

Returning to Campus With Health and Safety in Mind 2020-2021

Thank you for your patience as we have planned for the start of the 2020 school year. We have been working hard to weigh the updated information from public health officials as well as the needs of our students, staff and parents. Following the guidelines of the Minnesota Safe Learning Plan and taking into consideration the size of our community, we have determined that we are able to comply with the distancing recommendations and will open on September 8th for in-person learning.

We welcome your review of our plan to safely return to learning in-person this fall. Our proposed plan reflects our review of the current research, State guidance, medical knowledge, and best practices available to reduce and mitigate risks.



Our Commitment to Each Other

It is important that everyone in our school take steps to reduce COVID-19 transmission, particularly to those at high risk, while balancing the need to maintain a strong community that effectively supports staff, students, and families. We will need to work together to ensure that everyone stays healthy and that classrooms can remain open for in-person learning. Let's each continue to do our part to keep our friends, family, co-workers and community members safe and healthy.

- Monitor health and check temperatures before leaving home. A temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher indicates a fever and the need to stay home.
- Be alert for symptoms. Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19. If you detect these symptoms, contact your health care provider immediately.
- Stay home when you or your child are sick
- Stay mindful in social settings, avoiding large groups or unnecessary activities and wearing a mask in indoor spaces

Oak Hill will monitor the community and school-level impact of COVID-19 on a regular basis in consultation with public health to determine if adjustments to our learning model are needed. The decision to shift to an alternative learning model will center on the impact of COVID-19 at the school level, while maintaining awareness of changes in viral activity in the community through continued review of the biweekly county-level case data. We respect the impact a shift in learning model will have on the school community; making a change requires coordination and communication even when well thought-out plans are in place, and therefore will do so only when necessary.



Scheduling

While our 8:30a.m. to 3:30 p.m. school day will remain in place, our child care hours will need to be adjusted in order to accommodate keeping children and staff in their assigned cohorts. At this time, before school care will not be available. After school care will be offered at a flat fee from 3:30 until 5:00 p.m.

Lunch & recess will be staggered and will take place in classroom cohorts to minimize the number of children in the spaces and maximize social distancing. Any common areas used throughout the day will be disinfected between cohorts.



Safety Measures

Multiple safety measures have been put in place according to the required and recommended practices published for schools by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). These practices are foundational to minimizing the risks of exposure to COVID-19 for students, staff, and families.

Face Coverings

Executive Order 20-81 requires all Minnesotans to wear a face covering in all public indoor spaces and indoor businesses – including nonpublic schools – as of July 25, 2020. This Executive Order makes exemptions for children who are five years old and under, and those with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that makes it unreasonable for the individual to maintain a face covering.

Face coverings are required for all students, staff, and other persons present in any kindergarten through grade 12 school. To provide a consistent, safe environment for students and staff, this requirement applies equally to kindergartners.

While we are an independent school, Oak Hill is also a licensed child care center, which sometimes has different needs. Although face coverings are recommended indoors, childcare settings have unique needs that do not always permit universal face coverings when indoors. Childcare settings also require additional flexibility surrounding the use of face shields, which increase visibility of facial expressions and lip movements, which is critical to early childhood development and learning.

All staff working in an indoor setting must wear a face covering only in communal areas (e.g., center or building hallways, lobbies, restrooms, breakrooms, etc.) where groups may intermix. Staff may wear a face shield when wearing a face covering is problematic (for example, when young children would benefit from viewing staff facial expressions and lip movements to understand what is being said and how words are formed).

Children 5 years of age and under are not required to wear a face shield or face covering in a child care setting.

Children age 3 through 5 years who can reliably wear a face covering in compliance with CDC guidance may do so. This means they can wear it without frequently touching or removing it.

Consistent Groupings and Cohorts

In accordance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Oak Hill will be participating in the practice of “cohorting.” The practice of maintaining smaller, consistent groups or cohorts of children and related workers who avoid intermixing to the extent possible, are seen as an effective risk mitigation strategy - especially for settings with younger children who are unable to wear universal face coverings.

To reduce the risk of exposure, we will maintain consistent groups or cohorts of children and related workers by classroom, and will avoid intermixing groups or cohorts of children and workers to the extent possible.

Hygiene Practices

All staff and children will wash their hands:

- Upon arrival, when moving from one area to another and before leaving the program.
- After diapering/ toileting, coughing, sneezing, blowing/wiping noses, handling bodily fluids, garbage, or animals, cleaning/sanitizing, playing outside, in the gym and handling sick children.
- Before and after preparing or eating any food, giving medicine, water table and play dough use.

Staff will monitor and assist any child who needs help.

Staff will wash hands before and after administering sunscreen and will use a separate pair of protective gloves for each child.

Hand washing procedures are posted at sinks.

Handwashing will be with running water and liquid soap when available. Alternatively, a hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol will be used. Hand sanitizer use will happen only under adult supervision and will be inaccessible to preschool children when not in use.

Increased Signage on Campus

- 6' separation stickers in high traffic areas
- Directional marking of hallways and common spaces
- Level Specific Entrances (see Use of Physical Space Section for details)
- Hand washing
- Physical distancing
- Mask protocol

Cleaning and Materials Handling

Classrooms, including all high touch surfaces and used learning materials will be cleaned and disinfected daily by staff and by custodial crews in the evening. Frequently touched surfaces and objects include but are not limited to:

- Face shields
- Door knobs and handles
- Stair rails
- Classroom furniture
- Lunch tables and chairs
- Countertops
- Handrails
- Light switches
- Handles on equipment (e.g., athletic equipment)
- Push-buttons on the elevator
- Shared toys
- Shared remote controls
- Shared telephones
- Shared desktops
- Shared computer keyboards and mice

Monitoring and Excluding for Illness

Families are expected to monitor their health and body temperature prior to leaving for school each day. If your child is registering a fever of 100.4 or higher, please keep them home and notify the school of their absence. If a temperature check at school shows a fever of 100.4 or higher, this will result in immediate isolation of a student from their peers and parents/guardians will be contacted to pick up the child. Please make arrangements for students to be picked up within 30 minutes of notification.

Handling Suspected or Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19

When a student or staff member develops any symptoms of illness consistent with COVID-19:

The student or staff member will be isolated while they wait to be picked up or until they are able to leave the facility on their own. We will ensure that they have hygiene supplies available, including a cloth face covering / face shield, facial tissues, and alcohol-based hand rub.

Staff who are monitoring the student or staff member with symptoms will wear a cloth face mask and practice social distancing. The space used for isolation will be closed off after the ill person leaves. We will wait 24 hours or as long as is feasible before disinfecting. Outside doors and windows and ventilating fans will be used to increase air circulation in the area.

All areas used by the person who is sick, such as high-touch surfaces, and items they have touched (e.g., individual desk, cot, recently used toys, shared equipment) will be cleaned and disinfected.

We have developed a contingency plan with our custodial vendor outlining practices and protocols for daily procedures as well as various scenarios when COVID-19 is suspected or identified in our building.

Any suspected or diagnosed case of COVID-19 must be immediately reported to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) for monitoring. MDH will advise Oak Hill immediately on all next steps and direct our communications.

Exposure

If a staff member or child has been identified as in close contact to someone outside the classroom community who is diagnosed with COVID-19, that staff member or child will be required to self-quarantine for 14 days per the CDC guidelines or until a negative test result. Close contact means being closer than six feet for more than 15 minutes with a person who was infectious.

Positive Case of COVID-19 in a Classroom

If COVID-19 is confirmed in a child or staff member in a classroom community, all persons regularly in that cohort will be required to self-quarantine for 14 days per the CDC guidelines.

1. The appropriate public health authorities will be notified.
2. The classroom/office space will be thoroughly disinfected.
3. Distance learning will be initiated

Oak Hill will follow the enclosed *Decision Tree for People with COVID-19 Symptoms in Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs* when deciding exclusion criteria to determine when sick children, staff or volunteers may return.

Oak Hill will ensure all parent or guardian, staff and volunteers contact information is up-to-date in our student information system. We will follow all guidance from MDH for when and how we should notify our community. Communication will be delivered via email through our student information system.

In the Event a Classroom Needs to Be Closed Due to a Suspected or Confirmed Positive COVID-19 Case

Oak Hill Montessori, as a private school, budgets for staff and other expenses to run the school based on enrollment and tuition. We're dedicated to investing the right resources to help your child achieve their true potential. All of the protocols being taken as outlined above - PPE, additional cleaning, etc. - only increase the expense to operate the school and ensure the teachers and community will be here to welcome you and your children back after any temporary closure is over.

For Toddler and pre-Kindergarten students, on-site care will remain a priority. Should the daycare provision of the lower school be forced to close for longer than 2 weeks (either by State mandate or a diagnosed case of COVID-19), a credit will be applied to your account for 20% of any additional time not permitted in school.

For K-8 students, in the event a portion or all of the school is required to close, teachers will immediately transition to an online learning environment and will continue to provide educational instruction with your child until we can return to the classroom. Tuition levels will not be adjusted.



Use of Physical Space

Level-Specific Entrances/Exits

Drop off and pick up procedures will be altered to minimize contact across cohort groups. Each age group will enter and exit the school through an assigned door. To minimize the risk of exposure we will only be allowing students and staff into the building until further notice.

Toddler Community & Children's House: Door 1

Lower Elementary: Door 3

Upper Elementary: Door 4

Junior High: Door 2

Making Use of Open Classrooms

Classroom enrollment has been capped at each level to maximize classroom space available to each student and allow for distancing. All available classroom spaces will be used and assigned to a cohort group.

Open Windows and Doors as Weather Permits

Our beautiful Montessori classrooms are each equipped with doors and windows that allow for airflow from the outdoor environment. As weather permits, we will follow guidance from our HVAC vendor to open windows and doors to maximize fresh air.

Outdoor Environments

Each classroom has a doorway that opens to an outdoor extension of the classroom. Supervised outdoor workspaces will be encouraged while weather permits to maximize distancing. Activities requiring the gathering of a whole cohort will also be encouraged to take place in an outdoor space.

Ventilation Systems

HVAC systems in the school have been inspected for effectiveness and tuned for efficiency. We are currently installing bipolar ionization technology in all our air handling units. While this technology has been a part of hospital settings for years, it is now an option for schools seeking safer ways to destroy Coronaviruses. During the system's cleaning process, the NPBI technology attacks and kills viruses, mold spores and bacteria. The ions remove hydrogen from the pathogens, leaving them to die, and leaving behind clean and healthy indoor air. For more information, visit:

<https://globalplasma.com/npbi/>.

Water

Each classroom is equipped with handwashing sinks and hand sanitizer, in addition to those located in common spaces. Sinks and surrounding areas will be disinfected throughout the day. Elementary bathrooms will utilize a touchless wash basin.

Drinking fountains will be capped and only water bottle stations will be in use at each end of the building for filling bottles and disposable cups.

Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure

Classrooms will be arranged to naturally maximize distancing for students, including spacing of tables and chairs. All classrooms will be utilized in order to minimize the total number of students in each room.

Art and Music Specialists will visit classrooms and only small groups will be allowed to visit the Art and Music classrooms. Classrooms will be disinfected prior to another group using the space.

After school care, nap and lunch periods will be self contained within each cohort/classroom. The activity room and the all day Montessori room will be used for large motor activity for their respective levels and disinfected between uses.



Communication To and From Families

Although it may look different than in past years, we are confident that we will be able to safely bring staff and students back to Oak Hill for an in-person learning experience this fall.

Each family will need to [complete a Back to School form](#) to let us know whether your student(s) will be returning to campus in September, working with our partners at Guidepost Montessori to learn from home, or withdrawing from Oak Hill at this time.

Please submit your decision to the school no later than 12:00 p.m. on Monday, August 10th. Those enrolled after August 10th will be responsible for meeting the terms of the Continuous Enrollment Agreement and the established terms of withdrawal.

The week of August 10th, families can expect to receive additional information regarding specific new policies and procedures in the Covid-19 addendum to the Parent/Student Handbook. Knowing families' choices will be a key factor in our ability to share final plans for multiple scenarios.

In the meantime, we will be posting resources on our website at <https://oakhillmontessori.org/returning-to-campus>. The planning document and the website will be updated as changes occur. Commonly asked questions will be catalogued there as well. You may direct your questions to admin@oakhillmontessori.org.



Full Time Distance Learning Options - Guidepost Montessori Partnership

Our classrooms will be safe and ready for students. But for those not ready to return to a school building, we are partnering with Guidepost Montessori to use their innovative ideas and technology to bring the Montessori classroom to our students. In an effort to show their support and gratitude for Oak Hill teachers and families, Guidepost will be donating a small portion of monthly tuition payments back to our school.

Families may register as part of the Oak Hill partnership on a month to month basis, with a 30 day notice needed to cancel the service in the instance a family decides a return to school is possible (enrollment space permitting).

Toddler and Children’s House (0-5): Bring Montessori into your home through virtual lessons, personalized planning, support for parents, and physical activities and materials sent to your home. Cultivate your child’s independence and natural curiosity while being empowered and supported.

Children’s House (5-6): Children in their final year of Children’s House are better suited for extended virtual lessons. During this key year, they can continue to build core skills in literacy and math, supported with timeless Montessori materials and lesson plans sent to your home to continue the learning beyond the screen.

Elementary: Elementary students work at their level of needed challenge. Small group lessons flow into engaging work, designed to foster both academics and fundamental independence. Features include access to a learning platform that allows students to organize, plan, collaborate on and share their work.

Junior High: The junior high program offers distinctive core courses that explore the dimensions of human experience, thought, progress, and creativity. Students connect and apply the knowledge and skills acquired in their courses to their own passions, interests, and ideas in order to collaborate on projects and produce meaningful work.

<https://guidepostmontessori.com/virtual-school>