



# CORNERSTONE

MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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July 22, 2021

Dear Cornerstone Families,

We are so excited to welcome you to the 2021-2022 academic year at Cornerstone Montessori School! For new families, this packet contains important information about beginning school at Cornerstone and, for returning families, an excellent review.

After a different and challenging year, we are delighted to return to some sort of normal. The Covid-19 pandemic, while no longer the immediate threat it was in 2020-21, continues to rage globally, and children under 12 are unlikely to be eligible for vaccinations before October. The Parent Handbooks, which will be available to you at our Back to School Fair, will contain current information about our response to Covid-19, as well as the guidelines and policies that ensure our community is safe, healthy, and taken care of during this time. The information provided in this letter is current as of the date it was written – please pay close attention to your email and NotifyMe alerts for any changes that may take place between now and the beginning of school on September 8.

## **Communication**

Communication is an essential part of our work with your family here at Cornerstone. Good communication between parents and the teachers gives your child consistency between home and school, which builds security and confidence. We welcome your questions and involvement! We are a team in the education of your child. Each lead guide has an email address, which you can use to contact your child's teacher directly. These email addresses can be found in the Parent Program Handbook. Please note that school staff may not respond to emails outside of school hours.

***You will receive weekly news updates to keep you informed of everything happening at Cornerstone! Visit [www.cornerstone-elementary.org](http://www.cornerstone-elementary.org) to sign up for NotifyMe.***

I will be on maternity leave full-time until roughly October, and will be participating in some meetings and school-related activities remotely through December. While I am gone, Say Vang will serve as Acting Head of School ([sayvang@cornerstone-elementary.org](mailto:sayvang@cornerstone-elementary.org)), and Chris Bewell will continue to be available to you for questions around general school expectations and logistics (busing, meals).

## **Items to Bring**

The following items are required for ***children of all ages*** to bring to school, in addition to the school supplies listed on a separate sheet in this packet:

- Indoor shoes: Please help your child select a pair of closed-toe shoes that are comfortable

and secure. We ask that you refrain from purchasing shoes with excessive decorations, particularly with characters and/or lights. Please label these shoes with your child's name.

- An extra set of clothes: Children occasionally get wet or dirty during the course of the day. Please send extra items (tops, bottoms, underwear and socks) in a large, zip-locked bag so that they may be easily stored (for 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders; kindergartners should please bring their clothing in a backpack or paper bag). Please be sure to label your child's clothing with their initials or name. If clothing becomes wet during the day, we will launder it here unless you prefer otherwise.
- Face masks: Children and adults are required to wear a mask when indoors, unless there are extenuating circumstances that have been discussed with Cornerstone administration, and until vaccinations are available for children under 12 years. Please provide your child with a clean face mask each day. Additional masks will be available on-site for children who do not have one.

### **School Calendar**

Enclosed in this packet is a school calendar for 2021-2022, as well as a list of our parent partnership/parent education events. We strongly encourage you to note important dates, including parent-teacher conferences, teacher in-service days, and parent events, in your personal calendars now. The parent events are wonderful opportunities to learn more about the Montessori pedagogy and the work your children are doing, and to connect with the community as a whole. We will send additional reminders through our weekly newsletter, Stepping Stones, before all school-related activities.

### **School Day Length and Before/After Care**

***Our school day this year will end at 4:00pm.*** The Boys and Girls Club this year will be open to all children; please notify us if you would like your child to attend and we will walk them over when the day ends. Kindergarten children may remain at Cornerstone until 5:30pm, for an additional fee. Please speak with Catherine Kennedy, [catherine@mtcm.org](mailto:catherine@mtcm.org), if you are interested in signing your child up for the CMS After Care program.

***School will begin at 8:45am.*** Details of our drop-off procedures can be found in your Parent Policies and Procedures Handbook. The building will open at 7:30am for children who require before-care. **This year we are requiring that children be registered for before-care - we will not be able to accommodate drop-in attendance.** Before-care has typically been an environment where children struggle, as there is less struggle and inconsistency in attendance. Our hope is that formalizing this program will set children up for success when they begin their school days and will minimize inconsistent expectations and challenging behavior. You will be asked to register your child for before-care (either a 7:30 or 8:00 arrival) by email closer to the start of school. **Children arriving closer to 8:45 may wait with their parents until their classroom opens.**

### **Application for Educational Benefits**

Enclosed in this packet is the Application for Educational Benefits, which qualifies children for the National School Lunch Program, aka Free or Reduced Lunch. During this year, school meals will once again be offered free to all children, and Cornerstone will never deny a hungry child food in any year. There are still good reasons to complete your Application for Educational Benefits, however.

For Cornerstone, your completed application determines the amount of compensatory revenue we receive from the federal government each year. This funding allows us to retain our quality programming, including our ELL Teacher and Reading/Math Specialists, Going Outs into the community, and a highly-qualified and excellent teaching staff.

For families who qualify, your completed application can give you access to reduced internet costs through your local provider, summer camp discounts through the YMCA, and even possible access to debit cards for grocery purchases during school closures (this program has not yet been confirmed for the 2021-22 school year).

Please complete your forms at your earliest convenience and return them to Chris Bewell at the Back to School Fair. Cornerstone administration will be available to help with completing the forms and/or accessing benefits beyond the School Lunch Program.

### **Back to School Fair and New Parent Orientation**

We look forward to seeing *all families* on ***Wednesday, September 1, sometime between 2:00 and 6:00 at Cornerstone for the Back to School Fair!*** The Back to School Fair is an opportunity to meet staff and administration, turn in required paperwork, take school photos, and receive a flu shot. The Back to School Fair will primarily be held outside, however school photos and other activities may take place inside the building. Individuals entering the building must wear a face mask.

Parents/guardians new to Cornerstone are invited to also attend orientation sessions on Thursday, September 2, and Friday, September 3, 10:00-11:00. These sessions will introduce you to the Montessori program, as well as to the logistics of day to day life here at Cornerstone. Attendance both days is encouraged.

Enjoy the remaining days of your summer! Please reach out at any time with questions – we are excited to see you in September!



Alyssa Schwartz  
Head of School