

July 3, 2020

Dear MMS Families,

I hope you and your children have been able to experience the joys of summer and some familiar activities as this new season kicks off and New York starts to come alive again. Since school ended, academic leaders and administrators have been meeting routinely to discuss our reopening plans for the 2020-21 school year. Today, I want to share a number of updates with you.

### **Town Hall on July 15 and MMS Health Advisory Committee**

**Please save the date of July 15 at 8:00 pm for a town hall discussion on our reopening plan.** Pending approval from state and local authorities, **we expect to reopen the week of August 24.**

This Town Hall will be part of a series of communications/meetings regarding returning to school. We are carefully evaluating every aspect of the MMS experience, and to cover every topic in one evening will not be possible. On July 15, we anticipate primarily sharing information about classroom groupings and building-use changes, new equipment, and other policies that limit and control the flow of people through the building. Stay tuned for announcements of further meetings. Given that many schools are announcing that students will be toggling in and out of school during their official re-opened periods, we want to clarify: **We are planning to teach students physically in school every day, with students dismissing at roughly the same times as in previous years.** Of course, should we be forced back into remote learning, we may need a day to regroup, but will quickly transition to that mode. As we plan, the promises I outlined during our May town hall are still our guiding principles, chief among them:

- We want to safely return to 85<sup>th</sup> Street as soon as possible.
- We are developing contingency plans based on multiple scenarios.
- We will serve the whole child, focusing on understanding how each child has reacted, academically and emotionally, to the circumstances of this pandemic.

I am grateful for the guidance of the esteemed professionals on the [MMS Health Advisory Committee](#), which has met twice already and is scheduling at least four more meetings between now and mid-August. The parent voice—and parent concerns—is well-integrated in this group. They not only represent a spectrum of areas of expertise, the majority are also current parents, with the exception of one grandparent and a former parent. In addition to meetings, they are engaging with me and each other on a daily basis through a Slack channel to share research and discuss health/safety questions. New parent Kelli Hall, whose son Dylan entered MMS in April, also joined the committee. She is an associate professor at the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University and has trained as a social epidemiologist, maternal child health researcher, and advanced nurse practitioner.

### **Parent Survey Results**

Thank you to everyone who filled out the parent survey about distance learning and planning for the upcoming school year. **Following the July 15 Town Hall, look out for a quick follow-up**

**questionnaire to help us staff and plan accordingly in the following areas. Please carefully consider your interest in them:**

### **Early Morning Drop-Off, After School Care, and the Lunch Program**

Again, we will be asking about your interest in early morning drop off, after school care, and the lunch program. Although parents indicated a considerably lower level of interest than normal, we understand that desires may change in these unpredictable times.

### **Remote Versus In-Person Learning**

As stated above, we plan to reopen the week of August 24. We believe in-person classes will allow students the opportunity to bond or re-bond with their teachers, establishing critical trust that will help them succeed more in remote learning should a second wave compel us back to that model. Starting early may be our only opportunity to expand in-school time until a vaccine is widespread. In the survey, some parents seemed unclear about whether students could easily toggle between in-person learning and remote learning. Many schools have taken a firm stance on expecting their students to return to the building. We respect every parent's decision to make this choice, and we can accommodate remote learning. We understand that every household has their own idiosyncratic set of circumstances, be they health-related or personal. That being said, MMS is working hard to establish a safe environment for students with a small group model where children have limited exposure to students outside their classroom to minimize the potential spread of illness. For teachers' efficacy and for students' connection to peers, we hope to see as many children return as possible. **In the questionnaire, we will also ask for a firm answer on whether your child will be in school and if they can come back before September 9.**

### **Stronger Together Emergency Fund and Annual Fund**

In April, we established the MMS Stronger Together Emergency Fund. This effort exists alongside regular tuition assistance and is for families who are facing a loss of income due to the economic fallout of the pandemic. So far, this effort has helped keep eight children—perhaps close friends of your child—at our school. It's clear the economic havoc wreaked by this crisis is far from over. As long as funds are available, we will continue to provide assistance to families who find themselves in need unexpectedly.

### **Summer Enrichment Classes**

Summer enrichment classes will begin on July 13. If you have any questions about programming, please contact your child's divisional leader: Children's House Head Karina Cruz ([kcruz@mmsny.org](mailto:kcruz@mmsny.org)); Lower School Head Jody Quam ([jquam@mmsny.org](mailto:jquam@mmsny.org)); and Upper School Head Anna Martucci ([amartucci@mmsny.org](mailto:amartucci@mmsny.org)).

I look forward to speaking with you on July 15 about the year ahead!

Sincerely,  
Racheal Adriko