



Matthews Hall

Established 1918

Friday, April 24, 2020

Dear Parents:

By my count, today marks almost the twentieth “remote” school day since the uncertain completion of our March Break – and our first full 5-day week of learning at home. While I know that many aspects of our pivot to home-based learning have been highly experimental, I hope that we can all agree that everyone is striving to make the best of unique and unexpected circumstances during the final spring term of 2019-2020.

I have heard anecdotally from teachers that most students are engaging with our remote program in a regular way, asking questions, attending virtual class meetings, and supporting one another, and some are even “off to the races” working on passion projects, as they pursue initiatives that satisfy their need to keep occupied and moving forward. I have also seen impressive evidence of students who are active in their home kitchens. Have your children planned a dinner menu and learned the difference between braising and roasting, or sautéing and simmering, yet? What about baking bread? One is never too young (or too old!) to begin a course in the culinary arts and sciences!

While our teachers are planning activities and assignments to ensure academic learning continues, we also realize that their social and physical needs require a different approach. Absence from friends and a lack of active outdoor play are not easy at any age. Children can even miss the noisy banter of bus rides or the organized chaos of before and after school programs. We certainly wish these were part of our students’ days, but current circumstances do not allow such ancillary programs or services to proceed.

In terms of school fees, since we are providing coordinated remote learning opportunities during these unprecedented times, we are not able to provide a tuition refund for the remainder of the current school year. However, we will provide a credit for use in the coming school year for unused extended day, bussing, and private music lessons, in recognition of the fact that these services have not been possible to offer since March 30, 2020. In the case of graduating or departing students, we will issue a prorated refund of these ancillary service fees, once final accounts have been settled at the end of June.

Like you, we are carefully watching provincial plans for the gradual lifting of restrictions that will allow normal school operations to resume in the independent school sector (NOTE: a return to “normal” routines will also likely include some modifications for a period of time). Matthews Hall will maintain the previously announced tuition fees for the 2020-2021 school year; however, we are currently discussing our tuition fee structure, *should the School be required* to operate on a remote learning basis for part of the 2020-2021 school year. These discussions are overseen and ultimately approved by the Board of Governors.

We anticipate that Matthews Hall will be operating in an onsite mode in September, so the details of any provisional fee structure would only be communicated to families, *if* a remote scenario becomes more likely.

In solidarity with all Ontarians, we are awaiting clarification in the coming weeks and will communicate any adjustments as soon as possible.

For now our closure remains in effect in keeping with government orders. We watch and wait with an eye to the future, confident that our unity as a school community will see us through to the time when we get to turn our attention to the woes of playground mud and the excitement of the completion of our new school wing (...the progress of which has understandably been impacted as a result of COVID-19 restrictions on the construction industry).

In the meantime, let's bake some bread this weekend! As Julia Child once said, "How can a nation [or a school!] be great if its bread taste like Kleenex?"

And that's actually a fair question.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ric Anderson".

Ric Anderson
Head of School