



Dear Community Parents,

One of Community School’s greatest strengths is the high value we place on meaningful connections and relationships. Becoming a part of the “community of Community” is an important part of the CS experience, not only for students, but also teachers, parents, administrators, staff, alumni, and even the Head of School. We have so many traditions that are built around this sense of belonging, whether they be annual events like Goldy Day or Grandparent’s Day, or daily rituals like the Head of School greeting each child as they enter the school. *We* are Community School.

And that is one of the most difficult parts of this self-quarantine: Whether we are social distancing at school, or physically distancing during remote learning, we are at odds with our philosophy and our way of doing things. So how do you balance safety and health through isolation while also creating and reinforcing personal connections?

The answer is that you make it a priority.

Just as we have done with health and safety and distance learning, we are assembling a task force to guide us as we welcome new members to our community and create opportunities for families to reconnect. This group is looking at all of the ways we connect with each other, working to ensure that we do not lose our shared sense of belonging.

In the Classroom:

Because we will be restricting interaction between students who do not share a homeroom during the school day, we will be looking for ways to ensure that students are still connecting deeply

with other children. Using technology, we will certainly be continuing essential components such as the buddy system (where an older student connects with and mentors a younger), as well as continuing our Family Groups. We will also, though, be thinking creatively about smaller group social dynamics, within each homeroom, developing and deepening meaningful relationships. And we will continue to create additional ways to connect students who do not share a homeroom.

Community School Traditions:

Traditions are special and important at Community School; think of the excitement around family events such as Goldy Day or Halloween, or the importance to our students as they move through key traditions such as the Dino Dig, grade level plays, or the sixth grade camping trip. Some of these can continue with relatively minor adjustments for social distancing, but many will need to be rethought. That work of reimagining our school traditions has already begun, and I am excited about the new vision for these events. Some of our traditions may look a little different next year, but we are working hard to keep their core value alive while also making the necessary adjustments for health and safety.

Parent Involvement:

One of the great strengths of our community is the partnership between parents and the school; in fact, it is important enough that I discuss it in every admissions interview I conduct. Our parents serve in so many volunteer capacities, from grade chair to field trip driver to serving on the pledge week committee. Parents are often on campus helping out, sharing a meal with a student, or just grabbing a cup of coffee in the morning. Unfortunately, we face some challenges to this dynamic and will have to implement some necessary restrictions. In order to maintain our health protocols, we temporarily will not be able to allow parents the same level of access to our campus, as it is essential that we maintain the integrity of our social distance policies. This requires the school to re-examine many of the ways we have relied on parents in the past and some adjustments will need to be made. The school and the CPA will be working together in this task. Parental involvement is an essential component of the Community School experience, and while it may look a bit different next year, it will remain an enormous part of what we do.

Inclusivity:

Working to help every child and family feel that Community is ‘their’ school is an essential part of what we do every year. The diversity of our families, who come to us from throughout the region--and actually the world--and who represent every culture, is a cornerstone of who we are. We want all of our families to feel that they belong at Community, and have created events

throughout the year--beginning with our Goldy Day picnic, continuing through Parent Diversity Group educational events, and culminating at Bowling Night--that are designed to build inclusivity and a sense of belonging. This will be more challenging this year, especially at the beginning of the year, given the limitations on in-person interaction. The Parent Diversity Group has begun thinking about ways to carry out their twin missions--educating parents about issues of equity and diversity, and fostering inclusivity within the parent body--and how they can creatively still achieve those.

Mental Health and Wellness:

The mental health and wellness of our families and employees will continue to be a priority. We understand that there are many challenges that we all face as we adjust to the “new normal.” That is why we are putting together a team of parents, teachers, and the school counselor to create structures of support for families, students, and employees. This group will provide information to us all on best practices for maintaining mental health and balance while living through uncertain times, as well as creating fun and interesting ways to break down the social isolation that some of us may feel. Additionally, our school counselor will be providing tools for children to use both in and out of the classroom, in addition to being available for children and parents to help them with specific issues that may arise.

Contact with the School:

Because we will necessarily be physically more distant than usual for a period of time, it is doubly important to keep open lines of communication between home and school. We are researching technologies that will provide parents--especially the parents of our younger students--a better understanding of the classroom. And as always, teachers will be communicating with parents in a variety of ways, including tried-and-true methods such as phone calls. It is also important to us that we continue to hear from parents as we move forward with our plans for the fall. I have heard from many of you over the past two months, and I welcome feedback, concerns, and questions at any time. And for those of you who want to use the new technology of Zoom, just let me know and we'll set up a time to talk!

I also want to reiterate that we are actively searching for ideas and suggestions. You can feel free to send those directly to me, or to solutions@communityschool.com. Let me note that the latter is not intended as a substitute for our normal communication, but as a clearinghouse for great ideas; we capture them there, and then distribute out to the appropriate group of planners.

Over the course of the summer we will continue to refine our planning, and we will be updating families weekly. I have been so pleased with the eagerness of our planning groups as they dig

into the work, and excited by the creative solutions that incorporate thinking about health and wellness, what Community School believes in, and the importance of remaining connected with one another. And I know that, this time next year, we will be able to say that not only has the school stayed true to its mission and Guiding Principles, but we have also stayed strong and united as the community of Community.

Enjoy the start of summer, and stay well.

Warmly,

Bob

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the letters 'B' and 'C' in a stylized, cursive font.

Bob Cooke | Head of School

Dear Community Parents,