



Matthews Hall

Established 1918

Friday, May 1, 2020

Dear Parents:

This week I was able to take part in another CAIS webinar being offered to administrators and teachers in our national association of schools. Not surprisingly, the focus was how our schools were managing (...and how we will need to manage going forward) the complexities of “the great pause” in our post-pandemic life. There has been much talk about “pivoting” and the ability to adapt quickly to remote learning, as each school strives to meet, albeit imperfectly, the practical needs of thousands of children sequestered in their homes. For a small school like ours, I hope we can all agree that Matthews Hall has punched above its weight in several areas. I hope we can further agree that teaching and engaging children is demanding work.

I am in communication with colleagues working in boarding schools and K-12 schools who report that their senior students (now working from home and around the world) are taking maximum advantage of online modes of learning. That’s not surprising because for motivated older students, the opportunity for self-directed asynchronous learning is *very* different. Elementary children’s skills, knowledge, attitudes – and need for physical activity and play – present a different set of challenges for educators and parents.

Younger students need and demand accompaniment in their learning – accompaniment that is not as crucial for their older more independent peers. Does that mean that more work is advisable? Or a different approach? There is no perfect one-size-fits-all solution. What is working for your child? You can help us understand your children’s needs better by contacting their teachers with feedback and completing a short survey found [HERE](#).

So, how are we coping otherwise? How do we keep our frustrations, uncertainties, and expectations in-check? As one of my CAIS colleagues, a Toronto Head of School, shared with me last week, “...only the strength of our communities will provide the ongoing resilience we need to manage the situation we face.” And it’s as simple as that. We see this playing out in cities across the country. When communities take their eyes off the ball and begin circling the wagons, the whole notion of community risks going out the window. My wife used to tell me that, during moments of trial or crisis, “You must become more yourself, not less.” More anchored, more rooted, more connected, more determined, and more coherent. Situations are always riskier and more dangerous when the essence of who we are as individuals, families, and communities begins to drift from our moorings.

Who and what is Matthews Hall? Well, to begin with, we are that same *small family school* that started in 1918 – the year that the Spanish Flu was ravaging the world at the end of WW I. We are larger and more complex, but I hope we can still claim to be as wise. Part of such wisdom must surely be the ability to remain calm, resolute, creative, and centred in the midst of a challenge. There is no question that we are living through a particular moment in our history; but it is not just our history. It is the history of our children and *their future children* and we want to be able to say that we were able to keep our wits about us when others seemed to be losing theirs. If an independent school and its teachers are truly valued, we can only accomplish such stability through solidarity.

During a normal term, it is always easy to see solidarity on display with our students, especially on House League challenge days! For example, if you've ever walked into the gym during house league chanting, you will know what I'm talking about. Members of a team. Big and small. Fast and slow. Short and tall. But all with a **common interest** and **unquestionable mutual support**. Why not ask our kids to give us a lesson in COVID-19 isolation chutzpah? We know there is a lot of learning happening in your homes – formal and otherwise – and we should share it!

It's been a while since we were able to have a good old-fashioned House League competition. Help your child make a statement of support and solidarity with their **Sydenham, St. George, Oxford** or **Waterloo** compatriots!

Take a photo of your MH student learning at the computer OR playing OR singing OR climbing OR building AND **wearing their House League t-shirt**. Send the pic to Miss Moore moore.k@matthewshall.ca and we will tally the scores and share the photo evidence of learning, as we all make the best of it!

I have a feeling that Sydenham stands a good chance of winning.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ric Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'R' being particularly large and stylized.

Ric Anderson
Head of School