

Dear St. Michael's Parents and Families—

Please join us this Friday, November 8, for our annual **St. Michael's Field Day**, a half day set aside to encourage teamwork across the grades, to celebrate the pure joy of playing outdoors, and to build a stronger sense of community and relationship among students and faculty. Coach Greene's entry in this week's email, below, provides more detail; we do welcome you to join us for the entire morning, or part of the morning, from about 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon for this fun occasion. Please keep in mind as well that we dismiss early on Friday, at 12:00 noon, after the Field Day event, for the start to our three-day Veterans' Day weekend. Classes will resume on Tuesday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, at the regular time. For those of you heading out of town for the long weekend, we wish you safe travels and lots of fun!

Please consider as well joining us for a round of golf, or just for good company, or both, this Saturday, November 9, for our annual **Vaqueros Golf Tournament**, generously sponsored this year by Dr. Duane Dyson (P' 20, '26) of Dyson Pediatrics. We appreciate Dr. Dyson's efforts and the efforts of so many who have helped coordinate this fun event. The tourney will take place at Forty Niners Golf Club on Saturday, with golfers and guests arriving for registration at 11:00 a.m., lunch until 12:30 p.m., and tee off at 12:45p.m. Please email Marnie Ackerman, our Director of Philanthropy, at [mackerman@stmichael.net](mailto:mackerman@stmichael.net) for any and all questions. Hope to see you on the links!

With the **Halloween and Día de los Muertos** holiday and celebration behind us, I want to give a belated thanks to Katherine Leyton (P '20) and to her mother for all of the creative decorations we had on campus for the Halloween season. You may recall the 'skeleton selfie station' that Katherine and her mom set up on the bench just outside the front office. In the month leading up to Halloween, our skeleton-in-residence became affectionately known, thanks to a handful of our Lower School students, as "Sammy." We hope to see Sammy the Skeleton back on campus in 12 months' time to lend his (or her) spooky charm again to all passers-by. Thank you, Mrs. Leyton!

Please remember, too, that we have begun our **plastics-free campus initiative** this month. We will no longer sell water in plastic bottles during lunch, or elsewhere on campus, and we instead encourage students to bring with them a reusable water bottle, or thermos, from home for lunch and for use throughout the day. In addition, as noted in last week's email, we have also begun the process of eliminating all plastic utensils and styrofoam products from our lunch program and replacing them

with biodegradable utensils and service ware. Next steps in our green initiative? I have heard wonderful suggestions in conversation with students, faculty, and parents this year and last. As we move into more formal long-range planning together at the end of this academic year, after the self-study for re-accreditation in March, we look forward to exploring in-depth the ways that we can support more effective stewardship of our local environment. Thank you to all who have lent their wisdom in helping us achieve these small steps, with special thanks to Kelly Dewey, our director of student meals.

A closing note, about **first-trimester grades**: Next week (or very shortly thereafter), grade reports for the first third of the year will go home. What do report cards tell us, tell you, tell your sons and daughters about their learning here at St. Michael's? Grades represent a student's level of achievement in their classes—whether art or physical education, mathematics or science—over a finite period of time, in this case within the course of the first 55 days of the 2019-2020 academic year.

For my own children, especially perhaps for the older two, I expect them to invest ample time and energy and care to earn excellent grades, with help and guidance and encouragement from me and Alison along the way. “Being a student is your *job*,” I tell them. “Take it seriously.” But perhaps even more important for me, for us, is understanding and helping our kids to understand that learning happens over a lifetime, that the excitement and joy of learning—while it may not always result in an “A”—is what excellent schools help instill over time. Trimester grades are a snapshot in time, not the whole picture.

Character development and personal growth, what my Jesuit teachers in high school used to define as “becoming persons *for and with* others,” is vitally important. One might argue that it's even more important than academic success. The two, however, are not mutually exclusive, and that is the balance we aspire to here at St. Michael's—developing excellence in character, empathy and kindness in relationships with one another, with excellence in academics. To that end, consider reading the following short research essay from this month's *The Atlantic* about this drive for academic success and the importance of balancing it with virtues like empathy, kindness, and respect: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/12/stop-trying-to-raise-successful-kids/600751/>

All good wishes again for the three-day weekend!

Looking forward to seeing you on campus,

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