

## Governance Council Update 6/8/2020

What will school look like in August when we return? How will Summerfield shape its Waldorf education to meet the health and social issues of the times? What will be required and what recommended in response to the pandemic? When will we know the answers to these questions?

Below is the timeline we know at present:

- Week of June 8th - Faculty works on reports and grades.
- June 10th - Sonoma County Office of Education hosts a call on guidelines for opening school.
- Week of June 15 - Faculty meets to form what these requirements and guidelines mean for Summerfield and the protocols for how we will hold school in August as much as possible.
- Week of June 22 - We will announce what we have come to early in the week. This will be as detailed as possible based on the degree of clarity from County Health on June 10th.

Based on reports from other counties and the state as a whole, it is likely the directions will be two-fold 1) Specific requirements that must be strictly followed and 2) guidelines and recommendations to control or limit the spread of the virus. These requirements and guidelines may vary by age and vulnerability.

Over the past six weeks the Governance Council has received many communications from parents about health protocols, most with a specific perspective on masks. The strength and dichotomy of views suggests we have a social question to resolve before the return to school in August.

Where we have recommendations in place of requirements, Summerfield will undergo the social experiment - with adults and children - that is taking place all over the country. People against masks reference their freedom and the health risks of wearing a mask. People for masks cite their concern over the pandemic increasing and the risk to the vulnerable - who they may be, who may live with or rely on them, or who they may not even know. Even if children have less risk and are less likely to infect others, our campus has always been open to our families and community. Our parents, some of their family members, as well as our faculty and staff includes people who are in high risk categories.

Will Summerfield require or recommend masks when on campus, and if so will the school's protocol be the same for all ages of our community? We do not have answers to these questions at this time, but we know we must have them as soon as possible. If the direction comes from the county that masks are required, we will have little choice, if we want to stay open; if they are recommended, we will have to reconcile the strong and divided views on the subject amongst our community, parents, faculty and staff and students.

In the coming situation, how will we comport ourselves? How will we interact between masked and unmasked? What do we say to the young person who wears a mask to protect his grandparents and others he has not even met? How do we react to the child who wants to hug her teacher and friends? Will we insist on hugging or shaking hands, even if the receiver might be made uncomfortable or offended if a hug or handshake is not offered? As adults and young adults, will we choose to wear a mask to respect and protect our vulnerable, or will we expect and rely on others to respect our freedom not to wear one? How will the young emulate and be impacted by the feelings and choices of the older students and adults? What lessons will we give to the children and students through our interactions?

As a school - a Waldorf school - the last question is the most important. As with our love, our fears and strong negative emotions are passed to the children even without spoken words. We live in a country where some of the masked and unmasked are defending their rights with anger, even spitting and violence. Anger and fear may be becoming a more dangerous divider of our communities than masks or maybe even the illness. The us/them energy is dangerously tearing our country apart right now in many ways, and the children feel this, even when they are not aware of world and national events.

Can we be the community we wish our children to grow up in and emulate? That is not a single-minded or us/them community; it needs to be a community which respects difference and acts from love and understanding of each member. We need to strive towards this ideal not just until the end of this pandemic but through all situations the future will bring.

These are the questions we, the Governance Council on behalf of the Faculty, Staff and Board, are putting to you to consider while we wait for the news from County Health. The school will make a decision; how we act together with our differences will be the most important lesson we will teach as a school next year, and every single one of us - from oldest to youngest - will be both teacher and learner together.

With deepest sincerity,

Ignacio Garat, Jason Gross and Rachel McGarva  
The Governance Council