



# Matthews Hall

Established 1918

Friday, May 29, 2020

Dear Parents:

As we end the week, let's begin with the obvious: the Government of Ontario has extended its emergency order requiring all privately-operated schools to remain closed until June 9<sup>th</sup>. This comes as no surprise, as the province moves to gradually reopen over the coming weeks. It's now time to call it. In keeping with other CAIS and CIS Ontario members, we will not be returning to the classroom for the remainder of this school year.

Matthews Hall will continue to provide our "learning at home" program with supports in place until **Friday, June 12, 2020**. During this time, teachers will also be preparing final evaluations and reports to officially conclude the 2019-2020 school year. We will also be keeping you updated on the announcement of award recipients, special accolades, community news, and any additional class instructions during the month of June. It goes without saying that we will miss all of our year-end events and community celebrations, especially those that formally recognize the Class of 2020. That said, we look forward to re-convening our Grade 8s in the fall to celebrate their graduation in a suitable way!

For those concerned about the long-term academic consequences of their child's hiatus from regular school, what can be said? Well, a great many things actually. Albert Einstein famously believed that education was what remained after one had "forgotten" everything "learned in school". If we think back to the days of our own youth, I wonder how much content any of us can truly recall – bits and pieces to be sure and certainly the important residue of essential skills, attitudes, and learning habits. But a lot of the "non-essentials" would be lost in the mists of time.

Now that we have all endured this unusual pause in the way things are "normally" done, how should we be thinking about it? How can we put it in its proper place? How can we salvage and "soldier on"? There will be some who will be anxious and accusatory. Others will be more philosophical and pragmatic. And, still, a great many others will have a somewhat more realistic (and sympathetic!) appreciation for the "lived experience" of classroom teachers. As we can see, teaching children well is about more than content and computers.

And what qualifies a school as "good" during such a unique and *never-before-seen global* experience? Is a "good" school a curriculum-first institution that believes that if students know *this* and can do *this*, that *this* will be the result? As we know, it doesn't always work out that way and such schools can gravitate more to celebrating school success rather than people success.

WWKMT?

What *would* Kate Matthews think about all of this? What would Miss Matthews have thought about this “unprecedented” moment in history? And, if we are thinking and responding prudently, what should we be thinking? These are reasonable questions, if we are going to work and learn under the banner of her name and have our children emerge on the other side, not just more “intelligent”, but wiser.

To begin with, Miss Matthews would say that a good school should visibly and substantively improve the community in which it is embedded. All the best ones do and they have parents, students, teachers, and governors who are committed to this goal. They are filled with people who believe it’s actually not just about *us* and *our* kids, but about all of us together and all of the kids!

A good school also produces students that can empathize, critique, protect, love, inspire, make, design, restore, and understand almost anything – so maybe that’s been our task over these past weeks of separation.

Adversity is always a great teacher because, as Benjamin Franklin rightly observed, “...people will [only] know the value of water once the well runs dry”. True in life. True in history. True in schools.

Who will learn this important lesson? Time alone will tell.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ric Anderson". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial "R" and "A".

Ric Anderson  
Head of School