



Mid-Year Update Zoom Meeting Summary from January 18, 2022
Presented by Bob Gregg, Head of School, and Phil Strunk, Board Chair

Thank you to all who joined us via Zoom for our Mid-Year Update. A topline summary of the meeting is below. As always, please contact Head of School Bob Gregg with any questions you may have.

Opening Remarks from Bob Gregg

- It has been such a pleasure to welcome so many parents to campus this year (parent readers, info meetings, plays, holidays events, etc.). Our community thrives best when we are engaged and all together. We rely on the participation and support of our families.
- For new families in the past 2 years, while we are proud to have been able to offer a rich child-centered academic and social program, you have only had a taste of the benefits of our community. We will continue to work to welcome and acclimate you to St. Michael's.
- **In reflecting on the last semester and the last 2 years, our world has been turned upside down with the pandemic and yet, our St M ship stays uprighted.**
 - I am MOST proud of our nimble, brave, and dedicated faculty who have not wavered in their commitment to keeping kids engaged, learning, and at the center of all we do. Nothing makes us happier than seeing our Dragons thriving, laughing, learning, and enjoying each other on our campus.
 - We continue to work hard and find ways to keep school life as normal as possible here with social development experiences such as dances, plays, sports, events, spirit weeks, and more. We hope you all enjoyed our first-ever Christmas parade!
 - COVID pushed us to make our Outdoor Education program even more robust for LS students who are quick to show their love of the program. We continue to investigate ways to enrich the program, creating a unique offering that focuses on young children's emotional wellness which is so needed in these uncertain times.
 - We have navigated the pandemic as safely as possible. Our COVID mitigation protocols continue to work. Looking ahead, we have more to share later in this presentation on the evolution of our protocols.
 - We are grateful that our parents have been quick to let us know that they recognize how fortunate their children are to be a part of this learning community.
- **Admissions/Enrollment:** We have a strong applicant pool for every opening at the school and we anticipate being fully enrolled again.
- **Year-End:** Our plans for end-of-year celebrations continue to be fluid but they will joyfully happen.

- **Volunteers Needed! The best way for all of us to immerse ourselves in the St M community is to volunteer and participate.**
 - We have several keystone events coming up that we need your help with, including our 31st Annual Auction on April 1 and everyone's favorite-- Magic Dragon Day on May 7.
 - The Auction proceeds directly benefit our vibrant programs and offerings. We are excited to be back in person this year and we want this auction to be a night to remember. **Therefore, we depend upon YOU for auction item donations and volunteer support. Everything from demonstrating class projects to checking guests in is a great way to see everyone and feel connected to our Dragon community.**
 - Just as the auction is a social high spot for parents, Magic Dragon Day, our annual spring festival in May, is a much-anticipated day for students --filled with games, friendly competition, food, the traditional and much-loved Maypole dance, and more.
 - **It takes MANY HANDS to offer these events and we NEED you!**
 - **It's easy to volunteer.** Just email Bernly Bressler, our SMPA president, and let him know you're interested in getting involved.
Email: blbressler@gmail.com

Major Dates for the Upcoming 2022-23 School Year

- For planning purposes, major dates for the 22-2023 school year may be found on our website under [News/Announcements](#).

COVID Planning and Mitigation

- **Effective January 18, 2022, St M has adopted CDC's and VDH's updated/shortened quarantine guidance for K-12 schools. As individual cases are unique, an exposed or Covid+ individual's return date will still be determined in consultation with Nurse Maben.**
 - These updated protocols may be found [HERE](#) and are also posted on our website.
 - Under the new guidance, quarantine requirements currently differ for those who are exposed depending upon vaccination status.
 - If an individual's vaccination status is **NOT** on file in our Magnus Health portal, we will assume the individual to be **unvaccinated**.
 - As COVID vaccines are now available for all ages in our K-8 student population, we continue to strongly recommend that families vaccinate their children.
 - Understanding our vaccination rates is tremendously helpful in decisions on everything from field trips and lunch to performances and social gatherings. **Please continue to upload vaccination cards to your child's MagnusHealth portal.**
- **Will St. Michael's mandate COVID vaccines for school entry?**
 - We strongly believe the vaccine is the best way forward. That said...
 - Federal health agencies and VDH have yet to require the COVID vaccination for school entry. We will continue to monitor this.
 - Thus, though St M will continue to strongly encourage individuals to be vaccinated, at this time we do not plan to require it.

- **Our COVID leadership team participates in weekly live pandemic briefings** targeted specifically to independent schools with leading pediatric virologists from around the country. These medical experts are hopeful that by the spring the pandemic will shift toward an endemic stage.
- **Mask Protocols and the recent Governor Youngkin Executive Order:**

St. Michael's is aware of Executive Order 2 (EO2), which was signed by Governor Youngkin (on January 15, 2022) and relates to student masking in Virginia schools. At the same time, the Omicron variant continues to be highly contagious, as evidenced in the numbers on our COVID dashboard and from VDH.

As the pandemic continues, our primary objective is to preserve in-person learning at St. Michael's while prioritizing the health and well-being of students, faculty, and the full community. For that reason, the School's universal mask policy, which requires indoor masking for all children and adults on campus, will remain in place at this time.

In consultation with educational leaders in Virginia, St. Michael's has given considerable thought and analysis to EO2. At this time, it is the prevailing understanding that the permissive language of EO2 permits St. Michael's to continue with our current universal masking policy, a policy that is consistent with the recommendations of both the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

If anyone -- child or adult -- forgets to bring a mask to school, we will happily provide them with one. Those that refuse to wear a mask will be asked to leave campus.

From here, St. Michael's will stay the course on our required COVID mitigation policies until we see a significant improvement in case trends. We anticipate communicating an update to families about our mask and mitigation policies on or about February 15, unless circumstances warrant any changes to St. Michael's policies sooner.

Faculty Update

St. Michael's is pleased to announce that Michael Jones has been appointed Director of Technology, effective January 20, 2022. Through 2017, Mr. Jones was a member of the St. Michael's faculty for 6 years, serving the School as a science teacher, dean of students, design technology teacher, LEGO Robotics coach, and sponsor of Middle School rock band. Michael also assisted with the oversight and maintenance of our server, hardware, and software. Stepping away from St. Michael's in 2017, Mr. Jones managed the day-to-day operations of his family's on-site dental imaging business before returning to schools, serving as Registrar for Hungary Creek Middle School (Henrico County) and math/science/design teacher at Seven Hills School.

Mr. Jones brings significant educational and technological experience to the St M Administrative staff and team. His deep connections with the School run beyond his former employment; he's an alum, a current parent, and his wife Kensey is a second grade teacher. He has a profound love for the School, and we are delighted to welcome him back.

Strategic Planning

- In December, the School administration and the Board of Directors engaged a consulting firm, Warren Whitney, to aid us in developing our next strategic plan. This will be a 24-month process during which we will assess our School's mission, survey a range of stakeholders for input, and develop a roadmap for the School's leadership for the next five years.
- This is an exciting opportunity for our community to participate in shaping the way forward for our school. Please be on the lookout for a survey in the spring and for other ways you may engage in the strategic planning process.

Tuition for the Upcoming 2022-2023 School Year

Early the week of January 24, families will receive a letter announcing tuition for the 2022-23 school year. Consistent with prior years, there will be a small increase in the cost to attend our school (which is right in line with the precedent from prior years).

The Board of Directors takes its tuition setting obligation very seriously and gives careful consideration to this subject each calendar year. In our deliberations, we are guided by a few simple principles:

- As an institution, we are dependent on tuition for almost all of our annual operating expenses.
- The largest line item on the expense side of the budget is personnel. These are the people who work so hard to make our school what it is. Recognizing the importance of retaining our talented team of faculty and staff, compensation for these positions should be as competitive as possible.
- We understand the value proposition that all parents make in deciding whether to send their children to St. Michael's, and we strive to safeguard our unique place among the range of school options available in our region. We believe our tuition level is one ingredient among many that make our school community so special.

Re-enrollment contracts will be issued on January 31 and will be due back by noon on Thursday, February 10.

The New Assembly Hall

- Construction of our new Assembly Hall continues at an incredible pace and is on schedule. Barring any setbacks, we believe our eighth grade (Class of 2022) will graduate in this new building later this spring.
- At the same time, our fundraising efforts for this project, ably led by Senior Development Officer Mary King Coleman and her Capital Campaign committee team, are entering their final phase. The multi-year plan to construct the new Lower School building and the Assembly Hall called for a significant financial commitment, and our community has been rising to the task. To date, over \$5 million has been raised, which represents the school's largest philanthropic effort ever.
- **Your family should have received the recent campaign newsletter with updates on the One Together Campaign. As detailed in that document, the Board of Directors and a**

few special friends of the school have raised \$250,000 and issued a 2 to 1 fundraising matching challenge that will help us realize the balance needed to complete our important project.

- **Please take this opportunity to join the campaign, help us realize the final few hundred thousand dollars needed to build our Assembly Hall, and complete the vision for our wonderful campus.**
- Stay tuned for more information on celebrations and events to herald the opening of this new building and for your opportunity to support this exciting effort.

Closing Remarks

Overall, we are moving forward with confidence that we can do it -- and that means proceeding sensibly with school activities and events and all the daily school life things that we love. We are all anxious to get back to our pre-COVID practices, but as we reflect upon our pandemic journey, let's be sure to take pride and say, **"Look at how far we have come!"**