



2021-2022 Re-Opening Plan

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted our community and our world in unprecedented ways. This is a moment when our interdependence is our biggest strength. We have developed a school plan that is based upon the commitment of all of us -- every child, teacher, parent and administrator -- to keep one another safe. Throughout our campus, you will see changes and adaptations that enhance health and safety, complemented by creative approaches to learning and connection.

Together, we are raising citizens of the world. This experience, though it is not one we would have chosen for them, is a unique opportunity for our children. It is a chance for our students to learn resiliency, discipline, caring and creativity. As adults, every child will look back and remember this time in their lives.

Our goal is to have a school year when, even though many things have changed, much more is familiar. A year where Montessori materials and friends are enjoyed, and where extra time spent outdoors and in small groups creates feelings of security and connection. A year when we didn't just survive -- we thrived.

As data and official guidance on COVID-19 continue to evolve, we are monitoring the latest information and adjusting our plans accordingly. Please understand that these plans may change as circumstances warrant and as CDC guidelines are updated.

Montessori School of Syracuse
Covid-19 Reopening Plan Fall 2021

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OVERVIEW

With the guidance of our state government, the Montessori School of Syracuse has updated our Covid Re-opening plan, originally developed during the summer of 2020. Having students attend school in person entails some increased risk of contracting the Covid-19 virus for all concerned, because attending school involves daily contact between our students and staff, who will then be in contact with others in their homes. Our decision to continue to provide in-person learning is based on the fact that this risk is balanced against the educational, social and emotional well-being of our students. Our school has implemented health and safety protocols to responsibly mitigate that risk to the extent possible and as mandated by the New York State Education Department, the Department of Health and the CDC.

As a Montessori school, our classroom environments are designed to meet the developmental needs of each child as they learn and grow through interactions with the classroom environment, their teachers, and classmates. In person learning allows us to fulfill our mission, which is to empower students to achieve their full potential as self-directed life-long learners and global citizens through education rooted in the philosophy and method of Maria Montessori.

This document explains the policies and procedures we are employing to mitigate Covid-19 related risks at school and is built around the New York State Department of Health, CDC, New York State Education Department and Onondaga County Health Department guidelines, released during August and September 2021, as well as child-development and Montessori pedagogical considerations. MSS operating procedures meet or exceed the minimum Covid protocols and will be updated as new information or additional guidelines are made available.

These involve health monitoring and screening procedures, as well as school procedures designed to reduce the number of contacts between students during the school day. These procedures require all students and staff to wear masks in the classroom (unless otherwise prescribed by the guidelines herein) and to observe social distancing guidelines when possible. We believe these protocols are crucial to a safe and responsible response to the continued presence of the Covid-19 virus.

The information in this document will provide clarity around the practices and procedures we have established to minimize exposure to our community but in no way guarantees that Covid-19 or other communicable disease infection will not occur through participation in our programs. Please note that when and if the State of New York or Onondaga County modifies these guidelines, we will act accordingly.

In creating this plan MSS consulted with several stakeholders and content experts including parents, teachers, engineers, air quality experts, public health professionals, nurses, physicians and pediatricians. We appreciate their counsel and support.

LOCATIONS AND STAFFING

All students will be located at our main campus at 155 Waldorf Parkway, Syracuse, NY, 13224.

Primary (age 3-6)

The Primary cottages will continue to be multi-age groups. The teachers of each of the Primary classrooms are listed below:

Birch Cottage – Stephanie Dorion, Zoë Mullan-Stout & Lexi Van Wormer

Pine Cottage – Rachel DePaulis, Wenfang Zhao & Lina Liang

Maple Cottage – Julie Martin, Lisa Milazzo & Alissa Ryan

Elementary (Age 6-12)

Elementary classrooms are split into two levels. Cedar is the Lower Elementary classroom (6-9) and Willow is the Upper Elementary classroom (9-12). The teachers of each of the Elementary classrooms are listed below:

Cedar Classroom – Jane Phillips, Laura Dillon

Willow Classroom – Carrie Drake, Josh Jessen, Lisa Lucas

Elementary Early Arrival and After Hours programs will be set up to appropriately socially distance students.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Our existing arrival and departure procedures are listed below. All parents will be required to fill out a Health Assessment Attestation Form, prior to their child starting school at MSS.

Student Arrival (Primary)

- Arrival for all Primary cottages will be from 8:15 AM - 8:30 AM.
- Parents and students must wear a face mask during arrival and stay in their cars until greeted by a teacher.
- Stop at the designated arrival area for your cottage.
- Staff will walk to your car to greet your child. Your child should remain seated with his/her seatbelt on.
- Your child will be invited to unbuckle the seat belt or be assisted as needed.
- As soon as your car door closes and your child is away from the car, you may safely pull away from the designated drop off area to make room for another family as parking spaces are limited.

Student Arrival (Elementary)

- Arrival for all Elementary students will be from 8:00 AM - 8:15 AM. Students will arrive at the front circle.
- Parents and students must wear a face mask during arrival and stay in their cars.
- A staff member will walk to your car to greet your child. Please have your child remain seated with his/her seatbelt on.
- Your child will be invited to unbuckle the seat belt or be assisted as needed.
- As soon as your car door closes and your child is away from the car, you may safely pull away from the designated drop off area.

Late arrival

- Any student who arrives after the arrival window noted above will need to come to the front circle/main entrance and call the main office. A staff member will come to your car and follow the arrival procedures noted above. There may be a delay in getting a staff person to your car and parents and students must wait in the car until a staff person comes to assist you.

Student Dismissal (Primary)

- Half day dismissal for all primary cottages will be from 11:45 AM - 12:00 PM
- Full day dismissal for all primary cottages will be from 2:45 PM - 3:00 PM
- Teachers, parents and students must wear a face mask during dismissal.
- Please pull up and park at the designated location for your cottage.
- Wait in your car and your child will be walked to you and helped inside the car.
- Once your child is in the car, you may exit your car (with your mask on) to buckle your child in their car seat or booster seat.

Student Dismissal (Elementary)

- Dismissal for all elementary classrooms will be from 3:00 - 3:15 PM
- Teachers, parents and students must wear a face mask during dismissal.
- Please pull up and park in the front circle.
- Wait in your car and your child will be walked over to you.
- Once your child is in the car, you may exit your car (with your mask on) to finalize buckling your child in their car seat or booster, if applicable.

Early Dismissal – Early dismissal must be scheduled in advance with the teacher and the main office. Please follow this procedure:

- Notify your teacher and the front desk via email that you will need to pick up your child early and note the exact time of pick up. Doing this as early in the day as possible is helpful.
- Office Staff will remind the classroom teachers to prepare the child for early dismissal at the pre-arranged time.
- At the pre-arranged early dismissal time, please pull up to your designated arrival/dismissal location to wait for your child to be brought to your car.

CHILDREN'S MEALS

MSS will not serve any family-style snacks or meals. Each child will bring their own lunch and snack from home and food will not be shared between students. Staff will ensure children wash hands prior to and after eating. Students will maintain an appropriate social distance from one another while eating and masks will not be required during this time. Because there are students enrolled at MSS with lethal peanut allergies, parents are asked to refrain from sending their child to school with any foods containing peanuts or peanut butter. This includes morning snack, lunch and After Hours snack. Our teachers keep records regarding individual student allergies, and use preventative practices including hand washing before and after eating, children not sharing food, and washing tables after eating.

SPECIALS/RECESS

All elementary students will have music, art, fitness, library, French, Great Books (2nd level and up), and Nature Education/Land Lab. In addition, Willow students will have Tech Lab, and 6th levels will have their 6th Level program. This year's music curriculum will be modified to accommodate the 6-foot social distancing requirement for singing, voice projection, and playing a wind instrument.

Several outdoor spaces around campus will be made available for recess, physical activity and other classroom activities throughout the day.

TRANSPORTATION

Any trips that take students off campus will require all students and staff to wear masks and maintain appropriate social distancing and open windows when possible, within the vehicle. This will include trips to the Land Laboratory in Pompey.

EARLY ARRIVAL AND AFTER HOURS

Primary Early Arrival will be held in the Primary cottages and the Primary After Hours program will be held in Oak Cottage or outdoors. Elementary Early Arrival and After Hours programs will be set up to appropriately socially distance students.

HEALTH ATTESTATION

Health Screenings are important to help reduce the transmission of Covid-19 at school. MSS will ask all families to complete a health attestation form that reminds parents of the daily screenings that we request them to complete with their child, prior to school each day.

This section covers the following Health Screening Topics:

- Health and Temperature Screening Protocol
- Daily Staff Self-Screening Prior to Arrival at School
- Staff Screening of Child at School

Health Screenings

All parents have signed a Health Form attesting that by sending their child to school, they do not have any symptoms of Covid-19. All children and staff who meet any of the criteria below will be denied entry into the school.

- Temperature over 100°F.
- Any of the following symptoms if the symptom is of greater intensity or frequency than what is normally experienced: [Symptoms of Coronavirus \(CDC Guidelines\)](#)
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Chills
 - Fatigue
 - Muscle or Body Aches
 - Headache
 - Sore throat
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Diarrhea
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - Nausea or vomiting
- In the previous 10 days has had contact with someone with a confirmed diagnosis of Covid-19 or is under investigation for Covid-19.

A child who has exhibited symptoms that could be Covid-19 can return to school if the parent has obtained a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on a negative Covid-19 test, and symptoms have resolved.

Staff Health Attestation Prior to Arrival at School

All Staff members have completed a Health Attestation Form. If a staff member self-identifies as having symptoms listed in the screening criteria above, she/he will contact the designated administrator, not come into work, and follow the procedures in the section: Covid-19 Symptoms at School.

Daily Parent Screening of Child Prior to Arrival at School

Parents are encouraged to be on the alert for signs of illness in their children and to keep them home when they are sick. (See symptoms - [Symptoms of Coronavirus](#))

Staff Screening of Child at School

During the school day, staff will monitor students for signs of illness which could indicate Covid-19 symptoms. If a child exhibits any of these symptoms at arrival or at any point during the day, the child will be isolated from other students and the parent will be required to pick up their child.

FACE COVERINGS

Face coverings are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms. Acceptable face coverings include cloth-based face masks and surgical masks that cover both the mouth and nose. Face coverings should be cleaned or replaced after use and must not be shared. Students and parents/legal guardians should take responsibility for [maintaining their face coverings](#). Specifics for students, parents and staff can be found in the tables on the following page.

Students

Students at MSS are required to wear face masks unless they are able to social distance at least 6 feet. Students should bring their own masks to school so that they are comfortable, but additional masks will be available at school. We ask that parents send in an extra box of disposable masks for their child to keep at school.

Masks will be required for students during these activities:	Masks can be removed by students during these activities:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During arrival when the child is in the car • When in the classroom unless they are eating meals or they are taking a mask break (seated 6 ft. apart). • When traveling to an area outside of assigned classroom (common areas such as locker areas, entrances, exits, or bathrooms) • When traveling off campus via our school van (ex: Land Lab) • During dismissal, until the student is in the car with the parent • While dismissing from a school van (or bus); the mask must remain on until the student exits and is at their designated location and appropriately socially distanced • When singing (but a 6 ft. distance is required between students) <p>*The mask requirements will only be waived if the student has appropriate medical documentation to warrant an exception.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When outdoors and doing a lesson, seated at least 6 ft. apart • When a mask break is needed and the student maintains appropriate social distance • When eating snack or lunch (seated 6 ft. apart) • When napping <p>*Please note that students can choose to continue to wear their mask during these activities, if that is their preference.</p>

Staff

Masks will be required for staff during these activities:	Masks can be removed by staff during these activities:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During arrival procedures • During dismissal procedures • When traveling to an area outside of classrooms (common areas such as locker areas, entrances, exits, or bathrooms) • When transporting students off campus via school van (ex: Land Lab) • Staff must wear a mask when assisting an ill child or fellow staff member • When singing (but a 6 ft. distance is required between students) <p>*The mask requirements will only be waived if the staff member has appropriate medical documentation to warrant an exception.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When outdoors and appropriately socially distanced • When a mask break is needed and the staff person is appropriately socially distanced • When eating lunch (seated 6 ft. apart) <p>*Please note that staff can choose to continue to wear their mask during these activities, if that is their preference.</p>

Parents

Parents are required to wear a face mask during arrival and dismissal and at all times when on-campus.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING STRATEGIES

MSS will employ the following strategies for limiting the spread of COVID-19 in our classroom communities.

- Communities (called cohorts) will consist of stable, self-contained, pre-assigned groups of students with reasonable group size limits.
- Children shall not change from one group to another during the day.
- Cohorts shall not mix with each other.
- In the case of staff illness, a substitute will be utilized.
- Teachers may move to different cohorts throughout the day.
- All work tables will be spaced at least 3 ft. apart.
- Teachers will train students on best practices for appropriately socially distancing and mask wearing.
- All school/community events will be evaluated to determine if proper physical distancing strategies are possible. If it is decided that the event cannot take place, the event will be modified or canceled.

HEALTHY HAND HYGIENE

Washing hands prevents the spread of infections from one person to the next. All children and staff will engage in hand hygiene at the following times:

- Arrival to the classroom
- Before and after eating and handling food
- After using the toilet
- After coming in contact with bodily fluid
- After playing outdoors
- After handling a tissue
- Before touching eyes, nose, or mouth

Follow Five Steps to Wash Your Hands the Right Way

Follow these five steps every time.

1. Wet your hand with water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds.
4. Rinse your hands well under water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean paper towel or air dry them.

After assisting children with hand washing, staff should also wash their own hands.

Use Hand Sanitizer When You Can't Use Soap and Water

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in many situations.

How to use Hand Sanitizer:

1. Apply the gel product to the palm of one hand (read the label to learn the correct amount).
2. Rub your hands together.
3. Rub the gel over all the surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry. This should take around 20 seconds.

AIR QUALITY/VENTILATION

Maximizing air changes per hour (ACH) is one of many strategies MSS will be using to create a safe and healthy learning environment. This will be done by increasing opportunities for students to be outdoors and by increasing the airflow of indoor areas.

- Primary students will have access to each cottage's outdoor garden.
- Elementary students will have small group classes taught outside as often as possible, weather permitting.
- Nature walks will be incorporated into the school day by teachers.
- Fans will be used to increase air flow.
- All classrooms have windows that allow for cross-ventilation during the late summer and fall months, and in all weather to increase fresh air intake for short periods.
- All classrooms will have Air Purifiers with HEPA filters and UV lights (fully concealed within the unit). These will allow for additional air cleaning, especially during colder weather.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

MSS follows the [CDC national standards](#) for cleaning, sanitizing and disinfection of educational facilities for children and has a detailed plan for each classroom that will include staff responsibilities.

These efforts include the following:

- Staff will routinely clean, sanitize, and disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched.
- The schools cleaning service will conduct a thorough cleaning of the entire school every evening.
- All bathrooms will be cleaned and disinfected regularly throughout the day.
- Relevant targeted areas will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected if a positive case of Covid-19 is found at our school at any time during the school year.

Clean and Sanitize Materials

- All tables will be cleaned after lunch and snack.
- For the younger students who nap, each child's bedding will be kept separate. Mats are labeled for each child and cleaned daily. Masks will be taken off during nap time and mats will be spaced apart to comply with social distancing.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Procedures if an infected person (staff or child) has been in our school building:

MSS will close off areas used by an individual with Covid-19 and the area will be cleaned, according to CDC guidelines, by our professional cleaning service. Outside doors and windows will be opened and fans will be utilized to increase air circulation in the area.

All areas used by the ill person will be cleaned and disinfected. [CDC guidelines on cleaning and disinfecting](#) will be followed.

TRAINING

Staff will be trained regarding CDC and New York State Dept of Health recommendations and requirements. Training topics will include recognizing Covid-19 symptoms, PPE procedures, hygiene, cleaning and hand-washing.

PARENT COMMUNICATION

Email and phone

Each classroom has a school email address for parent communications. Teachers will respond to emails within 48 hours during the week. Teachers do not respond to phone messages during the day. Time-sensitive contact with teachers can be facilitated by calling the front desk at 315.449.9033 or emailing mssfrontdesk@gmail.com.

MSS will communicate regarding the following topics using email, phone, a dedicated website page and electronic Constant Contact newsletters:

- All new procedures and policies in regards to the reopening plan with the entire school community.
- With families, if their child has been in close contact with someone at school who has tested positive for Covid-19.
- With staff, if they have been in close contact with someone at school who has tested positive for Covid-19.
- With the entire school community if a classroom community has been temporarily closed due to Covid-19 exposure.
- With parents, inviting feedback and questions

Meetings/Conferences

Teacher meetings and Parent Teacher Conferences will be offered via Zoom as needed or as requested by the teacher or parent. In-person meetings may be offered as well. The administrative team will continue to determine the best course of action, considering all factors at the time.

Observations

Due to restrictions in place to mitigate the spread of Covid-19, regular parent observations are suspended until further notice.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Montessori School of Syracuse has and will continue to collaborate, share information, and review plans with local health officials to help protect the whole school community. School plans are designed to complement other community mitigation strategies to protect high-risk populations and the healthcare system and minimize disruption to teaching and learning.

MENTAL HEALTH

Our school's Montessori structure, with three-year multi age classrooms and small community size naturally lends itself to close relationships between students and their teachers. Parents are already accustomed to communicating closely with their children's teachers when issues arise, and this will be a key strategy to allow us to proactively engage with each student through their transition back to campus.

Teachers and administrators are trained to recognize signs of stress, trauma and anxiety in students, and in mindfulness and stress-reduction strategies that can be applied individually or in small groups in each classroom cohort.

The Director of Support Services will be available in a consulting capacity to support teachers to develop and implement classroom strategies and accommodations for identified students with IEPs and 504 Plans, to provide guidance to teachers and families involved in an evaluation process with the district to identify and determine eligibility for district-provided services, and to provide families with outside resources for additional support options such as private psychologists, counselors and private service providers for Speech, Physical and Occupational therapies.

All of our students have access to the outdoors on a daily basis -- this will be an additional opportunity for students to practice mindfulness and ground themselves through connection with nature.

VULNERABLE/HIGH-RISK GROUPS

Based on currently available information and clinical expertise, older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions might be at a higher risk for severe illness from Covid-19. To protect those at higher risk, it's important that everyone practices healthy hygiene behaviors. MSS will work to develop accommodations for students and staff who are at higher risk for contracting Covid-19.

MONITORING ABSENTEEISM

MSS administrative staff will monitor absenteeism among children and staff using our internal databases. Any unusual patterns will be considered when evaluating the need for temporary or long-term building or campus closure. Decisions about extending closure will be made in consultation with state and local health departments.

Attendance will be recorded in the school database.

COVID-19 SYMPTOMS AT SCHOOL

If Covid-19 symptoms begin while at school, the child/staff member must be sent home as soon as possible. Sick children will be kept separate from well children and staff contact will be limited as much as reasonably possible, while ensuring the safety and supervision of the child until they leave.

Classroom staff will follow these isolation procedures:

- Office staff will take the child to the Care Room in the main building
 - The classroom staff will inform the designated Administrator of symptoms exhibited.
 - Office staff will contact parents to come to school to pick up the child with instructions to contact their health care provider for assessment and testing.
 - The office staff will supervise the child until the parent arrives.
 - Once a parent has left with the ill child, the Care Room will be cleaned and sanitized, in accordance with CDC guidelines.
- Materials, toys, and furniture touched by the child who is sent home will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

- A child who has exhibited symptoms that could be Covid-19 can return to school if the parent has obtained a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on a negative Covid-19 test, and symptoms have resolved. Please email test results to the front desk or bring a paper copy when your child returns to school.

COVID-19 EXPOSURE

Per NYS DOH guidelines, any student who has been identified as having had close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with Covid-19 will be required to quarantine for 10 days. Fully vaccinated individuals do not need to quarantine, but need to wear a mask for 10 days and it is recommended that they get a Covid test 3-5 days after their exposure.

Unvaccinated students, who have been closer than 3 feet (for 15 minutes or more) from someone who tests positive will need to quarantine for 10 days. Onondaga County recommends testing 3-5 days after exposure and MSS requires that anyone who has been required to quarantine must get a Covid test on day 8 or 9 of their 10-day quarantine. Once the quarantine is completed and the student has a negative Covid test, they can return to school.

POSITIVE CASE OF COVID-19 IN THE CLASSROOM

If Covid-19 is confirmed in a child or staff member in a classroom, the following procedure will take place:

- A designated Administrator will contact local health officials to report the presence of a positive Covid-19 case at our school and wait for further guidance on next steps. In the interim, administrators will determine the most appropriate action, based on the Onondaga County Quarantine Guidance for School Exposures.
- Parents of the children in the classroom with the confirmed case will be notified and asked to immediately disclose if and when they experience any Covid-19 symptoms. Confidentiality will be maintained.
- The entire school community will be notified, through E-School News, that a child in the school (not their child's classroom) has been diagnosed with Covid-19. Confidentiality will be maintained.
- Designated personnel will complete disinfecting procedures in accordance with CDC and DOH guidelines.
- Students or staff members who test positive for Covid-19 can return to school when they have met the criteria developed by the Department of Health. MSS will require a copy of the Isolation order that the County provides as this will note the date of release.

CONTACT TRACING

Any positive Covid-19 case in the MSS community will be reported to the local health department which will initiate the contact tracing process.

<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/new-york-state-contact-tracing>

If there is a delay in the contact tracing process, MSS will initiate quarantine for those affected, using the Onondaga County Health Department Quarantine Guidance for School Exposures. Any student or staff member who is required to isolate or quarantine, will be contacted by the school with further details on what is required to return to school.

IN CASE OF MANDATED CLOSURE

If Governor Hochul or the Onondaga County Executive determines that schools in this area can no longer operate on site due to Covid-19, we will close the campus and move to distance learning. We will also work closely with the local health department to determine any circumstance which would cause us to close our campus in order to protect our students and staff.

All closing information will be communicated via our Constant Contact E-School News communication vehicle. In case of an emergency closure -- as we have used to cancel after school activities during snowy weather -- parents will be notified via Constant Contact, Facebook, and local news and media channels.

DISTANCE LEARNING

In the case that the campus must close due to Covid-19, MSS teachers will pivot to their Distance Learning plan.

In the event that an entire classroom needs to quarantine, remote learning plans will be implemented.

Depending on the developmental classroom level, teachers will use a combination of Zoom meetings, pre-recorded videos, FaceTime, email communication, pre-printed materials and assignments, Google classroom, and Calendly to carry out and coordinate each student's distance learning program.