



July 7, 2020

Dear Keystone Families,

This past school year was extraordinary for our planet, our country, and our school. Keystone saw its largest ever enrollment; our most successful fundraiser, raising over \$120,000; and we launched our first capital campaign to Buy the Farm. And in the months we were at school, we made amazing memories: exploring the campus biomes, cooking trout in the kitchen, the very entertaining Junie B. Jones Holiday Spectacular, and not one but two llama births. Every morning, you dropped off their kids at Keystone, knowing that they would be safe and well cared for emotionally, socially, physically, and academically, as they tackled days filled with music, animals, the outdoors, COG, art, PE, reading, math, experiments, explorations, and more.

Keystone COVID-19 Task Force & Plans

In the spring, our world was hit with COVID-19, and it is not over dramatic to say that life, as we knew it, changed. Schools and businesses shut down, parents were forced to work at home, with kids relegated to learn in front of a screen. Although it wasn't easy for any of us and done imperfectly at times, we hope you know that the Keystone staff poured their hearts and souls into an online education program that none of us had ever planned to do. We were and are so grateful for your flexibility, trust, and patience while we navigated these uncharted waters.

Unfortunately, we are still in the middle of this pandemic, with no change in sight for the foreseeable future. As such, we must again look at the possibility of community spread of COVID-19 for our 2020/2021 school year and what our role will be as responsible stewards of your child's social, emotional, and physical safety, while maintaining our commitment to deliver meaningful and purposeful learning.

In early June, we convened the Keystone COVID-19 Task Force, gathering experts in fields pertinent to the challenge to help guide us in making the most responsible decisions for our community. The panel was composed of our Keystone Board of Directors and experts in the fields of: Infectious Disease and Epidemiology; business strategy and econometric analysis; legal analysis; public education strategy; and nonprofit leadership in education, children and early childhood. Their diverse expertise was invaluable as we created plans unique to Keystone.

Armed with a healthy respect for this virus' unpredictability, we recognize that following any guidelines set by federal, state and local governments are important for the safety of our students, families, and community. The following information is the result of time, research, and expertise that the Keystone COVID-19 Task Force dedicated to helping Keystone develop safe and considerate plans for the unknowns of the upcoming year.



Please know that every inch of our hearts' desire is to bring the children back to Keystone. Keystone's history is rooted in whole-child safety, and we have always believed that a little risk (managed with adult guidance) helps kids in their navigation of learning and life. We know there is an inherent risk to childhood; we allow children to experience those risks in a controlled environment, so that the risk is not too great, and the consequences not so steep, that we can't recover if we fail. We know that we cannot eliminate risk for your family, but our commitment to the safety of your children and our staff remains paramount.

We have included several infographics that explain ways you can help your child prior to the beginning of school to ensure a successful transition between their home life to this year's school life. As the parent, you will set the tone for their expectations for the year. If you exhibit anxiety or nervousness about the year or the safety protocols, they are likely to pick up on that and have the same fears. We are choosing a tone of hopeful positivity: we have found new ways to be together and are confidently moving forward with that as our goal.

Parent Survey Results

We want to express how grateful we are that so many families chose to fill out the survey (more than 80%). You might expect that there were many wide and varied responses, and we thank you for your quick attention and honesty.

Some of the most notable results of the survey included:

- 67% of our families are comfortable with a full opening this fall with safety protocols in place.
- Approximately one-half of our families are comfortable with children masking and the other half is not yet comfortable with masking. We address Keystone's approach to masking and face covering in detail in this document, and in the attached PDF, "Helping Kids Learn to Wear Masks."
- 83% of our families are comfortable with their children coming on to campus for small group opportunities during an online or hybrid version of school.
- A majority of our families said that remote learning was manageable.
- Parents only had a moderate amount of concern about screentime usage for their child, but most parents ranked social interactions as their primary concern.

The survey confirmed what we already knew: that we have a diverse population of parents with diverse concerns and expectations, but that all had great reasons, when listed, for how they felt. Although the survey results did not drive our COVID-19 plan, it did help us to know what was a concern or not a concern for our families. This assisted us in determining what our families will want and need this year and how to meet those needs.



Social and Emotional Safety in a Pandemic

As educators focused on whole-child safety, we recognize the valid concerns about the toll this pandemic has on children socially and emotionally. Social and emotional safety are the foundation of Keystone's philosophy and these must be held sacred for all other learning and safeties to build. We are true to our words: every day at Keystone, every experience your child has, holds a touchstone of building social and emotional growth and safety. In this way, Keystone kids are uniquely equipped to face, manage, question and grow in self actualization, self-esteem, and self-worth in everyday life.

Covid has thrown obstacles of unforeseen proportions in the pathways of progression for our entire world, country, down to every parent and child on our planet. This is a tender and fragile time for all children as we fight hard to shield them from the insecurities in our world. Yet they sense our fragility as well. They are deeply connected to us and for those beautiful reasons, we can work hard to answer their questions honestly, and still wrap them in the safe arms of childhood as we encourage their lovely curiosities.

Keystone is so much more than just curriculum, and we know you chose us for more than just the delivery of learning methodology. Even though these extraordinary and difficult times may sometimes get in our way, we are always here to meet your child in the emotional moment where they are wrestling. Clearly, we prefer being on campus with your children, knowing them with deep understanding, where we can see and feel what is happening within them throughout the day. But no matter what we are experiencing in the chaos of the world, our most pressing need for all children, is to ensure that they are surrounded by a faculty whose primary jobs are to be an observer, a listener, and an empathetic partner and guide in the kids' emotional journey. It is through this reliable, practiced, and familiar support that children develop the confidence to step out independently, trust themselves, knowing that if they make a mistake, they can and will recover.

None of this is less important during COVID-19. In fact, because of the disruptions to the norms of childhood, it is even more imperative that we become more attuned to the emotional needs of our kids. Throughout all of these 2020/2021 scenarios, our first job will be attending to your child's emotional needs. As parents ourselves, we know that when a child experiences emotional stability, they are open and receptive to tackling the challenges of difficult times. It is also important to remember who we are as Keystone people. Please know, if any child is in need of comfort or nurturing, we will certainly attend to them as we would before: immediately and with compassion. While we are mindful of the importance of physical distancing, we will always hold and love your children when needed. They need it, and we do, too!

Throughout the attached documents, you will see that we are still attempting to hold whole-child safety (emotional, social, physical, academic) in proper balance. If we can help your family



achieve this in any way, please don't hesitate to get in touch with John, Jenny, or your child's teacher.

We are thankful for your trust in Keystone and its philosophy. None of our commitments to the mission or philosophy of Keystone have changed, and every decision we make will be rooted in the best case scenario for social, emotional, physical, and academic health. We are thankful for every opportunity to be with your kids, and we are hopeful that the world will soon find a way through this pandemic. In the meantime, rest assured that your Keystone faculty and staff is working diligently to provide the safest environment for your kids to learn and thrive.

Let our adventures into space begin!

Always,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerry Durning + John Sutton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' for Jerry.

Keystone co-founders/co-directors