

August 2020.

Dear Parents,

CAS is committed to welcoming our students back to on-site learning as soon as possible in an open-minded, caring, and global manner, empowering all our students to continue to develop their individual potential in this ever-changing world and based on the following principles:

- Act with fidelity to CAS. Mission, Vision and Core Values.
- Prefer face-to-face, on-line learning over on-line distance learning whenever it is safe to do so.
- Prioritize students, faculty, and staff health, safety and well-being over other principles.
- Ensure hygiene, health related policies are research based.
- Promote practice to reduce risk of virus transmission.
- Support our capacity to be responsible and agile when facing changing health circumstances.

Our Three Guiding Principles for Learning are:

- LEARNING:** Ensuring the highest quality of learning school-wide!
WELL-BEING: Ensuring social, emotional, physical and cognitive wellbeing!
BELONGING: Ensuring our sense of community!

As parents, you are probably feeling a variety of emotions at this time and concerning the pandemic of the Coronavirus; anxiety, fear, exhaustion, confusion and a sense of chaos from being in the middle of an event that none of us thought could happen.

It has been a long journey since March 22nd when we first began our Distance Learning Program. We were fortunate enough to have had prepared for our transformation to Distance Learning. Four years ago, we initiated a plan to enhance our technology services by investing in more laptops and iPads for student use. Every grade had at least a weekly technology class and the program worked off a cutting-edge curriculum. We also supported teachers with both in-house and off campus professional training in technology. During the past four years, teachers have improved their technology and coding teaching skills. They have become confident in their skill building and look forward to continuing to improve their teaching strategies.

The majority of teachers who have been very successful with our new program are those who realized the transition would take a lot of work and preparation. I publicly applaud my entire staff for their commitment and persistence for helping to bring us to where we are today. We successfully completed the 2nd and 3rd Period and are working toward positive results for Period 4.

At this time, I want to also applaud our families. Yes, all of you, mothers, father, aunts, and uncles and even grandparents for becoming our incredible partners in this virtual learning journey. I understand your frustration. I understand your fatigue. I understand that it is often impossible for you to accomplish all of your responsibilities in a day and also support your child.

We ask that you do what you can. We want to support your efforts and ensure that you are not overwhelmed. This is why we continue to meet with parents to make sure that needs are being met and that we are doing all we can to support individual issues. Do not hesitate to communicate any needs you may have. We will make every effort to work out some sort of support that will lessen the stress level for everyone involved.

Another area where CAS was prepared in advance to deal with the instant move to virtual learning back in March was that we had January and February to build the culture and routine necessary to move forward without any delay. Everyone stepped into the new world of virtual learning with background knowledge that answered "Not can we do this but we need to do this"!

I have received some parent emails asking for information about our plan for 2021. We all are aware that it is very unlikely we will be returning to campus during 2020. For the past three months, I have been attending meetings with government officials present such as Dr Asturias and the Coprecovid committee to review information and discuss possible return-to-campus scenarios as well as necessary protocols for returning. We cannot re-open until the government gives the approval to do. But we can plan and prepare for when that happens. This is what we have been doing.

We sent out surveys to all parents, students and teachers. The data gathered from these surveys provided us with a direction to design possible plans. These plans are also being created by over 200 international schools around the world. CAS is not the only school trying to find the most appropriate plan for returning to campus. And it is not the only school who has a commitment to hold the health and well-being of all of its members as a priority.

The CAS plan for 2021, supported by the Board of Directors and CAS staff, will be released within the coming days. We have been working on this for the past couple of months and have had to redo the plan a couple of times due to the overall changes with the COVID changes in Guatemala. **Please keep in mind that the plan you receive might also need to be adjusted.** We will not know until the actual decree from the government.

Parents will be able to opt for the program they feel more comfortable with. You can choose to have completely virtual or you can choose the hybrid model. (The hybrid model includes both face-to-face for one week and virtual learning for one week.) We need to keep in mind the indications for any previous health conditions mentioned on the surveys. These students and teachers will not return to on-site learning and teaching until the no-risk scenario exists.

Upon arrival to campus, all vehicles will be sprayed upon entering the campus. Students are required to leave their bus or their car on their own. (Precautions will be taken for the Early Childhood Program.) Faculty will be waiting for students to leave their car or bus. Once this is done, temperatures will be taken and hand sanitizer will be provided. These two procedures must take place prior to any student entering a classroom.

While on campus, there will be only ten students per class. Students will not leave their classroom and will maintain their learning experience with this pod of ten students. They will interact with teachers who will be using a mask and rotating from room-to-room.

Students who are on-site will be required to bring their own masks, water and food. The cafeteria is closed until the COVID situation has totally cleared up.

The above descriptions might be discouraging to you. I ask that you look at the plan with an open-mind and know that we will be ambitious in solving problems and creating solutions. We will think creatively and strategically across levels with a constant focus on maintaining and improving whenever possible.

After you have time to read our 2021 school plan, we will organize some grade level, town hall meetings. (Groups of individuals who will be able to ask questions about certain topics that have been defined prior to opening of the meeting.) During these evening hour-long sessions, you will have the opportunity to clarify any questions you might have. These sessions are planned to help everyone have a clearer picture of what lies ahead. **Please plan to attend when your child's level is announced. (An invitation will be sent to you individually.)**

Attached you will find our re-enrollment fees for the 2021 school year. There will be no changes to our present tuition package. Our Distance Learning Program has required a need to subscribe to several new online platforms that help support the use of quality teaching strategies used virtually. We will continue to use these platforms when we return to on-site learning.

We have faced a lot together through these extraordinary times. The world has changed in so many ways. I ask you to help us take the necessary steps for a brighter future ahead!

I want to thank you and our entire CAS community for your steadfast support for our students' learning during these exceptional times. We are looking forward to an **INSPIRING, ENGAGING** and **EMPOWERING** 2021 school year whether it is via Distance Learning or on-site. Thank you, again for your trust, dedication and support. **We can build something GREAT working together.**

Stay Safe, Practice Distance, and wear your mask!

Lots of virtual hugs,



Kathleen Wilmeth
General Director

