



From: Nancy Mellon <nmellon@riverschool.net>
Date: March 25, 2020 at 4:57:51 PM EDT
To: Nancy Mellon <nmellon@riverschool.net>
Subject: Distance Learning Post-Spring Break for River

Dear River Community:

I hope you have been able to enjoy time with your children during our Spring Break despite the challenges of adjusting to the loss of normalcy. Coping with the challenges of social distancing is tough for everyone, but particularly for young children who may not be able to fully understand the need for these extreme measures to help flatten the curve and slow the spread of COVID-19.

I am writing to share River's post-Spring Break protocol: **We will begin our Continuity of Learning Plan on Monday, March 30, hopefully with a return to campus on Monday, April 27.** As you know, DC Mayor Muriel Bowser has closed the city's public schools until April 27, and legal experts have advised us to consider this *the standard of care*. Like you, I want nothing more than for our students to return to the school experience they know, and I promise to re-open our doors as soon as it is safe for us to do so.

We have worked diligently to plan for the weeks ahead. I am deeply impressed by and grateful for our educators and administrators, who have designed ways to deliver our thematic curriculum using distance learning tools like Seesaw and Zoom. The children left for Spring Break with their distance learning kits in hand. You'll hear directly from your child's teaching team shortly about the individualized materials, videos and learning plans they've created. We anticipate that River's sense of community might be strained in the coming weeks, and we'll also plan virtual gatherings for our parents.

I have been participating in video conferences with other independent school Heads, and the consensus is that distance learning for young children is quite complex. We understand through school leaders in Washington state that synchronous learning has been both difficult to execute and not as productive as anticipated, so please expect an individualized program for your child, with custom learning goals and activities. Additionally, privacy laws related to synchronous learning are tricky to navigate, so while we will plan for class social interaction, we will not initially be conducting whole-group academic instruction.

At River, distance learning poses a particular challenge with the premium we place on low tech, personalized and project-based education. Please be patient with us. As one wise Head in Seattle expressed, "When it comes to distance learning, every teacher is a first-time teacher." We have the most highly qualified and creative educators in the area, and we will work tirelessly to keep your child learning and engaged. We will be learning from one another and welcome constructive feedback from you.

Finally, we know that the impact of COVID-19 on health is only one aspect of what our community is facing. Economic hardship has been a side effect of this pandemic. Our Board of Trustees has convened a task force to assist parents in the event of job loss or other economic setbacks. Please contact Chris Lopez at clopez@riverschool.net if your family has been impacted in this way.

You will continue to hear from me regularly as we make measured decisions and adapt to the changes that COVID-19 has wrought. Please know that we are here for you and your children, and that, together, we will get through whatever challenges lie before us. Remember to be gentle with yourself and show compassion for others during this time. I look forward to greeting you all in River's lobby soon.

Stay well,

Nancy

Nancy K Mellon
Founder/Head of School