



July 21, 2020

Dear Parents,

I hope that you are all finding ways to relax, restore and enjoy this summer in spite of the COVID-19 limitations! Here at Seneca, we are busy doing all the behind-the-scenes work – both in the building and from home – to get us ready for what I hope will be an inspirational year full of joy, discovery, and exploration, regardless of how unusual it is. Although none of us wants to rush the end of summer, we are looking forward to seeing your children on a daily basis again. The school does not feel quite as magical without them around!

In preparation for the new school year, which will likely look very different than past years, we wanted to share with you some important information. First and foremost, as I stated in our last Town Hall meeting, we are extremely fortunate that our spacious campus and long-term commitment to small class sizes allow us to be one of the few schools in our area to be able to offer, subject to state and local mandates, a five-day-a-week, on-campus schedule. We remain firmly committed to doing this!

With that said, the safety and health of our entire village will always remain our top priority. Throughout the summer, the Seneca Academy team, along with appropriate consultants, has been carefully studying recommendations from the CDC as well as from state and county officials. Based on that guidance, we are working on contingency plans that meet our goal of maximizing on-site learning while doing everything we can to follow best practices for maintaining the safety of our students and staff. Although we will not be able to share a finalized plan until August, when we will hopefully have more definitive information about what phase Montgomery County will be in and what specific guidelines we will need to comply with in order to open, I am able to share some of our overarching principles at <https://www.senecaacademy.org/covid-19>. Please also save the date for our virtual Town Hall meeting on July 29 at 8 p.m., at which times we will be discussing what we expect the 2020-2021 school year to look like.

On a more pragmatic note, I would like to share some non-coronavirus related information in this letter to help you prepare for the year ahead and for the start of school:

1. To find your child's school supply list, and other back-to-school information, please visit: <https://www.senecaacademy.org/back-to-school/>. Please know that some items on these lists may seem unusual; we are using creative thinking to help us have as much safe in-person learning as possible! Each student should also obtain the following items, all labeled with their name, and bring them to school:

Backpack (non-rolling and washable)	Lunch box/bento box (flat-opening preferred)	Art smock	Reusable masks/cloth face coverings	TWO reusable water bottles
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2. In keeping with state and local guidelines, students will be required to wear family-provided masks or cloth face coverings, with time given for safe "mask breaks" whenever feasible. **To prepare them for**

that, we strongly encourage parents to have children practice wearing masks/cloth face coverings, to find ways to normalize this as much as possible, and to teach children how to put masks/cloth face coverings on and take them off safely.

3. A Parent/Teacher Before-School Conference will take place on Monday, August 31, at staggered times throughout the day. These may be virtual or in person depending on parents' comfort level. Because of social distancing expectations, we ask that children not be present. Links to sign up for times have been provided in teachers' back-to-school letters.
4. The first day of school is on Tuesday, September 1, from 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Drop-off will begin at 8:15 a.m.; more information will be given out about the carpool procedure later in the summer. Wednesday, September 2, will be a full school day for everyone except kindergarten, who will be dismissed at 12:00 p.m. (Kindergarten parents, please see the letter from Mrs. Hauck regarding the kindergarten schedule.)
5. Students should bring a snack (such as a piece of fruit, vegetable sticks, granola bar, or cheese stick) and lunch daily. We ask that students bring TWO reusable water bottles each day in order to decrease the need for refills. Please do not send sodas or candy for snack or lunch.
6. Back to School Night will be on Thursday, September 17, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. This is a time for parents to learn more about the policies, procedures, and philosophies of Seneca Academy. Because of social distancing expectations, we ask that children not be present.
7. In addition to Back to School Night, Melissa Karasek (our Educational Director) and I will be offering *virtual* "What to Expect..." sessions on Zoom for parents of students in Grades K/1, 2/3, and 4/5. These sessions will be approximately one hour long and will focus on providing a developmental framework for children of those ages, insights about what you might expect to see in those years, and some specific parenting pointers with time to discuss your questions.

Finally, a few grade-specific reminders:

1. **Kindergarten Parents:** Please remember that ALL rising kindergartners need the Health Inventory and Immunization Form filled out by their doctor. (This includes children who attended pre-K at Seneca Academy.) Forms can be found on our Back to School page.
2. **Grade 3 Parents:** Please remember that you must submit an updated Emergency Form and Student Information Form for your rising third grader. (These can also be found on the Back to School page.)

I know that this is a lot, so let me end by saying "breathe." I hope that you continue to take the time to enjoy and treasure this summer with your children. Be mindful of the preciousness of the experiences and memories created in the downtime of summer, but know that an exciting adventure lies ahead for them in the new school year. While you continue to enjoy, please know that we are doing everything we can to ensure that we can keep everyone in the village safe while also "preserving the wonder of childhood" for our children. I am incredibly proud of how our village has handled the many difficulties that have come our way in recent months, and I look forward to seeing all of you in September!

In friendship,

Dr. Michelle Parker

Head of School