

March 31, 2020

Dear Maple Street Community,

Governor Scott has dismissed school for the remainder of this academic year. Obviously, we are all sad and disappointed. These feelings are real and important.

It's also real and important that the Maple Street staffulty will be thinking about ways to adapt virtual school as a longer-term endeavor as we move forward. We will think about joyful learning, trip week, move up day, and graduation with creativity and care. We don't have fully-formed solutions yet, but we will!

Maple Street's core values are Community, Respect, and Responsibility. These values underpin everything we do as a school, especially when the world is topsy-turvy (as Mr. Rogers might say).

Community

The Maple Street community is strong, and we are doing so much to take care of each other. The most important way that we are taking care of each other is by staying home. Our community member who was tested for COVID-19 is on the mend and on Wednesday received negative test results. As far as I know, there are no members of the Maple Street community who have tested positive for COVID-19.

Our community is committed to children and to equity. We have families from more than a dozen towns and from different socioeconomic groups. This means that home circumstances vary significantly across our community. Our diversity is a strength that we can build upon; a diverse community builds empathy and understanding. We are here to support each other, especially during tricky times like these.

The diversity of our Maple Street community becomes clearly visible when we have storms. Not all families—or teachers—have robust internet at home, and storms can cause spotty connections. This makes virtual school extra tricky. While some teachers are working from home, some of our teachers conduct virtual school from their classrooms (while maintaining social distancing and excellent hygiene) so that their classes can benefit from a clear and consistent internet connection. Some families and teachers lost power on Tuesday morning, and this would have made virtual school impossible for every class. Maple Street educators are working hard to make sure that we are continuing with the fullest possible Maple Street experience—and this includes snow days that take into account all the people in our community.

I know that the actual snow day from virtual school was received by different families in different ways; this is inevitable in a diverse and vocal community like ours. I suspect that one more unexpected event in a month of unexpected events may have been jarring. Things are unpredictable right now, and this is unsettling. As we adults grapple with the unexpected, I think it's important to let children know that while the universe can throw terrible things like pandemics our way, it can also still send magical surprises like snow days.

Respect

People respond to anxious times in a myriad of ways. With the understanding that sadness, fear, and anger are all reasonable responses to our circumstances these days, it is essential that we treat each other with respect and dignity. In our community, we get to take turns being strong.

One way that we can show respect to teachers is by helping students stick to their virtual school schedules. We are all working out new routines, and this can take some getting used to. Teachers do not have much flexibility in their schedules, and it can be hard to reschedule meetings. Regular and focused participation in virtual school will ensure that all students will be ready to progress to the next grade in the fall.

I want to express my profound respect for Maple Street staffulty and families, who are all dealing with the hardships and emotions while doing their very best to maintain consistent and caring environments for children right now. As Mr. Rogers said, "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'" As adults, we get to be the helpers. Thanks to each and

everyone of you for helping our children.

Responsibility

UNC professor Brandon Bayne adjusted his syllabus for this term. The principles he outlined describe responsibility at Maple Street right now really clearly. Here are some highlights:

Nobody signed up for this

- Not for the sickness, not for the social distancing, not for the sudden end of our collective lives together on campus
- Not for an online class, not for teaching remotely, not for learning from home, not for mastering new technologies, not for varied access to learning materials

The humane option is the best option

- We are going to prioritize supporting each other as humans
- We are going to prioritize simple solutions that make sense for the most
- We are going to prioritize sharing resources and communicating clearly

We will remain flexible and adjust to the situation

- Everybody needs support and understanding in this unprecedented moment

Please stay home, stay healthy, and wash your hands. Reach out to others for help, for support, and for connection.

All the best,

Cricket