

July 17, 2020

Dear Seven Hills Families,

As you know, we have been working assiduously to fine-tune our plans for reopening school on Aug. 18. It was great to see so many of you at our recent Town Hall meetings and to have the chance to answer your questions about the robust safety protocols we have developed. Your questions and input, along with that of our faculty and staff, will continue to enhance our preparedness.

As always, the safety of our students, their families, and our faculty and staff must be our highest priority. Though we have a great deal of confidence in the protocols we have developed for our campus, clearly the rate of infection in our part of the country will play a major role in determining how we approach the reopening of school. Accordingly, I want to alert you to something that, I'm sure, must be obvious at this point. Though we still hope to resume in-person schooling for all students on Aug. 18, given the way things are currently trending, it is conceivable that the conditions on the ground may force us to begin the school year in remote learning mode. This will be much more likely if, for example, the alert level in Hamilton County moves from its present Level 3 (Red) to Level 4 (Purple) on the County Alert Indicators, recently developed by the State of Ohio.

Furthermore, based on some of your questions at the Town Halls, it is also conceivable that even if we were able to begin the year with face-to-face instruction, some of you may still not feel comfortable sending your children to school, at least until the trendlines begin to move in a different direction. I wanted, therefore, to clarify how we have prepared for this contingency. If circumstances do force us to move to remote learning mode, we would employ the robust strategies we used last spring. To prepare for this possibility, our teachers have invested a great deal of time and energy over the summer researching ways to make our approach to remote learning even more engaging.

If we are able to resume face-to-face learning, but you, as a family, are not yet comfortable about having your children attend school in person, they WILL have the option of attending school remotely. The Swivl cameras which we have purchased for all of our classrooms will permit teachers to live stream their classes over ZOOM to students who are at home. Those students will be able to see and hear what goes on in the classroom and interact with their teachers and classmates. Obviously, there will be some limitations. It will be much more difficult for students to participate in some hands-on activities (science labs, art projects, music rehearsals, etc.), but students would be able to see and hear everything that is going on, ask and answer questions, and have some contact, albeit virtual, with their classmates and teachers. Initially, we had conceived of this as an option, primarily, for students who might have to be quarantined or who had medical conditions that might make in person learning particularly precarious, but the investment that we have made will make it possible for those of you who may not be comfortable at this point about in person learning to have a synchronous remote learning option. It would be our hope, if you do choose to avail yourself of this option, that it would be for a sustained and continuous period of time. Otherwise, the logistics will be very difficult for our teachers to manage.

To further assist us with our planning, I would be grateful if you would complete a brief snapshot survey. We would like to get a feel for how you are presently feeling about the prospect of an Aug. 18 return to in-person schooling for your children. It would be particularly useful to know how many of you are likely to avail yourselves of the remote learning option I described above. For reference, I have attached a (slightly revised) version of the reopening plans I sent a couple of weeks ago. If at all possible, please complete the survey by Wednesday, July 22, at 4 p.m.

I know this uncertainty must be frustrating; believe me, it is for all of us at school as well. I deeply appreciate your patience as we try to respond to a rapidly changing situation. I will, of course, keep you informed as our plans—and the public health situation in our area—continue to evolve.

One final plea. As I have said before, the success of our reopening plan will depend, in large measure, on our collective efforts, not just during school hours, but at all times. The school cannot do this alone. Over the next few weeks, as we all prepare to come together for a new school year, I would urge you to help your children understand how important it is to avoid putting themselves or others at risk. Please counsel them to practice social distancing, avoid crowds, especially when unmasked, and to habituate themselves to the common sense precautions we will insist on when school resumes. That will give us our best chance of a healthy—and uninterrupted—school year!

I hope you have a restful and safe summer.

We look forward to seeing everyone very soon!

Best,



Christopher P. Garten
Head of School