



**CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

**2020-2021  
Safe Learning Plan**

1611 Ames Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55106  
651-774-5000

[www.cornerstone-elementary.org](http://www.cornerstone-elementary.org)

*Updated 4.1.2021*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	3
Parent Contact/Communication.....	4
Policies During Covid-19 Pandemic	
Arrival/Dismissal .....	5
Bus Transportation.....	5
Covid Testing and Quarantine.....	5
Disinfection Procedures .....	6
Food and Nutrition.....	7
Health Policies .....	7
Self-Care.....	8
Social Distancing and Masking .....	9
Distance Learning Program.....	10
Grounding Philosophy.....	10
Assessments.....	10
Attendance .....	10
Class Schedules and Work Expectations.....	11
School Supplies.....	11
Social-Emotional Supports.....	12
Special Education.....	12
Specialist Services.....	12
Technology .....	13
In-Person Learning Program .....	14
Educational and Health Guidelines.....	14
Classroom Routines .....	14
Resumption of Distance Learning.....	18
Social Emotional Supports .....	18
Parent-School Partnership.....	20

## INTRODUCTION

August 25, 2020

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed schooling in significant ways. We are faced with decisions that can be literally life or death, and the decision to send your child to school or come to work amidst a global pandemic is not one made lightly. What has not changed is our commitment to providing a developmentally appropriate environment for your child to succeed. At Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School, we are committed to supporting your family and our staff in an environment that emphasizes health and well-being, while continuing to deliver the high-quality Montessori program that distinguishes us.

The following handbook outlines the changes that have been made in order to keep our staff and your children and families as safe as possible during this time. The policies contained here take priority over our Parent Policies Handbook and are subject to change, as guidance from the Minnesota Departments of Health and Education evolves. This handbook additionally contains details around the distance learning with supports program that begins our school year together, as well as a timeline for evaluation of transition to other scenarios.

There is nothing “normal” about the year we are about to begin. At the same time, our hope is to create a sense of normalcy for your children and an environment for them to thrive and be healthy, whether that is on-site at 1611 Ames or in your home.

Throughout these pages, we frequently ask you to let us know or reach out when you have questions, concerns, requests, or just want to share an experience. This is not an empty ask: distance learning demands much of you and of the teaching staff, and we must work together for every child to be successful. We look forward to sharing that work with you.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alyssa Schwartz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alyssa Schwartz  
Head of School

## PARENT CONTACT/COMMUNICATION

Cornerstone's guides, specialists, and administration are available to you by phone, email, or text. Please note that staff may not answer messages left outside school hours (8:00a.m.-4:30p.m.), however they will respond within 48 hours.

Parent meetings with the guides or administration will take place over Zoom or by phone, should they be requested by either party.

### Administration

Head of School	Alyssa Schwartz - 651-583-4181 <a href="mailto:alyssaschwartz@cornerstone-elementary.org">alyssaschwartz@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>
Director of Business Operations	Chris Bewell <a href="mailto:chrisebewell@cornerstone-elementary.org">chrisebewell@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>
Director of Elementary Pedagogy	Liesl Taylor <a href="mailto:lheidetaylor@cornerstone-elementary.org">lheidetaylor@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>
Administrative Assistant	Daylin Galdamez - 651-774-5000 <a href="mailto:reception@mtcm.org">reception@mtcm.org</a>

### Kindergarten Guides

Children's House 1	Brianna Olson-Carr - 651-895-3955 <a href="mailto:brianna@mtcm.org">brianna@mtcm.org</a>
Children's House 2	Molly McDermott - 651-895-3571 <a href="mailto:molly@mtcm.org">molly@mtcm.org</a>

### Lower Elementary Guides

Garden	Sara Wade - 651-370-0823 <a href="mailto:sarawade@cornerstone-elementary.org">sarawade@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>
Pond	Kes'ava Dernovsek - 651-370-3197 <a href="mailto:kesavadernovsek@cornerstone-elementary.org">kesavadernovsek@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>

### Upper Elementary Guides

Forest	Mara Johnson - 651-370-3761 <a href="mailto:marajohnson@cornerstone-elementary.org">marajohnson@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>
Marsh	Jess Goff - 651-370-3788 <a href="mailto:jessgoff@cornerstone-elementary.org">jessgoff@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>

### Learning Specialists

ELL Teacher	Cynthia Crooks - 651-571-1006 <a href="mailto:cynthiacrooks@cornerstone-elementary.org">cynthiacrooks@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>
Literacy Specialist	Megan Riemer - 651-243-2567 <a href="mailto:meganriemer@cornerstone-elementary.org">meganriemer@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>
Math Specialist	Amber Osterkamp - 651-587-8790 <a href="mailto:ameroosterkamp@cornerstone-elementary.org">ameroosterkamp@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>
Special Education Teacher	Suzi Splinter - 651-370-3789 <a href="mailto:suzisplinter@cornerstone-elementary.org">suzisplinter@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>
Special Education Teacher	David Shubat - 651-774-5000 <a href="mailto:davidshubat@cornerstone-elementary.org">davidshubat@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>
Social Worker (Pond/Forest)	Terri Strom - <a href="mailto:terri@mtcm.org">terri@mtcm.org</a>
Social Worker (Garden/Marsh)	Nora Springer - <a href="mailto:nora@mtcm.org">nora@mtcm.org</a>

## **CORNERSTONE POLICIES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

### **ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL**

To promote social distancing, parents may not enter the 1611 Ames facility. If a parent needs to see their child during the day, they should call the front desk and the child will be brought out.

Parents are encouraged to drop off their children between 8:30 and 8:45a.m. Children should exit the car at the front curb, where an administrator will greet each child, take their temperature, and guide them to their classroom where they will wash their hands and prepare for the day.

If a late arrival is necessary, please notify the administration and call upon arrival.

Parents may pick up at 3:00p.m. If you prefer to pick up your child before lunch, please speak with school administration about the appropriate timing. Please use the car line as detailed in the Parent Policies Handbook: parents will wait in their car or next to their car and their child will be brought out to them.

Staff and families will maintain the six-foot recommended distance during arrival and dismissal.

Children arriving before 8:30a.m. may ring the bell when they have arrived and they will have their temperature taken prior to being invited inside. Parents should not leave until their child has been approved for entrance.

### **BUS TRANSPORTATION**

Bus transportation will be provided for children living in St. Paul upon request. All children will have assigned seats, based on the order in which they are picked up/dropped off, and must remain in those seats for the duration of the bus ride. Children must wear masks while on the bus.

Parents are expected to monitor their child's health prior to sending them to school; children will not be permitted to ride the bus home if they are found to have a fever or other Covid-19 symptoms while at school.

Parents and children must agree to the Cornerstone bus policy, found on pages 8-9 of the Parent Policies Handbook.

### **COVID TESTING AND QUARANTINE**

Keeping our children, staff, and parents healthy is a community effort. All constituents are expected to follow state guidelines for safe behavior, and are asked to consider how the

entire community is affected when they choose to travel, participate in large social gatherings, or otherwise increase exposure to Covid-19. Families and staff are asked to consider self-isolating after high exposure activities.

The Minnesota Department of Health recommends that all children be tested for Covid-19 every two weeks. Testing resources are available at <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/testing.html>.

If your child utilizes a Vault at Home saliva test, they may bring it to school, sealed in its biohazard bag, to be returned for analysis every two weeks. The exact date of this opportunity will be posted in the Stepping Stones newsletter.

Staff, including those vaccinated, will also receive Covid testing every two weeks, at school.

It is important to note that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend *no travel domestically or internationally* at this time. If your family chooses to leave Minnesota at any point this spring, your child must quarantine upon return home following these guidelines:

- If you travel by mass public transportation (air, bus, train), your child must quarantine 5-7 days and show a negative Covid test after the 5<sup>th</sup> day of quarantine. They may return to school on the 8<sup>th</sup> day, with proof of the negative test.
- If you come into prolonged contact with people outside your household (an amusement park, sports event, etc.), your child must quarantine 10 days and return to school on the 11<sup>th</sup> day.
- If you travel by private car and maintain proper Covid mitigation strategies (wearing masks, washing hands, social distancing), your child may return to school immediately, however we still recommend quarantining for 5 days and testing after the 5<sup>th</sup> day.

## **DISINFECTION PROCEDURES**

Cleaning in classrooms is always important and we have taken this opportunity to strengthen our cleaning procedures. We use a peroxide solution and QUAT, two chemicals provided by Ecolab that have been proven to kill viruses. The peroxide solution is not ingestible, so any surface that may come into contact with a child's mouth or with food is rinsed with water and sprayed with QUAT, which becomes inert upon drying.

Light switches, doorknobs, and other high-touch furnishings will be disinfected before and after school and throughout the day as needed, using the peroxide solution.

Tables will be disinfected before and after each meal and additionally as needed through the day, using our peroxide-water-QUAT sequence.

All adults will wear masks and gloves during cleaning and sanitizing, including dishwashing, and food distribution.

## FOOD AND NUTRITION

Children will be offered breakfast, lunch, and a snack during the school day.

Children will eat at individual tables, situated at least three feet apart. Adults will support eating, conversation, and cleanliness during a potentially high transmission time. Meals will be individually plated prior to service.

Children who are engaged in distance learning may receive a week's worth of meals for pick-up at Cornerstone. Meals must be requested a week in advance; families who fail to pick up meals for two consecutive weeks will be removed from the purchase list unless they otherwise notify the school.

## HEALTH POLICIES

If a child or staff member is experiencing illness or has been exposed to a confirmed Covid case, they are required to complete the Cornerstone [screening form](#).

Upon arrival, all children and staff will have temperatures checked with an infrared thermometer. If a fever is identified, it will be verified with a second thermometer. Children or staff with a temperature above 100.4 degrees will be immediately sent home and must remain home until 24 hours after the fever breaks.

Tylenol and medication to reduce fever may not be used to determine the length of time a child is well.

Children will be isolated and sent home immediately if they demonstrate fever, dry cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat. Children experiencing dry cough, shortness of breath, or two simultaneous symptoms (for example, fever and diarrhea) will be sent home following the CDC Covid decision tree and will need to remain home for 10 days. A single symptom, other than cough or shortness of breath, requires the child to be home for 24 hours after the symptom subsides. Decisions to send children home ultimately rest with the CMES administration.

If an ill child has a sibling on-site, the sibling will also be sent home and must remain home until all children in the family meet the criteria to return to school.

If Cornerstone administration requests a child be picked up due to illness, parents are expected to arrive within 30 minutes.

The most up to date Covid-19 symptom list can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>.

If a child or staff member presents symptoms consistent with Covid-19, they are strongly encouraged to seek testing. Testing locations can be found at <https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/if-sick/testing-locations/index.jsp>.

If a child or staff member is diagnosed with Covid-19, the classroom community impacted will close immediately and follow MDH guidance. Administration will inform all staff and parents of MDH guidance and if additional closures are required.

A staff member or student who had symptoms of suspected or confirmed Covid-19 can return to the program when:

- At least 24 hours have passed since recovery – defined as no fever without the use of medications and improvement in respiratory signs like cough and shortness of breath;

**AND**

- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

**OR**

- It has been at least 24 hours since recovery **AND** the individual has a confirmed medical diagnosis for the symptoms.

If your child has an underlying health condition, please notify administration.

As of April 12, most, if not all, Cornerstone staff will be fully vaccinated. It is important to note that this does not mean school is a fully safe place. Children are not vaccinated and we do not know the full extent of possible asymptomatic transmission. We will err on the side of caution in any event of illness or exposure.

#### **SELF-CARE**

Children will be required to wash their hands thoroughly upon arrival, before and after eating, before and after going outside, after using the bathroom, and periodically throughout the day.

Parents are asked to apply sunscreen to their children before coming to school in the morning. Children will be invited to apply their own sunscreen before going outside for recess.

Children and adults will both change into inside shoes prior to entering the classroom.

Children are encouraged to leave backpacks and other personal items at home.

All children in the Children's House and Elementary will wear masks at all times inside the building. Cornerstone will have extra masks available if needed. Children will be taught proper mask usage and parents will be encouraged to model good mask etiquette with their children. A child may choose not to wear a mask if there is an underlying health condition and the school has received notification of the condition from a doctor.

## **SOCIAL DISTANCING AND MASKING**

All adults and children will wear masks inside and outside at Cornerstone, unless facial expressions are necessary (as with some language presentations), in which case face shields may be used. Face shields are not a replacement for masks and will be used sparingly, unless a mask is also worn.

All adults will socially distance (six-feet) from one another at all times. Children may socially distance 3 feet from one another and from adults.

Children will remain in parts of the building designated for their use and should not enter other environments.

Recess and use of the outdoor spaces will be staggered so that Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary children do not mix between environments. The Upper Elementary environments will share outdoor space during recess, as will the Lower Elementary environments. Social distance and masking will be maintained in the outdoor spaces.

The only staff who may mix between cohorts of children are specialists and administrators, who will socially distance when providing service and will take the utmost caution in avoiding direct contact with children.

## CONTINUED DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM

### GROUNDING PHILOSOPHY

Our Montessori philosophy has taught us to follow the principles of Cosmic Education. In our practice we must find a way to teach the whole child and ensure that each individual is offered an experience that not only meets the academic standards given to us by the state of Minnesota, but also inspires growth in the construction of a young human being. It is our task to ensure that each child is given lessons in all subject areas and to share the interconnectedness of our lessons. We must ensure that we are presenting the Great Lessons and offering follow-on ideas that are appropriate to the child's current environment and giving lessons from our albums as much as possible. The whole child has always been our focus and will remain the center of our work.

### ASSESSMENTS

The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) and the ACCESS test for English Language Learners (ELL) will be administered on-site, following the 2020-2021 Assessment Schedule found on the Cornerstone website. Children who are participating in distance learning may opt to come on-site for testing or to not complete assessments this year. Please notify school administration of your preference.

### ATTENDANCE

Attendance will be taken daily for all children. At a minimum, children will be marked present if they:

- Participate in a Zoom conference or collective with their teacher
- Speak to their teacher by phone or email
- Submit completed assignments on a given day.

Children enrolled in kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade may be considered present if their parent/guardian speaks with a teacher on a given day.

Upper Elementary children may have additional requirements for present attendance, including:

- Attend all scheduled collectives, lessons, and appointments
- Complete daily math & language/writing practice, and other lesson follow-on
- Submit follow-on work and demonstrate skill progress weekly
- Listen to daily read-aloud/attend read-aloud conversations
- Complete Work Journal daily
- Submit weekly written reflection & provide Work Journal documentation, as necessary
- Attend any additional agreed-upon scheduled meetings (more frequent check-ins, supported work sessions, as needed)

Children in all grades must participate in their General Education classes in order to be marked present. It is not sufficient to participate in ELL, Literacy/Math, or Special Education services only.

If children are regularly absent, school administration will follow up with the family to identify areas where Cornerstone can support attendance. If administration cannot reach the family after 3 attempts, a wellness check may be requested.

Children must reside in the state of Minnesota to be enrolled at Cornerstone. Please notify administration if you intend to spend significant amounts of time out of state during distance learning.

### **CLASS SCHEDULES AND WORK EXPECTATIONS**

Each child will be provided with a schedule of Montessori presentations, small group collectives, appointments with specialists, and independent work blocks. These schedules will differ based on level (Children's House, Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary) and will provide expectations for a full day of activity.

During Zoom calls, children are expected to be dressed and ready to participate in a community with their cameras turned on. Grace and Courtesy lessons will be given to provide guidance for how to be online.

It is not expected that children be online for an entire school day. Many of the activities that occupy children at school are necessary for distance learning at home, as well: sustained, free outdoor time, breaks for snacks and meals, time for self-care and care of the environment (i.e., contributions to home life). The schedules provided offer opportunities for these times away from classroom expectations, as well as blocks of time for children to engage in paper-based academic work that will be provided to you in bi-weekly packets.

Lessons will be given to the children in small groups, during live sessions with their guides, specialists, and on-site classmates. The lessons will be recorded on Zoom and posted on Schoology for viewing the next day. Children will also be invited to stay on Zoom for the duration of the morning, so that they can work with friends and attend lessons as invited.

Each level will communicate specific timing and expectations to children continuing distance learning.

### **SCHOOL SUPPLIES**

A school supplies list was sent home in the Back to School packet mailed the week of August 24. Elementary children should have access to the items on that list. If you need assistance acquiring anything, please notify the school and we will arrange a pickup of materials. Kindergarten children will be provided with any supplies they need for their distance learning program.

Materials for work at home will be available in Schoology and as paper packets that will be available for pickup every two weeks. If you are not able to pick up packets, please notify administration and we will make other arrangements with you.

### **SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT**

Distance learning puts stress on children, as well as parents. The lack of in-person contact can cause anxiety, isolation, and fear. Terri Strom and Nora Springer, our social work team, are available to support children through this time. They will offer 1:1 Zoom sessions with children through parent or teacher referral. We ask that you please notify your child's guide or the Head of School if you would like your child to receive support.

Terri Strom will be working with children in the Pond and Forest environments. Her email address is [terri@mtcm.org](mailto:terri@mtcm.org).

Nora Springer will be working with children in the Garden and Marsh environments. Her email is [nora@mtcm.org](mailto:nora@mtcm.org).

On-site visits will continue for each class, beginning the week of April 19. Children are welcome to join for recess at any time – please contact your guide or the Head of School to confirm the times of recess for each level. These visits are optional and will allow children the opportunity to play outside together and participate in small group activities.

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Special Education services will continue to be provided during our distance learning period. Children will receive direct service minutes with their teacher by Zoom.

We will continue all Special Education Child Find and evaluation functions during distance learning. Evaluation plans are created with the child's parent and may include invitations to participate in activities and assessments on-site with all health and safety guidelines in place.

Special Education ancillary services such as Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, and Developmental Adapted Physical Education will be conducted by Zoom for children learning at home.

### **SPECIALIST SERVICES**

All children at Cornerstone are considered general education students first, even if they receive additional support from our ELL Teacher, Math or Literacy Specialist, and/or Special Education Teachers. Accordingly, it is essential that children participate in their classroom lessons and activities during distance learning.

Whenever possible, children's services will be scheduled at the same time each day during distance learning, using a consistent Zoom link. The number of days per week a child meets with a specialist will be determined by need and, if applicable, the child's Individual Education Plan.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

Children will be most successful with distance learning if they have access to an internet-enabled laptop or tablet with keyboard and an established workspace (including table and chair). Children may also find an auxiliary mouse or headset/headphones useful for learning. Families that need assistance in providing any of these items may request support from the school.

Zoom and Schoology will continue to be the primary sources of online learning for children. Google Suite will also be used, largely for Upper Elementary children. Kindergarten children will use SeeSaw instead of Schoology.

Children will access all their appointments with specialists through a single Zoom link. Meetings with guides, collectives, and lessons will be on a class-specific Zoom link. Each classroom will also have a Schoology link, where children will access recorded content, copies of handouts, and more.

Each child in the elementary program (grades 1-6) will be given a Google email address to use in communicating with their guide and classmates and accessing Google Suite products as directed by their guide. While we will give the children lessons in proper email etiquette, please know that this is a powerful tool and our ability to monitor its usage is limited.

Epic Books ([www.getepic.com](http://www.getepic.com)) will once again be available for children to access reading content during the school day. Please speak with your guide or specialist if you need a classroom code. There are many other resources for ebooks – please let us know if you would like suggestions.

Additional online resources such as Freckle and Lalilo may be used by your child's guide or specialist. Those websites and applications will be shared with you as needed.

Just as important as digital technology in your child's learning is analog activity. Each child's day is designed to include open periods for offline work. When your child makes cookies, gardens, rides their bike, or plays with a younger sibling, they are developing their executive function skills, expanding their mathematical mind, and learning flexible thinking. Distance learning can be an opportunity for your child to engage in an intimate way with your daily home life, and we invite you to encourage these experiences.

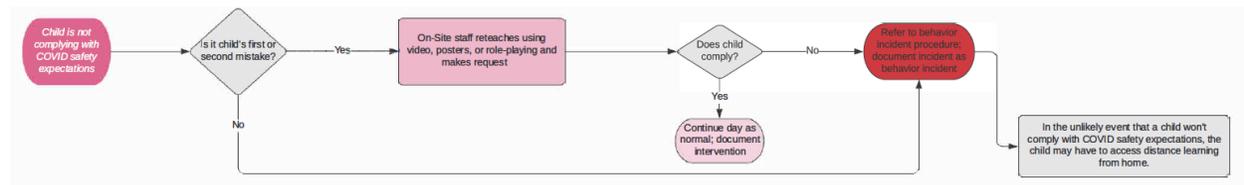
## IN-PERSON LEARNING PROGRAM

Effective April 12, 2021, any child who wishes to learn on-site at Cornerstone may do so. Children participating in our in-person program will be required to follow all health and safety guidelines defined below and in the Policies section of this document.

### EDUCATIONAL AND HEALTH GUIDELINES

In order to safely offer children the opportunity to benefit from an on-site experience, we have incorporated all federal, state, local and CMES educational and health recommendations. Each child will be afforded the expected safety measures and adequate supervision to ensure guidelines may be reliably followed.

In accordance with state law and in the interest of safety of the entire Cornerstone community, including families of children and staff, we expect and must enforce strict compliance to Covid protocol. While we do not expect this to be a problem, parents will be called and asked to pick children up who do not comply with safety standards after one reminder/re-teaching. Children who are unable to comply with the policies listed after two instances of calls home will be asked to resume distance learning. The flowchart below outlines the steps that will be taken if a child is not complying with Covid expectations.



### CLASSROOM ROUTINES

#### *Social Distancing*

All children must be at least three feet apart when on-site.

In the Lower Elementary environments, children will have a designated work space with a floor cushion, work mat, and chowki. Children will also have a small mat for outside work or lunch, and will be free to choose to work inside or outside. When children are writing or would like a break from their designated space, group tables are available which will be distanced and sanitized between use.

In the Upper Elementary environments, children will continue to work at group tables, with plexiglass separating each assigned work space.

#### *Lunch/Recess*

Each class may be split in two groups to eat lunch, minimizing the possibility of Covid transmission when children are unmasked. Whenever possible, lunch will take place outside.

School meals will be plated individually and all children will eat in the classroom or, whenever possible, outdoors.

Recess will take place by level, with each environment rotating use of the Cornerstone yard and the Boys and Girls Club field, during their designated recess time.

Lower Elementary will have lunch at 12:00 and recess after 12:30; Upper Elementary will eat at 12:45 and play outside 12:00-12:45.

#### *Material Use*

We ask that children please bring back all the materials they have received during distance learning, for continued use during in-person learning. These materials should be bagged, labeled, and returned during conferences (March 25-26) or the planning week (March 29-April 2).

As much as possible, children will work with their individual materials this spring. If children are sharing materials, they will wash their hands before and after materials are used and materials will be disinfected as needed.

Each child will have a bin or bag at their space to hold their well-organized materials.

#### *Instruction*

Over the last two to three weeks, guides, specialists and on-site staff have been hosting conversations and activities to help the children prepare emotionally and logistically for time together on-site. We know you have been having similar conversations at home! Children are excited and anxious at the same time about how everything will go.

At both levels, the guides have planned academic content, lessons, and supplies for lessons through the end of the year and, to the extent that it is appropriate and creates consistency for the children, lesson content is the aspect that will shift the least. Guides' top priority is the overall well-being of your children in the context of a school community. Guides are planning many lessons and activities to support learning how to be here together again in a larger group, enjoy each other's company – safely – and connect over meaningful academic and community work – the foundation of Montessori classrooms. Guides are preparing systems for giving group lessons and for supporting the daily activities of the children – work that includes interest and choice, snacks, movement breaks, lunch and recess, class meetings, and lots of physical education and learning outside.

Staff is preparing the environments, retaining as much Montessori feeling as possible: beautiful, simple space designed to help the children be safe and successful in our current model, while still meeting their needs for movement, communication, exploration, and independence.

In the Lower Elementary, children will receive lessons primarily in small groups. Material-based lessons will be presented using a projector and screen, so that children can see the

guide's hands, even at a distance. While children are in their small group lessons, the other children will continue working, with an emphasis on freedom of movement and use of the outdoor environment.

Children will receive a lesson on how to do group work safely, and will use floor dots to mark social distance as they gather around a project or activity. Initially children will request permission to move about the environment; as the children become more comfortable with moving around each other safely, they will have increased freedom within the classroom.

Children will continue to be grouped largely by grade, with skill level presentations provided accordingly. This is partly to support the children in their growth towards independence, after more than a year of working and learning alongside a parent or adult, and also to sequence lessons between the two Lower Elementary environments in the event that a return to distance learning is necessary.

Packets will also continue to be provided, for children learning in-person and at home. This work is intended to provide something that the children know how to use independently, from the beginning, and to provide consistency in the children's transition back to school.

In the Upper Elementary, children will be seated broadly by lesson group, with three lesson groups per environment. Each lesson group is organized by skill level and to ensure that each child has a work partner and friend in each group. The goal during this time is to connect the children to their community and to their work. There will continue to be similar routines from distance learning, to maintain consistency and support children in achieving a sense of completion from work begun earlier this year.

Children will be grouped at tables of no more than 3, to allow space for movement and big projects, as well as sufficient distance between individuals. The platforms in each classroom will seat more children, in line with the larger spaces they offer. There will be planned times for outside group mask breaks, which will support the strong need for developing connections with peers.

UE material-based lessons will be presented with a projector and screen, as in the Lower Elementary, and children will have the opportunity to work with peers off-site via Google Docs and Zoom and with peers on-site outside or at a safe distance indoors. Children will have freedom of movement within limits, which will gradually be loosened as they become more comfortable moving around one another safely.

The patios of both environments will have shade sails mounted, to extend the work space outside, and we are planning space in the main yard where children can safely and comfortably gather for whole class meetings that will allow Upper Elementary children input and investment in the systems that govern their communities

### *Technology*

Lower Elementary children will no longer use technology for their work at school.

Upper Elementary children will continue to use devices in the environment. Children who have been doing daily typing practice and/or are writing their assignments in Google Docs will continue to have access to these programs. Children will also use technology to conduct research, practice skills, and prepare capstone work (for the sixth years), much as they have always done in an Upper Elementary environment.

Rather than share a single desktop computer, as in the past, children will use individual Chromebooks in the afternoon. Children will wash their hands before/after use and these devices will be disinfected between children.

### *MCAs*

The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments will be administered this spring, in person only. The testing window will be April 19-May 21. Children will test by class and grade level, in the multi-purpose room (no more than 10 children at a time). Testing will take place both in the morning and afternoon and children will have as long as they need to complete each assessment. iPads will be disinfected between uses.

If you would like to excuse your child from MCA testing this year, please contact Alyssa Schwartz by April 16 or submit the form found on page 34 of the Parent Policies Handbook.

### *Specialist Services*

All Cornerstone-led specialist services will take place on-site (ELL, Math/Literacy/Behavior, Special Education). Contracted Special Education service providers will also, for the most part, work with children in person.

To prevent specialists from acting as vectors for Covid transmission, children will receive their services in Prairie, the multi-purpose room, or outside. Children will receive services 1:1 or in small groups, with children from their own class only, unless outside work at a distance is possible. Each environment will have a designated licensed specialist who will provide breaks for the lead guide and support recess; that designated specialist may provide services within the room for children from that class.

### *Classroom Staffing*

As mentioned above, a licensed specialist will support each environment for breaks, recess support, and any other necessary adult supervision. In addition, the Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary guides will each have an afternoon per week to prepare, collaborate, and support distance learning. The specialist will support the classroom, along with the environment's regular support team, on those days. Lower Elementary will be with their specialist on Tuesdays and Upper Elementary on Thursdays.

Each environment will have a General Education Assistant and Special Education paraprofessionals in accordance with the needs of the children in that room.

## **RESUMPTION OF DISTANCE LEARNING/ON-SITE CHILDCARE**

Should there be a significant Covid outbreak in Ramsey County, CMES reserves the right to return to distance learning. If this is necessary, student invitations to participate in on-site will be issued in the following manner until available slots are filled.

1. Children of Tier 1 essential workers
2. Children of CMES and CMS school staff
3. Children who qualify for special education services or have been referred for evaluation for such services\*
4. Children whose health and safety will be supported by meals and supervision unavailable elsewhere
5. Children with academic, or social/emotional recovery needs. These groups will be considered in the following order:
  - Children who qualify for ELL services
  - Children whose progress or attendance during previous periods of distance learning show a need for a burst of service to regain grade level norms
6. Children of Tier 2 essential workers
7. Children of Tier 3 essential workers

CMES reserves the right to limit access to on-site care to certain groups listed above, based on the Covid-19 case data within Ramsey County, recommendations, from public health officials, staffing capacity, or other reasons determined by school administration.

\*Children receiving Special Education services will be invited to participate in on-site based on individual need, the level of service required in their annual IEPs, and due process considerations. Children with IEPs may be given priority over groups 4-7, but are not guaranteed priority.

## **SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT**

The transition between distance learning and in-person learning will likely bring to the forefront the anxiety, isolation, and fear that children may have felt over this past year. Terri Strom and Nora Springer, our social work team, and Liesl Taylor, our behavior specialist, are available to support children through this time.

Terri Strom will be working with children in the Pond and Forest environments. Her email address is [terri@mtcm.org](mailto:terri@mtcm.org).

Nora Springer will be working with children in the Garden and Marsh environments. Her email is [nora@mtcm.org](mailto:nora@mtcm.org).

Liesl Taylor will work with children who have been identified for support through the SAEBRS assessment (Social, Academic, Emotional, Behavior Risk Screener).

Through Mindfulness Mondays in the Upper Elementary environments, 1:1 and small group sessions, and daily lunch groups, we aim to help children process their experiences, develop coping strategies for the constant change, and recognize their emotions for self-regulation. We expect that all children will have extra space and time in smaller groups to process their feelings and experiences related to this exceptional year and during this time of transition.

If you feel your child needs additional support, please speak with your guide or the Head of School. We may be able to provide extra minutes with one of our staff and resources for outside therapeutic assistance.

## PARENT-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

This year has been tremendously challenging, for many reasons. We are so excited to bring back children to our environments, while also recognizing that this transition will be a challenge of its own. These last few months of the 2020-21 school year will, likely, continue to be difficult, as children and adults face the trauma of this past year, learn to participate in a full-day of school again, and reintegrate into a community.

On our website, you can find *Our Approach to Work*<sup>1</sup>, which details how we help children find their way into engaging activity. This document will support families who are continuing distance learning, as well as families who find the return to school difficult.

Communications to the whole community are made weekly at minimum, through the school's NotifyMe system. Please make sure you are signed up for this service at [www.cornerstone-elementary.org/?PageName=NotifyMe](http://www.cornerstone-elementary.org/?PageName=NotifyMe). The guides, specialists, and administration are always available to talk with individual families about concerns and progress. Meetings this spring will continue to be held by phone or Zoom.

Parent Partnership events and other school gatherings will also take place by Zoom (Graduation and Kindergarten Fly-Up are to be determined). These opportunities are valuable for talking with your guides and other parents about Montessori pedagogy, classroom practices, and more. Please refer to your school calendar and/or the Stepping Stones newsletters for details.

We will no longer conduct monthly surveys, however we always welcome your feedback, suggestions, or requests. The annual school satisfaction survey will be distributed at the end of May/beginning of June. If anything comes up for your child or family in the meantime, please contact your guide and the Head of School.

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[http://images.pcmac.org/SiSFiles/Schools/MN/CornerstoneMontessoriES/CornerstoneMontessoriES/Uploads/Publications/Our\\_approach\\_to\\_work\\_at\\_Cornerstone\\_.pdf](http://images.pcmac.org/SiSFiles/Schools/MN/CornerstoneMontessoriES/CornerstoneMontessoriES/Uploads/Publications/Our_approach_to_work_at_Cornerstone_.pdf)