



BROOKLYN FRIENDS SCHOOL

March 20, 2020

Dear BFS Families:

During this surreal and challenging time, you have all been at the front of my mind. I concur that much feels uncertain at the moment. In this difficult time, I am moved by the existing strength in our community and our commitment to supporting one another. While the BFS community has had almost two weeks away from our familiar school hallways and classrooms, I, along with Leadership Team members have been continuously monitoring the rapidly evolving COVID-19 situation as well as the guidance from our city and state. We have also been focusing on our preparations for re-entry into Virtual BFS, which will re-launch on March 30th.

In this communication, I focus on several key areas, which have embedded links within for further related information. My hope is that this provides clarity for the days before us. More than anything please know that, even with this essential physical distance, we are here for you.

School Access

Governor Cuomo has just ordered all businesses/educational settings in New York State to only allow essential personnel. Our Family Center, Pearl Street and Lawrence buildings have undergone a multi-day intensive cleaning effort completed by a specialized outside firm, and our three school buildings are officially closed. Our Assistant Head for Facilities and Operations, Seth Phillips, will continue to ensure that all is safe for our eventual return. However, until this ordinance is lifted, no one is now allowed inside of the buildings. Spring athletic practices have been canceled until at least April 20th.

Extended Campus Closing through April 20th and Possibly Beyond

As you know, Mayor de Blasio has asked that all New York City schools be closed at least until April 20th. As of now, BFS will physically re-open on Monday, April 20th. I must emphasize that this reopening date is tentative at this point as local and state officials continue to monitor and react to the [COVID-19 situation on a daily basis](#).

Social Emotional Supports and Social Distancing

During these unsettled times, emotions are high. Feelings of anxiety, confusion, and fear are to be expected as your children's daily routines are changed and adults work to navigate an ever-changing global health crisis. We have made varied resources available to support you on our [Virtual BFS hub](#) as well as offer ways to extend support to your children.

Medical professionals have reached consensus that the most critical way to shift the trajectory and slow the spread of COVID-19 is to [engage in social distancing](#) and end all non-essential in-person interactions. For days, you have found yourselves unexpectedly at home, no longer having your normal day to day experiences. While this has presented opportunities, it has likely also been fraught with challenges and points of worry. To that end, we have been working on ways to extend support to you NOW.

Immediate Creative Ideas for Home

We know that many of you have already begun finding ways to encourage your children to remain connected to one another while also providing/finding suggestions for things to do. We also know that you might be seeking collaboration on this front. To that end, we have just launched a new Virtual BFS Page that introduces you to a variety of [Creative Ideas for Home](#). There are ideas for ALL age levels, and they vary in the level of independence/support required for each. As I mentioned above, there are also several resources for adults that we hope will be helpful to you. To diversify the offerings, these will continue to be updated and rotated in the days and weeks ahead.

Distance Learning and Additional Tech Support for Families

In consideration of this extended physical closure until at least April 20th, colleagues have been preparing for our distance learning plan, Virtual BFS, and we are prepared to continue our distance learning experiences on March 30th. Next Wednesday, March 25th, you will receive an email with detailed information about how [Virtual BFS](#) will work and how your family can prepare. This communication will consist of division-specific and developmentally-guided messages about how your family can prepare for and support at-home learning, schedule, technology platforms, and student expectations. We thank you for understanding that the first couple of days will consist of easing into our distance learning platform and setting the expectations (as appropriate) for our students while also making space to engage our youngest students and their families in helpful ways.

Supporting Our Community - Food Security

A significant concern is making sure that BFS community members who rely on the School for food have what they need. If you are concerned about your ability to secure food through this time period, please reach out to me directly by email in order for us to establish proper supports.

Gratitude

I thank each and every person in our community for the grace and patience that you have extended at this unprecedented and unscripted time. Thank you to the many colleagues who have been doing extraordinary work to flexibly re-design the way that learning as we have known takes place, all the while not compromising the human connectedness that is deeply embedded in our fabric. The steadfast commitment that I am witnessing on all fronts, from families, to colleagues, to our Board of Trustees, is inspiring. Yes, there is no denying that this is a trying time in our nation and world. There is also no denying that we will work to make this the most positive experience that it can be.

Our Friends core calls us to steward one another through joy and challenge. A massive challenge is before us, and with Light in our hearts, compassion, and diligence, together, we will meet it. Of this, I am certain.

Thank you for your continued confidence and support in our school and for gracing us with your partnership.

Holding our community in Light and love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Crissy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "C" and a long, sweeping tail that loops back under the name.

Crissy Cáceres
Head of School