

Dear Families,

As a city and as a country we are in a difficult time as we all learn to navigate a serious pandemic. We understand that this is scary and challenging for everyone in our Verner community. We know each of you are working to balance what's best for your own health and that of your family and friends. Verner's first priority is the care and well-being of all of our community.

We know this is a very confusing time and especially difficult for our children - they notice how the adults are behaving but do not always understand what is going on. With that in mind, we want to offer a few ideas to help navigate a conversation with your children about the current COVID-19 situation. It is important to keep in mind that there is no "magic talk" that will make everything perfect. We can only try our best to notice how your children are feeling, remain open to their questions and concerns, and give them love and reassurance, we will get through this!

***What age is "old enough"?*** You might be wondering whether some conversations are appropriate for your children. The truth is, we are *always* communicating with children - an infant in your arms picks up on whether you are calm or anxious, and that 3-year old usually understands more than we expect.

You know your child better than anyone else and you know how to communicate with them. We suggest you talk to your children, ask them how they are feeling, and be present with them. I do not know about you, but what helps me most is when people listen to me. The same is for children. Sometimes children are "telling" things in ways that are not words. They might be asking a lot of questions, they might be playing out fantasies, they might be acting sad, scared, or angry - it can help if you can just be with them and acknowledge their feelings. Let them know that you are there for them and that they are safe and loved- simple yet powerful.

***How much should I tell them?*** Children look to adults for answers and facts (and snacks!). But mostly they look to us to know whether they are safe. Children pick up on how we speak and how we move our bodies and they use this to assess their world. Therefore, try your best to be calm when caring for children. If you are anxious or upset about all the changes and what's on the news, use strategies to regulate your emotions before engaging with your child ( we have some if you need them). When you interact with your child, it can help if you can get down to their level, establish eye contact, and offer physical affection. Here are a few talking points you might find useful:

- Grown-ups have been talking a lot about *germs*. Germs are tiny things - so tiny we can't see them - sometimes they get in our body and can make us sick.
- Right now, people are scared about a germ called the coronavirus or COVID-19.
- We can help everyone not get sick by doing things we already know how to do:
  - Wash our hands really well!
  - Cough into your elbow!
  - Have more Home Days!
- It's OK to be scared and have lots of different feelings. You can tell me about your feelings.

**More Home Days.** While we wait for COVID-19 to run its course, schools and childcare centers will close and many businesses will cut back their hours. This can be confusing for children (and their parents, too!), especially because they might not understand why the changes are happening or whether they will ever “go back to normal”. Here are a few things to talk about:

- To help keep the germs away, many schools will be closed for a while, even Verner.
- That means there will be a lot of Home Days so we can stay healthy.
- That also means we will be staying away from crowded places like stores and playgrounds.
- But ... most importantly, you are **safe**. We are here, together, and we will get through this.
- Your Verner teachers and friends are staying at their homes, too - they are having Home Days just like you!
- Your Verner teachers and friends are thinking about you and they miss playing with you.
- Soon you will be able to go back to Verner and play with your teachers and friends just like before.

Teachers will be staying in contact by emailing activities and educational and play ideas you can do at home. Our social media pages will also offer ideas of what you can do during your home days. They can be accessed by typing @vernerasheville into the search area of your favorite social media site. We also will try to keep you up to date through Kaymbu and our website.

We will continue to closely monitor this situation, prioritizing the health and safety of our community above all. We appreciate your patience and flexibility.

Sincerely,  
Your Verner Family