

April 28, 2020

Good afternoon,

Each day the Sunny Hollow staff and I meet virtually. It's an important part of us staying connected as a team. We always start with stories from the "classrooms": successes, uplifting news, and things that our beloved students share. It's time that we value as a group and a reminder of the physical energy and life your children normally fill the halls and classrooms – and our lives – with. We truly miss their presence.

The transition to virtual learning has been a significant change and challenge for all of us – each of us meeting these challenges from a different starting point. Through it all, I am grateful for the grace and courtesy with which students, families, faculty and staff have met the challenge. We take great joy in guiding learning for students through virtual and non-traditional platforms. Equally important, we are thankful for these opportunities to connect during the time apart – and your continued trust and support.

I'm writing to you today to update you on the future – uncertain as it might be at the moment – and our plans moving forward.

Recent guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health and the CDC, and the Governor's extension of distance learning for Minnesota schools through the end of the academic year, means that we will not resume on-campus learning for the remainder of the 2019/2020 school year. This is a disappointment felt throughout our community.

That said, Sunny Hollow will return to normalcy at some point in the near future. And, in the interim, we will carry on the traditions that make us who we are. Through families and staff – and having interviewed last spring – I know that now is a special time at Sunny Hollow. And we are making plans to ensure that annual transition ceremonies take place for our students and families. More details will be forthcoming, but please note that the Casa transition ceremony for Kindergarten students and the Upper Elementary transition ceremony will be held as originally scheduled on the school calendar.

On the logistical front, we are working to coordinate the pickup of student belongings in such a way that your child(ren) may be able to see their teachers. As Minnesota is still under mandatory social distancing, we are not scheduling the pickups until the directives are lifted. Again, please stay tuned for further information.

Regarding Casa Summer programming, we optimistically plan to start June 8. That said, we'll be flexible with registrations and refunds if we need to deviate from that start date. At this time, we are reaching out to our community partners who will be offering programming for the Elementary Summer Camps. As we hear from them, we will communicate with all families, but especially those who have already signed up.

Looking ahead to the 2020-21 school year, we are planning (fingers crossed) for an onsite start at Sunny Hollow. Prudence, however, dictates that we simultaneously create several models in

the event that COVID-19 interferes with our ability to hold traditional onsite classes. The ability to be creative in meeting the needs of the children and reimagining Montessori education is more important than ever and we're thinking outside the box. As we formalize potential scenarios, look for an update from me in the coming months.

Reflecting back on the past few months, I appreciate the feedback that you have provided to me and to your guides. Along those lines, look for a survey later this week and **please complete the survey** so that we can continue to refine our distance learning program. It is important to hear from as many of you as possible.

In this time of uncertainty and all of the questions and challenges it brings, I know we are all connected throughout SHM community. We will strive to keep in touch, support each other in all possible ways and remain grateful for the presence in each other's lives. Please stay safe and reach out if you have any questions or concerns.

As always, please contact me if you have any questions or concerns. In particular, let me know if you are experiencing difficulty finding childcare.

In closing, I'd like to leave you with a quotation from Montessorian Susan Mayclin Stephenson that resonated with me. As you consider the education experience of your child for the next month or so, I hope that it does the same for you.

"Montessori is not a method of getting a list of facts into the heads of children. It is instead a system of careful observation and continued adaptation to create environments that can bring out the best in humans, and this means children, their parents, and all of the adults in schools. This is the greatest gift Montessori education has to offer. The academic excellence, that is a result, is a by-product of meeting the mental, physical, psychological, and spiritual needs of children at all stages of development."

I hope to see your family at the Sunny Hollow Montessori Virtual Gala at 6:00 p.m. this Friday!

Take care,

Sandy