

SMS Looks Forward to Welcoming Students Back on Campus with New State Opening Guidance

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On June 25, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released initial fall guidance for reopening K-12 schools aiming to help students back in schools safely. According to this guidance, students can learn on campus, in person while practicing 3-6 feet physical distancing. As long as proper physical distancing is maintained and health precautions are being carefully enforced, schools can design the way they group classes and cohorts. The same group of students need to be kept together throughout the day. Students in grade 2 and above are required to wear a mask or face covering that covers their nose and mouth. Students below grade 2 are encouraged to wear a mask or face covering. Mask breaks should occur throughout the day when students can be six feet apart and ideally outside or at least with the windows open.

Based on this opening guidance, Shrewsbury Montessori looks forward to starting the fall by bringing all students back to learn on campus, for full days, Monday through Friday with physical distancing and health and safety precautions. We feel confident in our projection for the fall at the moment to return to campus unless something unforeseeable happens before September. We are repurposing our classrooms and looking into renting additional classrooms on our Worcester campus at St. George Orthodox to ensure that all students can learn with 3-6 feet safe distance. In the meanwhile, we are deep cleaning our campuses, stocking up on PPE, drafting and training faculty and staff on health and safety routines, etc. In addition, our Shrewsbury Oak Street campus is expecting to have air conditioning installed throughout the building to provide comfort in the hot weeks in August and September in the beginning of the school year. We are likely to run air conditioners while having sufficient windows and doors open for health and safety.

While we look forward to starting the fall in person on campus, we are also aware that unpredictability is the nature of this pandemic. In addition to preparing our classrooms to receive students in person, our faculty are busy working this summer designing and preparing remote lesson plans for just in case purposes. Taking into consideration the feedback from spring semester's remote learning surveys, faculty in all divisions, from Children's House to Elementary are launching refreshed, robust and refined remote learning curricula. Added features include frequent 1:1 teacher to student meet-up sessions, meaningful small group learning activities, school-wide community building events, and multi-faceted ways of reaching students in real time to give feedback for engagement and academic progress.

Administratively, the **July 1** deadline is approaching for families to decide about next school year's enrollment. In order for the school to plan and finalize its budgetary and staffing needs for 2020-2021 school year to guarantee a successful opening, it is vital for the school's operation to maintain this July 1 deadline.

Amidst uncertainty, the school, however, aims to provide families with information and possible tuition assistance to help make this next school year more predictable. We are offering the following to families at this time:

- For Children's House children (Preprimary, 3 and 4 year olds), if extended period(s) of remote learning occur for the 2020-2021 school year due to pandemic related close down, the school will offer a 20% prorated refund for the duration of remote learning. If families choose to opt out of remote learning entirely, the school will offer a 100% prorated tuition refund for the duration of remote learning. Any period longer than two weeks is considered as an extended period falling under this offered condition.

- For Kindergarten to Grade 6 students, due to more mature developmental needs, remote learning can be a successful medium for students to achieve equivalent learning goals. The school administration is truly impressed by and has confidence in the redesigned, robust and refined 2020-2021 remote learning curricula. However, the school will reevaluate student and family experience as needed, including considering to provide possible prorated tuition refunds once we can have a chance to see through its implementation during the school year, if pandemic related close down occurs.

We will continue to [keep families updated throughout the summer](#). Please look to join our July info-sessions to gather details on the preparation work we are doing for the fall.

Warmly,
Amy Shen
Head of School