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Jeff Barclay
Director of Advancement
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Barbara Morrow
Irene Nadler

March 11, 2020

Dear Maple Street families,

Thank you so much for your attention to these regular health updates from Maple Street. We are doing our best to keep you informed and to digest information from public health experts and other area schools.

The health of Maple Street community members remains stable; our community member tested **NEGATIVE** for COVID-19 (hurray!) and there are **NO** new community members being monitored for novel coronavirus known to us, but our thinking about the role of Maple Street in community and public health efforts is evolving. While we continue to follow guidance from the CDC and work closely with state and local health officials, we have also been consulting with an academic epidemiologist to consider the ways that Maple Street might carry on with “joyful learning” as well as abide by our mission to “individual and social responsibility” and to endeavor to protect community members who are susceptible to illness as well as support our local health care system. That is, our school is part of a broader community, and public health experts recommend that, in times of epidemics, the community make efforts to reduce social mixing, and minimize the average size of groups that form, for whatever reason.

We have all been diligently handwashing and abiding by our health guidelines; this is a major thing we can all do to help protect public health. Everyone is also striving to reduce exposure to novel coronavirus (for instance, by learning to use social distancing, e.g., by not shaking hands at the door in the morning which still feels awkward to many of us). Still, because we are in early days of the epidemic, it is not entirely clear whether there are right or wrong ways for us to proceed.

Thus, in these tricky times, Maple Street will support families opting to keep children at home to engage in social distancing while we keep school open for those who choose to send their children to school.

Nicholas A. Christakis, MD, PhD, MPH, is a physician and sociologist who is a professor at Yale and an expert in such matters (you can read a recent interview with him here <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/03/does-closing-schools-slow-spread-novel-coronavirus> or listen to him reviewing what is known about COVID-19 here <https://samharris.org/podcasts/190-respond-coronavirus/>). He notes that “school closures are one of the most beneficial ‘non-pharmaceutical interventions’ (NPI) that can be employed to cope with the pandemic, more effective even than reactive quarantines or banning of public gatherings.”



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Informed by Dr. Christakis's research, for now, Maple Street will offer a hybrid school model beginning on Thursday, March 12. What is a hybrid school model? Good question! Here is how we are defining it at Maple Street: school will be open for families who choose to send their children to school. For families who prefer to keep children home, we will offer virtual school to digitally connect children to their classrooms. Teachers will use videoconferencing technology as well as email, Google Apps, and the portal to share classroom experiences and assignments. Both choices are OK.

Maple Street is offering hybrid school as a way of honoring the diversity of needs within our community. Closing school is a really big deal. It can impose hardships on many families, including for parents who are themselves health care workers on whom our community depends. One goal of hybrid school is to support families who are in close contact with people in high-risk groups or who are opting for self-isolation. Another goal of hybrid school is to support families who do not have access to home-based childcare. In short, hybrid school is intended to be sensitive to the various needs of all families during a sensitive time while reducing social contact where feasible.

Virtual school is clearly not a perfect replication of campus-based school. Glitches are inevitable and will take some time to figure out. We are ready to work though this with you in partnership and in our common commitment to doing what is right for children and our community.

Should you be interested in participating in virtual school, please let me, Jonathan Jacobs, and your child's teachers know, and we will get hybrid school started for you. Otherwise, I will look forward to seeing you at school.

All the best,