



Shrewsbury Montessori School

Growing Bright Minds from Age Three through Grade Six

Looking Ahead to Next Year

June 17, 2020

Dear SMS Families,

I fell in love with SMS when I had the incredible opportunity to visit the school in September last year. I remember the colors of the curtains in the Elementary STEAM room, the bean bucket in the Children's House, and the patterns on the music teacher's (now I know her as Mrs. Okerlund) sweater that she knitted herself. And, of course, the children! Having seen the children's smiles in the elementary year books and experienced joy, first hand within the walls of SMS classrooms, it is clear to me that this school knows and respects children and understands how childhood needs to be lived. In particular, I was touched by the warmth and openness I felt from interacting with the people in the SMS community. I felt like I had come home. It is with excitement that I am able to join the SMS family to lead the effort to share and nurture the school's ideals.

With gratitude, I would like to congratulate the SMS community—its students, families, faculty and staff, administrative team, Interim Head Maria Mihopoulos and the Board—for having worked together to successfully finish a challenging spring semester and school year! We can now turn our focus to an exciting start to the next school year. **This letter shares with you what and how SMS is planning for the fall and how families can expect to be informed of fall opening plans throughout the summer.**

SMS Fall Opening Planning

Since March, SMS Board of Trustees and Administration have formed a Covid-19 Response Committee to respond to the impact the pandemic has made on the school. Thanks to its leadership, SMS was able to carry out a successful full remote learning plan for the spring semester in 2019-2020 school year. The Response Team has added another focus working proactively to plan for fall opening. SMS is taking the scenario planning approach, presently looking at three probable scenarios for the fall: **returning to school with safety and health precautions and physical distancing, remote learning with robust distant learning curricula, and possible hybrid configuration(s).** We are hosting three live Zoom Webinars in July to keep families fully informed of the details of each scenario in areas of health and safety measures, academics, technology, and financial implications. We intend to use these Zoom sessions to provide the information to help you imagine what learning and school life can look like for our children and families under each scenario. Once internal and external circumstances allow us to make a decision for fall opening, we will be prepared for action.

We want to assure you that we have been and will continue to actively research and keep the SMS community informed of the most updated information for our scenario planning and decision-making for the fall. SMS relies on guidance coming from The Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Massachusetts Departments of Early Education and Care (EEC) and Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Governor Baker, local town and health officials, American Montessori Association (AMS), and Association of Independent School of New England (AISNE).

Based on how the phased reopening is progressing in Massachusetts at present and guidelines being recently released by EEC, we feel optimistic that SMS can open in the fall with students on campus. We have been proactively working to prepare our campuses to welcome back our students to ensure a safe start in the fall. Based on our good efforts thus far, we feel confident that we can fully prepare the school for students to learn on campus with appropriate social distancing and safety. However, we are also aware that unpredictability is the nature of this pandemic. We will, therefore, stay flexible and prepared to make any necessary changes. Even though we feel optimistic to resume instruction on campus in the fall, we plan to continue gathering information and anticipate announcing a firmer decision by **Monday, August 3**.

Summer Communication Plan to Families

We have developed a summer communication plan intending to provide a consistent and reliable touch point to keep SMS families informed of the school's fall opening efforts and decision-making process. We anticipate the information will be unfolded to you in four phases. The first phase announces SMS's proactive fall opening efforts and launches the summer communication plan. The second phase introduces and describes the details of the three fall scenarios SMS is preparing to implement. The third phase announces and explains the school's decision for fall opening on August 3. The fourth phase sends families information and instructions to prepare students and adults for learning in the fall.

Next week, I will share the Summer Communication Calendar with you. This calendar outlines scheduled events, topics and objectives, and intends to provide families with a birds-eye-view of the summer. This is so you can expect when you will hear from the school concerning what kind of information. SMS will send you invites before each event to RSVP and submit your questions. After each event, we will send you a recorded link of that online event and/or printed materials.

In the latter part of June, I look forward to reaching out to each family to get to know you, to learn about your history and experience with SMS, and to hear your hopes for the fall. Please click on this [link](#) to sign up for a call between June 19 to June 30.

Our first webinar info session takes place on **Wednesday, July 1** to introduce Scenario One: returning to school with safety and health precautions and physical distancing. This will include a discussion of the measures we are planning for learning on campus. Please join us at 8:30-9:30am EST or a repeat session at 7:00-8:00pm EST. RSVP invites will be emailed to prior to the event.

This will be an unusually busy summer for the SMS faculty, staff, leadership team, and its devoted Board of Trustees. We have a full team on board committed to create an engaging and safe 2020-2021 school year for our students. We take pride in our resilience and creativity. Our genuine care and love for our students clarifies our purpose and reaffirms our continued commitment to SMS every day. We are excited and have great anticipation for the fall.

Amy Shen
Head of School