



July 17, 2020

Dear Parents

You will soon have in your hands the school's operating plan for the first semester of the school year 2020 – 2021. Let me begin by acknowledging that we are not able to provide concrete answers or solutions for all the questions that will come to mind as you read this plan. Unsettling, perhaps, but this is also an indication that we are committed to remaining open to and incorporating new information if and when it comes to light. It also means we are open to hearing your questions, concerns and suggestions.

A few days ago I had a good, yet heart-breaking, conversation with a father of young children. It was good to hear his commitment and understanding of Escuela's mission; it was good to hear of his support for our school. It was heart-breaking to see the palpable fear in his eyes when he thought about his young children leaving the enclosed safety of the family quarantine bubble.

While it was quite some time ago that my own children were that young, I still remember the impact on my soul of the feelings we all have as we raise our young children. I understand that many of you are fearful and uncertain; that experience has been mine as well.

I understand the excruciating difficulties of trying to make the "right" choice.

I want to reassure you that you are not alone in navigating these waters. The decisions we make, we make together. Our mission is child-centered; you are our partners and collaborators in these decisions even as I am left to seemingly make them on my own. I can tell you this one thing without a doubt: our school can not do everything to keep your children healthy.

Keeping your children safe will require your participation. Escuela has always been a community of families committed to the shared mission of our school. In this time of "social distancing," there is a profound need for our community connection now. We must be there to support each other, to listen to each other, and we must work to keep our entire community safe. Indeed, our every action may now have a real and concrete effect on other members of our community. We need to acknowledge that our connection is the root of our ability to be safe.

This is what I ask of you: Be thoughtful in your daily lives to ensure best practices for health and hygiene. Take no unnecessary risks. Every day is an opportunity to relax your guard, to be tired of this pandemic, to go to the gym, to the mall, to the stores, to cave to your children's demands for play dates, over-nights, to be "sick of all this" and take risks in the name of your needs for "normalcy." Every day is also an opportunity I ask you to take: an opportunity to remain as quarantined as possible, to consider alternate ways to get what you need, from food to "things." Consider what your children need ... more than they need their health. Consider that everything you do or do not do affects potentially hundreds of families and their children. I want you to be here, at Escuela. I want you on this team. I want you to qualify to be on this team. And that means I need to trust you; we all need to trust each other. I need to know, without a doubt, that you and no one in your household will participate in behavior that puts us all at risk.

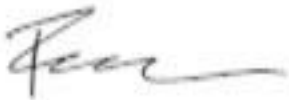
This is what I ask before you agree to bring your children back to Escuela. As a Quaranteam, we can do this, and we can do this safely.

The current climate in our country seems to be a constant onslaught of information, misinformation, politicized “science,” “real” science, upheaval and debate. Not wanting to wade into those waters, our school is nevertheless not immune from the effects of the debates. Even the debate around School Opening has become a political firestorm.

Understand that at Escuela del Sol we are not in a debate, we are not taking a political stance. Our stance is that we will do everything in our power to provide the best carefully prepared environment for the support and enhancement of every child’s growth.

To that end, we offer an operating plan that will be released later this afternoon A procedural document that is no doubt far from perfect. Even now, as close to August as we are, new information comes our way, and we are listening and learning. Even now, and as recently as a few hours ago I was in conversation with some parents who proposed what I believe are potentially viable and rather brilliant alternative scheduling possibilities. As we brainstorm together we need input from all of you. So yes, we’ll create another survey – – – please participate! Our decisions will hinge on what is best for most of you and all of it is based on keeping our teachers safe, your children safe, our community safe.

I am gratefully on your team!



Friedje van Gils
Executive Director
Head of School

