



11/8/2020

Dear St. Michael's Parents and Families,

Please read this email in its entirety, as it contains important COVID updates and subsequent decisions—both tentative and confirmed decisions—impacting the upcoming Thanksgiving and Christmas breaks.

First, I hope all of you are enjoying this beautiful—and most assuredly cooler—three-day weekend. **Tomorrow, Monday, November 9**, is a scheduled planning and prep day for faculty, for the end of the first academic trimester. Classes will resume, and the second academic trimester begins, on **Tuesday, November 10**. Please review the email communications from our division directors, Mandy Hart and Alex Hawes, for details regarding first-trimester academic reports and other grade- and division-specific information.

As the first trimester ends and the next begins, I give great thanks, again, to our teaching faculty for their commitment and care during these past seven weeks of hybrid learning. And I am equally grateful to all of you and to your sons and daughters for being so conscientious about and committed to the health and safety of all within the St. Michael's community, on campus and at home.

COVID Updates and Concerns

As all of you know, we continue to monitor on a daily basis and to meet weekly to discuss COVID concerns. This past week, our review of current and anticipated regional and local trends, along with anecdotal reports from our medical experts about the beginnings of a surge in COVID-related hospitalizations, have generated enough concern for us to look more closely at these next two weeks before break, and beyond.

Daily COVID cases in the U.S. have now exceeded 100,000, and in the State of Arizona the number of cases continues to rise as the rate of transmission has now surpassed the 1.0 mark (~1.2). According to the recent summary report from the Zuckerman College of Public Health at the U of A, community-driven viral transmission statewide is now equivalent to that seen during the last week of May 2020 (4,800 weekly cases) when Arizona was only four weeks away from its summer peak (27,800 weekly cases).

Furthermore, since last week case numbers per 100,000 and test-positivity rate in Pima County—two of the four primary indicators we have been tracking on a daily basis at the local level—have also moved from the green (good) into the yellow (caution), reasonably safe for us to continue in hybrid mode for the coming week though a worsening trend for sure in Pima County.

TENTATIVE Shift to Distance Learning for the Week of November 16-20

Given these steady upward trends with COVID in Pima County at present and the consequent health recommendation from the medical experts in our planning group, **there is a possibility that we will shift to distance learning for all students in K-8 prior to the start of the Thanksgiving break in two weeks.**

For this coming week, November 10-13, we will continue in hybrid mode and meet again with our medical experts this coming Thursday—or earlier, as needed—to assess COVID health and safety in Pima County for the following week in question, November 16-20.

It is our hope, as I have emphasized before, that we can safely continue in hybrid mode through the start of the Thanksgiving break on Friday, November 20. To that end, I will communicate on Thursday of this coming week, if not before, the decision for this final week in question before break. If we do transition to online for all students prior to the Thanksgiving break, the tentative date for coming to campus for learning materials will be Monday, November 16.

CONFIRMED Shift to Distance Learning for the Weeks of November 30-December 18

Given these same concerns, which the medical experts in our planning group anticipate will continue to grow over the next two months, **we have since decided to shift to distance learning only for all students in K-8 for the three-week interim between Thanksgiving and Christmas, November 30-December 18.**

With the potential shift to distance learning before the break and a confirmed shift for the three-week interim between Thanksgiving and Christmas, I encourage families to begin exploring childcare options for those weeks, November 16-20 (tentative) and November 30-December 18 (confirmed).

COVID Testing and Upcoming Holidays

The City of Tucson and Pima County continue to provide cost-free, efficient, and effective COVID testing for residents; you can locate sites and schedule an appointment [here](#). With the upcoming holidays and likelihood of travel and wider social interaction, we strongly encourage families to do voluntary COVID testing, especially as we look ahead to a return to campus after the Thanksgiving and Christmas breaks and the New Year, in early January.

I do not take lightly any of these decisions about interim transitions back to distance learning. The complexities in doing so are enormous, for all of you at home and for our teachers. Our continued health and safety remains my priority, our priority, above all; I will continue to embrace fully our professional and ethical responsibility to first protect the health and safety of our students, faculty, staff, and families.

Thank you for your continued understanding and patience, and for your love and care for the students, staff, and families of St. Michael's.

Sincerely,
Brendan Sullivan
Head of School
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