



## What's UP in Upper School?

Dear St. Michael's Upper School Parents and Guardians:

Greetings to you all! The endless days of summer are not feeling so endless anymore. I spent a few weeks driving to New England and back last month, stopping to see the Red Sox get walloped by the Blue Jays in Toronto and a raucous jazz concert at the Blue Note in Greenwich Village. So a mixed bag overall. I hope you are feeling recharged and ready for what I'm confident will be a terrific year ahead.

For those of you who don't already know me, I am beginning my fourth year as director of the Upper School and twentieth year overall at St. Michael's. I continue to teach 8th Grade English, and I will be helping again with the Yearbook and our literary magazine, *Eagle's Quill*. As my baseball allegiance suggests, I grew up in Massachusetts. I attended college in Connecticut and lived in Washington, D.C, for a number of years before seeking the open landscapes of the Southwest. (Hiking and outdoor photography are my chief hobbies.) My daughter and son both attended St. Michael's for grades K-8; this will be the first year in a very long time that I haven't had at least one child of my own on campus - alas.

I enjoy working with and getting to know each and every student in grades 5-8, and I hope to get to know the parents over time as well. My door (and email inbox) are always open. Once school is under way, I will send out emails at the end of each week with announcements and other important details. If you don't seem to be receiving these "Up Up And Away" memos—usually delivered electronically on Sundays—just let me know.

Here is a hodgepodge of reminders and other tidbits in the meantime...

Students may be eager to find out who their teachers will be. **Homeroom assignments** will be communicated separately by advisors, who will email the parents/guardians of each student in their homeroom by August 1st to inform them of their placement and to provide various details, including how to sign up for parent **intake conferences** in the coming weeks. Full schedules and class groupings will be distributed to students on the first day of school, at which point students and families will also gain access to bulletin boards, assignments, and grades in Blackbaud, our online learning management system. It is vital that students and parents/guardians be able to access and navigate Blackbaud comfortably and consistently. Please let me know if you'd like help doing so.

The start date for all Upper School students is **Friday, August 12**. This will be a full day, ending at 3:20 p.m. Students should bring their required supplies and summer work to school that morning.

The official school day for students in grades 5-8 goes from **8:00 a.m. to 3:20 p.m.** I would suggest that families aim to drop off their children between 7:45 - 7:50 a.m. each morning so students can settle in and get organized for the day. Students in Upper School will need to be picked up by a parent or another approved adult—or be under the direct supervision of a sport,

club, or the Aftercare program—by no later than 3:35 p.m. each day. For safety's sake, those Upper School students still awaiting rides at **3:35** will be signed into the Aftercare program rather than be left by the parking lot unsupervised. Speaking of which, the after-school study hall program for Upper School students is being combined with Lower School Aftercare under one umbrella overseen by Holly von Guilleaume. Look for further information from her about this program.

Families need to indicate permission in advance (once per school year) for their students to be authorized to leave campus independently, whether on foot, bike, or public bus. We do not allow students to use the park behind the school unsupervised after dismissal, as it is used by our Aftercare and Athletics programs, and we need it to be immediately clear which students are under whose supervision.

Similarly, if you'd like your child to be able to attend middle school sporting events (that they're not participating in directly themselves) after school, just send me an email to that effect, and we'll keep a list. However, students attending such competitions as spectators must be supervised until the games begin, typically at 4:00, which means they will likely need to go to the Aftercare program first.

Speaking of **sports**, look for information from Coach Greene about our after-school Athletics program. The fall season for students in grades 6-8 includes Coed Flag Football and Girls' Volleyball. Students in 5th grade can participate in our intramural program. Also be on the lookout for information from Dr. Antista about upcoming auditions for our annual **school musical**.

We are welcoming a number of new teachers into the Upper School family. (A few of these have been previously introduced.)

- **Kristin Vizzini**, an experienced art instructor known to many in our community, will teach Fifth Grade Art.
- **John Layer**, former Lower School Director, will continue to teach Seventh and Eighth Grade French and will also teach grades 6-8 Art. He will be an 8th grade advisor.
- **The Reverend Kristin Barberia**, our new Chaplain, will teach grades 5-8 Religion. Mother Kristin joins us from St. Matthew's Parish School in Pacific Palisades, California.
- **Charlotte Richardson-Zwald**, who taught Language Arts and Social Studies at Challenger Middle School for 22 years, will serve as a 6th grade advisor and will teach 6th grade Social Studies as well as oversee Upper School reading support.
- **Carol Golembiewski** will be a 7th grade advisor and will teach grades 6-8 Math. She has worked as a math instructor and, later, as a principal in the Vail District since 1989.

A few additional details worth noting in order to navigate our Upper School:

### **Lunches**

You will find detailed information about our hot lunch program and vendor, **Dishes2U**, in the current set of attached documents. Whether students order school lunches or bring their own lunches from home, they typically eat them outside in their respective courtyards. Please also

ensure that your child is staying hydrated. The best way to do so is for them to bring reusable **water bottles**, which can be refilled at our filtered water dispensers around campus.

We will also continue our **Allergy Aware** policy as we seek to minimize the presence of tree nuts on our campus for the sake of our Upper School students with life-threatening allergies. You'll find a separate document with further information about the vital importance of that effort.

### **Technology**

As mentioned, the school uses **Blackbaud** as its web-based school-management platform for communicating information about grades, homework, school forms, special events, and much more. Please be sure you are able to log into the site successfully. Many teachers will also use **Google Classroom** for certain types of assignments, but official grade information will always be found solely within Blackbaud.

Students in Upper School will continue to use an assigned **Chromebook**, stored at school overnight so they are available and safely charged at the start of each day. Families must review and sign the annual device contract in Blackbaud in order for their children to receive these Chromebooks on the first day of school. Students will need routine access to Internet-connected devices, and occasionally printers, outside of school hours in order to complete certain assignments. If this is difficult or impossible, either temporarily or permanently, please let me know and we can come up with alternate options.

### **School Supplies**

Most supplies are provided by St. Michael's at the start of the year, but there are a few items that families may need to provide themselves:

- **calculator** (such the TI-30 model) recommended for use at home
- **backpack** (to be stored in cubbies, bins, or on hooks in homerooms during the day)
- students in grades 6-8 need their own standard-sized **combination locks** for their assigned lockers; locker shelves (1-3) are also highly recommended

*Please clearly mark just about everything, especially water bottles, lunch boxes, and sweatshirts, with students' names so items can be returned easily if misplaced.*

### **Dress Code**

The complete dress code is available electronically inside our *Parent-Student Handbook*. Here is a quick summary of a few key requirements:

- All tops, whether short- or long-sleeved shirts, sweatshirts, or sweaters, must be either **white, fire-engine red, or navy blue**. Black and gray, for example, are NOT acceptable colors.
- Students who can't keep their shirts tucked in will quickly lose Free Dress and costume-day opportunities. Please check whether some shirts have been outgrown, or consider using a belt!
- Shorts, skorts, and skirts must be sufficiently long (ending no more than four inches above the middle of the knee). I realize it may be difficult to find items that meet those measurements these days, but it is required.

Our annual **Upper School Curriculum Night** is scheduled for the evening of Thursday, September 8, at 6:00 p.m. The event will provide opportunities for families to meet their children's teachers as well as administrators like me, and to learn about the classes and programs unique to the St. Michael's Upper School. In the meantime, don't hesitate to reach out to me ([ahawes@stmichael.net](mailto:ahawes@stmichael.net)) if you have questions or concerns about anything involving the Upper School.

I look forward to seeing you all on campus soon!

Best wishes,

Alex Hawes  
Upper School Division Director  
St. Michael's School