

Salmonberry Mid-summer Update

July 12, 2020

Dear Parents,

As promised I am making every effort to keep you all informed of what I know, and don't yet know related to our summer planning and our fall re-opening.

Laura Black and I have been attending weekly "partner calls" with Mark Tompkins at SJC Health and Community Services. Mark is the liaison working with schools in San Juan County, and is very well informed about nearly everything related to Covid-19 from a public health perspective. We have a private consultation with Mark this coming week to go over our current plans for safely reopening. I have also been receiving guidance from Dr. Frank James, guidelines from WA Department of Health, WA Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the WA Federation of Independent Schools, and the CDC. We are doing our very best to follow all recommendations and best practices with kids' safety being the highest priority.

I have maintained my Tuesday morning office hours, and quite a few of you have met me there to chat, give input and help me think creatively about re-opening. Please feel free to stop by Tuesdays at 9:00 (*Paul's Zoom room: PMI: 754-024-9652 Password (if requested): 151489*). The Parent Advisory Group has met once, on June 15. It was a very productive conversation, that also led us to connect with every family to ask a few key questions regarding your priorities including outside learning, mask wearing, screen-time, etc. This feedback was invaluable! Thank you for participating!! The PAG will meet again on July 15, at 10:00 and you are welcome to join us, even if you couldn't make to the June meeting. (See my Zoom Room login info above).

I have been meeting with Salmonberry staff bi-weekly to talk about gearing up for re-opening as well as stepping more fully towards creating an anti-racist school on every level. Teachers are putting in many extra hours this summer and remain fully engaged in all-things-Salmonberry.

Salmonberry summer camps have started back up and we are learning a ton from these experiences. The feedback from parents and teachers has been great, and kids seem really happy to be together, albeit with safety protocols firmly in place.

Socially distanced work parties are being organized to take place a little later this summer, as the buildings and campus are going to require some significant help to enact some of the modifications we are planning (see below). Please keep an eye out for a future invitation to come and help.

So, the question that I'm sure on everyone's mind is what will school look like in the fall. And, with a lot of details still in the works, here is a rough outline of...

THE PLAN

****Please keep in mind, that the following picture is still in development. I will send out a revised plan before August 1, which is the extended re-enrollment deadline for fall placement.****

First, I am fairly certain that, barring a significant local spike in Covid-19 cases, Salmonberry will be able to re-open for full-time in-person school! Students are likely going to be required to wear face coverings in order to attend. There will also be daily questionnaires, temperature scans, and lots and lots of handwashing and disinfecting.

We are currently planning to have each class spend at least one full day/wk off-site and outdoors to allow the inside spaces much more elbow room. We are talking to several sites that could provide excellent opportunities for nature-based, farm-based and just outdoor learning. On those days, both drop-off and pick-up would be at that designated off-site location.

We are also completing plans to develop the school campus to allow for several outdoor covered mini-classrooms. This again will help us to minimize the density inside our buildings.

We are swapping what was the 2019-20 Kindergarten and Intermediate classrooms, so that the 2020-21 Salmon class, when indoors, will meet in the south building, west classroom; and the 2020-21 Eagles class, when indoors, will meet in the north building. This again will allow us to maximize our square footage, putting the largest enrollment in the largest spaces. This is all going to require a lot of work including moving furniture, books, and well, basically *everything*. Thus the work parties! We also have a number of outside projects going too.

A few details and answers to anticipated FAQ's:

We will likely bring kids back to school in small, half-class cohorts, so expect the first week, and possibly part of the second week of school to be somewhat modified. Details will be forthcoming. This will allow teachers to explain new protocols at school more intimately and directly to each student, and ensure that we get off to the best possible start.

At every point, any students and staff who have any symptoms including cough, sore throat, fever, etc will need to be excluded from school. We are working with SJC Health folks on the details of the criteria for returning to school following an absence. Each teacher will be developing packets that can be taken home and used to support kids' learning while absent from school. Depending on the length of absence there may be some limited online support from our teaching staff available as well.

While inside our classrooms, the kids are very likely going to be masked at all times. (We may have "breather breaks," so that kids can step outside on a rotating basis and remove the masks for 5-minutes each hour or so – we'll see what's needed). Kids age 6 and up will have individual desks and to a large extent individual materials, to minimize contact. The desks will be spaced at least six feet apart. Current guidance is that physical movement between these well-spaced desks is okay and does not pose any significant risk.

While outside, there is a chance that kids could be without face coverings depending on the specifics of activities and behavior. We are getting greater clarity on this in coming days.

Students' coats, lunchboxes and other belongings will likely be stored apart from one another, rather than in a cubby room or corner as we're used to. Snacks will not be prepared at school, nor provided or shared communally. Everyone will simply bring their own food to eat.

The current guidance is that shared playground surfaces are not a risk, so we expect the play yard will be fully open. We will, however, likely be keeping outside cohorts small, so the shared all-ages recesses we're used to will likely end for now.

Teachers will be provided with clear face shields with attached cloth neck coverings, which has been approved as a safe way to allow our whole faces to be visible. Students will be asked to wear their own face covering brought from home, and also bring an extra one to have at school at all times. We will also stock additional disposable masks just in case.

A REQUEST: I AM GOING TO STRONGLY URGE ALL FAMILIES AND STAFF TO SELF-QUARANTINE FOR THE TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO OUR SEPTEMBER 2 OPENING.

I know we all really want to start our year off healthy and free from immediate concern of exposure. **So please make an effort to complete any summer travel before August 19.**

Likewise please consider having any family or friend visitors depart by August 19 as well. We are taking our health precautions very seriously and we are enlisting your help as a community to support this priority.

That's all for now. Please stop by my office hours, attend Wednesday's PAG meeting or send me an email if you have any specific questions (or creative ideas) that I can address in future communications.

Thanks as always for your support and patience. I know this continues to be a stressful time for many families. Your teachers are so eager to get back to in-person learning at Salmonberry School. We will adjust to all these changes with positivity, determination and good humor. We miss you and love you very much.

Sincerely,

Paul