

Q&A with Robert “Bob” E. Gregg, III, Head of School



After an extensive search that involved St. Michael's administrative team, faculty, parents, students, alumni, and members of the community, St. Michael's welcomed Robert E. Gregg, III as its seventh Head of School on July 1. Bob impressed the Search Committee and the Board with his passion for K-8 education, a demonstrated capacity for community-building, and his commitment to St. Michael's unique culture, mission, and values.

A native New Englander, Bob attended the Holderness School, received his bachelor's degree in political science from the University of New Hampshire, and holds an MBA with an emphasis in non-profits and marketing from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He has held a variety of positions at independent schools including teacher, director of admission and financial aid, head of lower school, and most recently, head of school at Green Hedges, a preschool-grade 8 school in Vienna, Va. Bob has served on the board of the Virginia Association of Independent Schools since 2014. He and his wife, Kathy, have three daughters, Ellie, a college sophomore, Ruby, a high school junior, and Anna, a seventh grader who will attend St. Michael's.

What are some words that describe you?

Thoughtful, outdoor enthusiast, one who appreciates humor.

How would people describe you as a Head of School?

Faculty/Staff: Affable, approachable, collaborative. Students might say, "Mr. Gregg visits our classrooms often and likes to sit with us at lunch. He also plays a mean game of Four Square." Parents: He knows my child well and cares deeply for his or her well-being. He built a strong sense of community at his previous school.

Why did you decide to become an educator?

Since early childhood, I have relished the independent school environment. As a youngster, I was blessed with rewarding challenges posed by outstanding teachers and mentors, and since then I have known that I would bestow similar opportunities upon others.

What do you believe are the benefits of a K-8 school?

I am drawn to St. Michael's for the fact that the School focuses specifically on teaching and learning in early childhood through grade 8, a model for which I believe is superior. A K-8 school intentionally extends early childhood and expands service and leadership opportunities for young children. At St. Michael's, a young person has the advantage to apply many skills that may go unrecognized or get buried in a setting dominated by older students.

What are your first impressions of St. Michael's?

For years, I have known of the stellar academic program and strong sense of community at St. Michael's, the culture of kindness the School espouses, and the widespread affection for the School throughout Richmond. St. Michael's is truly a special place and much-loved. I felt very warmly welcomed during my visits to campus.

What are you most excited about with your new position?

To get to know people, some that we've briefly met already and others we've not yet met. I'm also excited to work with the School to realize its goals for program and facility — some that are already identified and others we will identify together.

Who or what inspires you?

Students who find the courage to "dig in" and ask relevant questions, including those that don't have obvious yes/no answers, inspire me. Faculty who work to better themselves year over year inspire me. Successful leaders at other schools inspire me. One who stands for what's right in the face of adversity inspires me. My wife and children inspire me. Beautiful natural settings inspire me.

What can you share about your family?

My wife, Kathy, is also an educator. She most recently was a high school English teacher at Holton-Arms School. She is the best teacher I know! Together, our daughters are cheerfully boisterous and healthy siblings. They are very active among friends, soccer, lacrosse, and dance. Their entire elementary and secondary school experiences have been within exceptional independent schools where they have succeeded as scholars, athletes, artists, leaders, and followers. Individually, they are talented and caring. Each has a large group of friends and a few very close friends.

What will this move mean to your family?

Our move to Richmond is significant! Having spent 10 years living in Northern Virginia, we were fully ensconced in the community and our schools. However, for personal and professional reasons, we had spent increasing amounts of time in Richmond in recent years. We thought carefully about any possible move. Richmond's vibrant cultural center filled with museums, art galleries, theaters, higher education institutions, and an abundance of secondary school options are an exciting draw for us.

What are you currently reading/watching/listening to?

I often read a couple of books at a time. Currently, I am reading "The Art of Fielding" by Chad Harbach and also "Atonement" by Ian McEwan. I listened to WAMU (Washington's NPR station) each early morning while unloading and reloading the dishwasher and feeding our black lab, Rhett, and am now tuning in to Richmond's NPR station.

What do you do for fun?

I love to sail and windsurf. I still have and use one of the original windsurfers given to me secondhand when I was 15 years old. I've done a little bit of offshore sailing and will jump at future opportunities! I also love to ski and grew up as an alpine ski racer. My afternoon bus stop as a youngster was the local ski area. I also like hiking as I gain a lot of energy from beautiful, natural settings in the forest and mountains. I enjoy forestry and actively manage our family's timberland in the Adirondack Mountains. Each of the above-mentioned fun activities are intermittent, perhaps seasonal. Thus, more of the day-to-day "fun" is easily earned through watching my own children and students participate in their athletic and artistic pursuits.

If you had one more hour in the day, what would you do with it?

I would spend the additional hour each day connecting with my two sisters, my brother, and their families.

What is your favorite ice cream flavor?

I've never met an ice cream flavor and disagreed with it. As an ice cream eating contest champion (seriously), I love ice cream. I think of it as its own food group. That said, if Ben & Jerry's ever makes Coconut Almond Fudge Chip again (it's currently on B&J's "The Flavor Graveyard's Most Missed Flavors"), I'd choose it.