



## **Morning Star Montessori School COVID Plan 2021-2022 School Year**

The Morning Star Montessori School Reopening plan was developed based on:

- Review of New York State Department of Health guidelines for reopening schools
- Review of CDC recommendations
- Review of New York State Education Department P-12 Health & Safety Guide

The following document has been created to communicate our current plan for reopening as safely as possible. The organization of the Plan follows the required DOH categories. This Plan was shaped as best as possible in order to both ensure the safety of our children and teachers, and that we also stay true to the Montessori method. We understand that these guidelines are strict and may be challenging for 2-6 year olds. The goal of attempting to follow the highest safety standards ensures that we are all doing our best to keep our children, teachers and families safe. Our teachers have reviewed this plan and are comfortable with the guidelines put forth.

### **1. Reopening of in-person instructions**

#### **1.1 Capacity**

Morning Star is a small school with approximately 16 students and 2-3 teachers. Capacity is not an issue in regards to maintaining social distance, local medical capacity, availability of PPE equipment and availability of safe transportation.

#### **1.2 Social Distancing**

Students and teachers will maintain social distancing whenever possible, except when the core activity requires a shorter distance. Any time or place that individuals cannot maintain appropriate social distancing, individuals must wear acceptable face coverings, or will be separated by plexiglass or other impermeable divider.

#### **1.3 PPE and Face Coverings**

Teachers and children will wear masks in the classroom, except for snack time, short breaks or if deemed developmentally inappropriate and infeasible. There will be two designated locations (which will be more than 6 feet away from other children) where children can take

a mask break when they request one or when teachers offer one. Children will be required to attend school with their own mask, but the school will have masks available if a situation arises and a child is in need of one. Children will also be asked to have additional masks in their shoebox at school as backup. School will purchase masks for the teachers. Students/parents/guardians and staff will be trained on how to put on, take off, clean and discard PPE. The school encourages all parents/guardians to practice appropriate mask use at home with their children (learning to put on, take off). The teachers have requested that children use a lanyard with their mask, so that they can stay around the child's neck when not in use. This will ensure that masks are not left around the classroom on tables, floors, etc. and that each child always has his/her with them at all times.

#### **1.4 Operational Activity**

*Class size:* Due to the small size of the school, class size does not need to be altered. The entire population of the School will be considered a single cohort.

*Phase-In:* The school will be using a phase-in period for the first 2 weeks of school. The amount of time that children are at school increases each day until they are there for the full 2 hours 55 minutes. This allows children to slowly adjust to the school day and new routine.

*Remote Learning:* The teachers and the education director will develop at-home plans, such as loaning works out to students, recorded video instructions of works, live zoom meetings with a teacher and 2-3 students at a time. Remote learning will be offered anytime during which there is full school closure.

*Hybrid/Alternate Schedule:* If a hybrid model/alternate schedule with smaller cohorts of children becomes a necessity due to local community transmission or other issues, the School will collaborate with teachers and parents to develop the best option for all parties.

*Parent-Child Evening* will be run in 2-3 sessions and will be limited to 1 parent per child (which is already a practice).

*Parent-Teacher Conferences* will be conducted virtually if necessary based on local transmission rates.

*Student Observation:* Only one parent at a time will be allowed for Student Observation.

*Cafeterias, libraries, playgrounds, and gymnasiums:* N/A. The school does not have any of these facilities.

*Field trips:* N/A. Students do not take field trips.

*Safety Coordinator:* School will designate a COVID-19 safety coordinator whose responsibilities include continuous compliance with all aspects of the school's reopening plan.

### **1.5 Restart Operations**

After teachers prepare the classrooms for the start of the year, the School will be cleaned and sanitized as necessary, especially in areas such as the bathroom and high-touch areas. The school will stock the school with the necessary cleaners, sanitizers, disinfectants and PPE equipment. Appropriate signage will be placed in the school regarding hygiene, sanitation and symptom awareness as recommended by the DOH. Prior to the start of school, teachers will be trained in proper PPE usage and disposal, social distancing, temperature screening (students and themselves), positive screening protocol, hygiene/disinfection protocol as per CDC and DOH, safe usage and storage of cleaners/sanitizers/disinfectants, use of cleaning log, safe food preparation, isolation procedure of ill student and policies regarding suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19. In addition, the school will provide parents with materials to keep at home that will outline screening procedures that are necessary prior to coming to school (in addition to the temperature check at drop-off). Parents will also receive materials to keep on hand regarding possible or confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, and procedures in notifying the school.

### **1.6 Hygiene, Cleaning, and Disinfection**

#### ***Hygiene***

Teachers and staff will be trained on proper hand and respiratory hygiene as recommended by the CDC and DOH. Proper hygiene will be reviewed with students, including the importance of hand washing with soap for 20 seconds, using hand sanitizer when appropriate, covering sneezes and coughs with tissue/elbow (and washing hand with soap afterward), avoiding touching face, maintaining distance and wearing a mask. This information will be provided to parents/guardians to ensure that these habits are reinforced at home.

Teachers and students will sanitize hands immediately upon entering the School. The school will provide and maintain several hand hygiene stations, including 3-4 sinks for handwashing with soap. In addition, hand sanitizing stations (using CDC approved hand sanitizer) will be available for students and teachers to use upon entrance to school, before snack time, before using the water station, and as needed throughout the day. The school will have two

touchless dispensers, one for sanitizer at the entrance to the building and one in the bathroom for soap. The use of hand sanitizer will be supervised by the teachers.

The school will provide signage next to sinks and near sanitizing stations to encourage appropriate handwashing (with soap for 20 seconds) and to remind teachers and students that visibly dirty hands need to be cleaned with soap, not hand sanitizer. Receptacles will be placed in the appropriate locations for disposal of soiled items including paper towels and PPE.

### ***Cleaning and Disinfection***

Cleaning and disinfecting will be recorded into a log that will include date, time, scope of cleaning/disinfection, frequency for each facility/area type and assigned individual. The school will provide all necessary cleaning and disinfecting supplies, such as a CDC approved surface cleaner, paper towels, wipes and gloves. Sanitizers and surface cleaners used are included in the approved list put forth by the CDC. The school chose a non-toxic surface cleaner with hydrogen peroxide as the active ingredient. The school's bathroom is a single person bathroom and will be cleaned at the end of each 2 hour 55 minute school day. Frequently touched surfaces such as doorknobs, tables, desks, light switches, counters, phones, tablets, keyboards, toilets, sinks, faucets will be cleaned prior to the children entering the school, throughout the day as needed, and again after the children leave. When weather permits, windows will be open to allow for fresh air circulation.

All works will be cleaned, sanitized or isolated for an appropriate amount of time at the end of each school day. Any works that involve food will be individually planned using disposable or washable items or suspended if not deemed safe.

### ***Cleaning and Disinfection Following Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 Case***

If there is a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case in the school, all CDC and DOH guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting will be followed. The school will wait as long as possible before cleaning and disinfecting using the CDC approved cleaners, sanitizers and PPE provided by the school. A thorough cleaning will be done of all areas of the school including entrance area, all high touch surfaces (doorknobs, tables, desks, light switches, counters, phones, tablets, keyboards, toilets, sinks, faucets), all works and materials used by the students, and entire bathroom. Any material that can not be easily sanitized (books, papers, cloth items) will be set aside and isolated until the appropriate time it takes for COVID-19 to die on the item. Outside doors and windows will be opened if possible to increase air circulation in the school. If more than 7 days has passed since the person who is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 has been in the school, additional cleaning is not necessary, but routine cleaning and disinfecting will continue.

### **1.7 Extracurriculars**

Any extracurricular activities that may occur would be limited to small groups of children and the safety measures outlined in this Plan would be practiced by teachers and students.

### **1.8 Before and Aftercare**

The school does not offer before or aftercare.

### **1.9 Vulnerable Populations**

The school will offer accommodations to anyone that is at an increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness so that they can safely participate. The school will examine possible accommodations on a case by case basis.

### **1.10 Transportation - N/A**

### **1.11 Food Services**

The school day is under 3 hours, so students only participate in a snack, not lunch. A teacher, wearing a mask, will prepare and distribute snacks to children. Children will be instructed to wash their hands with soap for 20 seconds prior to eating their snack. Children will not share snacks. As children will take their masks off for snack time, teachers will ensure that children will be 6 feet apart. A snack rotation schedule of small groups of children will be implemented, with smaller groups having their snack at a time in one room, while other children continue with activities in the other room.

The self-serve water station will remain available for children to use throughout the school day. Children will be instructed to use hand sanitizer before pouring their water into a disposable cup.

### **1.12 Mental Health, Behavioral, and Emotional Support Services and Programs**

The school acknowledges that the transition back to in-person instruction may be difficult for some students. The school will be using a phase-in period for the first 2 weeks of school. The amount of time that children are at school increases each day until they are there for the full 2 hours 55 minutes. This allows children to slowly adjust to the school day and new routine. Teachers will be encouraged to communicate with parents/guardians about any behavioral or mental health concerns and the school will share community resources that are available to families.

### **1.13 Communication**

Parents/guardians will be provided with a copy of this Plan. This Plan will also be posted on our website. As an additional measure, prospective students/families and other visitors will be made aware of screening protocol and other safety protocol through email and/or phone communication. School will designate a coordinator or other point(s)-of-contact to be the main contact upon the identification of positive COVID-19 cases and to be responsible for subsequent communication.

## **2. Monitoring**

### **2.1 Screening**

*Attending School:* Please keep your child home if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- Fever (greater than 100.0°F)/chills
- Cough/shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Muscle/body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

School will also periodically administer a screening questionnaire for students that determines whether an individual has:

- (a) knowingly been in close or proximate contact in the past 14 days with anyone who has tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 or who has or had symptoms of COVID-19;
- (b) tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 in the past 14 days;
- (c) has experienced any symptoms of COVID-19, including a temperature of greater than 100.0°F, in the past 14 days

Students/parents/guardians must immediately disclose to the School if and when their responses to any of the aforementioned questions changes.

While the School will not administer screening questionnaires to children's immediate household members/caregivers, if an immediate household member or someone who frequently interacts with the child answers yes to any of the above screening questions, the child should also stay at home until the household member/caregiver has tested negative

for Covid..

*Student Morning Drop-Off:* The CDC no longer recommends temperature screenings upon entering school. Children will enter the school through the side door and will be greeted by a teacher. Children over 2 and adults will wear masks while outside of the school at pickup and drop off.

(Note: As per the School's usual practice, children enter the building without parents. Parents do not enter the building, as this makes for a smoother transition for the child in the School).

*Teachers Morning Screening:* Teachers will complete a daily screening questionnaire that determines whether an individual has:

- (a) knowingly been in close or proximate contact in the past 14 days with anyone who has tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 or who has or had symptoms of COVID-19;
- (b) tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 in the past 14 days;
- (c) has experienced any symptoms of COVID-19, including a temperature of greater than 100.0°F, in the past 14 days

Teachers must immediately disclose to the School if and when their responses to any of the aforementioned questions changes.

*Teacher Observation:* Teachers will be educated on observing students for signs of any type of illness while at school. In addition to the most commonly seen symptoms from the CDC that are listed above, teachers will be asked to look for symptoms such as flushed cheeks, rapid or difficulty breathing, fatigue, and irritability. A thermometer will be available for teachers to use if needed. School staff will also be made aware of the symptoms of Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome which is a serious condition association with COVID-19 in children. Teachers will follow all illness management protocol if a child shows any of the following symptoms related to this syndrome: fever, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, neck pain, rash, bloodshot eyes, feeling extra tired, trouble breathing, pain or pressure in chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, bluish lips or face.

*Visitor Screening (Prospective Parent Observation, Prospective Student Visits, Current Parent Observation, Parent-Child Evenings, Contractors/Vendors):* Any parent/guardian or child who is interested in visiting the school must complete a "questionnaire that determines whether an individual has:

- (a) knowingly been in close or proximate contact in the past 14 days with anyone who has tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 or who has or had symptoms of COVID-19;
- (b) tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 in the past 14 days;
- (c) has experienced any symptoms of COVID-19, including a temperature of greater than 100.0°F, in the past 14 days;

Contractors/vendors will not visit the school during school hours of operation.

*Screening Coordinator:* School will designate a central point of contact responsible for receiving and attesting to having reviewed all screening activities.

## **2.2 Testing Protocols**

Teachers shall refer parents/guardians of sick students to get students tested if they show symptomatic behavior or if they respond yes to any questions listed in the questionnaire. For the sake of determining close contacts, all children will be deemed to have been in close contact due to the nature of Morning Star. Therefore, if a student should be tested and be found positive, or if a student shows symptoms as outlined above in screening, the teacher will inform the board, and the board will inform all parents and teachers of the situation. This will include an email to indicate that a student showed symptoms and resources for where and how children and family members can be tested. As necessary, the board will reach out to local health department resources and officials for up-to-date testing site information.

Teachers who are symptomatic or have responded yes to any of the questions in the questionnaire are requested to get tested and/or see their health care professionals and will inform the board to determine an appropriate date to return to in-person teaching at the school.

## **2.3 Testing Responsibility**

Students/parents/guardians will be referred to the NYS Department of Health to determine appropriate testing location. <https://covid19screening.health.ny.gov/>

## **2.4 Early Warning Signs**

If a student or teacher has a confirmed case of COVID-19 while school is in session (e.g. not over a holiday break), the School will close for 14 days, as students and teachers will have been exposed and are required to quarantine for 14 days, as per government mandate. School will follow all regulations put forth by state and local health departments.



### **3. Containment**

#### **3.1 School Health Offices**

The School does not have a school health office. If symptoms of COVID are observed by teachers, teachers will follow Isolation guidelines as specified below.

#### **3.2 Isolation**

If a child becomes ill during the school day, a parent/guardian will be notified immediately and the child will need to go home. They will be moved to an isolated area of the school (monitored by a teacher) where they will wait to be picked up.

#### **3.3 Collection**

Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately and asked that they come as soon as possible to pick up their child. Teachers will look out the window to see when the parent has arrived or the parent will call the teacher to notify them of their arrival. Parent/guardian will wear a mask and come to the School door to pick up the child.

#### **3.4 Infected Individuals**

If a student or teacher has a confirmed case of COVID-19, the School will close for 10 days, as students and teachers will have been exposed and are required to quarantine for 10 days, as per government mandate. Confidentiality will be maintained.

If a person is diagnosed with COVID-19 by a healthcare provider based on a test or their symptoms or does not get a COVID-19 test but has had symptoms, they should not be at school and should stay at home until:

- It has been at least 10 days since the individual first had symptoms;
- It has been at least three days since the individual has had a fever (without fever reducing medicine); and
- It has been at least three days since the individual's symptoms improved, including cough and shortness of breath
- Documentation from a health care provider following evaluation

#### **3.5 Exposed Individuals**

Any person who was exposed to the COVID-19 virus must complete 10 days of quarantine and must have not developed symptoms before returning to school. In order to return to school individuals must supply "documentation from a health care provider following evaluation, negative COVID-19 diagnostic test result, and symptom resolution, or if COVID-19 positive, release from isolation."

#### **3.6 Exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms**

After exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, if the individual is not diagnosed by a healthcare provider with COVID-19 they can return to school:

- Once there is no fever, without the use of fever reducing medicines, and they have felt well for 24 hours; and
- If they have been diagnosed with another condition and has a healthcare provider written note stating they are clear to return to school

### **3.7 Hygiene, Cleaning, Disinfection**

If a student or teacher has a confirmed case of COVID-19 while school is in session (e.g. not over a holiday break), the School will close for 10 days, as students and teachers will have been exposed and are required to quarantine for 10 days, as per government mandate. School will follow all regulations put forth by state and local health departments. As the school will have been closed for longer than the recommended 7 days, regular cleaning and disinfection schedule will resume upon school opening.

If there is a suspected case in the school, the school will wait as long as possible before cleaning and open any outside doors and windows if possible to increase air circulation. All areas of the school will be thoroughly cleaned including frequently touched surfaces (doorknobs, tables, desks, light switches, counters, phones, tablets, keyboards, toilets, sinks, faucets) as well as materials used by the students. Anything that can not be cleaned will be set aside and isolated.

### **3.8 Contact Tracing**

“Contact tracing is a public health function performed by local public health departments to trace all persons who had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19.” To aid in public health officials:

- Teachers will keep accurate attendance records of students and staff
- Teachers will keep records of any visitors (e.g. prospective families or parent volunteers) that includes dates and times
- Teachers and the board will assist local health departments in tracing all contacts of an infected individual at school in accordance with the protocol, training, and tools provided through the New York State Contact Tracing Program and this section may be updated to reflect changes in that program.
- If teachers or board members get a call from “NYS Contact Tracing” (518-387-9993), they will answer the phone. Note that a contact tracer will: NEVER ask for a Social Security number, any private or school financial information, credit card information, or send a web link without proper authentication procedures.

- Privacy and confidentiality laws must be respected. If a teacher or board member is not sure if answering a question breaks such NYS or federal laws, she/he will refrain from answering and report the question to the board to be passed onto legal council when necessary. While Morning Star is not legally bound to follow Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), teachers will follow such guidelines and are prohibited from disclosing medical records. For such questions teachers should direct Contact Tracers to the family. Teachers do have the responsibility to inform the parent of suspected medical issues that the child exhibits within the classroom.

### **3.9 Communication**

Teachers and students are required to notify the school if an “individual has:

- knowingly been in close or proximate contact in the past 14 days with anyone who has tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 or who has or had symptoms of COVID-19;
- tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 in the past 14 days;
- has experienced any symptoms of COVID-19, including a temperature of greater than 100.0°F, in the past 14 days

If a student or teacher has a confirmed case of COVID-19, parents/guardians will be notified via email and phone as necessary. Teachers/parents guardians will be informed that the School will close for 10 days, as students and teachers will have been exposed and are required to quarantine for 10 days, as per government mandate. Confidentiality will be maintained.

## **4. Closure**

### **4.1 Closure triggers**

If a student or teacher has a confirmed case of COVID-19, the School will close for 10 days, as students and teachers will have been exposed and are required to quarantine for 10 days, as per government mandate. Confidentiality will be maintained.

The school will also close if mandated by the government.

School may also close at its own discretion for the safety of children, teachers and their families.

### **4.2 Operational Activity**

Teachers, Education Director and the Board will work to develop an at-home curriculum that best reflects the Montessori-style of learning.

### **4.3 Communication**

The school will notify parents/guardians and teachers immediately upon a closure decision through email and text. School will also communicate to parents/guardians and teachers regarding any consideration (prior to closing decision) regarding close due to levels of cases rising regionally or statewide. Teachers and Board will be in frequent communication regarding at-home learning plans.