



11/20/2020

Dear St. Michael's Parents and Families,

Happy Thanksgiving to all of you, and thank you for your continued patience and care. Please read this email in full. It contains summary COVID updates; an opportunity for childcare through the YMCA of Southern Arizona for the three-week interim; an upcoming webinar focused on parenting in this challenging time; health tips and health help during the break; and gratitude for your generous Thanksgiving canned-food and cash donations to support individuals and families in need this year.

Given the same growing concerns with COVID that the medical experts shared with the planning group again yesterday, **I am staying firmly with the consensus recommendation to defer all K-8 students and faculty to distance learning for the three-week interim, Monday, November 30, through Thursday, December 17. Friday, December 18, will remain a scheduled planning day / rest day for our teaching faculty.**

COVID Updates

I am deeply grateful to the experts in our planning group for their knowledge, care, and foresight. Their understanding of the virus and its implications for the health of all in our care have helped us stay ahead of the decision-making curve. In hearing directly from Dr. Elizabeth Juneman and Dr. Shannon Thorn on Wednesday, both of whom are working in hospitals and healthcare centers on a daily basis, and from Dr. Goodrum-Sterling at the U of A, who is herself immersed in the data, I am even more concerned about the coming weeks, and I am concerned in this regard equally for the students and adults in our care. To that end, our COVID Management Plan and our decisions about health and safety apply to all persons in our community—children, adults, and families.

As we have heard again and again from the infectious-disease experts, even the best mitigation plans—which we have—will eventually be overwhelmed when pathogen levels 'outside the gates' rise to the levels we are beginning to see...and certainly more so when the numbers get worse, which is the grim forecast for the coming weeks. In that scenario, of high levels of transmission in the broader community and with students and adults on campus, the calculus for maintaining health gets messy fast. Dr. Shannon Thorn, an infectious-disease specialist who has been working with our planning group since May, emphasized again in conversation yesterday that when transmission levels increase to the levels we are beginning to see now, the boundary between us (school) and everyone else (beyond the gates) erodes quickly. Keeping everyone in our care healthy and safe is essential to either mode of teaching and learning, as I know all of you fully comprehend and appreciate.

Childcare Help

The disruption and impact on families with a transition back to distance learning weigh heavily on all of us here. With the support of our Board of Trustees, we have partnered with the YMCA of Southern Arizona throughout the three interim weeks of distance learning at four YMCA sites in Tucson, beginning the week of November 30, from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. daily, for children aged 5–12.

The YKids Choice program has been operating as a state-approved childcare facility since March, with excellent supervision and no reported incidents of illness or infection among children. Children who attend the YKids program will be provided a staff-monitored and physically distanced space to complete their live or recorded Zoom classes, independent academic work, and other class requirements. Space is limited; for more information in considering the YMCA opportunity, please connect [here](#).

Upcoming Webinar for Parents

In partnership with the Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools (SAES), St. Michael's is pleased to offer a live, virtual event geared towards parenting during this uniquely challenging time. Please tune in to this special webinar for St. Michael's parents and families, joined by parents from other SAES partner schools, on **Tuesday, December 2, from 5:00 – 6:00 p.m. MST.**

Rob Evans and Michael Thompson, the two presenters, are highly experienced and engaging speakers. Michael G. Thompson, Ph.D. is a consultant, author and psychologist specializing in children and families. Dr. Robert Evans is a psychologist and school consultant. Rob is a former high school and pre-school teacher, and for many years a child and family therapist. He has consulted to more than 1,700 schools, public and private, throughout the U.S. and internationally, working with teachers, leaders, and boards. I highly recommend this event

The link for this virtual event will be provided for SMS families this coming week. Please consider attending live; the event will also be recorded and made available to SMS families after December 2.

St. Michael's Thanksgiving Food Drive

Thank you to all of our families for your generous contributions this year! With cash gifts from our school community in excess of \$5,000, matched dollar for dollar by TEP, yesterday we presented a \$10,000 gift to the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona-Tucson. Additionally, more than 1,700 pounds of dried and canned goods from the St. Michael's community were delivered this morning to St. Michael and All Angels' Parish for their food outreach to the homeless and indigent. On behalf of Brother David Hedges, Rector of the Parish, thank you for your generosity.

Health Tips for Safer Holiday Gatherings

The Arizona Department of Health Services has made available to the public a set of practical health guidelines for the upcoming holidays. We encourage families to continue adherence to the common-sense measures in place on campus and at home—washing hands, keeping physical distance, and wearing a facial mask—and to review the recommendations from ADHS, [here](#).

Health Questions and Concerns for Families

If you have any health-related questions or concerns during the Thanksgiving break, please contact our School Nurse, Erika Huff, at ehuff@stmichael.net, or by phone at 722-8478 ext. 219.

All good wishes for the start of the Thanksgiving break and for your continued health and safety,

Sincerely,
Brendan Sullivan
Head of School
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