

Community Message 7/23/2020

Please note the link to a new survey located at the end of this letter.

Dear Summerfield Community,

Since last Friday's message in response to the Governor's announcement, we have looked into a third possible way at least part of the school could be on campus. This is the waiver process for elementary schools.

The Paths to On-Campus Learning

We are still waiting to hear from the County Health office if we can be outdoors, even if on the watchlist and waiting to see if Sonoma County comes off the Governor's watchlist so schools can open on campus—so far we have not. If we come off and stay off by August 2nd, we can start school 14 days later—the 17th.

The waiver process was announced by the Governor, and waivers will be issued by the county superintendent. Their office is very busy working with the state on a process for applying for this waiver. Details have not yet been announced. The waiver would apply to elementary schools. Elementary school is newly defined as Kindergarten through 8th grade. If we receive the waiver, we could have ECE (under separate licensing) through 8th grade on campus.

The early childhood village will be starting school on campus through the childcare license which is under different regulations than schools, even if we don't receive the waiver. ECE families will be receiving letters soon outlining the beginning of school protocols along with the start date later in August for the younger children. The children will be grouped in cohorts of 12 and the kindergarten and TK day will be outside. Throughout the year, the lower school and high school may operate under a different calendar and under different regulations than the Early Childhood.

In sum, with the exception of ECE which can open, we are waiting to hear on all three paths:

1) Coming off the watchlist, 2) The waiver for grades 1-8, 3) Approval from County Health for outdoors classes. The stronger our health protocols, the better for everyone's safety, and the more likely we will spend more time on campus safely. In the meantime we are busy preparing for all possibilities, with the dual prioritization of health and safety along with a high quality independent Waldorf education.

Preparations and Protocols

1) Outdoors, Distancing, and Scheduling:

We know that outdoors is much safer than indoors: tents will be set up over the weekend (no sides in good weather so outdoors; we can add sides in winter to create extra large classroom spaces). We are working on a schedule and a calendar that prioritize health and safety, maximize flexibility, and ease transitions from on-campus learning to learning-from-home. We anticipate that even if we do start on campus, the county might come back on the watchlist, or we might have illness in the community that forces part or all of the school to return to home learning. Going back on the watchlist will not automatically trigger a return to full distance learning, if the community overall demonstrates a good health record.

2) Cohorts and Quarantine Periods:

To maximize health standards and create smooth transitions, our schedule from grades 1-12 will have all the subjects blocked, meaning, in addition to main lesson, subject and art classes will happen for four weeks and then change. This is to reduce to a minimum the number of teachers working with a class for a four week period of time to create a cohort of each class. After four weeks we will have either a week of vacation—like Thanksgiving week or Winter break—or we will have a special week of learning from home. With the last Friday of the block from home, this would make 10 days of time away from campus between blocks, creating a quarantine period so that teachers can start the new block with a new cohort with the minimum risk of increasing possible exposures. It has been shown that a very high percentage of cases show symptoms within 10 days. ECE will have small classes and keep groups separate for cohorting.

3) Calendar for the Year:

The full calendar and schedule will be announced soon. For the lower school and high school the calendar has regular classes starting on August 17th—on campus if possible or from home. It has a Thanksgiving week break, a Winter break around the holidays, a week of Spring Break in March and the year ending on June 18th. If we can be on campus, we will have special days with students the week of the 10th to orient to our new protocols and spaces. These will be assigned by section of the school, if any of the three paths to opening on campus come to fruition. Even if not on campus fully, we can have groups with 10 or fewer people—with distancing—to have orientations of students. In addition to those who will meet new teachers, we will work in an age appropriate way to orient students to our health, hygiene and distancing protocols (based on CDC, county and state guidelines).

The additional weeks from home are flexible and potentially moveable—if, for instance, we have to shut down for fires. Our calendar will have the usual number of days off and it adds days to the year to offset possible ones lost. Again, we will share the full details as soon as the schedule is finished.

Other News

When we do return to campus, you will notice the new roof on our lower school buildings, and the school's new solar panels being installed. The roof is complete, and the panels will be completely installed and generating clean energy for the school within the next few weeks. We are so thrilled to

be able to send all of that renewable, sustainable power to PG&E! Thank you sincerely to all of the donors who made this possible, and have added to the legacy of sustainability that Summerfield has been so proud to champion for almost half a decade.

Conclusion

The big question for all of us and our community is when will we know about school on campus. We assure you, that we will inform you as soon as we know anything new. SCOE (Sonoma County Office of Education) and the county health office are working overtime to get the questions addressed for the whole county. We remain patient with all the people in the county and state agencies who are working hard to figure this all out as quickly as they can but are still actively planning for all possibilities.

We could have made a decision early, as some of the school districts have. That decision could only have been school from home—distance learning. We are waiting as long as possible for the chance to be on campus. We anticipate a year that may have a number of transitions between on and off campus learning, and we continue to hone our program to adapt to these conditions while maintaining excellence in education based on our principles as an independent Waldorf school. Our standards for Waldorf education remain the highest, and we continually strive to deepen them.

This time has given us all the opportunity to examine our priorities and values. At Summerfield our commitment to Waldorf education has only deepened, as the times show more clearly than ever why it is essential.

Thank you again for your trust in our school and our work,

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

>>>Click here to take the Survey<<<



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