



**Welcome Back
October 14, 2020**

Ms. Janet C. Rotter, Head of School

The Roman Poet Ovid, born 43 B.C. wrote:

*All things change,
nothing is extinguished.
There is nothing
in the whole world
which is permanent.
Everything flows onward;
all things are brought into being
with a changing nature;
the ages themselves glide by in constant movement*

Last March proved to be one of the biggest changes the world has experienced in recent times. Little did we know that the Coronavirus was just the beginning of the sudden changes we were to make in our home, school, and work lives. Over the next eight months, we were jolted into seeing worldwide chaos, calamity, upheaval, plague, flood, fire, famine, poverty, injustice, grief, despair, and insanity! During these months we were continually reminded of being in unprecedented times, and we did our best to hold on, seeking comfort and guidance, while knowing there were no complete, clear answers. We struggled to make sense of what was happening, and to cope and adapt, personally and collectively.

Throughout the many months since March, we as a community came together in ways that showed an unwavering commitment to what we value and what sustains us always. We held on. There was never a doubt in our minds that, as we quickly changed to remote learning and sheltered in place, the core values of a Studio School education would prove to be vital: The value of meaningful relationships, the important connection of the student and the teacher, the continued emphasis on both the individual and the group, coupled with children of all ages learning from each other, and the participation and partnership of parents and families.

The Studio School Approach has been an excellent way to navigate the changes put before us. Our teachers helped the children process the overwhelming reality and listened carefully to their perceptions and understanding of what they were experiencing inside. Impressively, the students participated, to the best of their ability, in their schoolwork and were incredibly creative, channeling their powerful feelings into projects and community events. During this seemingly endless time of uncertainty and change, the children continue to respond with such resilience and

courage. I am in awe of how well the beginning of this school year is progressing with in-person and hybrid learning. Life and laughter have filled our building again.

A Studio Education is from the Inside Out, working in a way that honors developmental timetables, encouraging students to speak about their thoughts and feelings, while learning who they are, finding their voice, and developing their minds. Through the independent and shared experiences with teachers and one another, valuable, precious inner resources flourish: hope, strength, empathy, perseverance, curiosity, originality, creativity, and drive.

Whether inside or outside the walls of our school, in the park, or at home remotely, our work is so important. In the face of change, what do we hold on to? We turn to our core philosophy and approach: Studio's How-To-Learn curriculum and our Uniquely Studio classes, where these inner resources enable our students to face change, both in school and out in the world, with confidence and know-how. To ride the tides of change and not be swept up by the currents is an important lesson right now. And right now, the currents are so strong.

The world is always in flux, in matters of health, politics, climate, social justice, economics, education, and more. It necessitates a strong vision to be able to thrive through change and imagine a path forward for progress and well-being. In all times, and especially now, our children's education is what is needed to ground them and give them the space and time to learn and grow. Over the decades, I along with our community have created an educational model that involves a balance of insight and action. Studio's humanistic approach focuses on all people, product and process, intellect and emotions, discipline and character, and is most importantly, inclusive.

The Studio School remains true to its original ideas and beliefs, which have been confirmed by current knowledge in neuroscience, and by well-researched documentation on child and adolescent development. For 49 years, we have not been swept up in the trends that are attempting to address anxieties about learning—solely by results and measurements. We know what children need in order to be successful, well-rounded, thoughtful, kind-hearted human beings, and we seamlessly foster these qualities into our academic curriculum throughout the day. In these difficult and tumultuous times, and with the unpredictability of what the future holds, The Studio School reveals itself once again as a sustainable education.

Our mental health is always a priority, especially during this time of COVID-19. I want to emphasize that reducing stress and anxiety, at school and at home, is paramount now. Being together and having common activities, keeping a schedule and structure to our lives, pursuing new interests, and finding love, laughter, and joy in the small moments of life is recommended. Knowing everything is in everyone and what our effect is on one another, is what allows us to work from the inside out and develop patience and acceptance. Our minds, hearts, and bodies are complicated, and the internal work of childhood and adolescence, as well as the development of our precious inner resources, reveal themselves in delightful and inspiring ways.

Imogen, who is a middle school student, wrote in her letter to the Earth, "Today humans are pushing the rhythms of life faster than its natural tempo. As people, we must do everything we can to slow it down and allow nature to follow its path."

As each day goes by, this year's journey will gradually reveal itself to us. So, as we think about your children, how and what they will be learning, being mindful of their growth and learning styles, we will work together with you to bring about the best education. While it may not always be visibly evident, we are ALL changing ALL the time. I encourage you to use the many opportunities to be involved, make relationships in our community, and contribute, connect, and ask questions. Your children will benefit from your participation.

I believe more than ever that true learning can't be measured. How children live their lives is the essence of what they have learned. The beauty of who we are and the strength of what we can do changes over time as we discover what's *inside*. This is our gift to our children and to ourselves. The ebb and flow and the back and forth of growing, along with moments of inertia and regression, lead to the remarkable transformation seen at graduation. It is a most wondrous process and one that will sustain us through life, no matter what is happening in the world, and it is one that creates a healthy climate that is just and equitable for all.

Together, let's decide, what we would like to bring into being.