

3/22/2020

Dear Summerfield Community,

Our new Spring Break has begun, and it is just the very beginning of the turn of the season. In Nature and for many religions it is the time of rebirth. Since the Governor's announcement that distance learning might well happen for the remainder of this academic year and the county Shelter-in-Place order, the Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE) changed their message about returning to in-school classes on April 6th: *Following the March 17 Shelter in Place order, school districts will be working with the county's public health officer to determine an appropriate reopening date. We will share updates as they are known.* Summerfield will follow the county health department and public school districts in the timing of the decision and announcement that it is safe to return to in-class learning. In the meantime, the faculty is using the coming two weeks to plan for the possibility that distance learning might continue through the school year.

This situation has many challenges, and these may continue to evolve. Here are some questions we are working on now:

- How do we provide teacher lead from-home learning in a way that is true to a Summerfield Waldorf education and does not overload students and families with screen time?
- How do we respond to the needs of the students and parents to strengthen and grow the learning from home experience?
- How do we maintain our connections as a community so we can grow even stronger from facing these challenges together, knowing that these challenges are social, familial and financial and that they are likely to grow and intensify?

As we consider these questions and more, we have some initial recommendations which come from the Anthroposophical view of supporting good health. While we know aspects of this guidance may be difficult or impractical, we offer it for you to work with, and we respect your personal choices and situations:

1. For a minimum of three hours a day, you and your children should have wifi and phones off and not on your person. Spend as much of this time as you can outside, in Nature, if possible. Turn off wifi and power down devices at night before sleep.
2. Establish a rhythm at home and work hard to keep it. Your children's teachers are working to support you with age-appropriate suggestions.

3. For students who need schoolwork and communication with teachers to come over the internet, mediate for your children as much as you can and feel is appropriate. By this we mean that, depending on the age of your child, you might read and write the emails and print out and upload work. Again, while we suggest as little exposure for children as possible, we wish to be respectful of your choices while using the technology necessary to communicate and provide work and support between teacher and student.

We understand that home learning is being added to working from home and sheltering in, and that some of these suggestions may not be fully achievable. We know you have become co-teachers with us to whatever degree you can, and that this is also challenging. We realize and expect that you will need to personalize the suggestions and assignments from your teachers to make the learning most productive for your child.

It is also foremost on our minds that some families may or may soon be facing financial difficulties that impact their ability to continue normal tuition payments. We ask that anyone with concerns please contact the school directly via the finance office or the Governance Council so that we may work toward a solution for each circumstance.

The faculty is working hard so that Summerfield learning-from-home feels as much like the Summerfield experience as possible. This is a newly developing educational format; it requires that we find a way to respond to the needs of students and parents, while remaining true to the foundations of Waldorf education. We are committed to making sure this process becomes more refined as we work closely with you. To meet this goal, we must continue to deepen our connections and coordinated efforts as parents, faculty, and school.

The photo in the Press Democrat of one of our fathers working with his first grade daughter on her school assignment - counting the flowers while on a walk - and the visible warmth between them, paints a strong picture of what we can be at our best as a community.

Respectfully,
The Governance Council,
Ignacio Garat, Jason Gross, Rachel McGarva