

Montessori School of Champaign Urbana

COVID-19 Risk Management Plan

Maintaining Safe and Healthy School Operations in the Midst of the
Continuing COVID-19 Pandemic



2022-23 School Year

Updates effective September 26, 2022

Introduction



Dear MSCU Community,

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S. grew to such proportions that the State of Illinois temporarily shut down all schools in the state, eventually extending that closure for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, in order to contain it. Much has changed since then, and now in August 2022, we find ourselves in a “new normal” that is neither fully a return to pre-pandemic conditions, nor the same degree of nationwide severity as we had prior to vaccinations becoming available. **It is therefore the aim of our soon-to-be released 2022-23 COVID-19 School Action Plan to detail our plan for maintaining safe and healthy ongoing school operations in this current “new normal,” and to detail under what parameters these protocols exist.** We ask that you and your family keep in mind that the protocols listed in this document

are based on specific criteria and are subject to change based on evolving circumstances and conditions as needed.

MSCU’s #1 priority is and always will be the safety and support of our children, their families, our staff, and community. We are proud to say that due to the hard work and commitment of our staff and families to following our COVID protocols to-date, we are one of the few schools in the entire Champaign-Urbana area (and perhaps beyond) **that has operated and provided gentle, loving, ongoing in-person schooling since July 2020 with ZERO outbreaks.**

Our commitment to the safety of our community has been and continues to be the driving force in our policy making. Of course, as the pandemic has evolved, so too have the questions about how to offer the most stable and caring learning experience possible in these complex times, in ways that will reduce the amount of risk to the health of our children, families, staff, and community as well as increase equitable access to educational opportunities for all as much as humanly possible. While some may believe that the answers to those questions are obvious based on their own particular viewpoints, we humbly offer the fact that we serve many different families with many different needs, and we must continue to equitably address as best we can the needs of **all**, not just the needs of one group or another.

Here at MSCU, everyone matters. **That’s why we are asking for our entire community’s understanding, support and help as we continue to navigate an ever-changing landscape with regard to making choices that impact the lives of many families.** As we considered our

current policy, we considered not only the CDC recommendations (they recommend masking when the community is in high transmission), but we also considered family and staff input. Thank you to families and staff who filled out surveys. While we are all anxious to say goodbye to masks, it is vital that we do so in a thoughtful way. "To mask or not to mask" does not begin to cover all of the considerations our staff has put into these updates. For example, our primary and toddler students share space very differently than our older students. They are often chatting, exploring, or working together in very close proximity. They are also more likely to be comforted or assisted closely by staff.

With this 2022-23 release of our COVID-19 Risk Management Plan, we are pleased to offer a road map that addresses this new phase of the pandemic in which we find ourselves. We acknowledge from the outset that there will be no perfect plan that pleases everyone. We hope, however, whether you agree or disagree with some of the choices made, that you will find evidence of thoughtful decision-making that attempts to meet the changing needs of as many families as possible. We ask that day-by-day, above all, we seek to find what unifies and unites us as a community, rather than focusing on what small things may divide us — and that we teach our children to do the same.

While we cannot guarantee what the future holds, what we can and always will guarantee you is that we will put the health, safety, and learning of our children and families first, always. That is our commitment to you as our community.

Sincerely,

Kerry Rossow

Kerry Rossow
Interim Head of School

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Overview

The purpose of this plan is to provide the Montessori School of Champaign-Urbana (MSCU) with a framework for school preparedness planning and continued operation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The information and tools in this plan are adapted for the needs of MSCU staff, students, and community and will take into account the specific roles of each staff member of MSCU during the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, to include:

- Protocols and other requirements to promote health and safety during continued school operation for staff, students, families, and other stakeholders
- Staff responsibilities during both in-person and remote learning
- School operational policies during periods of high, medium, and low transmission during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic

Document Assumptions

Our previous COVID-19 School Action Plan, used and updated from July 2020 to August 2022, detailed what would be done in Phases 1-4 of the Restore Illinois Plan, with the assumption that the plan for Phase 5 would be *“Back to pre-pandemic operations, with new health/hygiene protocols in place as appropriate per IDPH guidelines.”* While much has changed since the original writing, including the Restore Illinois Plan itself and its definitions of discrete phases, we find that in general Illinois and the rest of the nation are currently (as of August 2022) existing with a “new normal” that approximates a Phase 5 with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, in which we must address what the “new health/hygiene protocols” will be going forward under the current conditions of continued concern over transmission but thankfully declining hospitalization and death rates in the face of more widespread vaccination.

As we detail some of these changes in protocol, please be aware of the following assumptions that govern the writing of this document version:

- In all circumstances if a mandate for schools that impacts private schools is presented by C-UPHD, IDPH, ISBE, or any other state or federal authority, we will follow that mandate.
- At all times the HoS retains the right to determine if a public health emergency warrants a change to this policy, even if a course of action is not yet mandated by public health officials.
- This document may be changed and amended as the COVID-19 situation evolves and more information becomes available about the SARS-CoV-2 virus which causes COVID-19.

Major Changes - Overview

We will base our policy choices on the rate of community transmission as communicated by public health departments and the CDC, as shown below. To every extent possible, we will implement a “one week transition period” when going to lower stages of transmission (e.g., if the community goes out of the stage of either high or medium community transmission to low community transmission, we would go “mask-optional” indoors starting 7 days later unless emergency conditions dictate otherwise). If we transition from lower stages of transmission to higher stages, we would return to the requirements for that higher stage immediately. Please be aware that this plan is subject to change based on evolving guidance from CUPHD and/or the CDC.

	High Community Transmission	Medium Community Transmission	Low Community Transmission
Masking & Social Distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toddler/Primary: Masking will continue indoors and outdoors except when eating/drinking; Elementary: Will continue to mask indoors; outdoors will stay optional Social distancing between students encouraged as appropriate (e.g., students will not be required to stay 3’ apart, but will be encouraged to give one another personal space as they were pre-pandemic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toddler/Primary: Masking will continue indoors except when eating/drinking; outdoors will be optional Elementary: Will continue to mask indoors; outdoors will stay optional Social distancing encouraged but not mandated Accommodations will be offered for immunocompromised individuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masking optional indoors and outdoors* for all programs Social distancing encouraged to the extent it was pre-pandemic Accommodations will be offered for immunocompromised individuals
Illness Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As per pre-pandemic guidelines, a child with diarrhea, vomiting, or fever of 100F or higher must immediately go/stay home until the child has spent 24 hours fever/vomit/diarrhea-free without the use of fever/vomit/diarrhea-reducing medication. Please also get your child tested and provide a negative test result and confirmation of 24 hour period fever/vomit/diarrhea-free without medication prior to returning to school. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a child presents with respiratory symptoms s/he must wear a mask indoors regardless of vaccination status or explained symptoms 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a child presents with non-respiratory symptoms attributable to a known non-contagious cause — please alert the HoS of known reason behind symptoms 		
Confirmed Exposure Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If child is fully vaccinated, with no symptoms, there is no need to quarantine after possible or even positive exposure If child is not fully vaccinated - they must complete 5 day isolation 		
Return to School After Illness OR Positive COVID Test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children who are home due to fever, diarrhea, and/or vomiting must be 24 hours fever/vomit/diarrhea-free without the use of symptom-reducing medication before returning to school. Positive case = 5 days isolation and continued masking at school 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive case = 5 days isolation and continued masking at school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive case = 5 day isolation + 5 days additional masking at school 	

* **PLEASE NOTE:** Staff will not monitor mask use when masks are optional.

Campus Access & Program Delivery

We plan to continue with in-person schooling, 5 days a week, with all available programs appropriate for our staffing and numbers, unless otherwise mandated by state or federal authorities. In the event of strong recommendation from local public health authorities to do otherwise, the School may seek alternatives to meet both public health and student/family needs at the discretion of the Head of School. In the event that a school closure or limited school numbers are mandated by state or federal officials, this plan will be modified based on the specifics of the guidance at that time.

Currently we are allowing families to schedule appointments to observe their children in class and will continue this procedure until further notice. Vendors and community members at large must also have an appointment or verifiable business to enter the buildings. This procedure ensures not only that we limit the number of potential vectors in the building but also increases the general safety and security of the campus, as strangers are no longer allowed to enter without permission.

Equity Considerations

According to the CDC's [K-12 Childcare Guidance](#), "Schools with students at risk for getting very sick with COVID-19 **must** make reasonable modifications or accommodations when necessary to ensure that all students, including those with disabilities, are able to access in-person learning. Schools might need to require masking in settings such as classrooms or during activities to protect students with immunocompromising conditions or other conditions that increase their risk for getting very sick with COVID-19 in accordance with applicable federal, state, or local laws and policies. Students with immunocompromising conditions or other conditions or disabilities that increase risk for getting very sick with COVID-19 should not be placed into separate classrooms or otherwise segregated from other students." MSCU will strive to make every possible accommodation for immunocompromised individuals or individuals with disabilities to have equitable access to learning environments, and will work with affected families on a case-by-case basis to determine what accommodations are desired by the family and feasible by the School.

Illness Prevention

Schoolwide Focus on Health & Hygiene

MSCU has always, even pre-pandemic, focused on developing healthy hygiene habits for children, including teaching and reinforcing such actions as properly washing hands with soap and water before and after meals and activities, not allowing the sharing of personal items and hygiene items (e.g., combs and brushes, etc.), sanitizing items that encounter bodily fluids such

as saliva, etc. We will continue these practices, including enhanced cleaning procedures in the classroom, as regular practice going forward regardless of the rate of community transmission.

The following COVID-specific measures will be discontinued until further notice:

- Temperature check upon arrival at school
- Hand sanitizer upon arrival at school/arrival in the classroom

Use of Social Distancing Measures

Social distancing, while encouraged during times of high community transmission, will not be enforced in the classroom **starting September 26, 2022** and going forward, except as appropriate for classroom management (e.g., we do not and never have allowed activities in which students engage in prolonged close physical contact such as wrestling or other horseplay). We do ask, as we did pre-pandemic as well, that at home families continue to reinforce the concept of respect for others’ personal space in the classroom, which our staff will also emphasize as we did pre-pandemic.

Strict classroom cohorts will be officially discontinued **starting September 26, 2022** until further notice.

Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

In general, the personal protective equipment that has been shown to make the most difference in protecting an individual and others around that individual from COVID-19 and other contagious respiratory illnesses is a well-fitted mask or respirator. Per the CDC, “Wearing a well-fitting mask or respirator consistently and correctly reduces the risk of spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. **At a high COVID-19 Community Level, universal indoor masking in schools and ECE programs is recommended, as it is in the community at-large.** CDC also recommends masking at all times in healthcare settings, including school nurses’ offices, regardless of the current COVID-19 Community Level. **People who have known or suspected exposure to COVID-19 should also wear a well-fitting mask or respirator around others for 10 days from their last exposure, regardless of vaccination status or history of prior infection.**”

	High community transmission	Medium community transmission	Low community transmission
Toddler/Primary (includes Kindergarten)	Indoors and outdoors: Mask required	Indoors: Mask required Outdoors: Mask optional	Indoors and outdoors: Mask optional
Elementary+ (Years 1-8)	Indoors: Mask required Outdoors: Mask optional	Indoors: Mask required Outdoors: Mask optional	
** Masking is required immediately at all grade levels and all community transmission levels when student is exhibiting respiratory symptoms, including but not limited to, runny nose, sneezing, coughing, etc. If symptoms of illness are present, please refer to guidelines for Illness Protocols as well.			

In general:

- Protective dividers on tables will be optional at the discretion of the Director/Directress
- Any need for other forms of PPE (face shields, protective clothing, etc.) for staff will be addressed depending on the severity of the community transmission and impact on hospitalizations/deaths in the community

Illness Protocols

Please see the following protocols chart to see the main requirements for when your child experiences illness:

	High Community Transmission	Medium Community Transmission	Low Community Transmission
Illness Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per pre-pandemic guidelines, a child with diarrhea, vomiting, or fever of 100F or higher must immediately go/stay home until the child has spent 24 hours fever/vomit/diarrhea-free without the use of fever/vomit/diarrhea-reducing medication. Please also get your child tested and provide a negative test result and confirmation of 24 hour period fever/vomit/diarrhea-free without medication prior to returning to school. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a child presents with respiratory symptoms they must wear a mask indoors regardless of vaccination status or explained symptoms 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a child presents with non-respiratory symptoms attributable to a known non-contagious cause — please alert the HoS of known reason behind symptoms 		
Confirmed Exposure Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If child is fully vaccinated, with no symptoms, there is no need to quarantine after possible or even positive exposure • If child is not fully vaccinated - they must complete 5 day quarantine 		
Return to School After Illness OR Positive COVID Test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children who are home due to fever, diarrhea, and/or vomiting must be 24 hours fever/vomit/diarrhea-free without the use of symptom-reducing medication before returning to school. • Positive case = 5 days quarantine and continued masking at school 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive case = 5 days quarantine and continued masking at school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive case = 5 day quarantine + 5 days additional masking at school 	

Dropoff & Pickup Procedures

We will continue to limit the number of students congregating at the same time in the hallway during dropoff and pickup times. We appreciate families continuing to use the car lines or parking and walking up to the walk-up point appropriately as detailed in the [Parent Handbook](#).

For late dropoffs or early pickups, we will continue the policy of asking families to call the office at (217) 356-1818 upon arrival and a staff member will walk out to receive or escort your child. Please do not enter the building at this time and please do not drop off your child and have them walk into the building on their own; there may not be someone ready to open the door for them.

Facilities & Food Service

We will continue enhanced cleaning procedures for the building each day; we ask that you pick up your children on time during their pick-up windows so that our staff do not have to stay overtime to do their daily room preparations. Late pickups will incur a fee, as they did pre-pandemic.

Food service will go back to being offered “family style” for Toddler and Primary students, but MSCU staff will serve the food to students while utilizing appropriate food handling equipment such as gloves and masks; currently self-service of food by students is not permitted. Elementary and Secondary students will continue to receive individually packaged lunches per the vendor. Tables will be disinfected before and after use during lunch service.

Extracurriculars, Trips, & Events

The availability of extracurriculars, trips, and events will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the School and will be announced via email to impacted classrooms and families. Accommodations will be offered for immunocompromised individuals as requested and to the greatest extent possible; we will work with families on a case-by-case basis to support the needs of immunocompromised or disabled individuals. During events, we ask that families observe our guidelines based on the rate of community transmission and help their children stay consistent with classroom policies as much as possible to avoid confusion:

	High Community Transmission	Medium Community Transmission	Low Community Transmission
Toddler/Primary age children (includes kindergarteners)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masking required indoors and outdoors except when eating/drinking; Social distancing between students encouraged but not mandated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toddler/Primary: Masking will continue indoors except when eating/drinking; outdoors will be optional Social distancing encouraged but not mandated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masking optional indoors and outdoors* for all programs Social distancing encouraged to the extent it was pre-pandemic
Elementary age children (starting from Grade 1) through adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masking required indoors except when eating/drinking; outdoors is optional Social distancing between students encouraged but not mandated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masking required indoors except when eating/drinking; outdoors is optional Social distancing between students encouraged but not mandated 	

Communication Plan

MSCU will continue to keep families informed and apprised of any necessary information related to pandemic management, including but not limited to known potential COVID exposures in the classroom, changes to this plan, and more. Email and SchoolWorx are the primary means of communication, so please make sure your email address is up to date in our systems (if you are receiving the Friday updates, your email address is up to date).

References

CDC: Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning (Updated 8/11/2022)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-childcare-guidance.html>

Executive Order 2022-03 (1/11/2022)

<https://www.illinois.gov/government/executive-orders/executive-order-executive-order-number-03.2022.html>

COVID-19 Exclusion Protocols (9/23/2021)

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/P-12-COVID-19-Exclusion-Protocols.pdf>

Revised Public Health Guidance for Schools (9/21/2021)

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Updated-Public-Health-School-Guidance-9-21-21.pdf>

CDC: Delta Variant: What We Know About the Science (8/26/2021)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/delta-variant.html#:~:text=%E2%80%A2%20Fully%20vaccinated%20people%20with,the%20virus%20to%20others.>

Champaign-Urbana Public Health District: COVID-19 Testing Information

<https://www.c-uphd.org/covid-testing.html>

Champaign-Urbana Public Health District: Coronavirus Information

<https://www.c-uphd.org/champaign-urbana-illinois-coronavirus-information.html>

CDC: COVID-19 Symptoms

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

CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019: Schools & Child Care

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>

Center for Disease Control

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/childcare-programs.html>

Champaign County: Best Practices for Re-Opening Your Business in the Age of COVID-19

<https://champaigncountysafe.files.wordpress.com/2020/05/covid-19-re-opening-toolkit-may29.pdf>

Disinfectants

<https://www.spartanchemical.com/solutions/covid-19/faq-page/>

<https://www.spartanchemical.com/globalassets/solutions/covid-19/list-n-spartan-disinfectants-.pdf>

Environmental Protection Agency

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
<https://www.spartanchemical.com/globalassets/solutions/covid-19/list-n-spartan-disinfectants-.pdf>

IDPH News Release 07/09/2021

IL DCFS

Montessori Public Policy Initiative

<https://montessoriadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Reopening-One-Pager.pdf>

Reopening Child Care in Illinois, 05.22.20

<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/OECD/Documents/05.22.20%20Restore%20Illinois%20Child%20Care%20Guidelines.pdf>

Return to School Roadmap

<https://returntoschoolroadmap.org/operations/school/>

The 74

World Health Organization

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/strategies-plans-and-operations>
https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/key-messages-and-actions-for-covid-19-prevention-and-control-in-schools-march-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=baf81d52_4
<https://www.who.int/teams/risk-communication/employers-and-workers>