

Stony Brook lab keeps Harbor County Day in person

Eight weeks into the 2020-2021 academic year, Harbor Country Day School continues to offer in-person learning, five days a week for its entire student body, since first re-opening its doors in early September.

With many concerns and unknown variables surrounding the reopening of schools following the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic this past March, Harbor's teachers and administrators spent the summer meticulously crafting a plan for a safe and healthy reopening. Existing classrooms and additional building spaces were measured to determine maximum student head counts to allow for six-foot social distancing between desks, new building traffic patterns were established to bring students through different building entry points to limit interactions between different class 'cohorts', and a plethora of health and hygiene measures were put in place, including daily on-site temperature checks, installations of additional restrooms and hand washing stations, indoor mask wearing, enhanced cleaning and building sanitation and increased usage of the 11-acre

campus' outdoor spaces.

Although eager for a return to school, parents, students and faculty alike remained apprehensive ahead of the September reopening date. Conversations between administrators and parents continued, determining what additional measures could be implemented to instill greater peace of mind that the school environment would be a healthy and safe one. The solution to that came from a family who was eager to support the school's health and academic program by subsidizing weekly testing in the form of weekly COVID-19 surveillance testing Harbor conducted through Applied DNA Clinical Laboratories, LLC based in Stony Brook.

Unlike diagnostic testing, which looks for the occurrence of COVID-19 at the individual level, surveillance testing looks for infection within a defined population or community and can be used for making health management decisions at the population level.

"Our capacity to perform COVID-19 surveillance testing is grounded in self-collection saliva kits and anterior nasal swab kits that are intuitive to use, a highly sensitive PCR-based assay kit that can



A Harbor Country Day School student works on her laptop.

detect as little as one copy of the SARS-CoV-2 genome per microliter in an individual saliva sample, and a high-throughput surveillance testing lab that can return testing results within 24 hours and often on the same day as sampling," said Dr. James Hayward, president and CEO. "When deployed as part of a consistent and ongoing surveillance testing regime, we believe our Assay Kit can help our clients to detect the virus before its median incubation time of 4 to 5 days

from exposure to symptom-onset. Being able to identify infections early and in a cost-efficient and rapid manner is how surveillance testing gets workers back to work and students back to school."

With COVID-19 positivity rates increasing at alarming rates nationwide, and Long Island's rolling average also increasing, albeit at a slower but sustained rate, it's not statistically likely that Harbor will make it through the entire school year without a positive case. However,

the early detection afforded by surveillance testing will help to minimize community spread and potential school closures, according to school officials.

Harbor recognizes that its streak of negative test results is, by and large, a result of the larger school community all doing its part outside of school to practice health and safety measures. Still, as positivity rates in New York State steadily increase and numerous cases are being identified at schools in surrounding areas, it's statistically unlikely that Harbor won't eventually see a positive case of their own. Because of this, Harbor's COVID-19 Response Team has already developed plans for that eventuality. Fortunately, knowing that potential positive cases will quickly be identified as a result of the surveillance testing allows everyone's main focus to be where it belongs - on learning.

For companies wishing to learn more about Applied DNA Clinical Labs' surveillance testing program visit: <https://adnas.com/covid-19-surveillance-testing/>. For information about Harbor Country Day school visit: www.HCDSNY.org.

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