



National Blue Ribbon School
since 2012

A Special Announcement Regarding Covid-19 Cases in the ICS Community

Dear Immaculata Community,

Thank you for all you have done to keep the school moving forward this past week. After six full weeks in school, our community is beginning to see the impact of a return to in-person learning at full capacity. With a return to in-person education comes the increased risk that our students and families may contract Covid-19, and many of our families are living in that reality this week.

At least fifty of our students either remained home or were sent home this week as they were exhibiting potential Covid-19 symptoms. And though the vast majority of these students tested negative and were able to return to school, a small number tested positive for Covid-19. In a small, but significant number of these cases, students were either fully asymptomatic or were experiencing very mild symptoms such as a light headache or mild fatigue. Furthermore, our Kindergarten classes shifted to virtual learning this past week as a number of students began to test positive during the weekend. To date, 12 kindergarteners have tested positive in what we have identified with the health department as a cluster of Covid-19 cases.

That said, we remain committed to the benefits of in-person education, especially at Immaculata. Students are overjoyed to be back in-person and we are continuing to rebuild a community that, like all the world, has been rocked by the events of the past two years. Finally, we know that pediatric vaccines are just around the corner, and we are excited that most of our youngest community members will soon be eligible for powerful protection through the vaccines now available to most of us.

We will continue to fight this virus with your help. Our collective efforts—our days spent in quarantine, the masks we wear, the vaccines we accept for our children and for parents—will help us to persevere through this challenge. Together, we can continue to make in-person education work at Immaculata. It's not going to be easy, but we believe we can do hard things. This year is no exception, and our staff, families and students are experiencing that reality every day.

MOVING FORWARD:

Although no plan is foolproof, we have revised our protocols as a result of the past two weeks. With the increase in positive Covid-19 cases in our school, we called an emergency meeting of the Immaculata Covid-19 Medical Task Force and consulted with both the Diocese of Raleigh and our local health department.

In order to continue to do our best to slow and prevent the spread of Covid-19 in our school, we resolve to do the following:

- **Lunch Protocol:** Although the majority of our classes have eaten outside since the beginning of the year, we recognize that lunch in classrooms exposes our school to additional risk. We're therefore committed to eating either outside, or distanced in the Fellowship Hall with a single grade-level per week, as often as possible. Even as winter comes upon us, we'll be eating outside with jackets and winter gear. And when we are forced by weather to eat inside, we'll do our best to utilize all spaces within our classrooms to spread out and eat spaced out to the extent possible.
- **Exclusionary Policy:** We will continue to exclude students exhibiting any of the symptoms on the Covid-19 symptom screener from the NC Toolkit. This includes almost any form of illness. This strict exclusionary policy, which requires students to test (rapid antigen or PCR) before returning, is endorsed as one of our best defenses by our medical task force.
- **Masking (Inside and Outside):** With the rise in cases at the school and our return to full in-person classrooms, distancing outside during recess and other break times has become increasingly difficult. For this reason, we have decided, with the endorsement of our medical task force, to require masking for students at all times, inside and outside, when on campus. Masks continue to be one of our simplest and best defenses against the spread of Covid-19. We believe our students and staff will be able to make this minor shift in order to protect the community as much as possible. Please also ensure that your students leave home every day with well-fitting masks—we will post additional mask resources on the Covid-19 information page.
- **Screening and Diagnostic Testing:** Finally, we have begun the process of starting a Covid-19 testing program on campus at ICS. The [NCDHHS](#), in conjunction with [Mako Medical](#), will be supplying ICS with both 1) regular screening Covid-19 tests and 2) diagnostic testing that we can administer in the school. To participate, K-8 families will have the option to "opt-in" to the program, and we will share more information about the program next week.
- **ICS Nurse:** Furthermore, our new school nurse will be joining us this coming week on October 11. She will be with us on Mondays and Tuesdays, and we will share more information about the nurse and how to contact her next week.

We understand that the protocols and the continued presence of Covid-19 in our community are stressful for our families, students and staff, and that many in our community are concerned and anxious about our present circumstances. Moving forward, in order to share information about positive cases as soon as it's available with our entire community, we will continue to notify our community when positive cases are detected, and we will also keep a weekly tally of cases identified in school and posted on a shared, public [Google spreadsheet](#) posted on our [Covid-19 information page](#).

To do your part, families, we continue to urge you to communicate with our staff about sickness as soon as possible. If your children are sick and kept home, please let your homeroom teacher and our front office know as soon as possible.

To return to school after illness, we must have either a negative Covid test or a note from a medical provider.

Finally, due to the increase in Covid-19 cases in our community and in order to encourage sick students to stay home while continuing to learn, we have changed our virtual student policy to include any student who is home sick. Virtual options vary by grade-level and we ask you to be patient as our heroic teachers continue to provide in-person education while offering virtual options to sick students as well.

With gratitude for all you are doing,

Dr. Corcoran

Mr. Kurz

Ms. Badillo