



St. Michael's Episcopal School

October 8, 2018

Friends,

“Meet the needs of the child,” is a guiding concept for our faculty and staff and a top priority under our [School-Family Partnership](#) (attached). A student has no greater need than to be safe and healthy. Clearly, our single campus offers a host of advantages in this regard. The Board of Directors and the Administration have been working on safety at the unified Singleton Campus since the earliest stages of planning and design. Engagement survey results over the past couple of years confirm these efforts are well positioned. Thus, we thought it important to share with you specific details about efforts the School has taken and is taking in the areas of (I) campus security, (II) automobile safety, and (III) student health to meet its responsibility of providing a safe and healthy learning environment.

I. Campus Security

This letter outlines the School's approach to safety and security on a single campus. It does not address in detail issues such as fire, severe weather, and medical emergencies, but please know these matters along with security are fully addressed under the School's crisis preparedness and management plans, which are reviewed regularly as part of the Virginia Association of Independent Schools (VAIS) accreditation process.

It is important to recognize the challenging nature of this subject. The measures outlined below are intended to keep students safe if a threat surfaces on or near campus. Our preparation for such an unsettling event is entirely appropriate and necessary. Yet, it does not have to equate to a loss of the feeling of freedom and community we so value.

Independent schools have, and St. Michael's, in particular, has always valued an intimate sense of community. Part of this has entailed an openness and familiarity of physical spaces so they feel like home. In such settings, children feel a wonderful mix of security and freedom. Of course, security and freedom are often difficult to balance in school settings, as they are in the broader society. Yet, I am confident our campus can continue to feel like home because I am fortunate to work with a remarkably talented, knowledgeable, and dedicated group of people who have worked hard to develop the plans outlined below. We are all in their debt.

Facilities

The following measures have been put in place to secure campus buildings and grounds.

- All exterior doors are locked during the school day, including extended day hours. The gymnasium front door is the sole exception due to the number of people entering that building to access bathrooms during recess as well as outdoor practices and games.
- Three exterior doors have been fitted with video surveillance and electronic buzzers for requesting/granting access. These are the main entrance to Singleton Hall, the main entrance to Hubbard Hall, and the Library entrance to Hubbard Hall.

- All interior classroom doors are locked but may remain open during the school day. This allows for quick, easy securing of a room in the event of an emergency.

The following measures have been put in place in Hubbard Hall and are planned as near-term upgrades to Singleton Hall.

- Security cameras monitor all common areas and feed a secure, cloud-enabled video system that can be accessed off-site if needed.
- Easy to deploy shades are positioned on all classroom windows. When classroom lights are dimmed, these effectively eliminate visibility into classrooms.

Procedures

With assistance from a local police resource officer, the School has updated its intruder/lockdown (a.k.a., Code Red) procedures and drills to include the following.

- All employees know the program mantra of **ADD** (Avoid, Deny, Defend).
 - **“Avoid”** indicates that students and staff should, if possible, hide from potential threats by moving away from doors and windows, darkening interior spaces, remaining quiet, and knowing rally points if caught in a precarious position.
 - **“Deny”** means ensuring proper procedures for visitors; as well, during a threat moving to remote or tough to access locations and locking or barricading doors.
 - **“Defend”** is the last line of defense, entailing basic self-defense tactics for adults.
- Regular staff professional development and school-wide drills reinforce the **ADD** mantra and practice the details of its implementation.
- The School will annually review, and modify as needed, its procedures and facilities to align with best practices.
- The School has recommended that VAIS consider adding intruder/lockdown drill observation as a requirement of accreditation.

Communication

In a crisis, clear communication is essential to an effective response. The School has in place procedures and resources to ensure such clear communication.

On-campus, among faculty-staff:

- The School’s phone system serves as a public address system. Each phone can function as both a speaker and a microphone connecting to another individual phone or broadcasting across the campus. Beginning this year, practicing use of this system is part of staff professional development.
- School employees and volunteer coaches are required to have a mobile phone with them whenever they are with students. A comprehensive list of these phone numbers is maintained on a secure cloud-based list. Via a third-party vendor, each employee or coach is able to send and receive broadcast text alerts in the event of an emergency.

Off-campus with families and first responders:

- As you have experienced on school days with inclement weather, the School utilizes an emergency text system to broadcast brief, time-sensitive messages. In the event of an emergency, this system would be used along with emails for more detailed information.
- As part of its work with the local police resource officer, the School has aligned its crisis management terminology (e.g., “Code Red” rather than “intruder” or “active shooter”) with that used by City of Richmond first responders.

- Ready access to mobile phones also provides the opportunity to communicate with first responders in the event of an emergency.

II. Automobile Safety

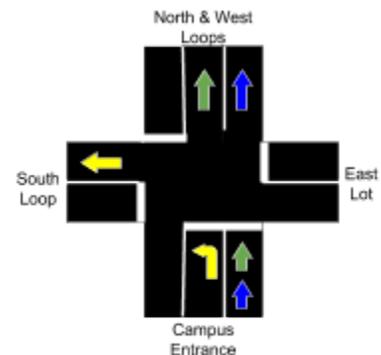
Each school day we have on campus about 380 students and 50 employees. At the beginning and end of the day, we add some 260 families as well as guests and visiting teams. Ninety-nine percent of these folks get to and from campus in automobiles, navigating modest on-campus roads, accessed via a single entrance from a fully-populated neighborhood. Those numbers add up to a challenging dynamic when it comes to keeping everyone safe.

I would like to thank and congratulate the entire community for beginning the year safely and successfully in this regard. While there will always be hiccups and areas to improve, our observations and the feedback we have received indicate that the overall circulation of cars around campus has worked well. That feedback has led to plans for a few adjustments so far, as well as plans for others in the near future. These pending improvements include:

- new curbing and paving in a few spots (e.g., the grass patch at the 3-way intersection crosswalk), and
- additional striping to more clearly delineate lanes and traffic flow.

As you know, our on- and near-campus driving guidelines exist for your child’s safety. We count on each other not only to follow them but encourage others to do the same. As a reminder...

- **D r i v e S L O W L Y.**
- On campus, always stop at the 4-way stop and the 3-way stop, unless directed by a St. Michael’s staff member to continue through the intersection.
- Use your turn signal.
- Use designated lanes entering campus during drop-off/pick-up. (See diagram to the right.)
- If you arrive before 7:40 a.m., you **MUST** drop off your child at Morning Gym. Starting a queue at the 4-way stop before 7:40 a.m. makes the line into campus unmanageably long and tempts folks to pass.
- Never pass a car unless directed by a staff member.
- Never move cones.
- Never be on the phone while moving in a car.



St. Michael’s teaches children to live our DRAGONS values of kindness, responsibility, respect, resilience, acceptance, integrity, and compassion. As adults, it is our responsibility to model these values when driving on campus and through the surrounding neighborhood. In short, we must be good citizens and neighbors. To that end, I have met with several individuals and organizations including the City of Richmond Police Department, City Council Representative Kristin Larsen, the leadership of the Traylor Estates Civic Association, and the leadership of Trinity Episcopal School. We have agreed to partner toward our shared interest of courteous, safe driving to ensure the well-being of neighbors and students alike.

III. Student Health

An interest in healthy students has long been a hallmark of St. Michael's, with physical education and health classes dating back to its earliest days. In recent years, efforts have been made to honor and grow this commitment through an ever-growing (pun intended) gardening program, a move toward nutritious "hot lunch" options, and regular first aid/CPR training for staff. This year was no exception with greater efforts in the administration of student medication, continued work on managing food allergies, and proactive improvement of building air quality.

- In conjunction with the Virginia Department of Social Services, key employees have undergone Medication Administration Training (MAT) and additional faculty will receive Emergency Medication Administration Training (EMAT). This training, a requirement of VAIS schools, ensures best practices in handling medication and dispensing it to children.
- This year the School continued and broadened its use of the Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE) form for documenting and systematizing the management of student food allergies. The FARE form collects all the information needed for the School to provide accommodations prescribed by a physician, removing any guesswork on the part of teachers or parents.
- As part of the planning for a single campus, the Board's facilities committee reviewed an extensive list of potential risk factors. Among these factors was the potential presence of radon in buildings, especially given the rocky terrain on campus. As with cameras and other security infrastructure, the School opted to proactively build into Hubbard Hall a basic radon mitigation system which can be augmented if needed. This was a cost-effective way to reduce this risk factor since installing such a system during construction is far less expensive than doing so on a completed building. As part of this process, the School tested Singleton Hall for radon and found levels in some locations which prompted mitigation. This fall, construction was completed on mitigation systems in these areas. Later this fall/winter, the School will retest all buildings on campus to ensure radon levels are at or below safe thresholds.

On behalf of the faculty, staff, and Board thank you for entrusting your child to St. Michael's. I assure you there is no duty we take more seriously than your child's safety. While we can never completely eliminate all potential dangers, we all as parents -- including Meredith and me -- can rest assured the School is working continuously to reduce those dangers while maintaining our readiness should a crisis occur. If you would like to discuss further any aspect of student health or safety please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Yours most sincerely,



Michael G. Turner
Head of School

Enclosed: [School-Family Partnership](#)