



Dear Episcopal Collegiate School Community,

As we prepare to return to school next week, I have some updates for you as well as a few important reminders. Our senior administrative team is actively monitoring the number of cases reported to us from within our community as well as the overall number of cases that are being identified in the broader Little Rock area. As I noted in my email last week, we experienced an uptick in cases at the very end of the semester. We have also had a couple of more cases since that time. We will know more about the status of the Episcopal community in the coming days.

In addition, we met with our medical advisory group on Monday night. As many of you already know, Little Rock is experiencing a surge in infections. In fact, most states in the US are experiencing a high number of Covid-19 cases. It is the consensus of our medical advisory group as well as other national experts that some of the leading spreaders of the virus are family and social gatherings. Because of the length of the Christmas and New Year holiday season, it is likely that these types of gatherings will continue to fuel the rise in our local community. Coupled with the possibility of family travel, the opportunities for virus transmission are considerable. It is also important to note that the full impact of transmission arising during the holiday break may not be known for several weeks.

Given the higher rates of exposure that we are currently experiencing in the Little Rock community, it is prudent and reasonable that we all take steps to help our school community navigate these challenging times. Consistent with recommended guidelines, we ask that your family:

- **Limit** exposure to groups, socialize outside and at a distance, stay a safe distance from others (especially while eating and drinking), wear your mask, and practice frequent hand hygiene.
- **Notify** your child's Division Head and Nurse Hopkins of exposures and positive test results. You can easily do that with our [COVID-19 Reporting Form](#) or email. The School will keep the Active Case Dashboard updated, so it is essential that you use the form to notify us so we can continue to be aware of infections, exposures, and quarantines within our community.

- **Stay** at home if anyone in your immediate household is experiencing Covid-19 like symptoms and remain at home until there is medical determination as to the likely cause of the symptom(s). Please let the School know of these type situations.
- **Go virtual** next week if your plans over the holidays will (or have) resulted in social gathering and/or travel exposure that significantly increases the possibility of infection. Go virtual if you believe it is in your child's best interest for health and safety reasons. Please alert your child's Division Head by Monday, January 4 if you wish to take advantage of this opportunity. (Typically, we have asked families to commit to two weeks of virtual instruction, but in this case, we will gladly have families choose to go virtual for the first week of the second semester (January 5-8).)
- **Follow** CDC guidelines when you return from a trip. These guidelines include getting tested with a PCR test 3-5 days after your trip and reducing non-essential activities for a full 7 days after travel, even if your test is negative. If you don't get tested, consider reducing non-essential activities for 10 days after travel. You can follow this [link](#) for access to the guidelines.
- **Keep** current on the Episcopal Collegiate School community by reviewing periodically the [Community Health Updates](#) information on the School's website.

Our plan to start the second semester on January 5 (January 6 for Upper School students) on campus remains in place. The decision to begin the semester with in-person learning could still change, however, based on what happens to the level of infection rates in our school community between now and then. Although we have confidence in our on-campus mitigation strategies, a meaningful outbreak of active cases in our school community could potentially jeopardize in-person learning. As a result, we believe it is prudent for all of us to be prepared for either in-person or remote learning.

We thank you in advance for your support and your commitment to these basic yet essential community health guidelines and responsibilities. We look forward to welcoming our students back to campus next week.

Sincerely,

Steve Hickman
Interim Head of School