

March 13, 2020

Dear Families,

As I am sure you are aware, last evening Governor Gretchen Whitmer issued an executive order calling for the closing of all public and private schools in the State of Michigan for the period of Monday, March 16 through Sunday, April 5, 2020. This action was taken in an effort to slow the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus in our state.

Although the order pertained to students from kindergarten through Grade 12, we have made the decision to close all of our programs, including toddler and preschool levels, for the same time period. This decision was not arrived at casually, as I know it will pose a hardship for some families. But our commitment to keeping your children safe (and, by association, families and staff as well) is our first priority, and we feel that we can best fulfill that commitment by closing.

We will also be adjusting our spring break to fall within the mandated time period. The new break dates will be March 30-April 3, 2020. Making this change will reduce the time away from the building to three weeks (2 weeks mandated + spring break) from four weeks.

At this writing, 46 of the 50 states, Washington D.C., and 113 countries or territories have confirmed cases of coronavirus. If you are planning domestic or international travel, we ask that you self-quarantine yourself and your children for two weeks after returning from a potentially infected area. This restriction will also apply to air travel to any destination.

During the next two weeks, we will be delivering “distance learning” to our students. This will take different forms depending upon the age of the children, and will also involve differing levels of parent involvement to facilitate the technology involved. We are currently working with our staff to train them on the various platforms, and they will be in communication with you soon. We will do our best, in age-appropriate ways, to continue offering as much program content as possible.

There is much still unknown about COVID-19, and because of the current difficulties with testing (quantity of test kits available, criteria a patient must meet before testing can be administered, and elapsed time before test results are available) limiting possible exposure is the most prudent course of action for all of us. We encourage you, as best you are able, to use this break to reduce or eliminate contact with other people, especially in group settings. We also request that you follow for yourself and your children, even more carefully than usual, the recommended procedures for reducing the spread of the virus, as listed below.

The CDC and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services have put out a number of communications with suggestions for cleaning and personal hygiene practices. Some of these are familiar to even the youngest children, as they are the same procedures we use and teach daily in our school. They are:

- Wash hands often and thoroughly (for 20 seconds) with soap and water. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and immediately throw the tissue in the trash.

- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, keyboards, cell phones, and light switches.
- Avoid handshakes.
- Avoid contact with people who are ill.
- Stay at home when you are ill.
- Learn about the symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, dry cough, difficulty breathing), and be prepared to self-quarantine if necessary. If you have symptoms, call your health care provider for direction.

Several documents have been posted on our schools' websites, including two that offer suggestions for talking with your children about the coronavirus, and we hope these will be useful to you. ([Click here for resources on website.](#)) Above all it is important to walk the fine line between helping children understand why safety practices are necessary and inducing undue fear. Stay calm yourself, share information in age-appropriate ways, and stick to the facts.

Recent events related to the COVID-19 virus are unprecedented, and the situation is changing constantly. This letter contains information that we know to be true as it is being written, but we, like you, will be monitoring the newsfeeds and adjusting accordingly. You can look forward to communication from your child's teachers very soon regarding distance learning and how it will be implemented for each class.

We appreciate your patience as we work toward good solutions in these challenging circumstances.

Sincerely,

Kay Neff, Head of School

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