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## Updated August 20, 2021

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## **Preface**

- This document is intended to outline the School's health and safety policy and protocols for campus learning in the COVID-19 pandemic for the 2021-2022 school year at Shrewsbury Montessori School. According to Guidelines released by Massachusetts Early Child Education and Care (EEC) and Department of Elementary and Second Education (DESE), Shrewsbury Montessori School aims to bring all students back on campus for full day in-person instruction. The School acknowledges that the policy and protocols outlined in this document intend to help mitigate, not eliminate risk. No single action or set of actions will completely eliminate the risk of COVID-19 transmission, but implementation of several coordinated interventions can greatly reduce that risk.
- The School also acknowledges that this pandemic is unpredictable. The School intends to develop policy and protocols that are flexible and nimble in responding to new information, and will keep the community updated as changes take place in the near future. For this reason, we are posting this Policy and Protocols Handbook on SMS's website, so the School can make timing adjustments when necessary.
- This Health and Safety Policy and Protocols document is considered as a 2021-2022 addition to the Shrewsbury Montessori School's Employment Handbook and Student and Family Handbook.
- The School has drafted this policy and protocols document by following guidelines established by Early Child Education and Care (EEC), Department of Elementary and Second Education (DESE), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).
- The school recognizes that mitigating risk related to COVID requires active participation and compliance by all members of the SMS community including teachers, staff, students, parents and any other household members of students and staff.
- Compliance to School Policies and Protocols: All personnel—students, faculty, staff—shall comply with the School's Health and Safety Policy and Protocols at all times. Multiple violations of the Policy and Protocols by a student (i.e. a child repeatedly showing up at school without PPE, lunch and snacks not prepared as required) will be investigated and may result in the individual being asked to leave school for the remainder of school year/ COVID-19 pandemic without tuition refund. Multiple violations of the Policy and Protocols by a faculty/staff member will be investigated and may result in disciplinary action including the suspension for the remainder of school year/ COVID-19 pandemic without pay or termination.
- Please direct your policy related questions to [ashen@shrewsburymontessori.org](mailto:ashen@shrewsburymontessori.org).

## **A: Summer Preparation**

### **• Preparing the school**

- Deep clean: The School employs a professional company to deep clean the campus including the floor, carpets, walls, furniture, bathroom, and the playground this summer to prepare to welcome students in the fall.
- Make infrastructure preparations (include but not limited to):
  - space planning to enable required physical distancing,
  - designate a room/space to isolate personnel or a student who is on campus and is discovered to: 1) have tested COVID-19 positive and has not been cleared to return to work/school by a licensed medical provider, 2) develop or is exhibiting potential COVID-19 symptoms or 3) has come in direct contact with someone who is tested COVID-19 positive,
  - whenever feasible, making high-touch items (i.e. faucets, toilet handles) touchless,
  - tape down arrows to direct school traffic within the building,
  - tape down physical distancing cues in classroom,
  - rearrange classroom furniture to support physical distancing,
  - post signs to remind people to practice health and safety practices,
  - post signs to remind people of hand hygiene and the need to wipe down high-frequency surfaces,
  - install soap and hand sanitizing stations where needed,
  - install Plexiglas to areas of the school building that physical distancing would be difficult to maintain, such as the front desk
- Establish daily cleaning and disinfecting routines while children are in the building: See details in the “Learning in School” section.
- Establish disinfecting routines for when an incident of symptom or COVID-19 positive case was present on campus.
- Establish a deep cleaning protocol of exposed areas if the school comes in contact with a person who is tested COVID-19 positive: See more information in the COVID-19 Scenarios and Protocol section.
- Stock up on appropriate PPE for students (of different age, grade level) and staff (of different roles).

### **• Preparing faculty & staff**

- Review and implement flexible sick leave policies and practices that enable staff to stay home when they are sick, or have been exposed or caring for someone who is sick. Consult with the Head of School and the school’s Employee Handbook for details.
- Require faculty to receive flu shots before returning on campus (unless medically contraindicated for the individual). Require faculty to receive a CDC-recommended COVID-19 vaccine once it is introduced and available to teach on campus, unless they have a medical issue precluding safe administration. The School administration will distribute and ask faculty and staff to sign a consent form.
- The School will follow MA State Travel Order concerning COVID-19. When infectious rate rises to a certain point, the School, can ask for faculty to report summer and/or vacation destinations and fulfill quarantine and testing regulations accordingly.
- Provide faculty and staff training on COVID-19 related health and safety policy, protocols and practices prior to the beginning of school.

### **• Preparing students and families**

- Require families to get each child up to date with their vaccines before returning to school.
- Require each child to get a flu vaccine in the fall and winter in the 2021-2022 school year.
- When a safe COVID-19 vaccination becomes available for children under 12 years old, upon the examination and approval of the School's Medical Advisory Committee, the School will reserve its discretion to establish a vaccination policy that requires all students to get vaccinations in order to participate in on campus learning. Students with medical and religious reasons can apply for exemptions.
- The School will follow MA State Travel Order concerning COVID-19. When infectious rate rises to a certain point, the School, can ask for faculty to report summer and/or vacation destinations and fulfill quarantine and testing regulations accordingly.
- Provide families and students with training on COVID-19 related health and safety policy, protocols and practices prior to the beginning of school.

## **B: Daily Preparation Before Coming to School**

- **Recognizing COVID-19 symptoms:** This is a full list of symptoms for which caregivers should monitor their children, and staff/faculty should monitor themselves:
  - Fever (100.4° Fahrenheit or higher or subjective if unable to measure temperature), chills, or shaking chills
  - Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
  - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
  - New loss of taste or smell
  - Sore throat
  - Muscle aches or body aches
  - Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
  - Severe fatigue, not explained by other reasons
  - Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) when in combination with other symptoms
- **If staff or students have any of these symptoms, they need to stay home.** They must get a test for active COVID-19 infection prior to returning to school. See more information in the COVID-19 Scenarios and Protocol section.
- **Daily self-screening and reporting:** All personnel, students, faculty, and staff must conduct self-screening of COVID-19 Symptoms before arriving on campus every morning. An agreement form will be sent to and signed by families and faculty. The agreement states that families and faculty promise to actively conduct self-screening daily prior to coming to campus, voluntarily report symptoms and positive cases, and then stay home to fulfill quarantine and testing regulations established by MA Department of Public Health.
- All personnel are required symptoms or positive cases to the Head of School (Amy Shen, ashens@shrewsburymontessori.org, 508-842-2116 office, 802-999-3145 cell) or designee if he/she is tested positive for COVID-19, is exhibiting [COVID-19 symptoms](#), or has [been exposed to COVID-19](#). A household member is considered as a direct contact for potential exposure. School employees and families must report such symptoms or potential exposure to the school and stay home to self-quarantine if a household member is tested positive for COVID-19. The Head of School or designee shall keep any COVID-19 positive case's personal information confidential. However, the Head of School needs to update the school community on its Covid-19 case numbers throughout the school year and may need to inform potentially exposed students' families and staff/faculty members of a potential exposure. The Head of School or designee also needs to report any COVID-19 cases to the local Shrewsbury Department of Health and Human Services, Patricia Bruchmann, Bruchmannp@worcestermma.gov, 508-841-8345 office, and for after-hours 774-242-7607 cell. See more details in Section E: COVID-19 Scenarios & Protocols.
- **Pack appropriately for the school day:** All personnel, students, faculty, and staff need to bring appropriate PPE, packed lunch, and additional personal items according to the School's Health and Safety Policies.
  - **Guidelines for packing PPE:**
    - For students: Face covering (i.e. masks) that securely covers student nose and mouth. Pack back-up masks to ensure that the student will have enough throughout the day. The school expects students from Children's House to Elementary (not Toddler program students) and adults to wear masks 100% of the

time at school, except for mask breaks, meal time, and outside during which children shall be **at least 3-5 feet apart**. The school will provide back-up child size masks if students happen to run out of or misplace their face covering and back-up face coverings in a day. **For eating, students should be at least 5 feet apart. When outside, students should maintain a minimum of 3 feet distance.**

- For faculty and staff: Face covering (i.e. masks) that securely covers nose and mouth. Pack back-ups to ensure enough supply throughout the day. The school expects children of ages and adults to wear masks 100% of the time at school, except for mask breaks, meal time, **and outside**. The school will provide back-ups for just-in-case situations. **For eating, adults should be at least 5 feet apart. When outside, adults should maintain a minimum of 3 feet distance.**
- For faculty and staff: When teachers perform tasks that involve cleaning up bodily fluids, eye covering, and gloves are required in addition to face covering. The school will provide face coverings, eye covering, and gloves.
- For faculty and staff: When performing COVID-19 related health check-ups (i.e. assessing a sick person by taking his/her temperature), the medical staff such as a nurse needs to wear full PPE (Face shield, n-95 mask, gown, and gloves). The school will provide the medical staff with full PPE supplies.

- **Guidelines for packing lunch, snacks:** According to DESE guidelines, schools should avoid food preparations on school premise unless they have a licensed commercial kitchen. Families are responsible for preparing lunch and snacks for students. Please prepare ready-to-eat meals and snack that do not require any preparation in school; for example, prepare sandwiches that do not require any assemblage or fruit that does not require any cutting into pieces. **Students and faculty can lunch in reusable containers. Please make sure the containers and water bottles brought to school are cleaned daily.**
- **Guidelines for packing water bottles:** Students and faculty can bring reusable water bottles. **Please make sure the water bottles brought to school are cleaned daily.** Water bottles are not to be shared. School provides disposable cups and water pitchers. Water pitchers will be handled by adults, with masks with hand hygiene being practiced before and after touching the water pitchers.
- **Guidelines for packing personal items:** Students and faculty are allowed to pack personal items such as a change of clothes and school supplies. **Regular backpacks are allowed.** All personal items **should be avoided to be shared**. All personal items need to be stored separately in clear plastic zipped storage bags so personal items of different owners do not come in contact with each other.

## **C: Learning on Campus**

These policy and practices are not listed in any particular order in this section. No single action or set of actions will completely eliminate the risk of COVID-19 transmission, but implementation of these coordinated interventions in total can greatly help to mitigate the risk.

**Daily screening on campus:** Families and employees are required to conduct daily self-monitor and screening before coming to campus. An agreement/consent form will be sent to families and faculty and these forms will be returned with signatures for families and faculty to promise to conduct this daily screening before coming to campus. A pamphlet will be distributed to families and faculty to remind them of COVID-19 symptoms. If anyone exhibits any potential COVID-19 associated symptoms, stay home. Once having arrived on campus, school employees will conduct visual and verbal screening on students. Students who exhibit any potential COVID-19 associated symptoms will be asked to isolate in the school's medical waiting room (former HOS office), to be examined by the nurse and sent to a public health facility or home. See more details in Part E, COVID-19 Response Scenarios and Protocols.

**Face coverings:** Face coverings that securely cover the nose and mouth (i.e. quality masks) are one of the most important tools to prevent transmission of the virus.

- **Students:** Toddler students are not required to wear face coverings. Children's House to elementary students are required to wear facemasks at all times when indoors, with the exception when eating or taking a mask break. When eating or taking a mask break, students need to maintain a minimum of 5 feet when in doors. Students are not required to wear masks when outdoor. When outdoors, students need to maintain a minimum of 3 feet distance and staying with their cohorts.
- **Faculty and staff:** Faculty and staff are required to wear facemasks at all times when indoors, with the exception when eating, taking a mask break or working alone in a classroom or office. When eating, adults need to maintain a minimum of 5 feet when in doors. Faculty and staff are not required to wear masks when outdoor.
- Special accommodations to the school face covering policy for students will only be considered for learning and behavioral conditions that preclude a student from wearing face covering (families must provide documentation from a licensed behavioral health provider in Massachusetts supporting this need). Accommodations will be made to ensure 5 feet distancing at all times for such a student. Should student behavior cause undue difficulty in ensuring 5-foot distancing at all times, the School may consider alternatives to ensure safety of that student, other students, and staff.
- When teachers perform tasks that involve cleaning up bodily fluids, eye covering (i.e. a face shield) and gloves are required in addition to face covering. When performing COVID-19 related health check-ups (i.e. assessing a sick personal by taking his/her temperature), the medical staff such as a nurse needs to wear full PPE (Face shield, n-95, gown and gloves).

Important note: According to EEC and DESE Guidelines, children under grade 2 are encouraged to wear face coverings that cover their mouth and nose. Students above grade 2 are required to wear face covering to cover their mouth and nose when 6 feet of physical distancing cannot be maintained. However, CDC guidelines stipulate that any person greater than 2 years of age should wear a face covering when in public settings. SMS acknowledges the inconsistency in these guidelines from these bodies. In effort to optimally support the health and safety our SMS community as well as our communities at large, SMS has elected to follow the above face covering policy. SMS may revisit this policy as we gain experience in implementation and/or new recommendations come to light.

**Mask breaks:** It is recommended that students have at least two mask breaks per day (i.e. mealtime and recess outdoors). Spaces for mask breaks must allow students to be at least 5 feet apart when inside and at least 3 feet when outside. School will use tape, markers, and signs to identify where students should be at maintain 5 feet of separation. Handwashing facilities or hand sanitizer will be available upon entering and leaving this space. Provide napkins or paper towels for masks to be set on (inside face up) when removed.

**Face covering/mask removal:** Masks should be removed by handling the ties or back/ear areas of the masks once seated. Do not touch the outside or inside of the part covering the face. While taking a mask break or eating, masks should be placed on a napkin, paper towel, or other container on the table, with the inside of the mask facing up. Face covering/masks should be put back on before leaving the mask break area or seat after eating.

**Mask disposal:** If a reusable mask breaks and needs to be thrown out or if a single-use mask needs to be disposed of, it should be placed into the nearest trash can by the individual who wore the mask. The individual should immediately put on a new mask after washing their hands.

**Physical distancing:** The primary mode of transmission of COVID-19 is through respiratory droplets by person in close proximity. The school adheres to stipulated 3-5 feet safe distance established by DESE and EEC. The goal is for a physical distance of 5 feet whenever possible; 3 feet is the minimum distance allowed. During meals, mask breaks, and other times when masks are not worn, 5 feet is the minimum distance allowed indoors and 3 feet outdoors. A maximum number of students and teachers per room will be calculated and adhered to in order to support these distancing goals (may vary depending on size of room). Shrewsbury Montessori's Auburn campus adheres to EEC's regulations of allowing 20 students and 2 adults in one room at a time.

**Creating and staying within cohorts:** It is important for our classrooms to be self-contained as possible. Keeping children, children's items, such as clothing, shoes, and lunchboxes within the classroom helps prevent cross contamination among other groups on campus. By minimizing cross contamination, we increase the possibility of closing just one classroom versus the entire school if there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19. Student and staff groupings will be kept as static as possible by having the same group of students stay together within one group throughout the school day. SMS students of all divisions are expected to stay within their cohorts throughout the school year for the duration of the DESE and EEC Guidelines released in June. Children will remain in their group without any mixing of groups at the beginning or end of the day. Children should not intermix during transition time, such as arrival and dismissal times. For the playground and gardening class, children follow a staggered schedule, so each classroom cohort can occupy the playground or garden one group at a time. Faculty and specialists will rotate in and out of classrooms to conduct needed lessons.

**Seating chart in the classroom:** In order to enable physical distance and help the school with contact tracing, children are assigned with a weekly seating (washable mats, laminated mats, desks or tables) or area where they use as a home base to stay within during the school day.

**Movement protocol within the school:** Students and adults are expected to follow the school's movement protocols to avoid crowding, maintain cohorts, and minimize unnecessary person-to-person interactions. See below for the school's protocols for arrival and dismissal times, transitions between recess groups, bathroom breaks, one-day pathways for hallways, exits and entrances.

**Hallways, exits, and entrances:** All personnel must adhere to the movement protocol established by the

school. Follow direction signs posted in hallways and at the entrances and doorways.

**Hand hygiene:** The primary mode of transmission of COVID-19 is through respiratory droplets caused by cough, talking and sneezing by person in close proximity. COVID-19 by way of droplets can live on surfaces for an extended period of time. For this reason, students and faculty are required to wash hands with soap and water for 20 second at each transition of activities within the classroom (i.e. wash hands before and after picking up a new Montessori Work) and at each transition when moved from one space to another (i.e. wash hands before and after the playground). Signs will be posted in the school buildings to remind faculty and students to comply with frequent hand-washing routines. Hand sanitizers are best reserved for situations when soap and water are not readily available. For student health, SMS will install hand sanitizer, soap dispensers, and water sources at strategic places in the school building, including all entries and exits, in bathrooms, in classrooms, and next to mask break areas. The School promotes hand washing with soap and water when possible. Hand sanitizer can be used when soap and water is not readily available. Visit this [link](#) for more information on CDC Guidelines on hand hygiene. Hand washing or hand sanitizer is required upon entering the school building.

**PPE usage:** In addition to face covering, when teachers perform tasks that involve cleaning up bodily fluids, eye covering (i.e. a face shield) and gloves are required in addition to face covering. When performing COVID-19 related health check-ups (i.e. assessing a sick personal by taking his/her temperature), the medical staff such as a nurse needs to wear full PPE (Face shield, n-95 mask, gown, and gloves).

**High touch area cleaning:** The primary mode of transmission of COVID-19 is through respiratory droplets by person released when people talk, cough, or sneeze. It is thought that the virus may spread to hands from a contaminated surface and through the nose or mouth, and cause infection. In addition, according to the latest research, this virus can live on surfaces for an extended period of time. For this reason, we need to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (i.e. playground equipment, door handles, drink fountains, etc.) within the school and on school buses at least daily or between use as much as possible. Use of shared objectives (i.e. gym or physical education equipment, art supplies, materials, games) should be limited when possible, or cleaned in between use. We also follow CDC's [six steps to cleaning a surface](#). Afterwards, we securely store away cleaning supplies for the safety our children. Surfaces and objects in public places, such a tabletop, toilet seats, countertops, keyboard, handles, desks, phones, Montessori materials, etc. will be cleaned after each use.

**Use safe disinfectant solutions:** The School uses an EPA approved disinfectant that is effective against COVID-19 on [EPA List N](#). When possible, only products selected as [safe for humans and the environment](#) containing active ingredients such as hydrogen peroxide, ethanol, citric acid, should be selected from this list, because they are less toxic, are not strong respiratory irritants or asthma triggers, and have no known carcinogenic reproductive, or developmental effects. The school will not use products known to contain methanol. When EPA-approved disinfectants are not available, alternative disinfectants such as diluted bleach (1/3 per gallon of water at room temperature) or 70% alcohol solutions can be used. Children should not be present when disinfectants are in use and should not participate in disinfecting activities. Most of these products are not safe or used by children, whose "hand-in-mouth" behaviors and frequent touching of their faces and eyes put them at higher risk for toxic exposures. If disinfection is needed while children are in the classroom, adequate ventilation will be in place and nonirritant products should be used. Disinfectants such as bleach and those containing quaternary ammonium compounds or "Quats" will not be used when children and adolescents are present, because there are known respiratory irritants. Staff will wear disposable gloves to clean surfaces using soap and water, and then use disinfectant. Cleaning with soap and water reduces number of germs, dirt and impurities on the surfaces. Disinfecting kills germs on surfaces. We will practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces. More frequent

cleaning and disinfection maybe required based on level of use. UVC disinfecting product is not recommended for children.

**Montessori classroom cleaning routine and procedure during instructional time:** Students are required to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before picking up and working with any new Montessori materials. Adults will wipe down Montessori materials with [children-safe solutions](#) after each use to prepare the material for the next child. For smaller Montessori materials that are difficult to clean (i.e. the alphabet and beads), the School is purchasing these materials for each child to have their own set. Disinfection of materials will take place each evening after children leave the school building.

**Work mats:** Each child should use their own work mat each week. Work mats must be stored separately (but not in sealed containers) and washed once per week.

**Soft and cloth-based materials:** Soft and cloth-based materials, such as rugs, pillow, stuffed animals, and dress-up clothing need to be removed from classrooms. Children can bring their own change of clothes and personal items, but they cannot shared.

**Storage for student personal items at school:** Student personal items including food, change of clothes, and school supplies cannot leave the students' classroom. Within the classroom, students will be provided with a space such as a plastic container to put their items, so student items can be kept separate from each other.

**Handling shoes in a Montessori classroom:** As Montessori practice, students are asked to bring indoor shoes to school. This practice shall remain the same. Student shoes will be stored in a way that they do not contact one another. Adults and students need to practice hand hygiene before and after touching shoes.

**Bathroom usage:** One child enters the bathroom at a time with a staff member if needed. Wash hands before and after using the bathroom. The School establishes and follows a bathroom cleaning schedule. Each bathroom will be wipe-down every 2-3 hours each day. When waiting for bathrooms, children must wait in line standing 6 feet away from one another. Signs and steps will taped in and outside of bathroom as reminders. Water faucets and toilet handles in school are all made to be touchless. The school does not use hand driers, which increase the flow of air particles in bathrooms. The school uses disposable towels. When feasible, windows in bathrooms that do not pose a safety or privacy risks will be opened.

**Recess & playground:** The School's playground will be used via a staggered schedule to allow one class cohort to occupy the playground at once. **When outside, children and adults are not required to wear masks, but need to maintain a minimum of 3 feet distance.** Students need to wash hands before entering and after exiting the playground. **For playground equipment, when possible and appropriate,** staff will wipe down high-touch surfaces made of plastic or metal between cohort uses by using [EPA approved cleaning products](#) that are safe for children. The School will use our Clorox 360 system to disinfect after children leave school grounds.

**Naps:** Place napping mats/floor beds 5 feet apart for nap time. Nap mat/floor bed should be wiped down and disinfected after each use. Parent need to supply blankets. Each child's blanket will be sent home to be washed once a week. During the week, blankets will be stored in a space or container to ensure that the blankets do not come in contact with each other.

**Physical contact:** Faculty and staff will limit touching children by using creative communication (air fives, waving, air kisses) to encourage social distancing. However, they fully understand that it might not be

possible to keep children 5 feet apart in a classroom 100% of the time, but with sufficient staffing, the school is committed to utmost to keep our children 5 feet apart. As COVID-19 infectious rate has decreased in the 2021-2022 school year, the School now allows physical contact such as light fist bumps amongst students, as we understand mutual encouragement and comradery is important for students' social-emotional development. However, extensive physical contact such as hug are continued to be discouraged.

**Ventilation:** When weather permits, windows and doors should be kept opened to maximize air circulation. Air filtration systems are installed in spaces where there is a need to increase air circulation. The school has placed HEPA filters in each classroom and common space. Doors and windows should be kept open whenever possible. When Air Conditioning is used, doors and windows need to be kept open.

**Arrival and dismissal:** Staggered pick-ups and drop-offs will be instituted at school to help disperse crowds to maximize physical distancing. Face covering is required during the pick-up and drop-off time for all. The School will arrange schedules and inform families before the start of school. Sibling situations in which families need to pick up multiple children will be taken into consideration to ensure that families make minimum stops at school each day. To ensure health and safety, we are asking parents to help a child in and out of a car seat and car if the child is too small to do so by him or herself. If assistance is needed for a child to get up the front door stairway, school faculty and staff shall wear gloves, and guide each child via a light touch on the shoulder. Hand sanitizer will be used in between each child if physical contact has occurred.

**Meals and snacks:** According to DESE guidelines, schools should avoid food preparations on school premise unless they have a licensed commercial kitchen. Parents provide lunch and snacks for their child. Please prepare ready-to-eat meals and snack that do not require any preparation in school; for example, prepare sandwiches that do not require any assemblage or fruit that does not requires any cutting into pieces. Families can bring lunches and snacks in reusable containers, utensils, and lunch bags. Please ensure that containers and utensils brought to school are cleaned and washed. The school will provide disposable cups for water.

**Water consumption:** Students can bring drinking water to school via reusable water bottles. All water bottles should be clearly labeled to avoid shared use. Water bottles cannot be shared amongst students. The school provides disposable cups for water consumption. Plastic water pitchers can be used on school grounds. Only adults can handle water pitchers wearing masks and practice wash hand hygiene before and after handling water pitchers.

**Food consumption:** Meals and snacks should be taken within the same student cohort inside of their classroom or on the playground. Students need to be seated a minimum of 5 feet apart when eating indoors, and a minimum of 3 feet outdoors. Hand hygiene should be practiced before and after meals and snacks. Face coverings will be removed for the shortest amount of time possible accounting for children being encouraged to eat/drink at a pace comfortable and natural for them. Remind students to practice proper face covering/mask removal procedures. Face covering/masks should be put back on before leaving seat after eating.

**Faculty and staff breaks and meals:** Faculty and staff are encouraged to take breaks as scheduled, but mingling to other classroom and programs is not encouraged. For the kitchen, faculty and staff are now permitted to use everything the kitchen can offer: the fridge, microwave, dishwasher, etc. However, please cooking or baking is not permitted. Please wipe down high touch areas such as the fridge handle and microwave oven before and after use. When eating indoors, please stay a minimum of 5 feet apart and 3

feet when eating outdoors.

**Faculty & staff meetings:** Faculty and staff are all vaccinated. They can gather indoors for meetings, but with masks on, continue to maintain as much physical distancing as possible.

**Treating school animals with kindness:** As a part of the Montessori curriculum, each classroom, ideally, need to host a live animal, like a fish, hamster or gerbil, etc. Disinfection spray is not healthy to our animals. Faculty need to notify the school administration the placement of school animals. School administration shall provide the cleaning company with instructions to practice care and caution when cleaning and disinfecting school facilities during after school hours.

**Handling school animals:** Taking care of school animals, such as feeding and cleaning the tank/cage is a part of the Montessori curriculum to teach students compassion, responsibility, and science. Faculty shall establish a schedule to allow student to continue their regular chores, but can practice social distancing while completing their chores. Students and faculty/staff should perform hand hygiene before and after touching animals or their tanks/cages.

**Nursing protocols/asthma treatment:** The School nurse and health professionals need to continue their normal duties besides attending to COVID-19 related routines and tasks. When examining COVID-19 related patients, the nurse needs to isolate the individual showing symptoms and wear full PPE to perform the examination process. For asthma treatment, the nurse needs to wear full PPE to treat the patient. When performing other duties, such as administering medications, the nurse needs to wear mouth covering and gloves when interacting with the students. The School needs to build a sub list for nurse and health care staff, for just-in-case purposes.

**Field Trips:** Field trips will be pursued virtually only, at least for the 2021-2022 fall semester. We hope to bring back field trips as COVID-19 infectious rate lowers in the spring semester.

**Food, as a Treat:** It is important for school morale for students and faculty to get a treat once in a while. However, due to COVID-19, we will continue to stay careful. The general rule of thumb is that you bring your own food, and eat your own food, and take away your leftovers. But for occasions like birthday treats and Halloween, individually pre-packaged food can be brought to school and served to students while the packages are sealed. Please alert the admin when families are thinking about bringing in a birthday treat/snack. We are bringing back Pizza Friday. However, each pizza must be individually ordered for and served to each classroom in separate pizza boxes. Teachers can serve pizza to students while wearing masks and gloves, by using disposal plates.

**Visitor and volunteers:**

- Nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations will be limited as much as possible. Exception can be made for contracted service provided for the purpose of special education, required support service, or program monitoring as authorized by the school. Meetings with external school personnel, including parents, will be conducted virtually whenever possible. A single entry and exit point will be designated for all visitors to be visually screened and logged in. For visitors who need to enter, they should first gain approval, be briefed on the school's COVID-19 policies, and verify they do not have symptoms. Ensure that visitors wear masks covering their nose and mouth at all times and are aware of any other health and safety protocols for the schools.
- Admissions tours and interviews can be conducted in-person, but visitors must present that they are vaccinated, wear masks, and can observe/stay in each classroom/office for no less than 15

minutes.

- Parent volunteers are now permitted to come to school for events. All parent volunteers need to present that they are vaccinated, wear masks in doors at all times.
- All visitors must notify the school administration ahead of time and fill out the virtual visitor log upon entering the school building.

**Gatherings:** Faculty & staff can gather indoors for school meetings wearing masks. For families, any gathering for school events indoors are not permitted at this time. Outdoors, the School can invite families and students to participate in small gatherings by maintaining cohorting rules while limiting participants to a small number, ideally under 20 at a time. The school will continue to follow MA DPH and CDC guidelines, and update its regulations on gatherings as needed. We thoroughly understand the importance of building and maintaining a positive school community spirit, and being able to invite family participation in school events is essential. We very much look forward to resuming normal practice as soon as we are able to do so safely. In the meanwhile, we will explore virtual possibilities to maintain the close-knit school community and stay connected.

**Track visitor log:** A log of all visitors will be kept and maintained for 30 days, with the date, contact phone number, arrive/departure times and areas visited within the building for each visit.

**Mental health and emotional support:** The School faculty, staff, and families are going to work together to shape messages to students about the response to the pandemic. SMS will approach school health and safety practices with positive messaging but will reinforce the importance of each student doing their part to help. The Schools plans to add forming healthy habits into the School's Montessori practical life curriculum. The School will also incorporate academic accommodations and support for all students who may be having difficulty concentrating or learning new information because of stress associated with the pandemic. Fear-based messaging will be avoided.

## **D: Specialist Classes**

**Music:** No chorus, singing, musical theater, and using brass or woodwind instruments are permitted indoors. When outdoors, with masks encouraged if possible, these activities can occur with at least 10 feet of distance between individuals. When singing outdoors, students should face in one direction, avoid singing in a circle or semicircle formation. Music learning will focus on other aspects of music instruction, such as history of music, music theory, or vocal anatomy. Or these courses shall be conducted virtually.

**Musical instruments:** As noted earlier, instruction for musical instruments that require air blowing (e.g., recorder, flute, oboe, clarinet, trumpet, saxophone, and trombone) can only occur outdoors when individuals are at least 10 feet apart. These instruments should never be shared. Instruction for musical instruments that do not involve air blowing (e.g., strings, percussion, and piano) may continue indoors or outdoors as long as health and safety requirements are met. If needed, these instruments can be shared between students in accordance with the guidelines on shared equipment. Students should be encouraged to clean their instruments regularly, especially the mouthpiece and high-touch surfaces, such as finger pads. For cleaning guidelines specific to each instrument, consult details here: [COVID-19 Instrument Cleaning Guidelines](#).

**Library:** The librarian will continue to conduct read out loud sessions and make the school's library catalogue and books available to students. The school library inventory will be moved to an off-campus location for 2021-2022. The librarian can have access to all the books and bring requested books to students on a schedule. The location of the library will be different, but our librarian and the school's objective remains the same: get our students fired up about reading and to love to read for learning and for life. The librarian shall establish a schedule following which returned books shall be kept in a safe space (i.e. an uncovered plastic bin) for at least three days before they can be returned to the library's shelves or lend to another student.

**Physical Education:** The School will contract YWCA to bring weekly PE classes on campus in the fall. As COVID-19 infectious rate lowers, we will consider resume the off site Gym and Swim program. When PE classes are conducted outdoors, students and faculty are not required to wear masks. Students should wash or sanitize hands before and after physical education. Particular attention should be paid to washing and sanitizing hands before and after masks are removed and put on, if applicable. No sharing of water bottles, towels, mouth guards, helmets or other equipment that comes into contact with the nose or mouth is allowed. As part of the school cleaning/disinfecting protocols, we will frequently clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces (e.g., any equipment used) between uses and at least daily.

**Art:** Art activities may involve the sharing of specialized equipment among students, such as paint brushes, paints, and cameras. Art activities must follow the guidance on equipment sharing. Additional suggestions for Art activities include:

- Adapt curricula when feasible to avoid expensive equipment (such as printers) that students need to share.
- Prioritize activities that require minimal supplies, such as sculpting clay, or create individual art kits with assigned supplies (e.g., colored pencils, markers) to use for the semester.
- Emphasize any elements that could involve outdoor time such as drawing outdoors.
- Change the focus of activities to avoid shared equipment use.

**Gardening:** Students or faculty are not required to wear masks when gardening is done outdoor. During to class, try to maintain a 3 feet distance from one another. See guidelines for using and cleaning shared equipment.

**STEAM:** The School will follow the guidelines for using and cleaning shared equipment. STEAM, like visual art, tends to be material heavy. Consult guidance on visual art to use for STEAM classes.

**Learning Specialist:** Students schedule 1:1 appointments to visit the school's Learning Specialist, who will maintain 3 feet physical distance and wear masks **when indoors.**

**World Language:** Teacher and students need to adhere to the school's physical distancing rules at all times. Songs and body movement are effective tools for teaching world language for a SMS aged students. Unfortunately, for the **2021-2022** school, year before the existence of COVID-19 vaccine, the world language curriculum needs to refrain from singing. When using gestures and movement, make sure students can stand/sit far away from each other to maintain physical distancing. **Now shared equipment, such as dictionaries are permitted.**

#### **Using shared equipment:**

- Lesson plans that minimize the use of shared equipment will be prioritized.
- If feasible, we will procure additional pieces of equipment in order to limit sharing.
- Faculty will assign specific students to specific pieces of equipment or workstations.
- Shared equipment should be wiped down with approved disinfection methods before and after each use (so there are ideally two wipe-downs between each student's use). Students or faculty could wipe down/clean equipment as appropriate.
  - An [EPA approved disinfectant](#) will be made available in each room for this purpose. Sufficient inventory of disinfectant supplies will be maintained at all times.
  - Teachers play an important role in proper equipment hygiene. In the classes in which students wipe down/clean their own equipment, teachers will demonstrate how to properly wipe down/clean equipment, reinforce the importance of this practice, and supervise cleaning to ensure it is done correctly.
  - Signage will be posted in all areas with shared equipment reminding students to wipe it down/clean it before and after use.
- Additionally, shared equipment should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily as part of building cleaning schedules. Frequently touched surfaces (e.g., handles, buttons) will be cleaned multiple times a day.
- Students will wash or sanitize hands before and after using equipment;<sup>2</sup> frequent hand washing is likely the best way to protect against transmission from surfaces.

## **E: COVID-19 Response Scenarios and Protocols**

The school is adopting the COVID-19 response scenarios and protocols released by DESE on August 18, 2021 and CDC. These scenarios and protocols aim to provide how-to guidance to situations such as what a person and school should do if a person within the school community is tested positive, exhibits potential COVID-19 symptoms at home or in school, or have come in close contact with investigated potential COVID-19 cases or someone who has tested positive.

### **Section 1: Key definitions**

This section outlines the list of COVID-19 symptoms, provides the definition of a close contact, and outlines situations where close contacts are exempt from COVID-19 testing and quarantine response protocols including isolation, quarantine, and Test and Stay.

#### **COVID-19 symptoms**

Below is the full list of symptoms for which caregivers should monitor their children, and staff should monitor themselves.<sup>1 2</sup>

Unvaccinated individuals and any close contacts presenting these symptoms should follow testing and quarantine response protocols as outlined in Section 2 of this document.

Vaccinated individuals who are not close contacts should follow the testing and quarantine response protocols if they are experiencing symptoms in bold. These individuals may also seek clinical guidance to assess the need for PCR testing if they have other symptoms on this list.

#### **COVID-19 symptoms list:**

- **Fever (100.0° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills**
- **Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath**
- **New loss of taste or smell**
- **Muscle aches or body aches**
- Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- Sore throat, *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Headache *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Fatigue, *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) *when in combination with other symptom*

<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts DPH, [Testing of Persons with Suspect COVID-19](#). (2020, May 13).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

## Definition of a close contact

Close contacts are defined as individuals who have been within 6 feet of a COVID-19 positive individual while indoors, for at least 15 minutes during a 24-hour period.<sup>3 4</sup> Please note that the at-risk exposure time begins 48 hours prior to symptom onset (or time of positive test if asymptomatic) and continues until the time the COVID-19 positive individual is isolated.

In general, close contacts should follow the testing and quarantine response protocols in Section 2 of this document. **However, certain close contacts are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols as noted below.**

## Close contacts who are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols

**The following close contacts are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols:**

- **Asymptomatic, fully vaccinated close contacts:** For SMS, they are not exempt from testing. Vaccinated individuals who are close contacts, regardless of showing symptoms will need to get tested within 3-5 days upon exposure.
- **Classroom close contacts:** An individual who is exposed to a COVID-19 positive individual in the classroom while both individuals were masked, so long as the individuals were spaced at least 3 feet apart, is exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.
- **Bus close contacts:** Individuals on buses must be masked according to federal requirements. As such, individuals who are masked on buses when windows are open are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.
- **Close contacts who have had COVID-19 within the past 90 days:** An individual who has been previously diagnosed with COVID-19 and then becomes a close contact of someone with COVID-19 is exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols if:
  - The exposure occurred within 90 days of the onset of their own illness AND
  - The exposed individual is recovered and remains without COVID-19 symptoms.

<sup>3</sup> Note: To be a close contact, the 15 minutes must occur within a 24-hour period. Multiple brief or transitory interactions (less than a minute) throughout the day are unlikely to result in 15 minutes of cumulative contact and do not meet the definition of close contact.

<sup>4</sup> CDC definition of Close Contact. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html>.

## Section 2: Recommended testing and quarantine response protocols

This section outlines testing and quarantine response protocols for individuals – students and staff – who test positive for COVID-19, close contacts who are not exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols, and symptomatic individuals. Each scenario outlines the duration of any recommended quarantine or isolation, the conditions to be met in order for the individual to return to school, and any additional considerations.

### Overview of Protocol Categories:

- Protocol A: For individuals who test positive for COVID-19
- Protocol B: Protocol for asymptomatic close contacts
- Protocol C: Protocol for symptomatic individuals

### Protocol A: For individuals who test positive for COVID-19

#### Protocol A for individuals who test positive

- **Duration:** Self-isolation for COVID-19 positive cases is a minimum of 10 days after symptom onset or after positive PCR or antigen test, if asymptomatic.
- **Return to school:** After 10 days<sup>5</sup> and once they have:
  - Been without fever for 24 hours (and without taking fever-reducing medications);
  - and
  - Experienced improvement in other symptoms; and
  - Individuals who do not meet these criteria after 10 days may receive clearance

from either public health authority contact tracers (the local board of health or Community Tracing Collaborative) or school health professional before returning to school.

• **Note:** Return to school should be based on time and symptom resolution. Repeat testing prior to return is not recommended.

<sup>5</sup> If an individual tests positive as part of a group pooled test, the 10-day period begins the day the group pooled test returned a positive result.

## Protocol B: Protocol for asymptomatic close contacts

For SMS, regardless of vaccinated or unvaccinated individuals, regardless of showing symptoms, need to follow testing and quarantine rules.

- For vaccinated asymptomatic close contacts, they need to get tested within 3-5 day upon exposure.
- Unvaccinated individuals follow the traditional quarantine (B-2) protocol.

<sup>6</sup> Guidance for People who are Fully Vaccinated Against COVID-19. Massachusetts DPH; August 2, 2021. Available at:

<https://www.mass.gov/guidance/guidance-for-people-who-are-fully-vaccinated-against-covid-19>

<sup>7</sup> Bernadette C Young, David W Eyre, Saroj Kendrick, Chris White, Sylvester Smith, et. al. "A cluster randomized trial of the impact of a policy of daily testing for contacts of COVID-19 cases on attendance and COVID-19 transmission in English secondary schools and colleges." (July 2021). medRxiv. Available at: <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.07.23.21260992v1>

### Protocol B-2: Traditional protocol (if school does not have access to rapid daily testing or family or adult individual chooses not to participate in Test and Stay)

- **Duration:** Quarantine is at least 7 days from the date of exposure
- **Return to School:** After 7 days, returning on day 8, provided that they:
  - Remain asymptomatic
  - Receive a COVID test (PCR or rapid antigen) on day 5 or later and receive a negative result
  - Conduct active monitoring for symptoms through day 14, and self-isolate if symptoms develop.
- **Note:** If an individual has symptoms at the time they are designated as a close contact or within the 14 days following initial exposure, they follow the protocol for symptomatic individuals (Protocol C). If an individual tests positive at any time, they follow the protocol for individuals who test positive for COVID-19 (Protocol A).

### Protocol B-3: Alternate protocol for those who choose not to receive a COVID test

- **Duration:** Quarantine is at least 10 days from the date of exposure<sup>8</sup>
- **Return to School:** After 10 days, returning on day 11, provided that they:

<sup>8</sup> CDC Science Brief: Options to Reduce Quarantine for Contacts of Persons with SARS-CoV-2 Infection Using Symptom Monitoring and Diagnostic Testing. Dec 2, 2020. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/scientific-brief-options-to-reduce-quarantine.html>.

- Have not experienced symptoms up to this point
- Conduct active monitoring for symptoms through day 14 and self-isolate if symptoms develop.
- **Note:** If an individual has symptoms at the time they are designated as a close contact or

within the 14 days following initial exposure, they follow the protocol for symptomatic individuals (Protocol C). If an individual tests positive at any time, they follow the protocol for individuals who test positive for COVID-19 (Protocol A).

### Protocol C: Protocol for symptomatic individuals

Protocol C applies to **vaccinated and non-vaccinated individuals** who experience the COVID-19 symptoms listed in Section 1 applicable to their status.

#### Protocol C for symptomatic individuals:

##### Protocol C-1 (Recommended): Return to school post-symptoms with test

- **Duration:** Dependent on symptom resolution
- **Return to School:** Individuals may return to school after they:
  - Have received a negative PCR test result for COVID-19. Note: So long as the individual is not a close contact, if a medical professional makes an alternative diagnosis for the COVID-19-like symptoms, the individual may use this recommendation (e.g., for influenza or strep pharyngitis) in lieu of a PCR test.

- Have improvement in symptoms
- Have been without fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.

• **Note:** If the symptomatic individual was a close contact who is not exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols, after symptoms resolve and they receive a negative PCR test, they should follow Protocol B-1 for Test and Stay.

- If Test and Stay is not available or the family or adult individual opts not to participate, they follow Protocol B-2 or B-3.

##### Protocol C-2: Alternative protocol for symptomatic individuals who are not close contacts and choose not to receive a COVID test to return to school

- **Duration:** Isolation is at least 10 days from symptom onset<sup>9</sup>
- **Return to School:** After 10 days, returning on day 11, assuming they:
  - Have improvement in symptoms
  - Have been without fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.

<sup>9</sup> CDC Interim Guidance on Ending Isolation and Precautions for Adults with COVID-19. Mar 16, 2021. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/duration-isolation.html>.

## Section 4: Frequently Asked Questions

### Who should receive a diagnostic test?

- If staff or students are a close contact of someone who tested positive for COVID-19, they should be tested and should follow the protocols outlined in Protocol B, unless they are exempted, as outlined above.
- If staff or students have COVID-19 symptoms, they should be tested and follow the protocols outlined in Protocol C.

### Where can individuals receive an individual PCR test?

- Every school should have a list of available test sites. A [list of test sites is available here](#), and Massachusetts also has an [interactive testing map](#). Staff and students who have symptoms should also contact their primary care provider for further instructions.

### How should schools address individuals with mild symptoms?

- If an individual has mild symptoms, the individual may be considered for testing using BinaxNOW, if available.
  - If the result is positive, they should be sent home and follow Protocol A.
  - If the result is negative, they should remain in school.
  - If the minimal symptom(s) persist, the individual may be re-tested within the subsequent 3 days. If symptoms worsen, the individual should seek medical care and be evaluated for the need for PCR testing.

### How does contact tracing occur?

- When a person has a positive COVID-19 test, the local board of health or the Massachusetts Community Tracing Collaborative will reach out to provide support so the individual can remain safely in medical isolation. They will also ask for help to identify close contacts.
- These organizations will then reach out to the individual's close contacts to provide information to help stop the spread of the virus, including how to safely quarantine.
- To further assist with contact tracing, the student/family and staff are asked to reach out to their personal contacts and notify the school. The school should also support contact tracing efforts within the school to the extent feasible.

### What additional steps should schools take if someone presents symptoms of COVID-19?

- If someone is symptomatic at school or on the bus, they should be masked immediately and evaluated by the school health professional for symptoms.

- If individual has COVID-19 symptoms as outlined in Section 1, they should be masked, and when feasible, be in a separate room with the door closed until they can be picked up. For full guidance for school health offices, please see [Additional Information for School Health Offices](#).

### **What additional steps should schools take if someone tests positive for COVID-19?**

- Determine if the individual was at school in the two days prior to symptom onset (or testing positive if asymptomatic) and until isolation.
- If so, clean and disinfect the spaces an individual spent time in, if they have not already been cleaned.
- Note that for districts participating in the statewide testing program designated school staff and parents/care givers will receive results of each individual COVID test a student takes through the testing software platform.
- Communicate with families and staff of close contacts, including informing them that:
  - There was a positive test (**do not name the specific individual**)
    - Explain that the student/staff is a “close contact” and therefore should follow the protocols for close contacts outlined in Protocol B.
    - Remind individuals of the list of COVID-19 symptoms to monitor for (see Section 1).
    - Ask them to communicate external test results to the school.
- If the school finds out about the COVID-19 positive test in the middle of the school day:
  - Make sure students who are close contacts are wearing masks.
  - If close contacts are symptomatic, they should be masked, and when feasible, be in a separate room with the door closed until they can be picked up. For full guidance for school health offices, please see [Additional Information for School Health Offices](#)

### **What should districts and schools do if they have a high volume of cases?**

Districts and schools can contact the DESE Rapid Response Help Center at 781-338-3500 for guidance if they are experiencing a high volume of cases. Notification should also be provided to local boards of health and district leadership.

## **Sources**

**CDC Readiness and Planning to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 in K-12 Schools:**

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1COKjS1pdN\\_7MAFwx30KGhKgx9oQ4h4ES/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1COKjS1pdN_7MAFwx30KGhKgx9oQ4h4ES/view)

**American Academy of Pediatrics, COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-Entry:**

<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

**Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, Massachusetts Child and Youth Serving Programs Reopen Approach, Minimum Requirements for Health and Safety, June 1, 2020, Updated June 12, 2020**

[https://eelead.force.com/resource/1591036172000/Min\\_Req](https://eelead.force.com/resource/1591036172000/Min_Req)

**Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance, June 25, 2020:** <https://www.mass.gov/doc/dese-fall-reopening-guidance/download>

**National Association of Independent Schools, Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for Schools:**

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**Fisher Phillips: Comprehensive COVID-19 Strategy Plan for Independent and Private Schools**

<https://www.fisherphillips.com/resources-alerts-comprehensive-covid-19-strategy-plan-for-independent>

**United States Environmental Protection Agency, Products that Meet EPA Disinfect Criteria:**

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>

**EPA Six Steps to Cleaning a Surface:** <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-04/documents/disinfectants-onepager.pdf>

**DESE Initial Fall School Opening Guidance, June 25, 2020:** <http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/return-to-school/>

**[DESE Guidance related to reopening schools, June 2020—up to date](#)**