

Montessori School of Northampton

Toddler - Middle School

MSN's COVID Plan for the 2020-2021 Year, Issued 9/1/2020

Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most serious health crises the world has experienced. We would like to thank all those in our community, our students, families, faculty and staff for their resilience, adaptability, patience, and understanding during this time of rapid change and uncertainty.

Guiding Principles

The reopening of MSN is guided by the following principles:

- Act in alignment with MSN's mission and core values
- Protect the health and safety of students and staff
- Follow the guidelines set out by the CDC, DESE and DEEC (Center for Disease Control, MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, MA Department of Early Education and Care)
- Prefer face-to-face learning over remote learning whenever it is safe to do so
- Provide clear expectations for teachers and students

Montessori Pedagogy

MSN typically follows the tenets of an authentic Montessori educational program. COVID regulations have caused us to adapt our program for the coming year. Our Kindergarteners will be in the same classroom (with some younger students), we cannot do food prep or cooking in the classrooms, we won't have field trips, and we are pausing our full Toddler program. Our Children's House classrooms will be much smaller than usual in order to follow DEEC guidelines. Parents are always an important part of our MSN school community and we are sad that we will not be able to allow them to come in and visit.

Personal Responsibility and Education

We are in this together. In order to ensure the health and welfare of all members of our school community, it is necessary that everyone take active steps to minimize the potential transmission of the COVID-19 virus. We ask all members of our community to carefully adhere to the CDC's best practices to stop its spread including mask wearing, handwashing and hygiene protocols, and physical distancing to the greatest extent possible at all times. As much as feasible, we encourage adults to avoid environments where social distancing is not possible and to strictly self-quarantine if they have had any risk of exposure to the virus. Everyone is expected to follow the Massachusetts travel ordinance:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-travel-order>

Acknowledgement of Risk

All schools are challenged to adapt to the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through MSN's planning and preparation for re-opening, we hope to shape positive school and learning experiences in a manner that is true to our core values and beliefs.

Parents sending children to MSN and employees working at MSN acknowledge that despite our best efforts, there is still a risk of infection. Attendance implies acceptance of the risk. We encourage you to continue to assess the best course of action for you and your family.

Program Summary

Academic Programs and Dates

September 8th, 2020 - June 18th, 2021

Children's House Half Day Program: 8:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Children's House Full Day Program: 8:30 AM - 3:00 PM

Elementary and Middle School: 8:45-3:15

Early Bird: 7:45 AM until classrooms open

After School Program:

-Children's House 3:00 - 4:00 PM

-Kindergarten and Elementary 3:00 - 5:00

Cleaning and Disinfecting

MSN has a detailed cleaning and disinfecting plan for each classroom, including staff responsibilities and the responsibilities of our custodial contractor.

Cleaning Schedule

Our hired cleaning service will clean all areas thoroughly each night using EPA-registered products and procedures. Cleaning during the day will be done by staff.

Products

The school will maintain a list of EPA-registered cleaning and sanitizing products which can be used, and provide guidelines for staff using them.

Classroom Materials and Equipment

- Machine-washable cloth toys will be removed from the classrooms.
- Any material that has been in a child's mouth will be removed from circulation, cleaned and sanitized before reuse.
- Books and papers will be used in the classroom without restriction, but will be removed if soiled.
- As much as possible, children will have individual material sets unique to them with which to work.
- Shared materials will be cleaned and disinfected after each child's use.
- For electronics, keyboard covers or disinfecting wipes will be used.
- Outdoor play structures will be cleaned between each class's use, and before use by the after school program.
- Tables used for lunch and snack will be washed and disinfected before and after use.
- Classroom staff will be cleaning surfaces and materials during the day.
- Common areas (door handles, front door keypad and exit button, staff room and equipment, toilet and sink handles) will be cleaned and disinfected periodically during the day,

Classroom Policies

- Both properties will have tents so that classes can be held outside as desired.
- During the academic year, children's belongings including outerwear and lunch boxes will be stored in their assigned cubbies.
- Children should only bring required items to school including snacks, lunch, water bottle, nap items (blanket/sheet/pillow), and outerwear.
- As much as possible, children will be assigned to work areas that are at least six feet apart from each other.
- Children will work on their own, provided with mats which will be cleaned daily or their assigned and labeled work rug, which will be taken home and laundered on Friday.

- Work rugs will be stored apart from each other.
- Students may not work in common areas or hallways.
- High-risk classroom activities such as singing and food preparation will be suspended.
- Handwashing will be part of the class routine before and after transitions as well as before and after children eat snacks and lunch.
- When inside, students will stay in their own classrooms as much as possible to limit mixing of classroom cohorts.
- Signage will be posted to manage traffic flow in hallways.
- Specialists will teach remotely or outside.
- No large group gatherings will occur at this time.

Strategies to Reduce the Risk of Transmission

Masks:

Staff

- Staff are required to wear face coverings at all times unless outside and maintaining physical distance (staff will provide their own masks and extra masks are available in the case of necessity).

Children:

- Children under age 2 will not wear face coverings at school.
- Children ages 2 to 3 are encouraged to wear a mask.
- Children ages 3 and up who can safely and appropriately wear, remove, and handle face masks are required to wear face masks and must be supervised at all times while wearing a face mask.

Parents and Guests

- Parents and guests are required to wear a face covering while in vehicles during arrival and dismissal.

Physical Distancing Strategies

MSN does not expect that young children will distance themselves from other children or adults while at school. Young children learn by engaging with their environment, which includes the other people in it. However, MSN will employ the following strategies for limiting the spread of COVID-19 in our classrooms when feasible.

Children

- According to EEC guidelines, classrooms will consist of stable groups. Stable means that the same children and their consistent caregiver(s) are in the same group each day.
- Children shall not change from one group to another during the day.
- Groups shall not mix with each other.
- The lead classroom teacher will remain with a single group each day. In the case of illness, a designated substitute for the group will assist with caregiving.
- Contact with specialist teachers in Art, Music, and Spanish will be remote or outside.
- The physical distance between children will be increased in daily work locations, group gatherings, meals, and snacks.
- Children will be reminded to socially distance with positive redirection and role play about social distancing occurring daily at group/circle times.

Health Screening Protocol

Health and Temperature Screening Protocol

The following symptoms, if observed in a child or staff member, are cause for immediate isolation and exclusion from school:

- Fever (100.0°F and higher), feverish, had chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Difficulty breathing
- Gastrointestinal distress (nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea)
- New loss of taste or smell
- New muscle aches

The following symptoms, if observed in combination with symptoms from the list above are cause for immediate isolation and exclusion from school:

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Runny nose or congestion
- Any other signs of illness

The following situations are cause for immediate isolation and exclusion from school:

- In the previous 14 days has had contact with someone with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19; or
- Is under investigation for COVID-19

Program Plan

Closure Decisions and Remote Learning

MSN believes that the benefits of in-person, face-to-face learning are profound. We have adopted the following plan and guidelines in order to ensure that we can safely conduct our program the best way possible for our students. Ultimately, the decision to remain open will be made according to Massachusetts state regulations and by order of the Governor. MSN is not bound by the reopening decisions of the Northampton Public Schools and is not required to follow their plans which are often guided by factors that are not relevant to private schools. Should the Governor or the Northampton Board of Health close our facility for any period of time, we will activate our remote learning plan and deliver our program accordingly.

This document was compiled using the DESE and DEEC COVID-19 guidelines and recommendations for schools and childcare programs.

In-Person/Remote Learning Plan

The 2020-2021 school year promises to be an especially challenging one for all of us, but we are confident that we can weather these challenges together. Looking forward to the 2020-2021 school year, MSN has put the following plan in place for in-person/remote learning.

We have used the Governor's color-coded COVID metrics and DESE's guidance to create a leveled plan. We realize we have a responsibility to help stop the spread of the virus and this tool gives us clear information on how to respond.

We looked at each of the state's color-coded map levels and took into consideration your feedback, your child's developmental age, our staffing situation, and our new cleaning protocol.

Information from the state:

Red will designate communities with more than 8 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents.

Yellow will designate communities that have more than 4 and up to 8 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents.

Green will designate communities that have 4 or fewer COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents.

Unshaded (white) will designate communities with small populations and fewer than 5 cases within the last 14 days.

Guidance for using these metrics to determine local learning models

Based on these updated weekly COVID-19 metrics, DESE’s guidance for how these data should inform each school and district’s learning model is as follows:

New color-coded metric*	DESE expectation for learning model
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="background-color: red; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-right: 10px;">RED</div> <p>Average daily cases per 100,000 is greater than 8</p> </div>	<p>Remote</p>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="background-color: yellow; padding: 5px; margin-right: 10px;">YELLOW</div> <p>Average daily cases per 100,000 is between 4 - 8</p> </div>	
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="background-color: green; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-right: 10px;">GREEN</div> <p>Average daily cases per 100,000 is less than 4</p> </div>	<p>Full-time in-person OR Hybrid (if extenuating circumstances)</p>
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-right: 10px;">UNSHADED</div> <p>Fewer than 5 total cases over the past 14 days. Generally, this is for communities with small populations and very few cases.</p> </div>	

**Measured as a 14-day rolling average and will be reported weekly as part of the online DPH dashboard*

The color-coded COVID updates come out on Wednesday evenings on the **Weekly COVID-19 Public Health Report** (see link). We will be looking at the September 9th update to make a decision about September 14th. We will base our color-coded plan on Northampton because the majority (65%) of our students come from here.

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-response-reporting# covid-19-weekly-public-health-report>

When we switch from one plan to another (Middle School has a slightly different plan):

Green/White → Yellow

When we move from green/white to yellow, we will switch to three days in-person on the following Monday.

Yellow → Red

When we move from yellow to red, Thursday will be our last in-person day and we will start all remote on Friday.

We will be more cautious with color movement in the opposite direction

Red → **Yellow**

When we move from red to yellow, we will look at two Wednesdays and if the color stays consistent, we will start three days in-person on the following Monday (for example, if it was red on 8/5 and yellow on 8/12, we would wait to see 8/19, and if it was still yellow, we would start three days in-person on Monday the 24th.).

Yellow → **Green/White**

When we move from yellow to green, we will follow the same as above, but we will go from three days in-person to four days in-person.

If Northampton is white for a month, we will discuss coming back to 5 days.