

Messenger



Summerfield

WALDORF SCHOOL AND FARM

JUNE 24, 2020



Back to School in August!

Dear Summerfield Community,

Two weeks ago Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE) in conjunction with County Health published the protocols for reopening school in August. These are based on reaching Stage 3 of the Governor's reopening plan, and the document can be found on the SCOE website. We are currently in Stage 2 in Sonoma County. The Summerfield faculty studied this document and has come up with some principles for how we will reopen our school in August.

We ask that you:

- Read the **Schoolwide Overview** to the right and overleaf, as well as the details from the section or sections of the school that apply to your family.
- Please finalize your enrollment decisions—the deadline for receiving reimbursement on placeholder fees for next year is **Friday, July 10th**.
- Be available for special days—part day orientations and the like—the week of **August 10th** and for the start of school the week of **August 17th**.

(Start day of the week may vary by section, and the calendar for the year is still being looked at for flexibility to optimize on campus learning.)

Schoolwide Overview

1) SCOE and County Health Principles for Reopening:

These apply to all public and private schools in the county and are based on the principle of safety for all community members and creating the optimum learning environment for the students. They follow CDC recommendations.

They are built on the concept that the more the guidelines are followed, the safer the community and the less likely a COVID-19 infection will close part or all of the school and impact the community. They emphasize following the county's legal requirements and making the *best effort* to follow the guidelines *as much as possible or feasible*, recognizing that there will need to be reasonable compromises in order to educate children.

Our summary of the SCOE principles for reopening schools:

- Keep six feet of separation, especially when indoors.
- Wear masks as much as possible. As of this moment, masks are required for everyone older than two. Everyone else *must* wear them indoors and anywhere six feet of distance cannot be maintained.
- Limit time with less than six feet of distance to less than 15 minutes as much as possible.
- Follow the hygiene and disinfecting protocols—regular and proper handwashing and disinfecting commonly touched surfaces, and more.
- When possible create cohorts to limit the potential for exposures.
- Institute health protocols including: at-home health checks before coming to school, close monitoring of student health during the day, separation when someone is symptomatic and staying home when sick.



2) Summerfield's Return to Campus Plan:

The faculty and parents surveyed agree that using our beautiful outside space as much as possible is safe and can be optimized for rich and deep learning experiences. Our goal, particularly while the weather is good in fall and spring, is to be outside as much as possible. We will create shade and shelter to support our outside classrooms. With six feet of distance and being outside, we can more safely learn and teach without requiring a mask all of the time we are in school.

As much as possible and for as long as we can, **Summerfield will offer all children all or most of a full day and a five day week, and outdoor classes will not have to be split.** There will need to be some classes indoors. These will *often* need to be split, as some of our rooms cannot accommodate full classes with six foot distancing, and, unless there is a change in state and county law, masks will need to be worn.

We recognize and plan for the likelihood that we may need a hybrid learning plan—part of the week in school, part of the week learning from home—and that we might be required to go back to full distance learning if we have an outbreak in the school or if the county must retreat from Stage 3 due to a resurgence of the virus. Hybrid plans may be more likely in severe weather—as in winter rains, extreme heat, smoke from fires, floods or other.

AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE AND FOR AS LONG AS WE CAN, SUMMERFIELD WILL OFFER ALL CHILDREN ALL OR MOST OF A FULL DAY AND A FIVE DAY WEEK, AND OUTDOOR CLASSES WILL NOT HAVE TO BE SPLIT.

We will need to change some of the things we are used to:

- Events are currently prohibited.
- Drop off and pick up of all but ECE will need to be based on our flood protocol to minimize the number of people on campus.
- We may not be able to serve school lunch to all or many grades.

3) Summary:

In the coming school year we will need to be even more kind and caring of each other and respectful of our differences of opinion on risk and how we interpret the protocols. We must be conscious that in our community are many in high risk categories, and we

must develop the idea and practice that we will often need to choose to limit or restrict our behaviors out of our love and

concern for others who may be at higher risk.

We must act from the courage and strength that comes from right action based on sound principles and love and care for each other. With this threefold foundation, our community will be strong, healthy in all senses, and able to bring the gift of a Summerfield Waldorf education toward freedom to our children.

*~ Ignacio Garat, Jason Gross, Rachel McGarva
The Governance Council*

Early Childhood Letter

Dear New and Returning Summerfield Early Childhood Parents,

As this unique school year comes to close, we want to reach out and share with you our planning and expectations for the coming school year. While much is still in flux, we have been in close touch with our county licensing representatives and public health department as we envision our time together. Quite a wonderful picture is emerging!

Summerfield hopes to open its campus to students in mid August with staggered start days beginning August 10th or so. In all likelihood, the kindergartens will open first, followed by the Rosebud classes and then Roots and Shoots. This will allow us to mindfully transition children who are moving from one program to the next. We expect that parents will be allowed on campus to accompany their children to the gate; if requirements remain the same, parents will sign their child in at that threshold and the teachers will take over from there. So that we are familiar to all

of the children, teachers will set up a time to meet with new students and their families before school begins; our campus is now closed but we trust that it will open sometime in late July. At that

time, enrollment should be finalized so we will be able to place children in their classes. We will stay in touch about meeting times and welcome your thoughts and ideas about the best way to connect with you and your child.

Class sizes will certainly be smaller when we return; the exact number is not certain but we will likely be in groups of 10 or 12 children. Those families who require afternoon care in the kindergartens will need to register by the whole year and their children placed in the same morning class to ensure that there



is no overlapping of groups. This approach to afternoon care in kindergarten is different and less flexible than in the past but will allow us to offer care for those who need it. In the Rosebud classroom, afternoon care has always been set up in this way with registration in advance.

We may offer the option of three-day and two-day kindergarten classes, depending on family preferences and enrollment. A number of families have expressed that they are finding time at home with their children to be rewarding and supportive of a slower pace of living. In addition, these classes would offer more affordable options for parents who are concerned about the cost of a Summerfield education in a year when the campus may be required to close for a time requiring that we take up distance learning.

The information we receive from our licensing agency and state and county public health offices is updated regularly. At this time (and, we expect, in the fall) neither children nor teachers in our early childhood village are required to wear facial coverings; these are worn at the “teacher’s discretion” and we have found that the children find it difficult to manage masks, are often too hot in them and that the touching of faces increases. So—masks are worn to school but are generally resting in their cubbies. The teachers may wear a facial covering if they prefer or if they are tending to a child’s needs while very near to them. When we are inside (for example, for eating and story time) we will work more with distancing the children.

There are other health protocols in place—such as taking the children’s temperatures and conducting a health screening at home every day before coming to school and sanitizing surfaces

at school regularly, etc. but children are able to play with each other and no strict 6 feet distancing is required outside. When we return to campus, we plan to spend much of our time outside on our beautiful campus (play yards, walking paths and farm) which we feel will be restorative for us all.



Please know that we are navigating this new situation with great consciousness and care and yet not letting it create in us a mood of fear or anxiety. It is vital that the children feel a true sense of calm demeanor in all of us—so the inner work of the adult is key. We can report with confidence that the older kindergarteners (who were on campus for our child-care offering) had a joyous and wonderful time—it was heartwarming to watch them return to campus and our teachers were ever so happy to receive them! This bodes well for the future. And we do hope to step into that future with you.

Know, too, that we look forward to getting to know you better as the new school year approaches. It will be wonderful to be with your dear children, bringing them the wondrous and healing powers of Waldorf education.

Blessings—on each and every one of you from each and every one of us!

~ The Summerfield Early Childhood Faculty

Lower School Letter

Dear Summerfield Lower School Parents,

For the last two weeks, we teachers have been hard at work wrapping up the year and envisioning our future. In this time of Covid-19, with the urgent questions of racial inequality so present in our hearts and minds, we have the opportunity to slow down, pay attention, look within and willingly participate in the process of renewing our school and community. We are challenged to create a new culture, new ways of connecting with and developing respect for all people. Supporting Summerfield children and



families is foremost in our minds, and we believe that offering real experiences and real encounters will balance the isolation and injustices so palpable today. How different are we willing to be? Together, we can meet this challenge with courage and resiliency!

The Lower School Faculty is of one voice—a resounding YES!—to holding school on campus, for every child, every school day, as much as possible for the coming year. We love Summerfield and believe that more deeply connecting to our campus, and therefore the earth, will ground and balance us all. Teachers are enthusiastic to enrich our curriculum through a deeper connection with nature! We plan to use outdoor and indoor spaces that will keep our social groups supported and intact, and we’ll split into smaller cohorts when necessary. The daily schedule will consider the practicalities of being outdoors, implement new practices for healthy breathing, and easily meld with distance learning if necessary. As the beginning of school approaches, we will communicate detailed pictures about changes in our daily starting and ending times, staggered pickup and dropoff times and other rhythms in support of keeping our community healthy and engaged.

We will also put into place new practices that support our physical and emotional well-being. Teachers will frame new habits around distancing and facial coverings as a gesture of respect for one

another. While we are fortunate to have a large enough campus to hold classes outside much of the time, where physical distancing is possible and masks are not required, there will be times of closer or indoor contact when all of us will wear a mouth and nose covering to care for each other. We feel confident that we can teach these behaviors and ensure that children feel safe, comfortable and able to learn. Additionally, all indoor spaces will be properly and regularly sanitized. We will similarly teach careful hygiene for being at school together.

We hope this summer fills each family with rest and peacefulness, and we look forward this Fall to nourishing each child with real experiences and a sense of community to give us the wherewithal to face today's challenges.

Most Sincerely,

~ The Summerfield Lower School Faculty



High School Letter



Dear High School Parents and Students,

The High School Faculty is excited to share our work on the changes we will need to make to start the school year in August. From hygiene

to distancing, we have to develop new habits and reform our culture without losing—hopefully even enhancing—the values and program that make our high school special.

Due to the school's ability to hold classes outside—which can allow for six feet of distancing, full classes while mitigating the requirement of a mask all the time—we will offer our program that exceeds the UC A-G requirements by having mostly outdoor classes and as much of our regular full-day, full-week program as possible. Certain classes will need to be inside, like science labs and some arts. This will require having fewer students at a time doing the activity, so there will be some adjustments to schedule or program to accommodate such splits.

We will also work on plans for making cohorts and modifying the schedule for hybrid or from-home learning, should we be required to do so for any reason during the year. While the need to change could happen at any time, we anticipate the winter flu and rain season as more likely.

We have discussed a number of options for ways to simplify the schedule for hybrid or from-home learning, building on and refining the experiences and feedback from



the spring. These include blocking classes, as we did this spring, or combining skills or artistic work with main lessons. The purpose of reducing class hours is to minimize time on zoom or even while on campus to create spaces in the schedule for cleaning shared spaces or perhaps meeting the need to assemble—safely in small groups—to discuss community issues. We know we can create efficiencies in our teaching that make time for these things, and we are confident that we can accomplish this without sacrificing the quality and depth of the overall educational experience.

As our traditional Open Week trips will not be possible in August, we will use the “special days” in the week of August 10th to work with the students in small groups on all the aspects of creating Summerfield High School outdoors, from scheduling to understanding protocols, to creating the outdoor classroom spaces, to the importance of turning off our screens while we can, as much as we can.

A central theme of our curriculum concerns a person who must learn the importance of asking the question: “Why is it that you suffer?” We will also use the special days to consider what others are going through in our times, with a focus on those subject to the racism that pervades our world and consider the study and actions that can make a difference in our world.

The High School Faculty is excited by the creative process necessary to return to campus with the required changes. We are inspired already from the prospect of working with the students on our community and classes in person.

With Joy and Excitement,

~ The Summerfield High School Faculty