

March 31, 2020

Dear Friends,

Since closing our schools more than two weeks ago, so many of you have been gracious enough to continue sharing your abundant gifts. Your captivating and uplifting music sessions, arts and crafts lessons, story times, and yoga classes on our social media channels offer us all unfiltered joy during a time when joy is needed the most.

During this unprecedented challenge, you remain the glitter that makes us shine and the glue that holds us together, even when it's safer to be apart.

As we now face an extended closure, the role of our leadership team is two-fold:

- 1) Help you personally endure this crisis.
- 2) Help our company collectively endure this crisis.

Our first goal is to take care of you because, as Mr. Rogers taught us, as humans, we are also helpers and now is when we must look to one another to help one another. If we take care of one another now, I know that, with our newfound shared strength, we can rebuild our schools in ways more beautiful than ever before.

Our second goal is to help the company withstand this crisis. Though many families have graciously volunteered to continue paying tuition, we are now collecting only a fraction of our normal income. While we remain ever-grateful to the families who are in a position to continue supporting us, this will cover only a small portion of what it will take to help our company reach the other side of this closure. While we absolutely want you to be taken care of during this closure, we also want to do everything possible to ensure that you have schools to come back to once this time is behind us.

Given our current circumstances – an extended safety closure and reduced tuition – leveraging paycheck alternatives has become the most responsible way to ensure that you will continue receiving as much financial support as possible while also safeguarding our company. Moving forward, the majority of our staff will experience an income transition through federal, state, and company resources:

- As planned, **Little Sprouts will pay your full paycheck as if you worked through April 3rd**. You will receive this paycheck by April 10th.
- **Beginning on April 6th, all full-time and part-time teachers as well as some Home Office staff will be temporarily furloughed and paid through your state's unemployment program.**
 - *What is a temporary furlough?* A furlough is like a leave of absence. It means that **you will still keep a job at our company**, but you will collect your income from the state instead of the company.

- Though everyone's eligible earnings will differ based on individual circumstances, we decided to move in this direction because of expanded federal and state relief funding in response to COVID-19. There is now a much greater possibility that, in most cases, full salaries will be available through unemployment.
- If you are enrolled in one or more of our benefits (i.e., medical, dental, etc.), **Little Sprouts will cover the full cost of your benefits during this furlough.** This means that you will not have to pay for your benefits but will continue to receive them in full.
- **Please take action on Sunday, April 5th (your claim cannot be submitted in MA or NH before this Sunday) by filing online with your unemployment office to begin receiving your new paycheck as soon as possible.**
- **When you complete your unemployment application the company name must be inputted EXACTLY as it appears on your W-2 (if have questions about this requirement contact your Director).**
- Our team has created an easy path for you to complete these simple steps:
 - You can walk through the entire process at: www.littlesprouts.com/covid-19
 - Once there, simply click the button that matches the state (MA, NH, CT, or VT) where you work (not where you live).
 - **You're also invited to join our Human Resources Department for a group demonstration for how to file. You can sign up to attend one of the multiple Zoom meetings that coordinates with the state in which you work, at:** www.littlesprouts.com/covid-19

While this may be an emotional transition, please know that we are here for you and your physical, emotional and financial stability is of paramount importance to us. As such, we have also assembled additional resources for you at www.littlesprouts.com/covid-19, including:

- **List of answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).** Do you have questions? So did we. We had a lot of questions because we wanted to make sure that this move was made with both our heads *and* our hearts.
- **Direct email access to our leadership team:** friends@littlesprouts.com. If you choose to send an email, we kindly ask for your patience as we try to give everyone individualized attention. You deserve it. Please note that you can also always contact your school's Director.
- Reminders that **Directors will continue to be an ongoing resource for you. Several Home Office staff will also remain active** so that we can continue to be responsive to you and our schools' families, and prepare for the safe reopening of our schools.

As we continue to navigate our new, difficult, and rapidly changing circumstances, we will continue to keep you informed and connected. Please know that you are loved, we are in this together, and your leaders will continue to fight fiercely for you for however long it takes.

In closing, I want to share a personal story with you.



This weekend, I decided to take a socially distant run. Though I am certainly not a very skilled runner, I have often found it to be a healthy way to clear my mind. Little did I know that, this time, my mind had other plans for me.

About five minutes into my run, my eyes started to spill over with tears. I stopped running and I found the closest rock on which to sit and catch my breath. Instead of clearing my mind, I surrendered fully to the thought of you. To me, each one of you is my son's teacher. Each one of you is *my* teacher. For the last seven years, you have been my friends and my family.

This new COVID-19 reality and the transitions we face as a result are *really hard*. As a leadership team, while we always try to make the "next right decision" in an ever-changing landscape, I recognize that many of you will still experience fear and pain, as well. I compassionately acknowledged to myself that it's OK not to be OK all the time.

After enough time had passed, I brushed myself off and continued jogging, albeit a little slower this time. As I live in Boston, I started making my way to the banks of the Charles River to take in some of nature's beauty. The closer I got, however, I noticed that many other people had the same idea. For my own health and that of others, I turned the other way. Instead, I ended up on a deserted path next to the highway. I ran on broken concrete and alongside neglected land scattered with trash. It was ugly and not what I had planned for my peaceful run.

I realized then and there, as the cracked concrete rose up to meet my stride, that this whole thing is ugly. This whole COVID-19 experience is not what we had planned. And, yet, step by step, I was still moving forward, one foot in front of the other. Breath by breath, my lungs filled with air at a time in which that's all we can talk about. In this ugly place, there was, still, undeniable beauty.

Although I welcomed gratitude in that moment, there remains for me an exceptionally tender recognition of how hard this is; how hard this will continue to be. That said, after I got home, I changed into a shirt that said, "Grow through what you go through." I remembered my courage, and I wrote you this letter.

Have courage, my friends. This is hard and we can do hard things.

With love,
Sarah

Sarah Schroeder
Chief Executive Officer, Little Sprouts