

July 10th Email to Little Explorers Families

Hello Little Explorers' Families,

Thanks for your patience as I try to navigate the start to a very different summer and school year. We finally got our start of school guidelines from the Illinois State Board of Education. There are quite a few changes that need to be made to keep everyone safe; but all are completely doable. I'm so excited to be talking about school starting. I miss all the kids!!! Everyone is so ready to come back to school. I'm working on an email with the guidelines spelled out but for right now, we need to talk registration and summer school/camp. Please take the time to read this email. I know it's long but there's a lot going on with all that's happened in the last 5 months. Thanks. Sherry

SCHOLARSHIP FAMILIES: First off, to our **scholarship families**, scholarships are not in jeopardy. But there have been a few changes to the Empower Illinois scholarships so we aren't certain if they will be as funded as last year. So I need all families that have applied to Empower Illinois or those that still want to apply for the Invest in Kids scholarships, to print out the attached application, fill it out, and get it to me along with all the required supporting documents. Please do this as soon as possible. Keep in mind that a family of 4 can make as much as \$78,600 and still receive a partial scholarship. So make sure you talk to me if you think you might qualify.

SCHOOL START DATE: The **first day of school will be Monday, August 31st.** I have debated and agonized for weeks whether to start school with the school district or give the kids some more time in summer school. This is simply not a normal school year and I believe we all are going to need some extra time to adjust to new guidelines and procedures, not to mention new ways of relating and communicating. With that in mind, I feel giving the kids a few extra weeks of summer school instead of strictly school will allow for more freedom to accommodate and adapt to being back with friends and in community after 5 months, not to mention to adjust to all the new changes. But if parents need childcare to go back to work, as of August 3rd, it will be available in the form of summer school/camp then school.

SO HERE'S THE PLAN:Summer School/Camp: We will do 4 weeks of summer school/camp - **August 3rd through August 27th.** Summer school/camp will be 9am-4:30pm for \$125 per week. Before care 7am-9am and after care 4:30pm-6pm. Before care OR after care will be \$20 additional per week, Before care AND aftercare will be \$30 additional per week. There will be a registration fee of \$25 per week but it will be applied to each week of summer school/camp. I will get the summer school/camp registration form to everyone on Thursday.

-The plan will be to use this time to help the kids get adjusted back to a schedule, have some fun, get a chance to catch up with their friends, and revisit some of the skills necessary to smoothly start the school year. **The weeks of August 3rd, August 10th, and August 17th will be for full time 4-10 year olds only.** We won't be able to have 3 year olds or part time kids for those weeks. We need some time to get the older kids anchored with the new classroom changes and new rules regarding masks and social distancing before introducing the little ones and part time kids. In all honesty, this is going to be new to all of us and the older students will be more adaptable to us having to change processes that don't work. The little ones will struggle if we show them or tell them to do something one way only to find out it isn't the best way, then ask them to change it.

-The summer school/camp week of **August 24th-27th** will include 3 year olds and part time students.

-Summer School/Camp - My plan right now is to use the morning time for summer kind of stuff – the park, outside, games, projects, crafts, etc. The afternoon will be more like summer school. My hope is this will help everyone with their adjustment back to school after so long away from the routine.

-Through **August 14th** lunches will be provided by the **Northern Illinois Food Bank**. We will be eating outside and will maintain 6ft social distancing while eating. I will let you know the plan for lunches after August 14th. I'm still working on that.

-When registering for summer school/camp, remember state guidelines require that everyone will need to wear masks to attend summer camp, including staff. I'm working on a full list of guidelines right now but this will be the biggest adjustment for kids.

-If you go through **CCRR/DHS**, please make sure your application with them is current and Little Explorers Montessori School is their provider as of August 3, 2020.

Other School Year Updates: -I've also decided on lengthening the school day for elementary (1-3rd grade) from 3pm to 3:30pm. Last year I really felt like I needed just a little more time with the kids in the afternoon. With this little bit of an extension, I can allow the kids the recess they seem to need and still have enough time for them to settle back into a productive worktime in the afternoon. NOTE: If there's a conflict with a sibling pickup time from our primary class (3 year old- kindergarten) since their dismissal will still be 3pm, the primary sibling can go to afterschool for $\frac{1}{2}$ hour and get picked up at the same time as the elementary student for no charge.

-The school year school day will be as follows:

Preschool and Kindergarten 8:30am – 3pm with before care 6:30am-8:30am and after care 3pm – 6pm.

Elementary 8:30am – 3:30pm with before care 6:30am-8:30am and after care 3:30pm-6pm.

I'm trying to streamline a few things between our tuition and before and after care program charges. I'm not raising tuition from last year and even looking at lowering before and after school charges. I will send out the registration form, school calendar, and tuition rate sheet for the 2020-21 school year on Thursday. Please fill out the registration form and email/scan back to me asap with the registration fee. Once we have updated our website with current forms, I'll have everyone electronically fill out the other required registration paperwork.

-The registration fee is \$175 but if you register before July 22nd, it will only be \$100. Remember this is per family not per student. Feel free to use Zelle at Montessori.explorers@gmail.com or a check for the registration fee.

-Please make sure to schedule your **kindergarten** for their **health/immunization check-up, dental, and vision check-ups**. These are absolutely required before your student can start school on August 31st. Also **2nd graders** need a **dental check-up** as well before they can start school. Don't forget to get a copy of all the check-ups from the doctors' offices while you are there. It's much more challenging once you leave due to HIPAA laws.

-There are just so many changes with the new school year, we absolutely have to have a **mandatory parent orientation**. I'm still working on some of the details for this meeting but it will be **August 23rd** at

3pm. I think having had a few weeks of summer school/camp will help us know and understand even more about how to manage the school year. Please remember that kids won't be able to attend this meeting.

-BTW, because we don't have the same space limitations that the public schools have, we won't have to do Blended Remote Learning or E-Learning like many public schools may be planning. Many schools are having to do 2 or 3 days at school and 2 or 3 days with Remote Learning at home.

-When all this happened in March, no one knew what to expect. We are all a little more experienced and wiser. Even if public schools close this year due to spike in Covid-19 cases, as long as we as a school are staying healthy, I should be able to get an emergency waiver and stay open for families that need childcare. I would operate as a childcare center but conduct the day as a school. Hope this helps put your minds at ease as far as expectations for your job requirements and the school year for your child. Also Zoom classes would again become a regular part of your at-home students' day (if you wanted.) We would just combine with the in-school attendance students. I promise to get creative and make sure we are meeting the needs as much as humanly possible of all our school-aged students. I even have a plan in place for our preschool students, IF this happens again this year.

School Supplies: I'm working on a school supply list. It's going to be a little different from years' past because the new guidelines state that students will need to have their own supplies rather than general classroom sharing. AND it's nearly impossible to find some of the supplies we often ask parents to provide in stores. I will get this out on Thursday as well.

Thanks so much for your patience!! Please bear with me as I'm sure some things will change periodically. I'm doing my best to keep up and get your kids to school as quickly and safely as possible. This has been just a crazy few months. I know everyone has differing opinions on the procedures and requirements that should and shouldn't be important. Unfortunately, I don't get the luxury of my opinion setting a lot of our procedures or requirements.

What I do know my opinion and as fact, though, is I'm so incredibly excited to get the kids back to school and settled into a routine even if it might not look like what they experienced last year. I promise to do everything possible to keep your kids healthy and safe while still providing them with the chance to be a child that loves to learning, loves to be a friend, and loves school.

Warmly,

Sherry Kunze