

March 19, 2020

Dear Parents,

All my previous communications have been mostly about the business of closing down the school and setting up learning@home. Today, I want to talk to you from my heart.

My heart is with our students. Our country's call to battle this virus is important, and we need to heed the call. We need to limit our contact with others. We need to maintain our distance from one another. But what does this mean for the children? Schools are about so much more than learning the content of the curriculum. At school, students make powerful connections with their teachers and with one another. One of the hallmarks of our school has been our commitment to building strong relationships with our students, particularly with those who struggle to make those connections. My heart is with our students as they no longer have these strong, face-to-face, connections with each other and their teachers every day. We hope to do what we can to stay connected to our kids in whatever way we can.

My heart is with our families. I do not know all the stressors this pandemic and our need to isolate is putting on our families. I do know that some families will struggle with childcare. Some will struggle with elder care. Some will struggle with financial loss. And I know that the limitations of contact with others, and being in the same house with the same people for a long time, can also put strain on our families. Please know that my heart, and the hearts of our staff, are with you. For now, our school office will remain open. If you need to talk to someone at school about getting support, you may call and we will do our best to provide what you need, or to connect you to what you need.

My heart is with our staff. Our teachers, educational assistants, support staff, and custodians all come to school each day to work with children. Working with your children gives us great joy every day. This past week has been very difficult for them. Yes, the workload has been enormous. They have planned for learning for students who came to school, they planned for learning for those who were not here, they planned for learning@home and they put the finishing touches on report cards. They have worked cheerfully, tirelessly, and yes, they are actually tired. One of the most difficult things they have dealt with is their sorrow about not seeing their students each day. We are sad. There have been many tears as we think about not having students in school each day. If you have a moment, please send your teachers a thank you. They are among the heroes this week.

My heart is with our communities. We are all part of many communities. Our social networks, our work networks, our churches and all of our community networks will be affected by this shift. I hope that each of you finds ways to give and receive love in the coming weeks. Communities are made strong by the care we demonstrate for each other. We cannot know if the smallest gesture is the one thing that a person needs. We can know that we need each other and that

the kindness and connection that each of us provides to others is what knits our communities together.

Let's do what we can in these coming weeks. Let's remember to treat one another with patience, kindness, and gentleness.

Take good care.

Ed Neufeld