



SAINT ANN'S SCHOOL

Vincent Tompkins
Head of School

November 13, 2020

Dear Saint Ann's Community,

This week, the seven-day average Covid-19 test positivity rate in the city continued to rise and New York state imposed new restrictions on bars, restaurants, and gyms. We are closely monitoring this unsettling rise in Covid-19 rates, and we are aware that the mayor is considering a potentially imminent closure of NYC public schools as the overall New York City positivity rate climbs towards 3%. While the mayor's decision would apply only to public schools, we are actively planning for any possible effects on Saint Ann's—either as a result of further action by the mayor or the governor, a potential increase in percentage positive cases citywide, or as a result of a potential positive case at the school that might require all or some students to shift to fully-remote for a period of time. Even with our collective best efforts we must all be prepared for the possibility that circumstances beyond our control may necessitate partial or full school closure on short notice.

City Positivity Rate, School Monitoring and Closure Decisions

If the overall New York City seven-day-average positivity rate were to climb above 3% we would take it as a very serious indicator of a worsening situation and would evaluate all options in consultation with our public health and medical advisory group. However, in the absence of a mandate or specific guidance from the NYC Department of Health, a citywide 3% positivity rate would NOT in and of itself trigger an automatic transition to fully remote instruction at Saint Ann's.

School Monitoring & Pool Testing

[Recent research](#) suggests that positivity rates in schools have been extremely low, that schools with appropriate safety protocols in place are not common sites of viral transmission, and that keeping schools open is in the best interest of both young children and adolescents. We have not yet recorded a confirmed case of Covid-19 among students or employees this fall. We have, however, experienced an increase in recent days in members of our community reporting contact with someone outside the school community who subsequently received a positive Covid test. It remains vital that this information be shared with our school nurses immediately, and I am grateful to those who have done so for their cooperation in following the school's notification, quarantine, and testing protocols. Our surveillance testing program has added one more early warning system that will help us to quickly identify any outbreaks and implement a quarantine of any close contacts—as some other schools have already done successfully this fall—should that be necessary.

Ultimately any decision requiring the school to revert to fully-remote for some or all of our students for limited or extended periods of time will be a judgement call about what is in the best interest of students, faculty and staff, one informed by the best possible data along with guidance from medical and public health professionals. Our goal is to sustain in-person learning for as long as we can do so safely. We will continue to gather and analyze data from a broad range of sources in our ongoing evaluation and planning so that we can make decisions that are in the best interest of Saint Ann's.

I would urge everyone over the coming weeks to be mindful of how the behavior of each of us affects the



well-being of all of us. Decisions around holiday travel, indoor dining, small or large indoor gatherings with individuals outside one's immediate household, and diligence in completing the daily health screening and returning your saliva test kit when your turn comes will directly affect how long we can safely remain open.

Given the rising positivity rate, everyone's continued cooperation with our surveillance testing program remains critical. We absolutely understand this process can be challenging for young children. Thank you all for your best efforts. A few reminders:

- **Please fill the tube all the way rather than to the halfway point.**
- Parents, if you have not yet filled out the [testing consent form](#) via the Parent Portal please do so at your earliest convenience.
- We will not be reporting separately on weekly surveillance testing. The data on any confirmed individual positive cases that we discover through this process will be incorporated into our existing data dashboard. If there are no cases listed on the dashboard, there were no cases discovered during pool testing.

Travel Survey and Post-Holiday Planning Update

Thank you all for filling out our travel plans survey last week.

- Since our community has limited plans for travel during the Thanksgiving break, we plan to open school for in-person instruction the week of November 30, assuming public health metrics permit. Anyone returning from travel is expected to follow the NY state travel advisory protocols.
- We plan to move from two to four days of in-person instruction per week in the Lower School as soon as November 30, unless the public health situation makes this inadvisable. In order to do so while meeting social distancing and reduced density requirements, some Lower School classes will move to the Bosworth Building. While this will increase the number of people in the Bosworth Building on any given day, we have taken steps to ensure we can still follow all of our existing health and safety protocols.
- We continue to plan for the period following winter break and hope to have an update for you next week.
- **We expect all students and employees to [follow quarantine and testing protocols as mandated by the New York state](#), and urge everyone to avoid indoor gatherings and other activities that could put the health of the entire community at risk.**

This Week's Numbers

We have no cases of Covid-19 among employees or students to report to you this week. We have updated the [data dashboard](#).

Have a safe and healthy weekend.

Yours,