. And in any given week, we understand, and remind all of you as well, that our plans are subject to change. For now, unless the recommendation of the medical experts in our planning group change or our Board of Trustees recommends a different course of action within this coming week, we are proceeding with our scheduled hybrid start on Monday, September 14.

As we look to the 14th, please note the following:

- We will welcome our Kindergarten and First Grade students to campus two days early, this coming Thursday and Friday, September 10 and 11. Please see the attached letter from Ms. Hart, our Lower School Director, with an overview of these plans for K and 1.
- With the help of our admin team, I will provide a video for all families with an overview and important reminders for the hybrid start, including campus-wide health and safety requirements, drop-off and pick-up procedures, guidelines for PE, music, band, and choir, and recess and lunch routines.

All good wishes to everyone for a safe and restful Labor Day weekend,

Sincerely,  
Brendan Sullivan  
Head of School  
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