



Dear St. Michael's Parents and Families,

**This email contains important information for the start of the coming academic year; I encourage you to read it in its entirety.**

With the full support of the St. Michael's School Board of Trustees and our administrative team, and with the ongoing guidance of our Covid planning group, I am writing to communicate with all of you the requisite campus health and safety measures that we have adopted to date for the coming academic year. A comprehensive working draft of our **2020-2021 Covid Management Plan**, including specifics of our distance-learning and on-campus options, will be sent to all families by or before mid-July, with webinars to follow in the latter half of the month to address questions from families.

As with every school in the State, we remain attuned to the public-health concerns related to Covid-19, and the subsequent decisions for schools, that may alter our academic calendar throughout the year. Nonetheless, we are committed to welcoming students back to campus full-time—or, if required at that time to do so, transitioning to online instruction—beginning on **Friday, August 14.**

A summary of our mitigation efforts—consensus recommendations from our planning group, based on a myriad of reliable guidelines and research for re-opening schools—is provided below and will be articulated in greater detail in the forthcoming Management Plan. The most essential elements of these efforts include the required use of facial coverings (e.g., a cloth covering or a facial shield) by all students and adults on campus; the physical distancing of students of at least three to six feet, as recommended more recently by the American Association of Pediatrics; maintaining student cohorts, or groups, of up to 18 to reduce interactions among larger numbers of schoolmates; adopting an abbreviated schedule for the end of the school day (2:00 p.m. for Lower School and 2:30 p.m. for Upper School) to allow for greater distancing at pick-up times and for adequate time daily to check in with our at-home learners; and the strict monitoring of, and response to, viral symptoms.

At the same time, families will have the option, beginning on our first day of school, to keep their children home and to pursue distance learning full-time. Students and families who elect this option will be directly engaged for every minute of the academic day through fully synchronous and secure Zoom conferencing. Developing a more robust online system for individual families will furthermore allow us to shift seamlessly to virtual instruction for the entire school, if and when mandated by local or state authorities, or as deemed necessary by the school.

### **2020-2021 Campus Health and Safety Measures**

**Personal Protective Equipment.** All students and staff will be required to wear a facial covering (i.e., a cloth covering or a facial shield) for the better part of each day while on campus. This requirement excludes those activities for which wearing a facial covering is unfeasible or impractical, namely during lunch times, physical education, and recess. St. Michael's will make a first-time, initial purchase of a cloth covering (with the SMS logo) and a face shield for every student and staff member.

**Physical Distancing.** Students will be physically distanced in their classrooms and during all other campus activities, using the American Association of Pediatrics recommended measure of 3-6 feet. Our two division directors, director of campus facilities, and school nurse conducted a thorough space inventory in June for each classroom, against the number of currently enrolled

students. Current spacing guidelines and recommendations will allow us to conduct daily on-campus, in-person classes for all students without the need to stagger, or alternate, daily class schedules.

**Handwashing/Hygiene.** We will have 37 additional hand-washing stations installed on campus and will require frequent hand-washing throughout the school day for all students and staff.

**Student Cohorts.** As noted earlier, students will be grouped into cohorts, based on their assigned advisor (Upper School, grades six through eight), or by their homeroom teacher (grades Kinder through fifth), to reduce, to every reasonable extent, cross-group gathering in person. All large in-person gatherings (e.g., assemblies, chapels) will be deferred.

**Campus Healthcare.** Mrs. Erika Huff, RN, our School Nurse, will increase her time on campus for the coming year. Additionally, we are constructing an isolation room in the nurse's office to be used in the event that a student exhibits signs of illness; and we are discerning a reasonable, feasible approach to health screening for students and staff.

**Before and After Care.** We will resume on-campus before- and aftercare for families, following the same applicable health and safety measures noted above.

**Cleaning and Disinfecting.** All high-touch areas of campus (e.g., classroom desks and chairs, entry and exit doorways and gates, etc.) will be cleaned and disinfected on a daily basis.

**Student Lunches.** Families will have the option of ordering lunches for each day of school, in advance, for their children through a regional meal provider, Dishes2U. All ordered meals will be delivered directly from local restaurants to school each day, and all partnering restaurants have explicit Covid safety protocols in place. Information on and registration for the D2U option will be sent to families in our second summer mailing later this month.

**Indoor Ventilation and Cooling.** Our Lower School campus classrooms (grades Kindergarten through third) are equipped as of January this year with central air-conditioning. Classrooms presently without central air-conditioning (grades four through eight) will be equipped with new standalone, high-capacity AC units, with supplementary air purifiers. We will forego the use of evaporative cooling in all classrooms but will continue to use evaporative cooling (as the only resource) in the Student Center/gym.

### **Other Related Measures**

**Outdoor Spaces.** We will use available outdoor space on campus, and the adjacent Harold Bell Wright Park, for the coming year, especially for outdoor-related activities (e.g., recess, class breaks, and physical education classes). We are still discerning how best to administer our after-school interscholastic athletics and intramurals programs. Our Director of Athletics, Kim Greene, is communicating regularly with, and staying apprised of all related decisions from, the Arizona Interscholastic Association (AIA).

**Campus Bandwidth.** We are in the process of upgrading our campus internet capacity by investing in fiber-optic cable installation. Increasing bandwidth will help with the use of instructional technology under any circumstances, and this change will be an added advantage with distance-learning.

**Admissions and Enrollment.** We are proceeding very carefully with new inquiries for admissions for the coming year to assure we can adequately accommodate physical distancing in each grade, student cohort, or classroom.

### **Summary**

We are all well aware by now of the recent surge in Covid-19 infection rates nationally, with the State of Arizona emerging as a leading locale for new cases. Among other related headlines this past week, national health experts and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) further suggest that infection rates in the U.S. could, in time, reach more than 100,000 cases daily. While cases in Pima County account for 10% of the statewide total, to date, the trending regional resurgence of the virus and the grim predictions for increased cases in the U.S. this summer, into the fall and winter months, nonetheless remain a significant concern for us, as they do for schools everywhere.

At the same time, we recognize the critical importance of in-person teaching and learning, as much for the intellectual development of the children in our care as for their emotional, social, physical, and psychological health. With substantive input from the medical professionals in our planning group and from a wide range of educational, medical, and healthcare sources, we have proceeded thoughtfully and diligently throughout the past two months to prepare ourselves for on-campus life to resume in August, and to offer families who choose to do so the option of keeping their children at home and engaging in our distance-learning program.

A number of well-established, professional health organizations continue to publish guidelines that support and advocate for school re-entry. More recently, this past week, the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP) issued a set of guidelines and a statement about the importance, even the urgency, of having students return in-person to their schools this coming Fall, “strongly (advocating) that all policy considerations for the coming school year...start with a goal of having students physically present in school,” citing as well that “(although) many questions remain, the preponderance of evidence indicates that children and adolescents are less likely to be symptomatic and less likely to have severe disease resulting from SARS-CoV-2.” The AAP statement from June 25 outlining their professional recommendations and guidelines for returning to school can be found [here](#).

As we continue our extensive efforts for the coming year, I am deeply grateful to our Board of Trustees and to the medical and legal professionals in our planning group (Vanessa Buch; Felicia Goodrum-Sterling, Ph.D.; Elizabeth Juneman, M.D.; Shannon Thorn, M.D.; Heather Walsh, M.D.) and to our administrative planning team (Alex Hawes, Mandy Hart, Sean Pollard, Erika Huff, and Kim Greene) for their great care and focus throughout the past two months.

I look forward to being in touch next week with further details.

With all good wishes for the July Fourth weekend,

Brendan Sullivan  
Head of School  
[bsullivan@stmichael.net](mailto:bsullivan@stmichael.net)