

May 13, 2020

Dear St. Michael's Parents and Families,

Happy belated Mother's Day to all of our St. Michael's moms!

These past eight weeks have been highly challenging for everyone, everywhere, and that is an understatement at best. I find that the mix of emotions most of us are experiencing in this crisis—including, among a host of others, anxiety, frustration, fear, grief, and intermittent hope—is tough to manage gracefully. As I have heard from so many of you, my own moods and emotions continue to swing like a pendulum day to day, on one end from *It's a gift to have this time together as a family!*, to the other, *How much more of this can we reasonably take?*, and everywhere in between.

At the same time, there has been genuine consolation. Our St. Michael's faculty have done an outstanding job providing a relatively seamless continuity of learning for our students, your sons and daughters. While we recognize the imperfections and shortcomings inherent in any distance-learning initiative, my assessment of what we have been able to accomplish, given the reports from schools locally and nationally, is that we have indeed done a remarkable job under highly complex circumstances. Toward that same end, of assessing and further improving our work, I invite and encourage you to share your own assessment of our interim distance-learning efforts by completing our brief (five-minute) survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QMHH7PG>. **This link will remain active through next Wednesday, May 20.**

This brief survey also asks for your input and interest in potential summer programming. Our traditional, on-campus summer programs, which typically run for one week to eight weeks, throughout June and July into early August, will not (because they cannot) operate this summer. The more pressing consideration for us in providing alternate online summer programming this year, in place of our on-campus options, is the availability of faculty. Like all of you, our own faculty have families of their own and have planned for rest or local travel during June and July. As much as they love the work of teaching and learning with our students, the prospect of engaging in more online planning and instruction during the summer months, after two long months of doing so daily, is a challenging one. (I have heard similar concerns as well from some of you, of the impact of more screen time on our students, your sons and daughters, at home during the summer break.) In order for us to determine the feasibility of hosting students for online work this summer, we need to first gauge, as noted, interest among families. For this purpose, I encourage you to complete the items pertaining to potential summer programs in the same survey linked above. I will share with all of you in two weeks, by Wednesday, May 27, an update, if not a final decision, on summer offerings, if feasible, at St. Michael's.

With two weeks to go in this current academic year—this week to complete our formal '19-'20 distance-learning instruction, and next week to prepare academic reports and to celebrate the end of the year in the appropriate ways (including a 'drive-in' Commencement celebration for our Class

of 2020 scholars on May 23!)]—we are above all grateful to you for your endurance and patience at home. We look forward to seeing some of you, most of you, in the course of the next two weeks. Please stay attuned to the weekly emails from Ms. Mandy Hart and Mr. Alex Hawes and respective faculty for details for all of the year-end events.

In addition to what I have already shared, this email contains further important information about the coming '20-'21 academic year. I encourage you to read the email in full.

2020-2021 Academic Year Outlook

In conversation with other school heads, medical professionals, and colleagues in the independent-school world about prudent approaches with planning for the start of the coming year, the trend is certainly moving in the direction of an on-campus start in August. **Unless required otherwise, we are also planning for an on-campus, in-person start to the 2020-2021 academic year in August, with all prescribed and necessary precautions, protocols, and best practices for community health and safety in place, and a corresponding model of instruction that allows us to 'toggle,' as required, between at-home and on-campus teaching and learning.** I will send to all families a comprehensive framework for the 2020-2021 academic year, including our full-year calendar for academics and events, in our June mailing via USPS and email. The initial calendar sent in January, noting start and end dates and vacation dates for 2020-2021, still holds; there have been no changes to these dates.

Within our own St. Michael's community, we have benefitted from the expertise of a number of parents in the healthcare field, those who have more recently shared their professional perspective on re-opening in the fall. While the trend of infection rates for COVID-19 have begun to decline overall locally, in Pima County, with further encouraging signs that these rates will continue to fall throughout the summer months, there is well-founded concern that infection rates will increase again during the cold and flu season. Until there is a vaccine for this particular coronavirus—still close to a year away, a consensus estimate within the medical community—we must prepare ourselves for the inevitability, or at least the strong possibility, of enacting intermittent distance learning at times, and as necessary, throughout the coming year at St. Michael's. I have yet to hear of any school, here in Tucson or elsewhere in the United States, that is not preparing for the same. **The great advantage that we have, that all of our students have, is our ability to make the transition to online quickly and nimbly, for the short or long term, as needed. Whether we are on campus or off, our work will continue to focus on strengthening the experience for all St. Michael's students, and on assuring the health and safety of all within the St. Michael's community.**

Family Financial Aid for 2020-2021

The economic impacts of COVID-19 have thus far been far-reaching and devastating, with a current rate of unemployment, nationally, hovering between 15 and 20%, and likely to become even more severe in the course of the coming months, into 2021 and beyond. The longer term impacts of the virus remain to be seen, but we know the economic impact for many of you, our families, is of great concern. **If you are discerning a choice about the education of your child (or children) for the**

2020-2021 school year because of financial concerns, please know that we are committed to working with every family to support need-based aid for the coming year. In addition to tax-credit funding that you may have already secured, or are in the process of securing for '20-'21, please know that St. Michael's also offers corporate-tax aid, funded generously each year with the support of families and individuals within the St. Michael's community, and additional funding available through the school. A first step in the process of seeking need-based aid is to complete the FAST application as soon as possible. For any questions or concerns about aid for the coming year, please contact me directly by email, at bsullivan@stmichael.net.

2020-2021 Faculty and Staff Changes and Assignments

There have been a number of changes to our faculty and staff assignments for the 2020-2021 academic year. In addition to the narrative below, I have included a comprehensive list of faculty and staff for the coming year.

In Lower School

We welcome **Maria Elena Iturralde** to our Lower School faculty. A native Spanish speaker with more than 15 years of classroom experience, Maria Elena will assume the part-time teaching role for lower school Spanish instruction. We appreciate the good work that **Mrs. Mary Redhouse** has accomplished in this role for the past four years.

Annie O'Meara, our longtime veteran second-grade teacher, will serve as the sole second-grade instructor for the coming year. We are capping enrollment for second grade at 19 for the coming year, with all subsequent applications for admission to be waitlisted until, and only in the event that, additional qualified admissions for second grade reach ten (10) or more, sufficient for us to hire a second teacher for second grade.

Mrs. Julia Rebert, who served as a teaching aide in kindergarten with Mrs. Laura Sanders' homeroom this past year, will assume the part-time aide role for our two K classes this year, assisting both Mrs. Sanders and Ms. Danielle Weiss for the morning cycle of instruction. We appreciate the great work that **Ms. Tracy Walrath** has accomplished in the K aide role for the past three years.

Mrs. Rachel Hawes, an upper-school faculty member for the past four years, will assume the additional responsibility of teaching our Lower School technology classes this coming year. We thank **Mr. Zach Rebert** for doing a fine job with Lower School tech instruction this past year.

In Upper School

Mr. John Layer, new to St. Michael's for the 2020-2021 year and a longtime, veteran educator, will take on a lead role for fifth-grade instruction and assume the lead role for our inaugural year of French-language instruction. We thank **Mrs. Patti Garcia** for her 25 years of service to St. Michael's.

In addition to his administrative role as Director of our Upper School, **Mr. Alex Hawes** will return to the eighth-grade classroom this coming year to teach both sections of eighth-grade English. We

thank **Mrs. Michelle Southern** for her excellent work in eighth-grade English for this 2019-2020 academic year.

Mrs. Jennifer Gould, our Upper School lead math teacher, will assume responsibility for teaching the eighth-grade advanced math class (geometry) this coming year. We thank **Mr. Gene McDougal** for his fine work this past year in that role.

Administration

Dr. Sandi Thompson will not be returning for the coming academic year. Dr. Thompson assumed a part-time role this year as our first school psychologist. I hope to reconsider Dr. Thompson or another candidate for the same role for the 2021-2022 school year. We thank Dr. Thompson for a successful year.

For a list of these and other changes in staffing and faculty for the coming year, please review, as noted, the attached faculty and staff roster for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Accreditation and Long-Term Planning

Our Board of Trustees and I last met two weeks ago via Zoom to discuss a range of topics relating to our interim distance-learning initiative, the longer view of the impact of COVID on planning and subsequent scheduling for 2020-2021, and our deferred visit for re-accreditation with the Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools (SAES).

With regard to our re-accreditation visit, we have been working with the Standards Committee for SAES on rescheduling a visit for the fall, tentatively scheduled for early October. There has since been a decision on the part of SAES to potentially defer the October visit to the spring of 2021. As we await confirmation for our visit, please know that our current ten-year accreditation with SAES, earned in 2009, has been extended throughout this interim period.

Furthermore, our self-study report, which we completed in anticipation of the visit initially scheduled for April of this year, is complete and will need no further updates. The disappointment with a delay for the re-accreditation visit, while it is completely out of our control, is the timing of our summer / fall 2020 strategic-planning process with our Board, faculty and staff, and students and parents. I look forward to the opportunity to convene over the course of the coming year as a community to discuss and eventually articulate a statement of vision, values, school-wide student outcomes, and strategic initiatives for the next three to five years.

For now, I am grateful, we are all grateful, for your commitment to St. Michael's and to the education of your sons and daughters throughout this challenging time. Please be in touch at any time with questions or comments. We look forward to seeing some of you, most of you we hope, in the next two weeks!

Sincerely,
Brendan Sullivan

Head of School

bsullivan@stmichael.net

619-251-7608 (work cell)