



SAINT ANN'S SCHOOL

Vincent Tompkins
Head of School

October 2, 2020

Dear Families, Faculty and Staff,

On my way through the Bosworth Building Lobby at midday I came upon a high school strings ensemble in a noontime class. The simple pleasure of pausing for a moment to listen was profound, at the end of a week in which both the transcendence of art and the reassurance of norms, routines, and rituals were sorely needed. I want to share several things with you in this weekly update.

Health and Safety

Reminders

I want to encourage everyone to keep up the work and remain vigilant and consistent in following critical health and safety procedures. Complacency is our enemy. We must keep wearing our masks, distancing from one another, washing our hands, staying home if we're sick and keeping school nurses (nurses@saintannsny.org) informed of any symptoms. **We are also asking that everyone fill out the daily Ruvna self-screening regardless of whether you (or your child) are coming to school in person or not so that we can monitor attendance and symptoms within the full community.**

City Positivity Rate and School Closure Decisions

We continue to follow available public health data and consult with a working group of medical professionals from our parent community for guidance on how those data should best inform our policies. We are closely monitoring this week's news of rising Covid-19 rates in twenty-one New York City ZIP codes. At this point we remain hopeful that the measures public health authorities are implementing in the most severely affected communities will contain these outbreaks, and that Saint Ann's can stay the course to remain open with our strict health and safety protocols in place.

The metric that we are monitoring most closely—in addition to the data that we report to the DOH each week on test results from within the school—is the rolling seven-day average test positivity rate in New York City. The City's announced policy is to close public schools if that rate rises above 3%. As of 10/1, the seven-day rolling average for the city is 1%. We have seen this week how that overall rate (and even more so the daily positivity rate) can be distorted by what is occurring in distinct areas of the city, but we also know how quickly the virus can spread. Having reopened successfully with firm safety protocols, in addition to seriously considering the City's position vis a vis public schools, we will continue to solicit guidance from our medical advisory group (with whom we met last evening), and the state and city Departments of Health before making any final determination to go fully remote. Ultimately I view this decision as a judgement call about what is in the best interest of the Saint Ann's community, one informed by the best possible data from both our school and the wider NYC community along with guidance from experienced medical and public health professionals. A rising test positivity rate is always a cause for serious attention and could necessitate additional safety protocols because of heightened risk for our community.

This Week's Numbers

We have updated the [dashboard](#) on the Parent Portal with this week's numbers. We do have one situation to report to the full community this week.

A student in the kindergarten who had been self-quarantining with their family since the evening of September 23rd because a sibling had been presenting with symptoms associated with COVID-19 went for a PCR test on September 26. While awaiting the results of the PCR test, the family decided to get a rapid antigen test on September 28. The antigen test came back positive for COVID-19 but



was quickly followed by the results of the original PCR test, which were negative. A second antigen test and a second PCR test both came back negative. We received the results of the second PCR test yesterday afternoon. (The child's sibling has also since received negative PCR and antigen tests.) The Department of Health is currently evaluating the likelihood that the first result received was a false positive and they are in contact with Saint Ann's. We expect to have more information in the coming days. In the interim we are following DOH protocols in reporting this as a positive case. We will update our data to reflect any changes as needed.

No one at school was in close contact with the child during the period of potential contagion and the student will complete the full quarantine period before returning to school, so the situation did not require additional quarantine for any other students or employees. Saint Ann's notified families in the class and reported the positive antigen test to New York State as required. We have included it in the confirmed case numbers on our dashboard for full transparency. We want our community to have all of the information. Thank you for respecting the privacy of all Saint Ann's community members, and for helping us to reinforce that Saint Ann's does not tolerate bullying or stigmatization based on actual or perceived health status.

Testing

Our physicians group has advised us to actively monitor the rapidly evolving landscape of testing options for routine surveillance testing and pool testing. All options remain under active consideration and any decision to shift our testing policies will be informed by expert guidance on their efficacy, sustainability, and reliability, and by information that my colleagues and I continue to gather about the experience of other schools that have testing regimes of various kinds in place.

COVID Alert NY Contact Tracing App

Earlier this week New York State released a contact tracing mobile phone app that will alert users if they were in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19, allowing them to self-quarantine immediately, get tested and reduce the potential exposure risk. To learn more and download the app visit: <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-alert-ny/>.

Travel

During this season of long holiday weekends we want to remind everyone about our policy on travel and coming to school in person. Students or employees returning from travel to any countries or states on the [NYS restricted travel list](#) must complete the 14-day quarantine before entering any school building.

Wishing all of you a safe and healthy weekend!

Love,