

February 28, 2020

Dear MOMI Parents:

You might guess that thoughts of the immediate and long-term wellness of our community filled my waking and sleepless moments this past week. Certainly as the week clicked by, my ears were full of calls, conversations, e-mail communiques, and numerous other forms of information needing careful attention and a discerning eye. There most definitely was a great deal of material out there about the coronavirus and you should expect that my intention in sharing what I did or potentially will in the future, is to do so in a mindful, valuable, and reasonable way.

To this end, I wondered how I might best present something related to what I saw this past week that has value, teaches us all something, and encourages our remaining thoughtful of one another. I thought of handwashing and its historical merit. Of mere coincidence, a notification of news popped on my screen as I opened my computer—*Forget Masks, the Best Way to Protect Yourself Against the Coronavirus is Frequent Handwashing*. Amazing, how about that?

I personally had no idea the historic value of handwashing and at this point in time, appreciate its significance for keeping us as healthy as can be, even in those instances when our bodies tell us to slow down, rest, and recalibrate. Truth be told, as recorded in 1846, handwashing was deemed as a plausible means for preventing infection. And while the data showed steady drops in mortality rates in 1840's Austria and Florence Nightingale proved likewise in 1850's Italy, it wasn't until a near century later in the 1980's that handwashing was nationally endorsed as a valuable hygienic practice in the United States. Today, at Montessori School of Maui, it is a common practice too.

Following morning "Hellos," gentle embraces, or the lightest of reassuring touches, the children are asked to wash their hands. They do so to not only protect themselves but to protect each other, and to remain thoughtful of one another too. My point exactly.

Please take care of yourselves and each other. Enjoy your weekend too.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric L. Dustman', written over a light gray rectangular background.

Eric L Dustman, PhD
Head of School

March 6, 2020

Dear MOMI Parents:

This week was filled with re-enrollment, preparations to welcome prospective families to campus tomorrow, final rehearsals before curtain-called performances by the lower elementary, and other activities that support student learning and well-being, including hand washing. As I understand it, it was a good one. And to call it busy would be an understatement.

Should you find at this point that you missed your March 4 re-enrollment deadline, please make a note to contact Jamie once we resume March 24.

As you know, news and information about the Coronavirus continues to be shared far and wide through social media, news outlets, and any number of conversations had by those well-informed or not so much. My point? Please make considerations about where you educate yourselves.

You can expect that I will maintain diligence in my efforts to discern and disseminate helpful information to you over the vacation. Please keep an eye on your e-mail so that if additional precautions are necessitated by local authorities, the CDC, the HDOH and others, you will know. Additionally, please take note of the information below, as first shared by me on March 1, 2020.

Travel

The impending travel by many does statistically raise the probability of spread. To educate and protect yourselves, please check the following with frequency:

U.S. Department of State Travel Advisories:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

CDC's Travel: Frequently Asked Questions and Answers:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/faqs.html>

If you are traveling to a [CDC Level 3](#) country or the country you are traveling to could become reclassified as Level 3 while you are overseas, we ask that you notify the school (ericd@momi.org, subject line: Spring Vacation Travel) prior to leaving and upon your return. As travel to these areas is not recommended, you will be expected to observe a 14-day self-quarantine period, at minimum, and be seen by a physician before returning to campus. Should

COVID-19 [symptoms](#) become a worry at any time, please seek medical attention. Furthermore, understand that you may be required to undergo a mandatory quarantine by State health officials if you travel to one of these countries.

Of course, I wish for all of you to remain safe and healthy. Please take care of yourselves and each other.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric L Dustman', is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Eric L Dustman, PhD
Head of School

March 27, 2020

Dear MOMI Parents:

I am really excited to share that your MOMI faculty and staff have engaged with one another to great lengths over this past week to prepare for the launch of our Distance Learning Program. Things are looking very good and I know that everyone is enthusiastic to reconnect on this platform despite our shared and collective preferences to do otherwise.

While many of you have sought to learn more about what our Distance Learning Program will entail by reviewing the Distance Learning Program & Protocol document included in March 23rds Monday Messenger or by seeking assistance from your child's teacher or me, I truly believe you will be surprised by what our efforts have created. As you would expect, we have all worked to develop a rich and meaningful distance learning program that will engage your child and provide for his / her further growth and development.

What's New?

Before today's end, every parent from Primary – Upper Elementary should receive a note from your child's teacher (I know others have sent too). It will include the following:

- 1) An e-mail address and password specific to your child and only useable, and necessary, for access to Google.
- 2) A Google Classroom code, specific to your child and his / her class.
- 3) *Important to note regarding items (1) and (2) which will provide access to your child's respective Google Classroom—some teachers have already populated the "classroom" with assignments, materials, and ideas. We expect that your child (and you in some cases) will do the best he / she can but that shouldn't start until Monday. As your letters have encouraged, simply take today and this weekend to look around. Don't worry about the assignments posted, engagement will start Monday and so too will your teacher's responses to any questions.*

Any Further Updates?

While we intend to execute our distance learning program for as long as our suspension of on-campus operations continues, my hope for resuming some level of normalcy as soon as possible is not dashed. I am hopeful but as I have previously shared, I will inform you of any changes to our thinking about on-campus activities as the safety and well-being of students, staff, and you remains paramount.

We're All Learning

So, in the meantime, we will continue to extend newfound effort to employ the newfound skill that distance learning has demanded. As we begin, please remember that we are all in this

together. Many of us have our own children at home so we are managing the same challenges as you. Additionally, I'd like to encourage all of us to be patient with one another, to breathe, and to take it one step at a time. There will undoubtedly be glitches, hiccups, and other unforeseen issues but we'll tackle them together. If we all keep this in mind, I am sure we will do well to act in manner that affords kindness, care, and respect towards one another—they are after all qualities that we hope to teach and observe in our children.

Additionally, I want everyone to remain mindful of their child's mental health and well-being. As one teacher encouraged each of us today while we engaged in the umpteenth Zoom Conference of the week, "we need to make sure that when we connect with students over the coming weeks that we attend to their spiritual and mental health. This situation is so different from anything we've ever experienced, it can be scary, and we should try our best to make sure everyone feels okay."

Contact

Lastly, I understand that questions will come up and you'll want answers. To help expedite such answers, given the schedules we are now forced to keep in the office to assure ourselves our own safety, please seek assistance through e-mail. Contact Cheryl Kaupalolo at cherylk@momi.org for questions about tuition and finance, contact Jamie Athearn at jamiea@momi.org for questions about admissions, send general questions to info@momi.org, and contact me at ericd@momi.org if you have questions about the program and school operations. Without a doubt, you can bet we'll reply as distance learning has required distance work, and we're all connected.

Please be safe and well. Take care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric L. Dustman", written over a light gray rectangular background.

Eric L Dustman, PhD
Head of School

April 3, 2020

Dear MOMI Parents:

Our need to shelter in place has certainly disrupted everyone's life and work. In whatever case and wherever you find yourself, we're here to help.

In the event that you have been laid off or challenged by a reduction in income, or you are deemed essential to the workforce, we want to help. As we currently research foundations and community programs that could lend assistance and lessen the hardships presently felt, we are eager to pass useful information along. To learn more, please contact Cheryl Kaupalolo, our director of finance. Even if you've done so already, do so again.

Due to this disruption too, we have focused our attention on ensuring the value inherent in our educational program that regularly honors the student and honors the family. The challenge and the opportunity at hand is to ensure a marriage of the two in delivering our online curriculum.

Taking our program online undoubtedly looks different to everyone. It's important as we wrap up Week 1 and enter Week 2 that I help to define three key differences that may have come to mind as a result of your own new perspective.

1) Time

Like we do within the familiar school day, all teachers have provided your children with sample daily schedules and sample work schedules. Alongside Zoom meeting schedules and invites, your children have received lesson logs or been encouraged and directed to organize as they normally would according to these schedules.

Why did we do this? Using daily work schedules and offering choice in materials and work is what we do. When age appropriate, children use lesson logs or planners to schedule their own work in accordance to their individualized schedules.

Enacting and supporting these ideas, even in a distance learning platform, supports what we believe is the nature of your children's independence. Like at school, we are affording it to your children at home. Help them embrace it.

2) Lessons

Most school days children receive individualized, small, or large group lessons when at school. Understand that these will look different and are going to take many forms—such as quick impromptu Zooms, simple check-ins or even as advisory conversations where past, current, and future work choices are reviewed. These may last moments or may be several minutes. Context matters.

Why do we do this? Teachers never lecture within a Toddler, Primary, or Elementary Montessori environment (At times this happens in Upper Elementary but certainly

Middle School marks the transition most definitively). While they certainly do introduce ideas and materials, they are forever the facilitator of and provide the means for learning by the children. **This facilitation of learning will hold true in a distance learning platform because it honors children, their capabilities, intrinsic motivation, and growing self-esteem.**

3) Honor of the Family

Our efforts in developing a distance learning program that supports children have been steadfast. Given the challenges present for everyone, we've felt it important to also honor the family.

Why do we do this? We know times are challenging and our uncertainty is great. Because of this, the approaches and goals identified in (1) and (2) above are designed to support the age-appropriate nature of your Montessori children. By providing your children with familiarity in work and challenge, it is our belief that they will be best able to exercise the independence we observe daily. **By supporting children in exercising their independence using the normal schedules and tools always at their disposal, flexibility of the family schedule can be honored too.**

We anticipate that the perspective with which you are viewing your children as they approach schoolwork via the distance learning platform is very different. As such, I encourage you to be patient with yourself, be patient with your children, and be patient with us. Our work, preparation, and effort are no less than they have always been. I want you to understand that your own needn't be any more than normal either.

Sure, your children are home and we acknowledge that fact. Yet, as we identified in the Distance Learning Program and Protocol, the overarching aim is for you to provide space for learning, establish routines and expectations, begin and end each day with a check-in, and establish times for quiet and reflection. These are things your children are used to and are capable of working within. We take comfort that these ideas will knowingly benefit you as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric L. Dustman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Eric L Dustman, PhD
Head of School

April 10, 2020

Dear MOMI Parents:

I hope this note finds you having enjoyed a pleasant and safe Peace Day. While not a previously scheduled school day for us on the calendar, I anticipate that many took advantage of this plus one to engage with teachers and friends. It's important, no matter the day, to maintain our connections, to potentially rekindle lost ones, and to support one another with words of encouragement and appreciation. To this end, I'd like to offer the following so that you remain aware of our efforts as we look to strategize and make considerations for the ever-changing scenario we face in the coming months.

Tuition Assistance

We have extended the Tuition Assistance Deadline for all families until April 30, 2020 and have elected to look at how best to expand our criteria for decision-making. As we fine tune the revisions to the process, we will keep you informed. For now, if you are interested in tuition assistance for next year, please follow the instructions on the attached flyer.

Our Continued Help

As reported previously, in the event that you have been laid off or challenged by a reduction in income, or you are deemed essential to the workforce, we want to help. To learn more and to discuss your own situation, please contact Cheryl Kaupalolo at cherylk@momi.org.

Prepayments, Re-Enrollment, and Curricular Decision-Making for the next school year

Our efforts to manage the multiple factors associated with our current situation remain high. Like you, we are aware that how this will all play out remains unpredictable. In order to eliminate some uncertainty, we'd like to offer the following assurances for the immediate future.

Your 2020-2021 pre-payments for now are refundable. As we continue to look at the situation over the next couple of months, we expect that by the end of June we will be better able to determine what Fall may look like. To this end, we will be in touch before any pre-payments become non-refundable so that you will not lose your ability to reclaim them if your situation limits your ability to remain a part of this community or you elect to pursue an alternative. We anticipate doing the same for prospective families.

July 1 of the calendar year has always been our published date whereby you could rescind your plans to enroll without obligation to the outstanding balance of the Enrollment Contract. At this juncture, we are electing to move this date to July 15. As greater considerations are made, we will update you.

Should you have questions about the information shared here, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric L. Dustman', is written over a light gray rectangular background. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Eric L Dustman, PhD
Head of School

April 17, 2020

Dear MOMI Parents:

I want to relay a conversation that I had earlier this week with a good friend and fellow head. We talked about the benefits gained from thoughtful planning and intellectual work. We concurred that typically, we all make plans, set goals, and structure our days in ways that provide a tremendous amount of comfort. We love to imagine life like this or that, work like this or that, and we often say, "This has to happen this way because.... "

We agreed that in some cases, and this one is no exception, that we must succumb to the fact that huge aspects of life are sometimes not within our control. This submission has its own value and wisdom because many enormous aspects of our lives lie in the hands of the unknown. Our minds, however impressive, cannot peer into the future and wrestle away every last ambiguity. We as people, and our plans, are subject to many variables and may not ultimately look as we previously imagined. To this point, he shared the following poem by Jen Bryant entitled, *And Later . . .*

*I take my kaleidoscope off the shelf,
look through the little hole at the end
of the cardboard tube;*

I turn and turn and turn and turn,

*letting the crystals shift into strange
and beautiful patterns, letting the pieces fall
wherever they will.*

Like my friend, this poem resonates with me during this time. Like you, I like things stable and safe, and the same. In talking to the faculty, they do too and that is why we are constantly talking about consistency and routine for children. In many ways, however, our children are better at being flexible than we believe they are. We can learn from them in this moment. They know, intimately, that life is about constant change as their bodies are changing and so too are their minds. In moments where they are uncertain or doubtful, we can offer them assurances. I'd like to offer them to you too. I'm confident we'll make it through this, perhaps not all in the way we'd like or imagine but we will. We all have something to learn and we should remain open to it. Acknowledging this is a great first step and one that I encourage you to take.

Be well. Be safe.

Sincerely,



Eric L Dustman, PhD
Head of School

April 24, 2019

Dear MOMI Parents:

Everyone's routine has taken on an appearance that is much different than anyone could have ever imagined. One of my new routines involves reviewing the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency's (HEMA) report as shared by Phil Bossert, executive director of the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools, that drops into my inbox each afternoon. As you can imagine, it is full of statistics, details, and updates about COVID-19 and the new routines that have been necessitated as a result of its appearance in our lives.

Engaged certainly, to better inform my team's decision-making, the information gleaned often lies heavy, provides little resolve to decisions that must be made, and gives even less certainty about the virus that remains a threat. As a result, I thought I'd look elsewhere in the hopes of finding any information about something else that could brighten the picture that's presently redrawn daily. To my delight, I read about kindness.

I think you'll appreciate learning that kindness is just as contagious, if not more, than what we're sheltering from. Studies show that [kindness spreads](#). At Harvard, they found that kindness ripples out to a radius of three social steps. In other words, when we do something kind, it affects our friends, our friends' friends, and our friends' friends' friends. Watch this [video](#) to see how kindness spreads.

So, whether big or small, any gesture that you set in motion will ripple, and it could quietly and radically change your experience, and someone else's too. Doing it this weekend might even change the world.

Be safe, happy, and well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric L. Dustman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Eric L Dustman, PhD
Head of School

May 1, 2020

Dear MOMI Parents:

As I look outside from my couch, or what I affectionately call my home office, I am grateful for the opportunity to be here on Maui. Viewing the many beautiful plants and trees that grow within my eyesight, hearing the doves, chickens, and Myna birds, and feeling the ocean breezes sweep through the open windows is blissful and helps me to organize my thoughts and the information I want to share with you.

First, I hope you've found a way and taken the opportunity to share your gratitude, care, and appreciation for one another and the Hawaiian culture as we would have traditionally done on campus this morning. Celebrating together and spreading the spirit of Aloha among our immediate and extended communities has definitely become one of my most favorite times and I lament not doing so in person today. Please accept my warm wishes from afar and know that efforts remain steadfast to assure us all time together again soon.

Next, I want to remind you of our plans for Monday, May 4. It marks that first day for collecting your child(ren's) things according to the following schedule.

Monday, May 4- Toddler - Primary
9:00-11:00 Noon-2:00

Tuesday, May 5- Lower Elementary
9:00-11:00 Noon-2:00

Wednesday, May 6- Upper Elementary/Middle School
9:00-11:00 Noon-2:00

Thursday, May 7- Toddler – Lower Elementary
9:00-11:00 Noon-2:00

Friday, May 8- Upper Elementary – Middle School
9:00-11:00 Noon-2:00

If you have multiple children, please remember that it's okay to join, at any time that applies to you, by entering the large parking lot and circling around to Aftercare.

What to bring

To expedite the process and assure our timeliness, preparing a sign with your child's name and class may be helpful.

If your child has library books that need to be returned to MOMI, please bring them with you.

If your child is in Middle School and has a mathematics textbook that is no longer needed, please bring it with you.

What to do

Remember, it will only be necessary that you pull up and pop your trunk. Deesha, Momi, or I will gladly place your child's belongings inside.

Certainly enjoy the rest of this beautiful day. Thank you, as always, for your continued support and encouragement as we continue to navigate our next steps.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric L Dustman", is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Eric L Dustman, PhD
Head of School

May 8, 2020

Dear MOMI Parents:

Even amidst the on-going uncertainties that remain present for all of us, I find it absolutely necessary to seek out and find bright moments. Depending on where I look, I am routinely able to find a few things of interest but in most cases, I find greater joy in creating my own. I want to encourage you to do the same.

First, take a moment to follow up on Jen Dempsey's e-mail from earlier this week. As part of our Sustainability Committee's efforts and previous Earth Day Celebrations, our "Catch the Plastic Free Wave and Wipe Out Plastic Pollution!" mural is in it to win it. Follow the simple direction below to "Please vote for your favorite Plastic Free Hawaii Mural submission."

*Go to [Kokua Hawaii Foundation](#) and click the link in the description to vote. The deadline to vote is Sunday, May 24th! We will be gifted a water filling station if we win so spread the word!

Second, today marks the end of Teacher Appreciation Week. It goes without saying that all MOMI staff and faculty have worked very hard during the last month and a half to coordinate the assemblance of a cohesive, meaningful, and consistent distance learning program. Doing our best to meet everyone's needs has been no small feat and we're not yet done. Show your appreciation and reach out to your child's teachers. I know they'll appreciate your kind words.

Next, I appreciate you. Thank you for continuing to support and being a part of this community. I know times have been difficult and yet your optimism and resilience continue to be wonderful. You have juggled work, taught and / supported your children, stayed at home, and have still found time to maintain your own assemblance of normal. Kudos to you.

Finally, Sunday marks Mother's Day and I certainly don't need to tell you to make an effort there. It will surely be appreciated.

As always, take care of yourselves and each other. I look forward to seeing you sometime soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric L. Dustman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Eric L Dustman, PhD
Head of School