

*April 3, 2020*

Dear Maple Street families,

It's been a week since we learned that schools in Vermont won't be back on campus this academic year. This has been a week of finding new routines and figuring out what will sustain us through physical distancing for the rest of the school year. Students, staff, and families are certainly feeling all the feelings, but amidst the sadness and anxiety, the Maple Street community continues to demonstrate kindness, creativity, and educational excellence. In a time of uncertainty, Maple Street is steadfastly certain about its commitment to being a joyful academic community that inspires confident learners.

In addition to teaching our students every school day, our stellar staff is creating a Learning Resources List. Maple Street staff has expertise that we are eager to share. This compendium of online learning tools is curated by our staff in hopes that we can share developmentally appropriate and educationally sound resources with our families and the broader community. There will be sections sorted by developmental level for Literacy, Math, Science, World Languages, Current Events, Virtual Field Trips, Research Tools, and more. The Learning Resources List will be up on our website shortly. Please check our website for some great ideas!

The Student Council met this week on Zoom and has adapted plans for Spirit Week to make them appropriate for school at a distance. These students have demonstrated true servant leadership by considering the community's needs and swiftly generating ideas for addressing them. Their efforts to bring fun, connection, and community to school at a distance are deeply appreciated. Please see the Student Council's letter below.

Our team is also thinking creatively about new ways we can celebrate traditions that are important to the Maple Street community. Stephanie Paul is planning a Spring Concert at a Distance. All Maple Street students will begin practicing music for this event soon. Geoff Chamberlain is carrying on with Rock Band and generating ideas for how community members can share their talents in a fun way. We have assembled a graduation committee to consider ways we can celebrate our eighth graders and all their accomplishments. One idea we are considering is an outdoor movie extravaganza (with appropriately distanced seating) featuring a highlight reel of the graduates' time at Maple Street.

Yesterday was the most successful Day for Maple Street ever! Donations to our school were up by 21% over last year and participation was at an all-time high. In a time of economic uncertainty, Maple Street is humbled and honored that our community demonstrated its love for our school this way. Our Annual Fund supports our program in meaningful ways, so the donations are sustaining, but it is the participation that really resonates. Each gift feels like an endorsement of all the excellent work our staff does on a daily basis for our students. Thank you to everyone who participated in Day for Maple Street and our Annual Fund this year.

Special thanks to Meredith Morin, our anonymous gift-matching sponsor, and our Trustees, Amy Panitz, Chuck Burdick, Rusty Davis, Peter Hershberg, Rocco Maggiotto, Daphne Markcrow, Diana Pagnucco, David Pollock, Dina Senecal, Matt Weir, Janet Turnbull Irving (Trustee Emerita), and Emma LeMay (AdHoc Trustee) for all efforts in making the Day for Maple Street so successful. Their dedication to the stewardship of Maple Street is a big part of what makes our school so wonderful.

On another note, I've been thinking a lot about the words we use to describe what we are doing as a school right now, and I'm going to change some of my vocabulary.

We are not really “social distancing,” because we nurture and value our relationships more than ever. I’m choosing to use “physical distancing” because we are staying physically away from each other as an act of care.

“Virtual school” sounds like it’s not really school, and Maple Street is carrying on with school for real. “School at a distance” seems to better describe what our amazing staff and students are doing every day. Teachers are carrying on with curriculum, instruction, and social emotional learning while families are doing the important work of scaffolding the “classroom management” part of children’s learning.

Thanks so much to all of you for learning new technology skills you never anticipated needing, juggling family and work in heroic ways, caring for friends and neighbors in ways big and small, and sharing Maple Street’s commitment to children. Here’s to moving forward kindly and creatively together!