



**Back to School Blueprint for the 2021-22 School Year:
Parent Zoom Meeting Summary**

Date: Monday, May 10, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

St. Michael's intention is to start the school year in accordance with the [2021-22 Academic Calendar](#), with a goal of resuming normal operations for in-person teaching and learning with amended COVID protocols. Below please find a summary of the May 10 parent call to review our plans.

Opening Remarks

- **Thank you to our St. Michael's faculty and staff**
 - This year has been a tremendous challenge - - that is an understatement.
 - You have modeled resiliency, optimism and creativity.
 - Thank you for everything you have done for students, families, and colleagues!
- **What we learned this year:**
 - This has been one of the hardest years in St M's history... but TOGETHER (as students, faculty and families), we SUCCEEDED! Our Dragons happily learned in-person from August-June with core academic classes being the focus of instruction during the fall half-day schedule. We ALL have much to be proud of this year.
 - Thank you to our families for your flexibility.
 - One of the learned lessons from the pandemic is every school needs to be nimble with operational changes going forward. Schools will need to build their policies based on today's data, and then rely on effective communications via email, phone texts, and social media posts to announce changes should they need to occur for the coming school year.
- **What was hard/what we could have done better:**
 - We all missed gathering as a full community and the sense of community.
 - We also missed having parents on campus but St M has been working hard to offer on-campus parent opportunities through the end of this school year.
 - A key learning is that St M must remain attentive to timing and content of communications.
- **What accomplishments are we proud of:**
 - Outdoor learning: We took full advantage of our amazing 70-acre campus and intend to continue with this.
 - Our COVID mitigation/protocols worked and we were on campus the full school year.
 - Our students and faculty rose to the challenge and impressed us daily with their can-do spirit, resilience, courage, and grace.
- **We are immensely thankful for the trust and support you placed in us this year and we are grateful for your partnership.**
 - Thank you as well for your constructive feedback in our recent parent survey.
- **Welcome new families! We are excited that you are joining our St M community!**

Our Plan for the Coming 2021-22 School Year

Looking ahead, here is what we HOPE next year will look like and what we are planning for, pending any new mandates from the Governor or a spike in local COVID numbers.

While we are so very happy to see the steady decline of COVID infections in RVA and Virginia, we are mindful that COVID variants are spiking greatly in India, Japan, and South Korea, and parts of Europe are again on quarantine lockdown. We will continue to evaluate all summer and will make any updates as needed and recommended. Our full St M community must remain vigilant and nimble, and parents need to know that things could change on a dime for schools. That said, St. Michael's is thinking positively and we are looking forward to an exciting year ahead!

- **This fall, we will return to our standard school hours:**
 - 8 a.m. to 2:55 p.m.
 - Free Morning Gym beginning at 7:15 a.m.
 - If not attending Morning Gym, the morning drop-off window is 7:40-7:55 a.m.
 - Students should be in their seats and ready to start the school day by 8 a.m.
 - Afternoon pickup is between 2:55 p.m. and 3:05 p.m.
 - Any students not picked up by 3:15 p.m. will be sent to Extended Day and charged a \$10 late fee.
 - Any student in Extended Day beyond 3:30 p.m. will be charged the applicable drop-in rate.

- **What COVID mitigation will remain in place?**
 - **Masks:**
 - Likely, but we will assess this given updated state and CDC guidelines in mid-August and will adjust as necessary. As you know, the guidelines are changing constantly. As such, we will communicate closer to the start of school about any indoor or outdoor mask requirements and updated COVID protocols as needed.
 - We had a very healthy year at school; masks may have been a big factor.
 - We will alert families in August as to if daily health screening questions and temperature checks will be necessary.
 - **Desk shields:**
 - No, but we reserve the right to return to them if there is a surge in COVID case numbers given our return to normal classroom density.
 - **Cohorts:**
 - No cohorts. Our plan is to resume normal operations/normal sections and classroom density.
 - **Physical distancing:**
 - Our plan is to resume normal operations unless advised otherwise by the state and/or the CDC.
 - A reminder that we made significant investments this year in upgraded HVAC/air filtration in our buildings.
 - **Storage:** Students will be able to use lockers and cubbies.

- **Will the COVID vaccine be mandated for children for school entry or faculty members?**
 - The freedom offered by the vaccination cannot be overstated. The ability to gather, to see a smile, to hug, are all valuable, and we hope that as vaccines are approved for younger students, our families will avail themselves of it.
 - Vaccines (Pfizer version) are now approved and available for children aged 12-15 and we **strongly encourage** taking advantage of them.
 - Until the FDA approval goes from provisional to fully approved, we won't mandate the COVID vaccine but St M will continue to evaluate this.
 - The majority of our St. Michael's faculty and staff are COVID vaccinated.

- **Will a virtual learning option be available for those that desire/need it?**
 - **NO.** Unless there is a change in the situation, we have decided we will return to in-person schooling only.
 - We won't have the same personnel available to support an online learning program, but teachers will work on ways to connect with students who are absent due to a COVID-related illness/quarantine and absences will be treated as they were pre-COVID.
 - Middle School assignments will be posted on Google Classroom. Lower School assignments will be sent home.
 - Teachers will work to get students caught up when they return to school.
 - For parents that want to stay remote, there are a number of online alternatives that are more cost-effective for parents than what St. Michael's provides and in some ways are much better because they focus solely on remote learning.

- **Dress Code:**
 - St M will return to our standard dress code for the 2021-22 school year. We will send out the dress code standards and post them on our website in early June.
 - The one modification is that our third through eighth grade students will no longer be required to tuck in straight-hemmed golf/collared shirts. If students are wearing a sweater or sweatshirt, they must tuck in the shirt underneath.
 - Parent reminder: students will continue to go outdoors and use our 70 acres for learning and daily activities, so they should wear the right clothing, weather gear, and sturdy shoes.
 - Students will be able to wear their St M hoodies/sweatshirts/jackets inside. No other hoodies or sweatshirts with writing or logos may be worn inside.
 - Dragon t-shirts/shirts are only to be worn on weekly Dragon Dress Fridays.

- **Will students be allowed to move around the halls, buildings, and change classes? Yes**

- **Middle School:**
 - **Advisories returning? Yes**
 - **Electives returning? Yes**
 - **Dragons' Hour for study hall and special meetings/events will also return.**
 - **Middle School Sports?**
 - Yes, though we will determine if it is inter-collegiate or intramural based on discussions this summer with the schools we compete against and given any Governor mandates.
 - **Will student lockers be used? Yes**
 - **Will students change in locker rooms for gym class? Yes,** but if there is a change in state mandates, students will be able to wear gym clothes on the days they have PE.

- **Will students change classes? Yes**
- **Social functions (dances, field trips, etc.)?**
 - We hope to return to as much normalcy as can safely be implemented while following any updated CDC and State of Virginia mandates.
- **Middle School orientation:**
 - An orientation program is planned in late August for rising sixth graders. Stay tuned for more info.
 - We are also planning for a modified orientation program during class time for seventh graders, as they too will be somewhat new to some of the systems to which we return.
- **Lunch indoors and all together? Yes**
 - Students will have the opportunity to eat indoors, but one of the things we learned is that eating outdoors is preferable.
- **Hot Lunch Program: Will Yay Lunch (our hot lunch vendor) resume?**
 - Yes, that is our goal. But will not launch until **Tuesday, Sept 7.**
 - [Yay Lunch](#) does not provide milk so families that desire it may bring it from home.
 - Students must provide their own lunch utensils.
- **Events and Traditions:**
 - We are committed to returning to as many St M events and traditions as safely possible in the coming year.
- **Field Trips:**
 - We are beginning to work on scheduling field trips. We hope that we will be able to work out the logistics for off-campus opportunities.
- **School Nurse and School Counselor plans?**
 - We are committed to having a school nurse and counselor next year.
 - How will St M address any social-emotional needs of children given pandemic stress?
 - St M is exploring expanded counseling services.
- **Extended Programs - topline of what it will look like next year:**
 - **Morning Gym** back to normal -- use it as you need it! Cars received from 7:15 to 7:35 a.m.
 - **Extended Day** dependent upon registration. Lower School (K-5) registration opened May 1, and closes May 31. Middle School registration opens August 1 to align MS sports & all-school enrichment, and closes August 15.
 - Likely split as in years past: K-1 together, 2-3 together, 4-5 together, 6-8 together
 - We plan to roll out a social-emotional learning curriculum with a focused theme each month, using our DRAGONS values as inspiration. For example, September is *Kindness* and all lessons will be geared towards that value-- kindness to our friends, kindness to our planet, etc.
 - Drop-ins are back!
 - **Afterschool Enrichment** will be “business as usual” with offerings for each grade level each season. If you have suggestions for enrichments St M should consider, please send them to Director Ashley Buffey at abuffey@stmschool.net.

- **Assembly Hall Construction:**
 - St M is excited to break ground this summer on this much-needed building
 - Please expect construction vehicles on campus next year. St M will communicate as needed any impact on carpool, etc.
 - For now, the site will be fenced off. Students and faculty will have full use of the rest of the campus.
 - We hope to have access and use of the building about a year from now.

- **Parent/Teacher Conferences:**
 - Conferences will be held 2 times per year (October and April) and given positive parent feedback, will be held via ZOOM for parent convenience. Parents may still choose to attend conferences in person.
 - Extra conferences may be scheduled at teacher/parent discretion.
 - Middle School parents are encouraged to reach out to specific academic/enrichment teachers throughout the year to set up a time to discuss any concerns they may have about their child's progress.

- **ERB's:**
 - The School is currently evaluating data from the spring ERB Milestones testing. Independent Schools around the United States have been using this test to assess potential learning loss due to the pandemic. St. Michael's administered these tests in April in order to evaluate how our students performed compared to other independent schools in the country.
 - **We are pleased to report that our St M students again scored strongly as compared to both independent school and national norms in reading and math, Milestones' two subject tests.**
 - **We believe this was so successful because St. Michael's prioritized core learning starting in August.**

Parent Questions:

Note: Some parent questions were addressed in the above summary. Additional responses are below.

- **How are the Middle School Advisory groups determined and when will we find out our child's advisory group assignment?**
 - Middle School advisories are created with care by the Middle School Director and involve conversations with the Director of Admissions, Lower School Director, Middle School teachers, and the fifth grade teachers.
 - Students and families will receive an email from their student's advisor a week to ten days prior to the first day of school. Parents will have the opportunity to meet with the advisor during orientation on Monday, August 30.

- **Are there plans to offer Middle School sports more than 2-3 days per week?**
 - Not at this time due to field/athletic facility space, the breadth of sports we offer as a small school, and coach availability. The majority of our coaches are also our faculty members.

- **Will carpool be returning to pre-COVID methods and perhaps adding arrows to the carpool lanes? What about staggering carpool drop-off times?**
 - We plan for carpool to return to pre-COVID methods whereby students are all outside awaiting pickup.
 - St M will explore adding additional directional arrows to our carpool lanes.
 - Staggering carpool times is not doable as we have families with children in multiple grades in the same family. This was explored and addressed when the Hubbard Hall Lower School building was being built. Because more than 15 teachers teach more than one grade level, it is not feasible for us to run a staggered schedule. Nor do we have the personnel to run multiple schedules and carpools, as well as cover classrooms for a staggered schedule.

- **If a Middle School student is in a sport that doesn't start directly after school, can they stay on campus without being signed up for Extended Day?**
 - The majority of our Middle School sports start immediately at the end of the school day.
 - Should there be an instance where a sports practice starts later, there will be an opportunity to pre-register for a discounted sports Extended Day drop-in rate using our Drop-in Form (circulated in August). Unexpected drop-ins to the program will be received but will not receive the discounted rate.

- **Is St M going to go back to the 7-day (A-G) rotation schedule vs. a 5 day (Monday-Friday) schedule? And does it apply for both the Middle School and the Lower School?**
 - St M will return to the 7-day rotation schedule.
 - In 2018, the School contracted with the consulting firm ISM to propose schedules that would be best for the School and the students that included addressing the needs and expectations of the Middle School expansion. In order to meet St M's mission of superior academic instruction, the A-G schedule was determined to be the best option.
 - The Lower School is on an A-G schedule for the sake of continuity and because the two divisions share enrichment teachers.

- **Can you please address the timeline and process for sixth graders to register for electives?**
 - Current sixth and seventh grade students previewed the elective choices on Tuesday, May 18.
 - On Wednesday, May 19, during study hall, students were sent the link to the Google Form to fill out their top five choices. Priority is given to rising eighth grade students.
 - New students and rising sixth grade students will receive the registration link via email by June 1.

- **When will new sixth graders/new students find out who their Dragon Guides are?**
 - Dragon Guides will reach out to their families in the next few weeks.

- **Has St M considered setting the half day early-release days to fall on a Friday vs. during the week?**
 - Many of the speakers and organizations with whom we contracted for faculty professional development had limited Friday openings.

Note: We did receive questions during the call regarding closing exercises and events for the end of the 2020-21 school year. Those questions have since been addressed in separate communications to families.