Dear Ivymount School Families,

Yesterday, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) announced that schools will remain closed through April 24. We share with you the considerable uncertainty as well as the disappointment this news brings, even while recognizing the importance of this effort to slow down the spread of COVID-19.

Now that we know the school closure period is extended, you probably have questions about our plans for providing remote instruction/e-learning and what this will mean for your child and family. We are waiting on the MSDE and the Local School Systems (LSS) to respond to some of our concerns prior to being able to answer your questions. Your children are our highest priority and we are working hard to get these answers within the next few days. All of us at Ivymount are eager to help and are frustrated to not be able to immediately respond when our students are in need.

Tuition for the vast majority of Ivymount students is funded by their LSS and MSDE, based on an MSDE approved daily per diem rate and rates for related services. Unlike our public school partners, Ivymount only receives payment from the LSSs when we are open to provide services to our students. For this reason, we make up any days that we are closed for inclement weather or emergencies, including our current closure through March 27.

During this closure, Maryland nonpublic schools, including Ivymount, have not received confirmation from MSDE or many of our LSSs regarding further funding for their students or the expectations of providing remote instruction. Today, we are starting to make progress. We received confirmation from OSSE and Alexandria Public Schools about placement and remote instruction. MCPS has notified us that they are contacting parents regarding their technology needs. Let’s hope this momentum continues and we can quickly move past this place of uncertainty.

Until we have a commitment for on-going funding and formal requests to provide remote instruction, we are unable to provide a plan for our staff and students. Given yesterday’s announcement of a longer closure, we are optimistic that we will hear from MSDE and our other LSSs in the next few days. We will continue to strongly advocate alongside MANSEF and DCASE, our MD and DC associations for nonpublic special education schools, and will let you know if additional advocacy from you and the wider community becomes necessary.

Our team of dedicated and creative staff have been hard at work preparing for the move toward Ivymount e-learning and services. Our Project SEARCH programs began implementing remote instruction last week and the Maddux School began this week. Each Ivymount School Program Model (i.e., Autism, MAP, MLN and School to Work) has been discussing how they can provide an effective program remotely that would meet your child’s unique needs.
We want to ensure that our e-learning and services are individualized and implemented with our exceptional learners in mind. We are also cautious that if not done properly, this could further complicate the new home situation your family is now navigating. **We are prepared to enter into this unchartered territory of e-learning with your family and navigate it together.**

Our school programs and Ivymount Outreach will continue to provide some resources by email and on our websites. We hope you have joined our Spirit of Ivymount virtual spirit week on our Facebook page, one way we can be together in spirit while physically apart.

I want to thank you, our students, and our staff for your support during these unprecedented times. Our Ivymount community is strong because of your spirit.

Sincerely,

Susan Holt
Executive Director