



New School Montessori Center

Welcome Back to School!

COVID Re-opening Plans – Fall 2020



GENERAL

The New School's top priority is the health and safety of our students, families, and our local community. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the school will be implementing various protocols to address the safety concerns resulting from this global crisis.

In addition to consulting with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE), the school is also monitoring and following recommendations and mandates from federal, state, and local governing agencies and health organizations. As such, **please note** our policies and procedures are subject to change at any time.



PREVENTION

Hygiene Measures

- Teachers, staff, and children will frequently wash their hands with soap and water throughout the day. In particular, everyone must wash their hands upon arrival to school and every time they exit or enter the classroom or restroom. Additionally, hands must be washed before and after eating snack or lunch.
- Teachers will model and monitor appropriate handwashing techniques for children. Teachers will also reinforce the messaging to avoid contact with one's eyes, nose, and mouth, and to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues.
- Teachers will also have hand sanitizer available as an extra precaution to help ensure students' hands are clean (applied to younger children with adult supervision).
- Students will wash hands within the classroom at staggered intervals to minimize congregation.

Face Coverings

School Employees

- All school employees must wear an approved face covering at all times at school, except while eating, drinking, or in an unpopulated area.
- Face coverings may be removed outside if the staff member is more than 6 feet away from another individual.
- Face shields are not recommended as a replacement for face coverings but may be worn at certain times for teaching purposes provided appropriate social distancing standards are followed.

Parents and Guardians

All parents and child guardians are required to wear a face covering during the following times:

- While approaching a classroom or the office door
- Near the playground area at drop-off or pick-up times when an appropriate six-foot social distancing standard is unlikely to be realistic
- In any outside area (except when eating, drinking, or engaging in physical activity) if within 6 feet of another individual
- At all times if within the school building or external classroom area

Students

- Current safety recommendations indicate that students younger than 3 should not wear a face covering.
- Students in our Children's House classrooms are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings, if they can be worn properly. Face coverings may not be worn during nap time or during any physical activity.
- Lower and Upper Elementary students are also strongly encouraged to wear face coverings while in classrooms, especially during group lessons where physical distancing is difficult.
- Middle school (MAP) students are required to wear face coverings while in classroom unless they are able to socially distance.
- Face coverings for LE, UE, and MAP are to be removed for eating, drinking, and physical activity.
- If a student experiences difficulty wearing his/her face covering, they will be provided with breaks during which they can remove his/her face covering for a short period of time.
- Students without face coverings should maintain physical distance to extent feasible.

Face covering exceptions include:

- Anyone who has trouble breathing
- Anyone who is unconscious or incapacitated
- Anyone who is otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance

Gloves

Individuals handling or serving food must use gloves in addition to face coverings. Gloves shall be used by employees who are screening others for symptoms or handling commonly touched items.

Other Measures

The school administration and teachers will arrange each classroom environment and adjust existing policies in accordance with safety measures recommended by governmental and health officials.

Classroom Supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimize sharing of supplies and equipment among staff and students to the extent feasible.• When items are shared, they will be cleaned and disinfected between use.• Students will be provided with as many supplies as feasible for dedicated use, such as labeled work mats, etc.• Shared water play and sensory materials such as rice, beans, sand, or playdough activities will be modified for personalized use.
Personal Supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To reduce cross-contamination, families are expected to limit what their children bring to and from school. In particular, soft materials or non-essential items that are difficult to clean or disinfect.• Bedding for younger children will be sent home on Fridays to be washed.
Ventilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each classroom will take advantage of the dedicated outdoor spaces accessible by each exterior door. Shaded workspaces will be arranged to allow for students to work both indoors and outdoors whenever possible.• Windows will also remain open when comfortable to do so.
Separate Cohorts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To minimize cross contamination, each classroom or pre-designated classroom group will be considered as a separate cohort, and movement of teachers and students between these rooms will be restricted as much as possible.• Each cohort group will have a designated time and space for recess on the playground to avoid mixing with other cohorts.• Specialty and enhancement classes will be presented by recordings or live streaming into the classroom until the cohort restrictions are lifted.

Cleaning, Maintenance, and Food Preparation

The school's enhanced cleaning and disinfecting products and protocols will adhere to state and local guidelines.

- All classrooms will be equipped with disinfectant, soap dispensers, hand sanitizer, tissues, and paper towels at all times.
- Designated staff will be responsible for cleaning common contact surfaces, such as desks and tables, counters, door handles, light switches, and playground equipment throughout the classrooms and the school at regular intervals throughout the day.
- The after-school staff and commercial janitorial service will perform additional school-wide sanitizing and cleaning each evening.
- All common use items will be disinfected between uses. Appropriate items will be sterilized in our commercial-grade sanitizer.
- After an illness or concerning symptoms of a child or adult, access to areas used by sick person is closed until thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
- Weather permitting, each class will maximize circulation of outdoor air by opening windows and doors, unless doing so would pose a health or safety risk. Additionally, each class will utilize a prepared and dedicated outdoor learning environment throughout the day to the extent feasible.
- If supplies must be shared, a use limit will be placed on supplies and equipment to one group of children at a time — with cleaning and disinfecting between uses.
- The school's HVAC company has installed a commercial air filtration and purification system (called iWave) into the existing units throughout the school building.
- To avoid cross-contamination and general health concerns, the school will not be providing classroom snacks. Each family must provide a morning and afternoon (for full day children) snack in the child's lunch box.
- Students will have access to either plastic utensils or classroom silverware for snack and lunch. Any non-disposable silverware or serving plates will be sterilized in our commercial sanitizer after each use.
- Children's lunch boxes or snack containers will not be placed together in our refrigerators. Lunches and snacks will be stored in each child's cubby or locker. In order to keep food fresh, parents should place an ice pack in the lunch box.
- To further minimize the risk of food preparation, parents are asked to bring food and containers that are easy for children to independently access and prepare. If at all possible, please reduce the number of meals that need to be heated.



HEALTH SCREENING, ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES

Arrival and Health Screening

For the safety of our community, all staff, parents, and guardians are asked to minimize close contact with the community at arrival and departure.

General Guidelines

- Designated routes and staggered arrival and departure schedules will be established to decrease crowding at entry and exit points. These times will be communicated and updated on our COVID resource web page and via email communications.
- Parents are required to inform the school if any person with whom they've recently been in contact has exhibited COVID-19 symptoms or tested positive for the COVID-19 virus.
- Our attendance tracking system no longer requires fingerprints and is now a contact-free process. Families are asked to download the free app from Brightwheel that allows parents to scan a QR code to automatically sign in their children. If this is not feasible, a staff member will update your child's attendance once they enter the classroom.
- The attendance software will prompt for verification that no members of the child's immediate household have been exposed to anyone with COVID-19 symptoms. Parents are **required** to inform the school of any medication their child has been given either during the prior evening or in the morning before arrival at school.
- Health screenings consist of contact-free temperature readings and an evaluation of any other observable symptoms, in conjunction with an assessment of possible COVID-19 exposure based on family feedback. The decision to allow a child to attend or an adult to enter the building (based on potential health concerns) will be made by the staff member administering the screening.
- **Parents or visitors are not permitted to enter the building without approval of administration.** Should a parent wish to enter the building or arrange for an observation, please contact administration to schedule a time. All adults entering the building will be subject to a health screening.
- Congregation of individuals on the school property is prohibited without permission from the school administration. If approved, individuals must wear masks and practice appropriate social distancing.
- Parents arriving for early-care or after the scheduled arrival time must bring their child to the office door, not their child's classroom. Upon arrival to the office door, a staff member will administer the health screening.

Arrival (for Infants, Ones, and Toddler Twos Programs Only)

- Parents should drop off their child between **8:30am** and **8:45am** to facilitate the staggering of arrival time.
- Parents will walk directly to their child's exterior classroom door for drop-off (unless participating in before-school care). A teacher will take the child's temperature prior to entry. Any child with a fever of 100.0 degrees or higher will be required to return home.
- As always, if approaching a staff member within 6 feet at drop-off, parents should wear a mask.

Carpool Arrival (for Children's House, Elementary, and MAP Only)

- When arriving to morning carpool, please remain in the car until a staff member approaches your vehicle to assist your child. A staff member will conduct a health screening while your child is in the car. We will be staggering arrival times. These will be emailed to families and posted on the school's website.
- Any child with a fever of 100.0 degrees or higher will not be permitted to leave the vehicle and must return home.
- If the health screening is clear, another staff member will assist the child at the carpool door in using hand sanitizer and will ensure they arrive at their classroom. Once in the class, the teachers will prompt the child to thoroughly wash their hands.

Departures

Due to the challenge of ensuring coverage for separate cohorts, it is **essential** that parents arrive at least a few minutes earlier than the scheduled departure time. This timing is also important to facilitate a smooth and safe dismissal, while maintaining social distancing guidelines.

Unapproved late dismissals, even if only by a few minutes, will create multiple complications as we manage various cohorts. Therefore, families who arrive late will be charged the daily childcare fee **even if only a few minutes late departing**. Frequent late departures may result in a family being charged the annual childcare fee.

Please contact the school as soon as possible to alert the administration and teachers if picking up a child earlier or later than their scheduled or pre-arranged departure time.

Departure (for Infants, Ones, and Toddler Twos Programs Only)

- Parents should pick up their child directly at the classroom's exterior door between the hours of **4:15pm** and **4:30pm**.

Departure (for Children’s House, Elementary, and MAP)

- **Noon and Full Day Departure:** Children will either be picked up on the playground (CH1 and CH2) or from the classroom’s exterior door (CH3 and CH4). In the event of inclement weather, all CH children will be picked up at their classroom’s exterior door.
- **Departure (for Elementary and MAP):** Students will be dismissed in carpool between 3:15pm to 3:30pm.

Before and After-School Care

Due to the need for separate cohorts, our before and after-school programs will initially be restricted to families who are enrolled in our annual childcare plans.

Beginning in September, parents may also take advantage of our after-school care provided they call ahead for approval. After-school daily rates will apply (please see the *Tuition and Fees* page on our website at www.montessoricenter.org for more information on these fees).

All children participating in before-school care should sign in at the office door, including the Infants/Ones and Toddler Twos families.



HEALTH MONITORING

The health and safety of our school community is paramount. Administrators, teachers, and staff will adhere to thorough health monitoring protocols and procedures throughout the day.

Symptoms of COVID-19

Symptoms of COVID-19 include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Fever and / or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Recent loss of taste or smell
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Headache, fatigue, body aches

Please note, while COVID-19 symptoms in children are similar to adults, children may exhibit milder forms of these symptoms.

Parents should notify the school prior to attendance if their child has a chronic condition that may mimic symptoms of COVID-19, such as asthma. Medical documentation to this effect will be required.

Daily Monitoring

Staff and teachers will monitor their students for any symptoms that develop throughout the day. Additional temperature and wellness screenings will be implemented throughout the day as needed.

Please note that knowingly sending a sick child to school or medicating with a fever-reducing medication prior to arrival **are serious infractions of our policy** and may result in a revocation of onsite enrollment and forfeiture of any applicable refund of school fees.

All school employees are instructed to report any personal symptoms they may be experiencing immediately. The school has additional staffing available to facilitate an immediate replacement of any administrator, staff, or teacher in the event they fall ill.

Student and Staff Isolation Protocols

In the event a student develops symptoms of an infectious illness while at the school, we will implement the following:

- The student will be immediately taken to either the inner office or another isolated area in the building. The child's temperature will be recorded, and a teacher or administrator will document the details of the symptoms or concerns. If safe to do so, the child will be provided with a face covering.
- The parents (or emergency contacts if parents are not available) will be called to pick up the student as soon as possible. Please note due to the risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus, if parents are not readily available during the day, they must ensure a local emergency contact is on standby to pick up the child within a **20-minute** window of receiving a call from the school.
- The school will provide the recorded illness observations and temperature reading to the parent or caregiver picking up the child. In addition, the parent or caregiver will receive information on the return policy based on the symptoms.
- If the health screening identifies at least two symptoms of COVID-19, quarantining will be required before returning to school as per the guidelines in the Returning to School section below.

Should a staff member fall ill, they will leave the school immediately. If a staff member leaves due to COVID-related symptoms, the school is committed to supporting the staff member without the concern of losing any accrued Personal Time Off (PTO).

It is important to note that whereas there may be a variety of conditions that exhibit COVID-19-like symptoms, the school's employees are not trained to differentiate between other ailments and those caused by the COVID-19 virus.

Considering the serious nature of this pandemic, the school will err on the side of extreme caution in determining when to send students and staff home.



CONFIRMED DIAGNOSIS OR EXPOSURE TO COVID-19

The most immediate concern as we return to school is to reduce the potential risk of anyone in our community contracting COVID-19. However, this virus is highly contagious and there is no guarantee that a COVID-19 diagnosis will not occur, even with the most diligent of preventative measures.

In preparation for a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 diagnosis, and in compliance with the DHHS and DCDEE, the school has developed procedures for school sterilization, parent notification, and a temporary partial or complete school closure.

Please note **it is mandatory for all families and staff to notify the school immediately** if they develop COVID-19 symptoms, if they receive a confirmed diagnosis, or if they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for the COVID-19 virus.

Suspected COVID-19 Symptoms

In the event a family reports they have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, or if a staff member or child shows two or more COVID-19 symptoms during a health screening, they should return home immediately and quarantine for 15 days.

Confirmed case of COVID-19

In the event anyone at the school tests positive for COVID-19, a representative from the DHHS will determine the appropriate course of action. In this scenario, there will be a school-wide announcement via email and text notifications (for those who have enrolled in this service) to inform all families and staff that someone in the school has received a positive diagnosis. Further communications will follow based on the determination of direct exposure to one or more cohorts.

All individuals who have been identified as being in close contact with the affected person are required to remain in quarantine at home for 15 days after their last known exposure to the person, unless he or she tests positive, in which case, the protocol for returning to school after a positive diagnosis would be followed (see below).

Please note that notices to staff and families will maintain confidentiality in accordance with all state and federal laws.

School Closure Criteria

Following the DHHS investigation of a confirmed case of COVID-19, there may be three courses of action taken.

- The school may not be required to close any classrooms if the DHHS determines that there was no issue regarding close contact, child / teacher ratios are appropriate, and there is sufficient space to continue normal operations.
- The DHHS may decide to temporarily close either one or more classrooms or cohorts.
- Alternatively, the DHHS may determine the entire school needs to temporarily close.

In the event the school or one or more cohorts needs to close, these students will transition to online instruction.

Teachers have pro-actively planned for a potential classroom or school closure and are prepared to transition seamlessly to the online platforms.

For toddlers or younger children who are not suited for distance learning, the school will offer a make-up session for any missed weeks during the summer.

Returning after Positive or Negative COVID-19 Test Results

Symptomatic Individuals

Symptomatic individuals who test positive for COVID-19 can return to school once they can answer yes to BOTH of the following questions:

- Has it been at least 15 days since symptoms first appeared OR 10 days after the resolution of a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medication), whichever is longer?
- Has there been symptom improvement, such as a cough or shortness of breath?

If the criteria above are met, it is not necessary to require a negative COVID-19 test in order to return.

Asymptomatic Individuals

Individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 but have not exhibited any related symptoms (asymptomatic) may return to school once:

- 15 days has passed since the date of their first positive test

However, if the individual develops symptoms after their first positive test, they must be able to answer yes to BOTH questions listed above (for symptomatic individuals) before returning.

Negative Test Results

Symptomatic individuals who have exhibited two or more COVID-19 symptoms but then test negative for COVID-19 may return to school once they can answer yes to BOTH of the following questions:

- Has it been at least 48 hours since the person had a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines?
- Has the person felt well and symptom-free for at least the past 48 hours?

Close Contact with Individuals with a Confirmed Diagnosis or Symptoms of COVID-19

Individuals who have been in close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case or to someone exhibiting two or more COVID-19 symptoms may return to school after completing 15 days of quarantine at home.

The purpose of quarantine is to determine if a person who has been exposed to COVID-19 will become infected. These individuals must complete a full 15-day quarantine even if they test negative for COVID-19. However, if the individual develops symptoms or tests positive, they must follow the criteria for this scenario listed above.



LEGAL WAIVER

Please be advised that The New School does not imply that the policies or procedures herein will immune anyone entering the school property from exposure to COVID-19. Our procedures and protocols are designed to meet federal and state mandates to reduce the exposure to COVID-19. However, please note, regardless of the mitigating procedures in place, families, teachers, staff, and visitors assume personal risk by entering the school.

If at any time a family becomes uncomfortable with attending the school in person due to the risk of exposure to COVID-19, they should immediately contact administration and their child's teachers. The family may then transfer to an online platform. For younger children, they may make up any lost weeks during our summer session.

Please note this is a living document and may be changed at any time.

Our teachers, administrators, and staff are greatly appreciative for the support of the parent community in assisting with any and all efforts to maintain a healthy environment.