

Keystone Montessori School

Sharing the Responsibilities

2020-2021 Supplement to the Keystone Family Guidebook

Introduction

This supplement is intended to detail the new procedures and protocols that will be in place as we return to school amid the Covid-19 pandemic. We anticipate that this virus is going to be with us for a long time, and we must learn to navigate within this most unusual situation. We need to proceed with our daily lives, while remaining cognizant of the risks involved. Life has always involved risks, but this current risk is particularly insidious because it is so vast, so fast, and so invisible.

Our mission at Keystone involves keeping the best interests of the children first and foremost in our thoughts and actions. Now we are going to expand upon that idea, and include the Keystone staff as well. In order to manage the continuation of school operations this year, it is essential that we all recognize that there exists a shared responsibility between parents and staff. We must all collaborate to protect the health of our entire school community. Parents and staff must be careful with their choices, be aware of the impact their choices may have on others, be honest in their dealings, and be willing to make the sacrifices necessary to protect the health and well-being of the entire school community.

As we move through the school year, there may have to be adjustments to this supplement. We will respond swiftly and responsibly if the need arises. We will be diligent with our daily cleaning procedures and we will commit to safe practices as much as is feasible. What we cannot do, however, is guarantee that Covid-19, or some other communicable disease won't enter our community. We will present our best, most conscientious efforts to mitigate these threats, but we can't rid the world of them. Parents must decide for themselves what is in their child's best interest, and if they are comfortable with the measures presented in this supplement. Parents must weigh the risks versus the gains, and then make their choice of how they will proceed.

Home Health Assessment

At the end of this supplement is a Home Health Assessment. Please place this form in your home where it is easily available to you each morning. Every morning before school please assess your child for possible Covid-19 symptoms. If your child has some of the symptoms of Covid-19, a fever of 100.4°F or higher, or has been in close contact with someone who has Covid-19, **DO NOT BRING THE CHILD TO SCHOOL.**

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT SICK INDIVIDUALS STAY AT HOME!

Morning Arrival (8:15-8:30 AM)

Please note that the morning car line is our longest car line and it is important we have everyone's cooperation, in order for this now lengthy process to move as quickly and safely as possible.

All children must arrive via the car line. Arrival by foot or bicycle will not be permitted.

Shortly before the staff member approaches the car, the parent must apply hand sanitizer (containing at least 60% alcohol) to the child's hands and supervise its thorough application.

The child is to remain seated in the car, with the car door closed, while their temperature is checked by a staff member using a non-contact thermometer. If a child registers a temperature of 100.4°F or higher, the temperature will be taken again with a second thermometer. If the child registers a second reading of a fever the child will not be permitted to enter the school.

Staff members will wear masks during the car line process, and drivers must wear masks as well. With health and safety in mind, it is highly recommended that the same driver handles arrivals and departures every day. During car line the staff will not be available for lengthy discussions with parents.

A late arrival will be an even greater disruption this year. If you do arrive late, please ring the doorbell just one time and then get back in your car. Due to the additional health and safety procedures that are now in place, late arrivals will need to wait patiently until someone has the opportunity to answer the door. It may take several minutes before late arrivals will be able to enter the school. Children and parents must wait in their car in the carport. The front door camera will provide a visual reminder that someone is waiting.

Early Morning M.A.D. Arrival (7:30-8:15 AM)

The procedures will be the same as above, but the driver will need to ring the door bell and then return to the car to wait. Do not pull up into a parking place, but rather remain in the carport driveway.

Early Departure

Children who need to leave school early in order to attend an appointment will not be able to return to school that day.

Departure (Noon or 3:00 PM)

All children will depart via the car line, and not by foot or bicycle.

The staff members handling the car line process will wear masks, and drivers must wear masks as well. With health and safety in mind, it is highly recommended that the same driver handles arrivals and departures every day. Staff members will assist children into the car but the driver is responsible for pulling up into a parking spot to complete the buckling-in process.

For the noon dismissal, the departing children will be dismissed from the stairway. Physical distancing will be respected.

For the 3:00 PM dismissal, the children will be dismissed individually from their own classrooms. The staff will be using walkie-talkies to coordinate the dismissal process. Patience on the part of all drivers and staff will be greatly appreciated. During car line the staff will not be available for lengthy discussions with parents.

Departure after 3:00 PM

All children will depart by car, and not by foot or bicycle.

Driver should ring the doorbell, return to the car, and remain in the carport driveway.

Driver should wear a mask. With health and safety in mind, it is highly recommended that the same driver handles arrivals and departures every day.

A staff member, wearing a mask, will assist the child into the car, and the driver can then complete the buckling-in process.

Handwashing

Handwashing has always been a very important component to keeping the KMS community healthy. Automated soap dispensers have recently been purchased to facilitate this process. Pop-up paper towel dispensers were purchased several years ago. Staff members will demonstrate and supervise proper handwashing procedures.

Children will wash hands:

- Each morning upon entering the classroom

- After every visit to the bathroom

- After coughing or sneezing into the hands

- After returning a material to the shelf

- Before and after snack

- Before and after lunch

- After quiet time

- After playtime

Hand-sanitizer

Hand-sanitizer will be available for those unusual times when washing hands with soap and water is not possible. Staff will administer hand sanitizer when it is necessary. Please do not send in hand sanitizer clipped to your child's belt, lunch box, or work bag.

Snack

Primary families will continue to share the responsibility of providing snack for their child's class.

Appropriate snacks and their preparation are explained in detail in the Family Guidebook.

A staff member, however, will portion the snack into individual, disposable cups.

Elementary children will continue with their snack procedure as outlined in the Family Guidebook.

Lunch

The lunch routine will be modified for all classes. Staff members will be responsible for setting the tables instead of the children. "Table for two" will be the preferred seating.

Handwashing will take place before and after lunch. Staff will monitor the process.

Montessori All-Day

Nap mats will be arranged head to toe and will be placed as far apart as is feasible.

Handwashing requirements will continue throughout the day along with significant monitoring.

Afternoon snack will take place in the classroom and "Table for Two" will again be standard.

Visitors

We will not be able to accommodate visitors or parents inside the building during school hours.

Observations, joining in on a child's birthday celebration, and parent-child lunch dates will be not available this year.

Special guest speakers will not be allowed inside the school building.

Masks

Staff will wear face coverings (face masks or face shields) while performing car line duties.

The primary children will not wear masks.

The elementary children will be required to wear cloth face coverings provided by their parents.

Parents/drivers will wear masks during the child's arrival and departure.

Staff will wear face coverings (face masks or face shields).

Physical Distancing

Staff members will practice physical distancing among themselves as much as is feasible and practical, including during playground times.

Physical distancing will be practiced as much as is feasible at car line times.

Teachers will modify their prepared environments to allow for more open spaces.

Children will be encouraged to have sufficient space when lining up, such as when waiting to use the bathroom, getting ready to go outside, and getting ready to come inside.

Children will also be encouraged to have sufficient space between their work and someone else's.

Elementary children, by their very nature need to participate in collaborative work, which makes physical distancing especially challenging. They will be limited to one other collaborator, and will be encouraged to provide sufficient space between themselves.

The two primary classes will play on the playground at the same time. They will be encouraged to respect each other's space and will wash their hands upon returning to their classrooms.

The elementary children will play on the playground at a time that is separate from the primary children. They will be encouraged to respect each other's space and will wash their hands upon returning to their classroom.

Due to the small nature of the group, all children who stay after 3:00 PM will play outside at the same time.

Group singing will take place outside.

If a Child Exhibits Covid-19 Symptoms at School

If a child exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 at school, he will be isolated immediately and the parents will be notified. A prompt pickup by a parent will be expected. The child will be supervised by a staff member during this isolation period. The child will be encouraged to put on a mask, and the staff member will have on a mask. Physical distancing will be practiced. Cleaning and disinfecting of the room used for isolation will be done some time after the child leaves.

If the child is not evaluated by a medical professional or is not tested for COVID-19, then it will be assumed that the child has the virus, and may not return to school until the child has met the criteria for returning to school. Those criteria are listed on the next page. Mecklenburg County Health Department, as well as the school's child care consultant will be notified of the situation and they will offer guidance.

Criteria for Returning to School After Onset of COVID-19 of Symptoms, Diagnosis, or Positive Test Results

Child may return to school if the parents can answer ‘yes’ to **ALL** three of the following questions:

1. Has it been at least 14 days since symptoms first appeared?
2. Has it been at least 3 days (72 hours) since the child had a fever, **without** using fever reducing medicine?
3. Has it been at least 3 days (72 hours) since the child’s symptoms have improved, including cough and shortness of breath?

Returning to School After COVID-19 Symptoms but Negative COVID-19 Test Results

Child may return to school once parents can answer ‘yes’ to the following questions:

1. Has it been at least 72 hours since the child had a fever **without** the use of fever-reducing medicines?
2. Has the child felt well for at 72 least hours?

Returning to School After Being in Close Contact with a Person Diagnosed with COVID-19

1. Child may return to school after completing at least 14 days of quarantine at home. The full 14 days must be completed even if the child tests negative. If child develops COVID-19 symptoms or tests positive, returning to school must follow the criteria above. Close contact is defined by NCDHHS as “within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes”.

Returning to School After Travel

If a family chooses to use public transportation (planes, trains, or buses) all members of the household must take a Covid test 3-5 days after returning home from the trip. If everyone in the household tests negative then the child may return to school after completing a 7- day quarantine period at home. If someone in the household tests positive for Covid, then the child will need to quarantine for 14 days. The child must be completely symptom free before returning to Keystone.

If the family, however, travels in their own automobile, then the child may return to school if the child can successfully pass every part of the daily morning Home Health Assessment administered by the parent.

Family trips should be conducted with caution. Out of respect for the safety of the entire Keystone community (children, staff, and other family members) attendance at large-scale events such as weddings, reunions, funerals, conferences, rallies etc. is discouraged at this time.

Staff

Prior to the school opening, the KMS staff will meet and review all health and safety guidelines, with special emphasis on COVID-19.

Staff will be held to the same health procedures and requirements as the children, and will be under instruction to stay home when feeling ill, including self-quarantining when necessary.

The staff will continue to receive cleaning and disinfecting instructions and supervision throughout the school year as they maintain the prepared environments.

Communication with Parents

At the present time, our lines of communication will need to be done via phone, Zoom meetings, conversations while wearing masks, or physically distanced conversations. We still feel strongly that communication about a child should be done personally, and will not be done via email. If a parent needs to discuss a situation with the child's lead teacher the parent should contact the office to arrange for a phone call with the teacher or send the teacher a note asking for a telephone call. Due to the expanded car line procedures for arrival and departure, communication between staff and parents during those car line times will need to be kept brief.

Parents will be notified when the school is informed that a child or staff member has been diagnosed with or has tested positive for Covid-19. Confidentiality will be respected. Mecklenburg County Health Department, as well as the school's child care consultant will be notified of the situation and they will offer guidance.

Parents will be notified when the school is informed that a child or staff member has been exposed to Covid-19. Confidentiality will be respected. Mecklenburg County Health Department, as well as the school's child care consultant will be notified of the situation and they will offer guidance.

Substitutes

As mentioned before, due to the nature of the current pandemic situation, we will not be allowing visitors into the school. This will also include substitute teachers. At the present time both the administrative assistant and the head of school will serve as substitutes if needed. If at any point a classroom's staff becomes sufficiently depleted due to illness, then that classroom may have to be temporarily closed while the staff recuperates.

Preparing the Children for the School Year

It is the responsibility of all parents to prepare their children for the new school year. Parents also shoulder the responsibility of helping to keep the school community healthy by:

- Adjusting children's summer bedtimes to correlate with school hours so that children are well rested and healthy for their school days
- Explaining the new car line routines, and reassuring the children of these positive changes
- Continually reinforcing proper handwashing at home
- Continually reinforcing proper usage and disposal of tissues at home

- Continually reinforcing proper coverage of a sneeze or cough, by coughing or sneezing into an elbow or shoulder
- Establishing and reinforcing the good habits of keeping fingers out of noses and mouths
- Explaining and reassuring the children about the changes for school lunchtime and playtime
- Sheltering children from news reports
- Minimizing extra-curricular activities outside of school because they may pose a risk to the rest of the school community
- Minimizing erranding with the children as well as travel outside of Charlotte

Conclusion

This new school year is going to present many challenges, but challenges don't necessarily mean impossibilities. Challenges just make us think more and work harder. Challenges make us stronger. If Keystone parents and staff work together sharing the responsibilities of protecting the school as much as humanly possible, then the Keystone children will all be well served.

We must learn to live within the parameters of scientific evidence, good judgement, and consideration for the rest of the world. It is our hope that through the dedicated and earnest collaboration of our entire Keystone community that all the children will be able to enjoy the wonderfully rich and joyful Montessori education experience that they deserve.

Resources

Center for Disease Control website
 North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services website
 NCDHHS: StrongSchoolsNC
 NCDHHS: ChildCareStrongNC
 Lighting Our Way Forward: North Carolina's Guidance on Reopening K-12 Public Schools
 American Academy of Pediatrics: COVID-19 Planning Considerations:
 Guidance for School Re-entry
 Harvard University, T.H. Chan School of Public Health:
 Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools
 Bergamo Montessori School Health and Safety Guidelines for Primary and Elementary
 Programs
 Austin Montessori School Operating Plan Summer 2020

(revised March 12, 2021)



Home Health Assessment-Sharing the Responsibility

To Be Completed Every Morning Before School

1. Has child/children been diagnosed or had close contact in the last 14 days with someone diagnosed with COVID-19? Close contact is defined by NCDHHS as “within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes”.

If ‘yes’, the child should not come to school, and may return 14 days after the last close contact. The school should be notified.

If ‘no’, the child may come to school if not experiencing any symptoms listed below.

2. Does the child exhibit any of these symptoms? If ‘yes’ to any of these symptoms the child should stay home and the parent should consult with the health care provider. The school should be notified.

Fever or chills

Diarrhea

New cough

Nausea or vomiting

Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

Headache

Fatigue

Congestion

Muscle or body aches

Sore throat

New loss of taste or smell

Congestion or runny nose

3. Has any health department or health care provider been in contact with you and advised you to quarantine?

If ‘yes’ child should stay home and the school should be notified.

If ‘no’ the child may come to school.