

Maria Montessori School Pandemic Response Plan

Maria Montessori School is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all its students, staff, and families. We have developed the following Pandemic Response Plan (PRP) for the 2020–21 school year that will guide our decisions regarding the reopening of our campus to students and employees, as well as our overall program. *These policies and procedures will be in place when the campus reopens for the 2020/2021 school year, planned for September 8, 2020.*

We recognize that through the implementation of the following coordinated efforts, we can reduce, not eliminate, the risk of COVID-19 transmission in our community. We strive to balance our decision to open the campus, with the mitigation policies and the many known benefits of children experiencing in-person learning at school.

All actions on the part of the school will be undertaken with the well-being of students and staff in mind, while providing as “normal” a school experience as possible, giving the children the feeling of safety and reassurance.

The School will update this PRP as federal, state, and local guidelines and regulations change. It will also be included as a temporary addendum to the Parent Handbook and Staff Handbook. Until communicated otherwise, the rules and guidance of this PRP supersedes previous policy to the extent that there is any inconsistency between it and the existing Parent or Staff Handbook. Parents and staff will be informed via email of updated versions as they are available. Updated policy documents will also be hosted on the school website: www.MontessoriSchoolHouse.org.

If you have any questions regarding current policies or procedures, you should contact the school director, Dena Stoneman.

- **Resources and Guiding Entities**

- MMS’s Plan is based on recommendations and guidance from the [Center for Disease Control](#) (CDC), [California Department of Public Health](#) (CDPH), the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) (AAP), federal [Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#) (OSHA) standards related to COVID-19, Governor Gavin Newsome’s [Health Order](#) as it pertains to schools, the [San Diego County Office of Education](#) (SDCOE), and the health orders from the [San Diego County Health Department](#) (SDCHD).
- As part of our planning, the School has taken into account the mounting evidence regarding COVID-19 in children and adolescents, including the role they may play in transmission of the infection. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, COVID-19 *appears to behave differently in children and adolescents than other common respiratory viruses, such as the flu, on which much of the current guidance regarding school closures is based. Although children and adolescents play a major role in amplifying influenza outbreaks, to date, this does not appear to be the case with COVID-19. Although many questions remain, the preponderance of evidence indicates that children and adolescents are less likely to be symptomatic and less likely to have severe disease resulting from SARS-CoV-2 [COVID-19] infection. In addition, children may be less likely to become infected and to spread infection.*

- **Implementation**

- To be effective, MMS’s PRP requires the full cooperation of all our community members, and everyone is responsible for implementing and complying with the School’s PRP to mitigate COVID-19 contagion.
- This PRP addresses the health and safety procedures that MMS has implemented and the responsibilities of the School and its community members.

Acknowledgement of Risk and Responsibility

Continual on-campus learning will only be possible with all of us working together to follow health and safety guidelines, on and off-campus.

- Parents and staff will be asked to sign an acknowledgement of risk and responsibility. The school will rigorously adhere to health and safety guidelines determined by national and local health and government authorities. However, attendance at school poses some risk of exposure to COVID 19 due to children being in the same classroom with other children and staff. Individuals may want to carefully consider this possibility and the potential impact on their household.
- Attendance implies acceptance of the risk. We encourage all to continue to assess the best course of action for you and your family. MMS will not be held liable for contracting illness.
- **We ask all families and staff to recognize their responsibility to other families and the teachers in our school community. To participate in the campus operations, we require that our community members:**
 - **follow state and county health orders (currently mandating “stay-at-home” orders, visiting only essential and re-opened businesses outside your home)**
 - **monitor child and family health, watching for all COVID 19 symptoms**
 - **do not give fever reducing medication 24 hours prior to school attendance**
 - **report all incidents of possible exposure to COVID 19**

School Program: On-Campus Learning and Distance Learning

- Our current plan is to start the 2020-21 school year with on-campus learning for Primary students, as well as on-campus school for K-6 and Secondary students.
- Safeguarding the health of our community members is our top priority, and we are prepared for switching to distance learning throughout the school year if public health guidelines indicate we should do so.
- **On-Campus Learning**
 - We are looking forward to being able to welcome students back to MMS for on-campus learning, and we will offer as full a program as possible under pandemic conditions.
 - MMS’s physical and human resources enable us to provide an at-school, in-person education under new health and safety guidelines.
 - Some program modifications that you may see will include: limiting student movement during the day; a new daily schedule with the ability to pivot to distance learning quickly if necessary; limited in-person, large group meetings and activities; no off-campus travel; increased use of outdoor spaces; limited before and after-school care hours, and no food service.
- **Distance Learning if Campus is Closed**
 - We learned a lot through our distance learning experience in the spring, and if we are required to move to full distance learning, our students will still experience the meaningful and joyful learning that is a hallmark of the School’s educational mission.
 - Students will participate in developmentally appropriate schedules that are a balance of live and recorded content, and independent work periods.
 - Parents will be supplied a Montessori at Home Handbook which details expectations for teachers, children, and parents.
 - All students will have access to their own electronic device if not available at home, with school checkout of devices if necessary.
 - The School will continue to utilize a number of digital tools—including Zoom and Google Classroom—for learning, engagement, and maintaining community.

Social-Emotional Support

- Supporting our students' social-emotional development is more important than ever during these trying and uncertain times. Your child's teachers will be focused on your child's adjustment back to school and any other related concerns.
- The School administration may also be able to connect you with resources for families who want outside support for children who need more help transitioning back to school.
- **Considerations for Parents**
 - Children are looking to their parents to let them know how they should be feeling about things. As much as possible, parents should try to be a non-anxious presence in their children and communicate their confidence in their children's ability to cope with stressful situations, including going back to school.
 - Parents are encouraged to help children reestablish routines at home that will help prepare them for coming back to school. This [linked article](#) from Children's Healthcare of Atlanta has some great suggestions to prepare for reentry.
 - Once parents read through the School's PRP and understand more about the 2020–21 school year, they are encouraged to communicate clearly with their children about the return to school to begin to prepare them for how things are going to look different this school year. Frequent brief conversations—e.g., "See how the mailman has a mask on? You and your teachers will wear masks at school, too!"—are recommended instead of one or two long conversations that hash out all of the changes.
 - Parents are encouraged to reinforce the idea that children have agency in keeping themselves safe and healthy rather than emphasizing the many unknowns. Although no one knows exactly what the school year will bring, it is important that children feel a sense of comfort knowing that there are specific things they can do (e.g., hand washing and maintaining a safe distance) to help keep themselves and others healthy.
 - Ample evidence shows that maintaining balanced nutrition, getting moderate exercise, practicing mindfulness, establishing good sleep habits, and having adequate social support are the best ways to counteract the effects of stress on children (and adults). Little things can help to make big improvements in the reduction of stress.

Health and Hygiene Practices

- **Handwashing**
 - Children:
 - Upon arrival, children will be required to wash their hands.
 - Children will wash hands under supervision before snack, before lunch, after-playtime, and at the end of the day.
 - Each classroom cohort will utilize either a designated restroom or portable handwashing station.
 - Supervised use of hand-sanitizer will be allowed as necessary throughout the day, but not as a substitute for handwashing.
 - Staff:
 - Staff will wash hands at a minimum upon arrival, at each break and at the end of day.
 - Hand washing stations will be equipped with sanitizing wipes for use on handles and dispensers between individual use.

- Hand sanitizer will be provided for staff to use as needed.
 - Frequent handwashing is critical in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. Everyone is instructed to wash their hands throughout the day for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.
- **Respiratory Etiquette**
 - Everyone should cover their mouth and nose with their sleeve or a tissue when coughing or sneezing and avoid touching their face, in particular their mouth, nose, and eyes, with their hands. They should dispose of tissues in provided trash receptacles and wash or sanitize their hands immediately afterward.
 - Respiratory etiquette signage will be displayed throughout the School.
- **Face Coverings and Protective Equipment**
 - Primary children are permitted, but will not be forced to wear face coverings at school.
 - Elementary children will be asked to wear face coverings at school, and always when interacting with others.
 - All staff will wear a face covering while onsite at school, while moving about on campus, and when interacting with teachers, other staff, parents, and students.
 - Face shields are permitted for staff when necessary for the student to see the mouth movement (for speech clarity) or when conveying emotion or comfort for the child (pending further Health Department guidance).
 - Use of gloves is required while disinfecting surfaces, materials and objects; gloves are optional at other times.
 - Parents are required to wear face coverings during student drop off and pick up.
 - Students and Parents will provide their own face coverings.
 - According to public health officials, individuals can spread COVID-19 to others even if they do not feel sick. While not a substitute for physical distancing, the use of face coverings is an important way that we, as a community, can protect each other by mitigating the spread of COVID-19.
 - Exceptions may be made with consideration for medical reasons and age and to accommodate eating and drinking; outdoor and physical activities, including P.E.; and instructional time when physical distancing can be maintained and additional preventative measures are in place.
 - CDC guidelines provide general considerations for wearing and maintaining a face covering, including the following:
 - The mouth and nose are fully covered
 - The covering fits snugly against the sides of the face so there are no gaps
 - The wearer does not have any difficulty breathing while wearing the covering
 - The face covering can be tied or otherwise secured to prevent slipping
 - Face coverings do not have to be worn by employees when they are alone in their classroom or office.

- **Physical Distancing**
 - Children
 - Children will be encouraged to socially distance with visual cues, seating arrangements, directed queueing and teacher redirection.
 - Role play about social distancing will occur at group/circle times, and during outdoor playtimes.
 - Staff:
 - Staff is expected to maintain social distancing with each other while at work
 - Stay 6 feet apart
 - Refraining from hugging, handshakes, high-fives, etc.
 - Three staff maximum are allowed in the smaller common areas (i.e. kitchen, staff lunch area, work rooms, inner office).

- **Group Size & Cohorting**
 - Children will be grouped in steady cohorts of a size appropriate for the classroom, allowing for social distancing.
 - Children from the same family who are enrolled at the same level will be in the same group where practicable.
 - Adults will stay in the same classroom with the same group for the entire day.
 - Groups of children will not be commingled on the playground, lunch area, bathrooms, or during after-care hours.
 - Specials teachers (excluding computer lab classes) utilizing outdoor classroom space wherever possible to facilitate learning and maintaining physical distance from students.

- **Spacing**
 - Works stations, desks, tables will be oriented such as to maximize distance between children as much as is practicable.
 - Group activity times within the classroom (i.e. circle time) and lessons will be organized such that students will have maximum distance from one another.

- **Shared Supplies**
 - To the extent possible, sharing of classroom supplies (i.e. pencils, markers, crayons) will be minimized, with each student having separate supplies.
 - Classroom supplies and materials that are shared will be disinfected at minimum once per day, and more frequently where necessary.
 - Personal items transported back and forth from home will be limited to the extent possible (i.e. backpacks, lunchboxes, etc...).

- **Water Fountains**
 - Drinking fountain use is discouraged. Personal water bottles should be brought to school, and thoroughly cleaned at home daily.
 - Please label your child's water bottle.

- **Meals and Snack**
 - Children will bring all snacks and lunches from home. Communal snacks from the school will not be served.
 - Food preparation (an important part of the Montessori curriculum of practical life) will be temporarily suspended.
 - Lunch will only be brought to school in disposable bags. All packaging and utensils should be disposable. (We recognize the impact on the environment and the departure from our normal stance on disposables. We believe that safety takes precedence at this time.)
 - Lunchboxes, backpacks, thermoses etc. will not be brought to school.
 - All uneaten food, bags and packaging will be disposed of before pickup.

- **Napping (Primary Students)**
 - Children will nap in their own classroom.
 - Children will be 6 feet apart.
 - Cots and bedding, or rest cloths, will be stored separately and disinfected weekly.

- **Field Trips**
 - Off-campus field trips will be restricted until community conditions improve to a level deemed safe by local health authorities.

Cleaning, Disinfecting, and Ventilation

MMS uses CDC-approved, eco-friendly medical-grade disinfectants and has implemented updated cleaning, disinfecting, and ventilation practices.

- Common areas will be disinfected with EPA COVID19 approved products (Clorox wipes, Lysol spray, etc.) after drop off time, after lunch, between use by different cohorts, and at the end of the day:
 - Adult and child bathrooms: faucets, toilets, handles, sink surfaces, paper towel and soap dispensers
 - Kitchen and staff room surfaces
 - Keypads (i.e copy machines)
 - All door handles (inside and out)
 - Shared computers and monitors
 - Phones
 - Front desk (horizontal surfaces)
 - Hand rails

- Classroom common areas (outdoors included) will be disinfected with EPA COVID19 approved products (Clorox wipes, Lysol spray, etc.) periodically during the day, and between use by different cohorts:
 - Tables and chairs
 - Shelf edges
 - Commonly used materials and objects
 - Cubbies
 - Door handles
 - Bike handles and seats

- Commonly used outside toys
- Grab bars on playground equipment
- Classrooms and common areas will be treated nightly with a disinfectant fogger (non-toxic) in order to sanitize materials and soft surfaces.
- If someone within the community contracts COVID-19, contact tracing will be used to identify and notify people who may have been exposed at school, and also to determine the exposed areas and equipment within the building. These areas and equipment will be disinfected per CDC guidelines.
- Air Flow
 - The School's HVAC system, coupled with open doors and window, allows for the maximum amount of incoming fresh air, and limited air recirculation. The School will continue to maintain an rigorous filter replacement schedule to support the best air quality.
 - Classroom doors and windows will remain open to maximize air flow and exchange.
 - Classrooms without extensive air flow will have hepa filter air purifier(s) to assist in air exchange.

Campus Access

As virus spread is more likely between adults, we are restricting parent and visitor access to student learning spaces.

- All parents and visitors must enter through the main courtyard area, wear face coverings, and be screened upon arrival.
- There may be occasions in the future when parents are invited onto campus for meetings and events; in the immediate future, most meetings will be conducted virtually.
- Access to the interior of the school will be limited to children and staff.
 - Parent volunteers will not operate on campus at this time.
 - School tours will be held virtually, or by appointment with one family (masked and not interacting with students or materials.)
 - Vendors and service providers will be limited to access in areas away from students.
 - Emergency service vendors will be scheduled at non-operational times if possible.
 - If immediate service is required:
 - Children will be removed from the area accessed by the provider
 - A staff member will accompany the service provider at all times
 - Areas and surfaces will be disinfected after completion service

Student Arrivals and Departures & Campus Movement

- **Drop off – Primary Students**
 - Parents will drop off children in the courtyard to limit access to the interior of the building.
 - Parents should maintain 6 feet of distancing while waiting to drop off.
 - Staff members will meet the parent and child in the courtyard.

- Contactless sign in: Staff member will sign in child for the day by visual identification of the parent. This will be entered into the student log-in record.
 - If child will be dropped off outside the normal drop-off window of time, parent will contact the office by phone upon arrival so the child can be met in the courtyard and escorted to the classroom.
- **Pick Up – Primary Students**
 - Parents will pick-up students from the courtyard. Students will be brought from the classroom/play-yard by a staff member.
 - Parents should maintain 6 feet of distancing while waiting for the child.
 - Contactless sign out: Staff members will sign out children for the day by visual identification of the parent. This will be entered into the student log-out record.
 - If child will be picked up outside the normal pick-up window of time, parent will contact the office by phone upon arrival so the child can be escorted from the classroom.
- **Drop off – Lower Elementary Students**
 - Parents will drop off children in the front gate exterior bark/bench area to limit access to the interior of the building.
 - Parents should maintain 6 feet of distancing while waiting to drop off.
 - Staff members will meet the parent and child in the front of the school.
 - If child will be dropped off outside the normal drop-off window of time, parent will contact the office by phone upon arrival so the child can be escorted to the classroom.
- **Pick Up – Lower Elementary Students**
 - Parents will pick-up students from the front gate bark/bench area. Students will be brought from the classroom/play-yard by a staff member.
 - Parents should maintain 6 feet of distancing while waiting for the child.
 - If child will be picked up outside the normal pick-up window of time, parent will contact the office by phone upon arrival so the child can be escorted from the classroom.
- **Drop off – Upper Elementary/Secondary Students**
 - Parents will drop off children at the back-gate area to limit access to the interior of the building.
 - Parents should maintain 6 feet of distancing while waiting to drop off.
 - Staff members will meet the parent and child at the gate.
 - If child will be dropped off outside the normal drop-off window of time, parent will contact the office by phone upon arrival so the child can be escorted to the classroom.
- **Pick Up – Upper Elementary/Secondary Students**
 - Parents will pick-up students from the back-gate area. Students will be brought from the classroom by a staff member and wait in their separate classroom cohorts.
 - Parents should maintain 6 feet of distancing while waiting for the child.

- If child will be picked up outside the normal pick-up window of time, parent will contact the office by phone upon arrival so the child can be escorted from the classroom.
- **Student Movement on Campus**
 - Timing of student movement from class to playground, lunch area, outdoor classes, etc... will be arranged such as to minimize student interaction between cohorts.

Temperature & Wellness Checks

- Temperature of all children will be taken at drop off, before parents depart.
- Temperature of staff will be taken at the start of shift.
- Contactless thermometers will be used in all cases if possible
- If an in-ear thermometer is used, it will be disinfected with alcohol after each use
- Assessment upon arrival and throughout the day monitoring for symptoms such as respiratory, digestive, lethargy, etc... Students and staff with any symptoms of illness will not be permitted to remain on campus.
- Particular attention is given to individuals who report any of the following symptoms, which may appear two to 14 days after exposure to COVID: cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle or body aches, congestion or runny nose, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, bluish lips or face, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea.
- Parents and staff will affirm daily that they and immediate family members have had no direct exposure to a COVID-19 positive individual, no related symptoms, and have not traveled internationally (or had close contact with someone who has) in the previous 14 days. (Official guidelines specify commuter travel to Mexico is exempted.)

Sick Policy

- Our sick child policy will be amended as followed:
 - Children will be sent home when a temperature is 99.6 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, or other symptoms of illness.
 - Temperature will be taken upon arrival daily, and checked later in the day if warranted.
 - Children with a temperature or other symptoms of coronavirus infection will be isolated from the group until pick up.
 - Parents will be called for pickup within 30 minutes.
 - If a parent is not available within 30 minutes or there is no response from the phone call(s), the emergency contacts on the child's release form will be called for pickup.
 - A person showing signs of illness may return to school after:
 - Self-isolation for 10 days, and resolution of symptoms for 72 hours OR
 - Receiving a negative COVID test, and resolution of symptoms for 72 hours OR
 - Obtaining a letter from an MD documenting the symptoms as related to an ongoing, chronic condition (such as allergies).
 - Parents are prohibited from using a fever reducer for an enrolled child within 24 hours of school attendance. Evidence of usage may result in discontinued enrollment.
 - The school reserves the right to send a child home as sick even in the absence of fever.

- The same sick policies apply to staff members.
- MMS has implemented a specific COVID-19 health support policy that promotes staff staying at home when they are sick or displaying symptoms of COVID-19, when household members are sick or displaying symptoms of COVID-19, or when required by a healthcare provider to isolate or quarantine themselves or a member of their household.
- Before arriving on campus:
 - Anyone who is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or knows that they have COVID-19 should isolate at home.
 - Parents should communicate with the School—using the methods listed below—if one of them or a member of their household tests positive for COVID-19, experiences symptoms of COVID-19, or has close contact* with someone who is positive or symptomatic of COVID-19.
 - *CDC currently defines “close contact” as “someone who was within six feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 48 hours before illness onset until the time the patient is isolated.”
 - Parents should continue to report student absences via the school phone number; reports of COVID-19 symptoms, close contacts, and COVID-19 diagnoses via email or phone to Dena Stoneman, School Director.
- **COVID Positive Results and Contact Tracing**
 - Contact tracing is part of the process of mitigating the spread of infection. MMS has a plan to work with public health officials if a community member tests positive for COVID-19. The School and/or local public health officials will work with the infected person to identify close contacts and will notify community members who may be close contacts. Patient confidentiality will be maintained.
 - Anyone who is absent due to a positive COVID-19 test shall not be permitted back in school until at least 10 days after the positive test result, and other symptom improvement. Longer absence may be warranted and required by the school, dependent upon further health authority guidance.
 - Anyone who is absent due to close contact with a person who has COVID-19 shall not be permitted back in school until 14 days after last exposure. This person should check temperature daily and be observant for any onset of symptoms. They should also stay away from anyone who is at higher risk for getting sick and get tested.
 - The school director will be responsible for communicating COVID positive results to the Health authorities and to possible exposed persons.
 - In addition to the aforementioned requirements, anyone who is required to be off-campus due to a COVID-19-related concern must consult and receive clearance from the school director before being allowed back on campus.
- **Testing for COVID-19 for staff and students**
 - Periodic surveillance testing for staff (further guidance as to intervals currently pending; likely rolling staff testing 25% each 2-week period).
 - Staff will be referred to their health provider to be tested (as mandated by Department of Managed Health Care memo 7/23/20; teachers as essential workers, or to free County testing sites).
 - No isolation required while waiting for results.

- Routine student testing not required at this time; if student has close contact or Covid symptoms testing will be recommended. (Testing does not shorten required isolation or quarantine period.)
 - Students will be referred to their health care provider or to no-charge government testing sites.
 - While waiting for results, student should remain out of school, and isolated at home
- School may require testing on an individual basis if warranted and as it becomes more widely available.

Operating Hours

- Operating hours will be temporarily changed to 7:45 AM to 4:30 PM.
- Opening staff will prepare the environment from 7:00 AM to 7:45 AM to ensure protocols were met from the previous day and disinfect common surfaces.
- Closing staff will disinfect environments from 3:30 PM to 4:30 PM.
- After-school childcare will be offered only until 4:30pm during the pandemic. This is due to staffing considerations when keeping student cohorts separate. As conditions allow, we will return to normal operating hours.

Training and Preparedness

This document will serve as the Maria Montessori School response plan for COVID-19. The School will provide employees with pandemic response training prior to the return of students to campus. Additional communications and training will be ongoing as COVID-19 guidelines and requirements change.

Parents will receive communication about the pandemic related procedures via email, and will sign acknowledgement of receipt and understanding. The document will be an addendum to the Parent Handbook. Updates will be provided as appropriate.

Campus Closure Triggers & Plans

- Every effort will be made to maintain on-campus operations. However, certain conditions may require closure of individual classrooms, or the school campus.
- Campus operations will be such that students will be kept in small classroom cohorts with consistent students and staff, to minimize mixing of student groups and possible exposure to COVID campus wide.
- Local health department officials will determine extent and length of closures.

Condition	Action	Action / Duration	Communication
County Health Dept. or State Mandated County Wide Closures	School campus closes. Education pivots to online platform.	School closure; time determined by authorities.	School wide email communication
COVID 19 Positive Case in a cohort (classroom community)	Individual COVID positive Student or Staff excluded, and quarantined, along with close contacts (likely entire cohort). Education for cohort pivots to online platform.	Room closure; 14 days, or as determined by authorities.	School wide email communication
Close contact with a confirmed COVID 19 case (i.e. family member)	Individual COVID exposed Student or Staff quarantined for 14 days. Education resources supplied to quarantined student.	No closures.	Cohort email communication
COVID 19 symptoms (i.e. fever, cough, etc...) in individual student or staff.	Individual COVID symptomatic Student or Staff excluded, and testing recommended. Return following negative test and 3 days after symptoms resolve OR following symptom resolution and 10 day isolation.	No closures.	n/a
COVID 19 positive cases across multiple cohorts or in >5% of student body	School campus closes. Education pivots to online platform.	School closure; time determined by authorities; likely 14 days.	School wide email communication

Students Unable to Participate in On-Campus Instruction

Situations where students are unable to participate with in-person learning because of heightened risk will be considered individually to determine how best to supply educational resources to continue learning. Parents, teachers, and school administrators will develop plan according to each unique circumstance