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June 2, 2020

Dear Families,

We are very much looking forward to welcoming you and your children back to school. Our responsible transition plan remains in motion, with Loveworks Directors and teachers reviewing new policies and being trained on new procedures together in school this week.

As you know, there is a lot to learn. Our outstanding staff was well versed in the rules and regulations of early education prior to COVID, and with the virus still a serious risk, both our organization and our state continue to take important precautions. While the number of new cases remains relatively low in Vermont, we remain committed to a high level of procedures and restrictions to reduce the risk to the staff and children.

**Before going any further, I want to address PPE.**

During our Loveworks staff sessions yesterday (and today), we reassured staff that masks, soap, sanitizer, and gloves are available to them. We have purchased high level masks for the staff made by a professional fabric company. Each mask has a MERV 14 filter providing additional protection sewn into it. We have many gallons of soap and sanitizer per school on hand, as well as gallons of our hydrogen peroxide based sanitizer and disinfectant. We've also secured non-contact infrared body thermometers and face shields for staff that will be screening and taking children's temperatures upon arrival.

Our staff will be wearing cloth face coverings while with the children - this is also required by our new state licensing regulations. Masks have quickly become a part of everyday life, and while it is not required for children to wear masks at school, they are invited to bring and wear their own if they can properly put on, take off, and not touch or suck on the covering. While our staff love your children and are always happy to help them learn new skills, the constant adjusting of face coverings actually increases risk of exposure for both children and staff. That stated, we have created time-sensitive curriculum, which includes catchy songs, posters, and stories about the power of masks, hand-washing, and how being compassionate to others now looks. All employees are also taking the VOSHA training, and will submit their completed certificate.

In addition to PPE procedures outlined above, this week's family update covers:

- Hours of Operation
- Arrival and Departure Times
- Arrival and Pick-Up Procedures
- Daily Contact Free Wellness Screenings
- Sick Policies
- State Travel Restrictions
- Changes to the Classrooms
- No Mixed Groups & Playground Use
- Physical (Social) Distancing Strategies
- Emotional Well-Being of the Children and The First Day
- Parent Communication



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- What to Bring to School for Your Child
- Staff Dress Code
- Hand Washing
- Cleaning, Sanitizing and Disinfecting
- Pricing and Payment
- For Loveworks Families: Invitation for Celebrating Teachers on Monday, June 8
- For Heartworks and STEAMworks families: Invitation for celebrating teachers on Monday, June 15
- Next Steps

### **New Hours of Operation:**

Loveworks: 7:30am - 4:30pm

Heartworks Summer Camp: 8:00am - 4:30pm

Part of Vermont's new regulations for childcare programs, as well as CDC direction, includes reducing the number and frequency of person-to-person interactions. In order to operate within these parameters, going forward, we will break our drop-off and pick-up times into two shifts that will be assigned to specific classrooms, allowing the same teachers to be with the same children for the day.

### **Loveworks**

Children in **Infant 1, Young Twos, Two/Three Year Old Classes** will be in session from **8:30 am - 4:30pm**

Children in **Infant 2/Young Toddler, Toddler 2, and Preschool** will be in session from **7:30 am - 3:30pm**

### **Heartworks Summer Camp**

Some camp classes will be in session from **8:00 am - 3:00 pm** with an option to extend to **4:00 pm**

Some camp classes will be in session from **8:30 am - 3:30 pm** with an option to extend to **4:30 pm**

Assignments will be made during the enrollment process that will start soon.

### **Arrival and Departure Times**

Parents may begin to arrive 10 minutes prior to the arrival time assigned for their child's class for drop-off, and may arrive up to 20 minutes after the listed arrival time. This allows for a 30-minute drop-off window at Loveworks.. At the end of the day, parents may begin to arrive 15 minutes prior to the end of the day for their child's classroom. If you would like to arrive or depart with your child at other times within the timeframe of your child's class, please provide advance notice by calling the school, or sending an email so we can be prepared.

Per state guidance, ideally we ask that your family designate one single person to both drop-off and pick-up your child(ren) every day, until further notice. Guidelines from the state recommend that older individuals such as grandparents should not pick up children because they are at greater risk for serious illness. Any parents and designated persons who are self-quarantining due to close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual should not do drop-off or pick-up.

During this transition period, access to the inside of the school will be for children and staff only. Drop-off and pick-up will be conducted outside of our main doors (though, we will have plenty of instruction on-site to help you navigate the new system, and we will send out an email with detailed instructions),



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so that we can conduct non-contact wellness screenings to keep doing our part to reduce viral exposure.

**Non-Contact Wellness Screenings will consist of:**

- Asking the following questions about your child:
  - Do they have a cough, muscle pain, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chills, shaking with chills?
  - Have they been in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, taken any medication in the last 24 hours, recently traveled outside of Vermont?
  - In addition, we will make a visual inspection of the child for signs of infection, illness, fatigue, etc.
  - We will take the child's temperature with a non-contact thermometer.

Temperature checks of both children and staff will continue throughout the day. At any time, children who spike fevers of 100 or higher will need to be picked up within an hour of family notification. Children who become ill or have a fever will immediately be removed from the classroom and will be able to rest in our designated sick space, away from other children. It is essential that you be available to pick up your ill child as quickly as possible. Children with a fever greater than 100 must be out of school until they have not had a fever for 72 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.

Daily screenings of staff will also be conducted, prior to staff members gaining access to the inside of the school. The same staff (including floating staff members and assistants, who are essential to provide our teachers with breaks and support) will cover the same rooms each day. Again, this policy is being put in place to reduce the frequency of new person-to-person interactions as much as possible. This focused approach will also make it possible to close rooms and wings, as opposed to having to close the entire school, should a confirmed case of COVID arise.

**Sick Policies**

We have always been fortunate to have families who follow our illness policy and understand the importance of helping their own child recover and be cared for at home while also protecting the health of other children to prevent the spread of an illness. At this time, it is of utmost necessity for the health and well-being of our staff and children that you continue to adhere to our illness policy. The main change to our policy is the requirement to be out for 72 hours with no fever-reduction medication; we may ask for a doctor's note to confirm that the child is safe to be at school and no longer contagious. We will also be mindful of excessive drooling and runny noses due to bodily fluids that may find its way on the teacher's, as well as on the child's clothing and/or toys. Gastrointestinal illnesses, rash, swelling of hands or feet, and runny nose that consists of thick, yellow-green mucus will also be monitored closely. Children who have been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID, or who are awaiting COVID test results, should not be in school. Thank you for being diligent in following our policies for the sake of your own child, as well as for everyone else in the school.

**Vermont State Travel Restrictions**

Vermont now has very strict restrictions about traveling out of state and then back into the state. A day trip for visiting relatives is considered okay, as well as essential workers who need to commute out of state on a daily basis for their essential job. Everyone else falls under strong mandates to self-quarantine if returning from a trip longer than one day. Here are a few references from the state requirements on travel, including mandated of employees:



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## **MANDATORY HEALTH & SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL BUSINESS, NON-PROFIT & GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS** *Work Safe, Be Smart, Stay Safe Order*

### **CROSS STATE TRAVEL**

Commuter (**day trip**) traffic to and from Vermont by those who travel daily between Vermont and adjacent states is authorized for essential travel (e.g. essential work, healthcare, groceries) and currently authorized daily work, family visitation, or recreation. **Travel to and from Vermont from outside the daily commuting area AND by those who do not travel to and from adjacent states daily is currently restricted and subject to mandatory quarantine upon arrival in Vermont.**

**From the Department of Health:** If you are visiting or returning to Vermont – or you live in Vermont but have spent more than one day traveling for non-essential purposes – you must quarantine for 14 days once you arrive in Vermont.

**From our new child care program regulations:** Children who arrive from out-of-state need to be quarantined for 14 days, or be tested at day seven, before entering childcare.

### **Changes to our Classrooms**

On the first day of training, the teachers learned about the spread of COVID-19. They learned how to recognize the kinds of materials, toys, and objects that need to be removed from the room or need to be modified - such as covering a cloth cover currently on a futon with a plastic tablecloth for easier and more completed sanitation. Items to be removed from the classroom include items that are more difficult to be washed, sanitized, and disinfected. We also reviewed how to reduce the amount of toys in a room to create more areas for play and how to divide some popular toys and items into two smaller containers to be placed in different locations of the room to help children play in smaller groups. Teachers will be creating a place in the room for toys to be washed after mouthed the first time by the younger ones; older children will be taught to put the toys and materials they have played with away in an area to be washed, instead of right back on the shelf. Teachers have learned strategic tips for rearranging the furniture to promote play, while also restricting the number of children in any one area. At Loveworks, we are installing full doors in all classrooms where half doors or gates were previously used. In at least one instance, we also installed a new fire alarm in the classroom that was required before adding a door to the room. Most of our schools have central air with air coming in from outside; in addition, we intend to open many windows to allow more fresh air into the classrooms and building and increase overall ventilation.

### **No Mixed-Groups and Playground Use**

As was mentioned briefly under our hours, children will remain in their classroom with their teachers. Children will not be combined during the first arrival time or near the end of their scheduled day. Siblings will not be able to visit siblings in other classrooms. This is all to reduce frequency of new person-to-person contact. While we pride ourselves on fostering friendship, we will use this challenge to learn that being a good friend sometimes means giving each other the space that's required to take care of one another.

Classrooms will not use the same playspace or connected play spaces on the playground at the same



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time. Some playgrounds may be further divided to allow a section of the playground to be empty of children while allowing opposite sides to be used, thus creating more space between the groups.

Playground equipment will also be cleaned and sanitized before the next class of children uses the playground.

### **Physical (Social) Distancing Strategies**

During the first day of training, staff received many strategies to begin to construct a new rhythm of the day, including transitions with physical (social) distancing for the children during this “new normal.” This includes several points mentioned under changes to the classroom, such as moving the furniture, creating different areas for playing with toys, etc. This will also include having fewer children sitting at the table at the same time. Some rooms may have an additional table added to help to spread the children out more, and other classrooms may serve meals in multiple sessions on a rotating basis.

Children will be assigned table places and seats that will be used only by them. Younger children will be assigned to specific highchairs. For older children, we will create specific places for lining up with pictures, letters of their name, shapes, etc. to assist them in learning where to stand or sit.

At nap time, we had always spread children apart from each other as best we could; we will now continue that practice and assure that children’s heads are more opposite of others’ feet.

For cribs, a similar setup will be used, dependent on the space for the distance to move the crib apart. Since infants sleep according to their own schedule as opposed to all at the same time, teachers will also strategically work to have an empty crib next to a sleeping infant. Infants will also be placed down in an opposite direction from the next closest sleeping infant. We are adding additional boppy pillows to the infant classroom which allows each child to have their own..

Teachers currently in training are also learning how physical (social) distancing strategies can be applied to early education schools. We are exploring new ways to approach meal times, circle time, and enrichment time in order to keep helping our children establish trust and friendship while also limiting touch and extended close contact. During this time, we will not be having any large group gatherings or events, such as family picnics. Through recreating the daily rhythm, teachers will be aware of what classrooms are coming in from outside, and when this will happen. In this way, we are purposefully ensuring that no two groups cross paths in the hallways or walkway to the playground. Some classrooms that have a second door to their classroom may be using that door to enter and exit the building in an effort to avoid being in hallways or the lobby area. If this may happen with your child’s class, you will be informed of the use of these doors.

As was mentioned in the outline of our new drop-off procedure, only employees and children are being allowed in the buildings at this time. We will not be conducting any tours on site and instead will conduct them virtually; our vendors will leave packages outside and not enter the building; and visitors or volunteers will not be allowed in the building. Contract service providers who assist children for the purpose of OT, PT, and speech and language Interpreters will continue to be provided access to our schools.



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### **Emotional Well-Being of the Children and Their First Day**

The first day of training also included time for our teachers to reflect on the emotions of the children.

The school pause was 11-12 weeks ago, which could seem like 6 months or longer for children. Inviting children back, teachers need to be prepared for the emotions your children might be feeling yet cannot express. Children might not remember their friends' names and may wonder what to do first, where to go, and hold any number of other questions. They will need a gentle welcome back, and our teachers plan to help guide them into play, introduce them to other children by name, and ask questions such as if they still like playing with a certain toy so they know that their teachers do remember them.

Our teachers are also mindful of developmental changes - physical, emotional, social, and cognitive - during our pause. The Pre-K teachers will help those further prepare for Kindergarten. The teachers are aware that each child has had a different and unique 11-12 week period, and while we recognize the challenges that may be associated with this extended period at home, we are delighted to have the children back and to help them move forward.

During the first few weeks, we will focus on helping children slowly acclimate and gain new skills in playing purposefully with others and in very small groups. Our teacher trainings also address new ways to socialize and run games from a distance – this includes playing “I Spy” while sitting for some of the older children, creating a fun song or movement connected to our emotions to express our feelings, and much more.

### **Family Communication**

To reiterate, we will be receiving your children at the entrance, and parents will not be carrying/walking their child to or from the classrooms. Teachers will not see you on a daily face-to-face basis to have a conversation about your child's day, or to read the agenda for the day. We will be providing daily communication with you by using our Kaymbu systems that some schools had been using since early fall. This is also how you received the bulk of family communications during the extended closure.

This system will allow us to send you pictures of your child on a daily basis; you have the option to let the Director know if you are comfortable having your child in pictures with other children and then that picture could be shared between two or more families in the class, allowing you to see your child in play with friends from the class. Kaymbu also allows us to send you daily notes, newsletters, news alerts, messages, pictures, and videos directly to your email. You can even add the email addresses of grandparents or other family members so that they can also receive pictures of your little one enjoying their school days. Directors have additional information that they will share with you regarding Kaymbu to ensure you are properly setup.

If you would like to send a note to the teacher, please place the note in your child's lunch box for the teacher. If we have a note to send to you, we will also place it in the lunchbox. You can also call the school or send an email to the Director at any time to request a phone call from the teacher or a short parent-teacher video conference.

### **What to Bring to School for Your Child**

We are limiting what can be brought into school.

Please provide:



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- Lunch box with snack and lunch for the day, including utensils.
- Water bottle for those that use them, ideally with a strap attached.
- Infant bottles can be placed in a lunch box or packed separately in Ziplock-type bags.
- Ideally, a rectangular plastic tote container that is around 16" x 12" x 7" deep; we will have some extra on hand in case you are unable to provide this.
- Three sets of complete extra clothing, and 2-3 extra shirts, each set stored in a separate Ziplock-type bag and placed in the tote container.
- Nap items:
  - Infants to 12 months: a pack-n-play size sheet and sleep sack.
  - One year olds and older: a crib-size sheet and a very thin lightweight sheet or blanket.
    - If your child is one year of age or older and needs to sleep with a small stuffed animal or small lovey blanket, please provide that to be used only at nap time. Please also note: this item will not be going home nightly. It will be sent home at the end of the week for washing. Please place all items in the tote container.
- If appropriate - a supply of diapers, diaper wipes, diaper cream.
- Sunscreen - age appropriate. Please note, we request that you apply sunscreen to children who are one year old and older prior to arriving at school so children are prepared for going outside starting in the morning.
- Pacifier - if your child uses one. Please pack them in a container that closes, such as a plastic case or a Ziplock-type bag.
- Inside shoes for children who cruise and walk.
- An extra sweatshirt or sweater as part of the extra clothing supply for days that might be a bit cooler inside the school.
- Appropriate clothing worn for the day, including a lightweight jacket or sweater should your child be cold outside, as well as a hat.
- Please note what is not on the list and please do not bring them into the school: no toys from home, no books from home, no backpacks, no diaper bags, and no car seats.
- With a permanent marker, please label all of your child's belongings, including bedding, meal containers, infant bottles, lunch box, and water bottle. This is necessary for teachers to keep everything together, and also because some children might have similar looking items.

### **Staff Dress Code**

During the summer, we always want the staff to be comfortable, especially during Heartworks Camp, and have allowed shorts, T-shirts, and casual dress. While they may continue with that tradition, we are also recommending covering their skin as much as possible with long sleeves and long pants for their protection. We are also recommending that all long hair be tied up in a short ponytail or a loose bun. We further recommend teachers wear an oversized long-sleeved shirt that can be worn over their clothes, allowing them to forego strictly wearing only a long sleeved shirt. Should a child spit up or drool on the teacher's clothing, they can change the large shirt instead of their entire outfit. Some parents have asked if there is anything we might need; if you have clean oversized shirts that button up or zip up for the schools to have available for teachers to wear each day, these would be graciously accepted. Please bring them to your School Director.

### **Hand Washing**

Our practices in our schools for years have been to teach the proper way to wash hands which includes turning off the water with a paper towel. We will continue to teach and help younger children with this



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practice. Hand washing procedures are an everyday, multiple-times-a-day occurrence. We are also adding additional times for children to wash their hands throughout the day, and all teachers are well aware of the need to follow through with this - such as each time a child scratches their face, touches their nose, etc.

### **Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting**

Cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting is another area that has always been high on our lists of daily occurrences in our schools. Teachers had previously been taught about using soapy water and then sanitizing an area, as well as the difference between sanitizing and disinfecting. We will be reviewing this again, with additional items added to the list to review. Teachers will have an additional 50-60 minutes per day in the classroom without children for addressing cleaning and classroom needs. After our closure in March, we also had professional cleaners clean all of our buildings.

**For Loveworks Families, invitation for celebrating teachers on Monday, June 8, 10:00 am - 10:15 am**  
**For Heartworks and STEAMworks families, invitation for celebrating teachers on Monday, June 15, 10:00 am - 10:15 am.**

We would like your assistance with this special drive-by event to honor and celebrate our amazing, courageous, hardworking, passionate educators by driving by the parking lot and/or school and honking your horn, waving, cheering, and/or displaying signs to show how much you appreciate them, honor them, and thank them for helping us to open our schools to welcome back your children. School Directors will provide specific drive-by information based on the School specific site.

We truly have missed our Heartworks, STEAMworks, and Loveworks extended families. We are very excited to create our new normal together; one that is filled with love, compassion, and playful learning.

### **Sick and Payment Policy Updates:**

Children who are sent home or not provided access to the school following a wellness screening, must remain out of school until they are fever-free with no fever reducing medication for 72 hours. **Tuition rates will continue to be applied even when children are out sick.**

If your health care provider issues a COVID test, we ask that your child remains out of school until you receive test results. **Daily tuition rates will not be applied to families who remain out of school awaiting COVID results.**

In the instance that a positive case is confirmed, our school will contact the local health department and we would greatly appreciate a notice from you as soon as possible. **We will continue to uphold our policy of not revealing the names of anyone with a confirmed case, nor will we share if the confirmed case arose in a staff member or a child.**

Upon learning of a confirmed case, the impacted rooms and/or wing will close down as quickly as possible, with all families being given notice to pick-up their children within one hour. The impacted rooms will then be closed down for a minimum of 3 days for further cleaning. We will also contact the local health department to receive any/all further instruction. **During these safety closure periods, tuition rates will continue as usual.**



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**If a closure periods extend past two weeks, tuition will be reduced to 50%. If a safety closures extends past three weeks, tuition will drop to 25%. If a school is required to be closed for one month or more, tuition will drop to 10%.**

### **Pricing and Payment**

These recent extended safety closures, combined with added costs to running everyday business, will continue to stress and stretch our operating budget through the rest of the year, and likely into 2021 as well. **We have found ways to avoid a tuition increase now to help offset these significant loses:**

- Going forward, Loveworks and Heartworks Camps will only accept weekly or month payments.
- Check payments will no longer be accepted for regular tuition payments.
- ACH setup will be required for all returning families.
- Any past due balances (prior to COVID related safety closures) will need to be settled or have an agreed upon payment plan in place prior to returning.

Please be in touch with your Loveworks Director to confirm your return or if you plan to delay that return. For Heartworks Camp, we will be back in touch with the application tomorrow.

Now, more than ever, we are so very grateful for the chance to be in the same place at the same time with those we truly care about. Your children and family continue to be genuinely missed by all of the teachers and leaders of our organization, and while the “new normal” does look and feel very different, being together is still very, very good.

More very soon!

With appreciation,

*Lisa*

Lisa Zengilowski, President; Heartworks, STEAMworks and Loveworks Schools