

# Northeast Iowa Montessori School

## Operating Plan - 2020/21 Academic Year

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### Overview

#### **All Day Program Summary**

Hours

Location and Staffing

Parent Contact/Communication

Arrival and Departure

#### **General Preparedness and Planning**

##### **Training**

##### **Face Covering**

##### **Health Screening**

#### **COVID-19 Symptoms and COVID-19 Cases in School**

COVID-19 Symptoms at School - Children

COVID-19 Symptoms at School - Staff

COVID-19 Exposure - Staff and Children

Positive Case of COVID-19 in the Classroom Community - Children or Staff

Quarantine and Isolation - Definitions

#### **Monitoring Absenteeism**

#### **Physical Distance Strategies**

#### **Healthy Hand Hygiene**

#### **Cleaning and Disinfecting**

#### **Food Preparation and Serving**

#### **Vulnerable/High Risk Groups**



## Overview

*Let the teacher not lose sight of the fact that the goal sought is not an immediate one - not the hike - but rather to make the spiritual being which the teacher is educating capable of finding their way by themselves. Maria Montessori*

I love this quote by Maria Montessori. The hike (COVID-19), has given us the opportunity to pause, grow and experience a unique kind of educating. The solution cannot be immediate because there is no clear immediate solution. So, we learn to take our time, practice patience, give an over abundance of grace and find the way by ourselves. This operating plan is not the hike - it is guidance that will remain agile and fluid as we navigate and find our way.

Our classroom environments are designed to harness the developmental forces of each plane of a child's development for the child's own optimal self-construction through experiential interactions with the environment. Our ability to guide that development is diminished in the absence of a face-to-face learning environment. By starting school in the fall, we are aiming to fulfill our mission of Northeast Iowa Montessori School, which is to provide a nurturing environment that cultivates each child's intellectual and creative potential while instilling a sense of individual and global responsibility.

This document explains the policies and procedures we are employing to mitigate COVID-related risks at school. That approach is built around intensive new health monitoring and screening procedures, as well as new classroom day procedures designed to reduce the number of contacts during the school day and interactions. Starting school in the fall with these new protocols represents an important first step in responsibly living with this virus.

NEIM believes that operating under these conditions is in the best interest of the community and that each NEIM family will make its own decision about the balance of risk, and what is best for their children. The information in this document will provide clarity around the practices and procedures NEIM has established to minimize exposure to our community but in no way warrants that COVID-19 or other communicable disease infection will not occur through participation in our program.

Thank you,

Rachael Buresh

NEIM Head of School

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## All Day Program Summary

August 31, 2020 - May 28, 2021

### Hours

**\*\*No walking school bus will be offered this academic year**

**\*\*No early drop off will be offered this academic year**

School Hours: 8:15am-3:00pm

Arrival: 7:45am-8:15am

Departure: 3:00pm-3:15pm

After School Care: 3:15pm-5:30pm **\*\*After school care is only available to those students who are registered for NEIM.**

### Location and Staffing

418 West Water Street, Decorah IA 52101

Head of School

- Rachael Buresh

Elementary - 6 yr - 12 yr

- Lead - Jane Busch
- Assistant - Tim Felton

Children's House - 2.5 yr - 6 yr

- Lead - Heather Vilaro
- Assistant - Jenny Lenehan
- Assistant - Claire Tebbenhoff
- Mentor - Christine Gowdy - Jaehnig


### Parent Contact/Communication

Head of School - [neimontessori@gmail.com](mailto:neimontessori@gmail.com) Text: 563-419-0509

Elementary - [greenfields@mabeltel.coop](mailto:greenfields@mabeltel.coop)

Lead Guide and Assistants - [neimguides@gmail.com](mailto:neimguides@gmail.com)

School phone - 563-382-6491



## **Arrival and Departure - Please read carefully**

Our Arrival and Departure procedures, with added procedures for health screening and hand hygiene, meet the state guidelines for social distancing and limited contact.

**Families with students in both Elementary and Children's House programs will use the FRONT door on 418 West Water Street for Arrival and Departure.**

Arrival for the **Elementary community** will be from 7:45am-8:15am.

Parents/Designated Person, and staff must wear a face covering during the arrival. Children are also encouraged to wear a face covering.

The same parent or designated person (DP) should drop off the child each day.

Parent/DP and child will wait at the back gate for staff members who will take the child's temperature with a contactless thermometer and will ask the health screening questions.

**\*If your child has a temperature of 100.4F or greater, the staff member will verify the temperature with another thermometer.**

**\*A child with a temperature of 100.4F or greater will not be admitted.**

**Please maintain social distance at the gate, please be patient and a gentle reminder to not leave your vehicle idling.**

Staff members will clean hands after each child's arrival.

## **PLEASE NOTE - NEW PROTOCOL FOR CHILDREN'S HOUSE**

Arrival for **Children's House community** will be from 7:45am-8:15am.

Parent/DP and child will use the **front door** which is located at 418 West Water Street. You can park along the street or the public parking located on the west side of the school. **Please follow the social distancing markers on the sidewalk and a gentle reminder to not idle your vehicle.** A staff member will take the child's temperature with a contactless thermometer and ask the health screening questions.

Parents/Designated Person and staff must wear a face covering during the arrival. Children are also encouraged to wear a face covering.

The same parent or designated person (DP) should drop off the child each day.

**\*If your child has a temperature of 100.4F or greater, the staff member will verify the temperature with another thermometer.**

**\*A child with a temperature of 100.4F or greater will not be admitted.**

Staff members will clean hands after each child's arrival

***ALL Families:*** *It is important that families have a back up plan in place if the child is not able to be admitted into the school. Also, please respect that only staff and students will be allowed in the building. If you need to drop something off please text the Head of School at 563-419-0509 and she or a guide will meet you at the West side door of Children's House.*

**Reminder: Families with students in both Elementary and Children's House programs will use the FRONT door on 418 West Water Street for Arrival and Departure.**

**Late Arrival - Please follow this procedure for ALL students.**

- Text the Head of School (HOS) 563-419-0509 and indicate the time of your child's late arrival.
- HOS will make arrangements for receiving the child.
- At the pre-arranged late arrival time, please use the Children's House side door (West) that you would utilize from the public parking lot.
- Guides will observe the arrival and assist the child with arrival following the regular arrival procedures.

**Departure - please read carefully**

Departure for **Elementary community** will be from 3:00pm-3:15pm.

Parents/DP and staff must wear a face covering during departure. Children are encouraged to also wear a face covering.

Parents/DP will wait at the back gate (keep in mind social distancing and idling of vehicle) students will be escorted out to you.

**PLEASE NOTE - NEW PROTOCOL FOR CHILDREN'S HOUSE**

Departure for **Children's House community** will be from 3:00pm-3:15pm.

Parents/DP and staff must wear a face covering during departure. Children are encouraged to also wear a face covering.

You can park on the street or use the public parking lot on the west side of the school. Please be mindful of not idling your vehicle.

Parent/DP will wait at the **front door** outside utilizing the social distance markers (418 West Water) students will be escorted to the door.

**Early Departure - Please follow this procedure for ALL students.**

- Text the Head of School 563-419-0509 and indicate the time of your child's early departure.
- HOS will make arrangements with guides for assisting the child for early departure.
- At the pre-arranged early departure time, please use the parking lot side door (West) at Children's House. Guides will assist the child with departure and bring to door.

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## **General Preparedness and Planning**

Northeast Iowa Montessori School has and will continue to collaborate, share information, and review plans with Decorah Community School District and local health officials to help protect the whole school community. School plans are designed to complement other community mitigation strategies to protect high-risk populations and the healthcare system, and minimize the disruption to teaching and learning.

This document was compiled using the COVID-19 guidelines and recommendations for schools and childcare programs published by the CDC, State of Iowa, and Department of Human Services. NEIM operating procedures meet or exceed the minimum standards of care and will be updated as new information or additional guidelines are made available.

[COVID Resources](#)

[COVID Childcare Guidance](#)

[CDC Plan Prepare Respond](#)

[COVID-19 Case Reporting and Outbreak Responsibilities](#)

## **Training**

Staff must be familiar with and receive ongoing training regarding State, CDC and DHS recommendations and requirements. Training for COVID safety practices will be on-going.

## **Face Coverings**

Face coverings are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms. Face coverings come in many different styles. Please choose a style that is comfortable for your child.

## **Staff**

Staff will be required to wear face coverings at the following times;

- Arrival and departure
- When performing health screening of staff and children
- When assisting an ill child or staff member
- At any time staff feel a face covering is required

## **Students**

Students in our programs are not required to wear face coverings. However, a face covering should remain at the school. We would encourage students to wear a face covering for arrival and departure.

## **Parents/DP**

Parents/DP are required to wear a face-covering during the arrival and departure times.

## Health Screening

Daily employee and child health screenings are important to help reduce the transmission of COVID-19 at school.

This section covers the following Health Screening Topics:

### Health and Temperature Screening Protocol

#### Staff Self-Screening Prior to Arrival at School

#### Staff Screening at School

#### Parent Screening of Child Prior to Arrival at School

#### Staff Screening of Child at School

### Health and Temperature Screening Protocol

All children and staff who meet any of the criteria below will be denied entry:

- Temperature of 100.4F or greater
- Any of the following symptoms if the symptom is of greater intensity or frequency than what is normally experienced:

Cough                                      Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

Chills                                        Repeated shaking with chills

Muscle pain                                Headache

Sore Throat                                Loss of taste or smell

Diarrhea

- In the previous 14 days has had contact with someone with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19.
- Is under investigation for COVID-19.
- In the previous 14 days have traveled to another country.

### Staff Self-Screening Prior to Arrival at School

Staff members will conduct self-screening prior to arrival at school. A negative self-identifies as having symptoms listed in the screening criteria above, she/he will contact the HOS, not come into work, and follow the procedures in the section: [COVID-19 Symptoms at School - Staff](#).

### Staff Screening at School

The HOS will verify that staff have conducted the proper screening protocols upon arrival at school.

## **Parent Screening of Child Prior to Morning Arrival**

Parents are encouraged to be on the alert for signs of illness in their children and to keep them home when they are sick.

**Staff will conduct and log the temperature checks of each child and adult in the community three times each day. (At arrival, before lunch, prior to departure)**

## **COVID-19 Symptoms and COVID-19 Cases in School**

This section provides details and procedures for the COVID-19 Symptom, Exposure, and Diagnosis within the school community.

### **COVID-19 Symptoms at School - Children**

### **COVID-19 Symptoms at School - Staff**

### **COVID-19 Exposure - Staff and Children**

### **Positive Case of COVID-19 in the Classroom Community - Children and Staff**

## **COVID-19 Symptoms at School - Children**

If COVID-19 symptoms begin while at school, the child must be sent home as soon as possible. Sick children will be kept separate from well children and staff contact will be limited as much as reasonably possible, while ensuring the safety and supervision of the child until they leave.

Classroom staff will follow these isolation procedures for ALL students:

- Classroom staff will offer the child a disposable face mask but not required.
- Classroom staff will take the child to the isolation location in the staff office for Children's House or HOS office for Elementary.
- The classroom staff will inform the HOS of symptoms exhibited.
- HOS or guide will contact parents/DP to come to school to pick up the child ASAP.
- HOS or guide will supervise the child until the parent arrives.
- Parent/DP will meet HOS or guide at the west side door of Children's House for pick-up.
- Once a parent has left with the ill child, the isolation room is cleaned and sanitized by staff.

Families are encouraged to coordinate decision-making around the child's care with the family health care provider if there are specific health concerns, chronic disease, or complex social or emotional dynamics in the home.

In case of a child who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and does not get evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, the child is assumed to have COVID-19, and cannot return to the NEIM community until the individual has met the criteria for return under Children or Staff with Positive Case of COVID-19.



**A child who has exhibited symptoms that could be COVID-19 can return to school if the parent has obtained a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on a negative COVID-19 test and an alternative diagnosis.**

### **COVID-19 Symptoms at School - Staff**

Staff is required to monitor their health and perform daily health screenings for symptoms of COVID-19. Staff is required to stay home if they are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 and to contact their healthcare provider.

Staff exhibiting new or worsening symptoms of possible COVID-19 at school should:

- Put on a disposable face covering
- Will self-isolate until proper staff to student ratio is covered and then will leave the building
- Obtain a COVID-19 test
- Follow the recommendations of their healthcare provider

In the case of a staff member who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and does not get evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, the individual will follow the criteria for Positive Case of COVID-19 in the Classroom Community - Children and Staff

If a staff member has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to work before completing the above self-isolation period, the individual must obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for the return based on a negative COVID-19 test and an alternative diagnosis.

### **COVID-19 Exposure - Staff and Children**

If a staff member or child has been identified as 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. Close contact means being closer than 6 feet apart for more than 15 minutes from the person who was infectious.

### **Positive Case of COVID-19 in the Classroom Community- Children or Staff**

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

- Contact DHS to report the presence of COVID-19 at our school and Iowa Health
- Notify staff and parents/caregivers that a member of the classroom community has been diagnosed with COVID-19. Confidentiality will be maintained.
- Notify Decorah Community School District that a child in the school (not their community) has been diagnosed with COVID-19. Confidentiality will be maintained.
- Close the NEIM facility for 14 days to allow self-quarantine for all children and staff who have been in close contact with the person diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Complete disinfecting procedures will be done at time of closure.

Decisions about extending closure will be made in consultation with the Iowa Public Health Department.

Children or Staff with Positive Case of COVID-19, who have exhibited symptoms and who have stayed home (home isolated) can return to school/work when the following criteria are met:

- At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications); and
- The child or staff member has improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and
- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared, or Negative results of an FDA Emergency Use Authorized COVID-19 molecular assay for detection of SARS-CoV-2 RNA from at least two consecutive respiratory specimens collected >24 hours apart (total of two negative specimens).

#### **Quarantine and Isolation - Definitions**

From the CDC:

##### **Quarantine**

Quarantine is used to keep someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others. Quarantine helps prevent spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they are sick or if they are infected with the virus without feeling symptoms. People in quarantine should stay home, separate themselves from others, monitor their health, and follow directions from their state or local health department.

##### **Isolation**

Isolation is used to separate people infected with the virus (those who are sick with COVID-19 and those with no symptoms) from people who are not infected. People who are in isolation should stay home until it's safe for them to be around others. In the home, anyone sick or infected should separate themselves from others by staying in a specific, "sick room" or area and using a separate bathroom (if available).

#### **Monitoring Absenteeism**

NEIM staff will monitor absenteeism among children and staff using a monitoring spreadsheet. Any unusual patterns will be considered when evaluating the need for temporary or long-term building closure. Decisions about extending closure will be made in consultation with the Iowa Public Health Department.

#### **Procedure for Recording Community Attendance**

HOS records attendance, verifying and updating the health screening log for the community. Include the reason for absence; contact a parent if the child is not present.

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## Physical Distancing Strategies (Best Practices)

NEIM does not expect that young children will distance themselves from other children or adults while at school. Young children learn by engaging with their environment, which includes other people in it. However, NEIM will employ the following strategies for limiting the spread of COVID-19 in our communities:

- Children's House and Elementary shall have limited contact with each other.
- Each child will have a designated work table and floor space so that children can be spaced as far from each other as possible while engaged in activities at school.
- The physical distance between children will be increased in daily work locations, group gatherings, meals and snacks.
- Naptime mats will be spaced out as much as possible, with alternating head to toe arrangements to reduce the distance between children. (Not applicable to Elementary Community)
- Those children who do not require naps will go outside with the Lead guide. (Not applicable to Elementary Community)

## Healthy Hand Hygiene

Washing hands can keep you healthy and prevent the spread of infections from one person to the next. All children and staff will engage in hand hygiene at the following times;

- Arrival to the classroom and after breaks
- Before and after each work choice
- Before and after eating or handling food
- After using the toilet or helping a child use the bathroom
- After coming in contact with bodily fluids
- After playing outdoors or in sand
- After handling garbage
- Observed touching of eyes, nose, or mouth

## Follow Five Steps to Wash Your Hands the Right Way

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>

Follow these five steps every time.

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds.
4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

After assisting children with handwashing, staff should also wash their own hands.

## **Use Of Hand Sanitizer When You Can't Use Soap and Water**

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. If soap and water are not readily available, children will be supervised in the use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in many situations.

### **How to use hand sanitizer**

1. Apply the gel product to the palm of one hand.
2. Rub your hands together.
3. Rub the gel over all the surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry. This should take around 20 seconds.

### **Cleaning and Disinfecting**

NEIM follows the national standards for cleaning, sanitizing and disinfection of educational facilities for children provided by **Caring for Our Children (CFOC)**.

These efforts include the following:

1. Staff will routinely clean, sanitize, and disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched, especially materials, as detailed in the Cleaning and Sanitization binder.
2. All bathrooms will be cleaned and disinfected regularly throughout the day, at a minimum bathrooms should be cleaned and disinfected two times per day.
3. Soap and water, bleach and water and UVC wands will be used to disinfect and sanitize our environments at the end of each day as well as our air-quality machine turned on each night.

### **Clean and Sanitize Materials**

1. Materials that cannot be cleaned and sanitized will not be used.
2. Materials will be cleaned and sanitized between each use by the assistants.
3. Materials that children have placed in their mouths or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretions or excretions will be set aside until they are cleaned by the UVC wand by the assistants.
4. Machine washable cloth materials will be used by one individual at a time and will be laundered before being used by another child.
5. Children's books, like other paper-based materials such as mail or envelopes, are not considered high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning or disinfection procedures.

### **Clean and Disinfect Bedding (Not applicable to Elementary)**

Each child's bedding is kept separate and stored in individual labeled bins inside a cubby. Cots are labeled for each child. Fitted sheet, blanket and pillow will stay at the school and be laundered every Friday at the school. No stuffed animals or stuffy allowed at this time for rest time.

## **Cleaning and Disinfecting Procedures if an infected person (staff or child) has been in a school building:**

Close off areas used by the individual with COVID-19 and wait 24 hours before beginning cleaning and disinfection to minimize the potential for exposure to respiratory droplets. Open outside doors to increase air circulation in the area.

Staff will clean and disinfect all areas used by the ill persons, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces. Staff must follow **CDC's guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting.**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>

NEIM uses disinfecting products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19.

## **Food Preparation and Serving**

- Children will bring a water bottle that will stay at NEIM for the school year. The child's water bottle will be sterilized each evening.
- **NEW - Each child will bring their own snack - shared and family-style serving will not be allowed.**
- Each child will bring their own lunch from home and put in their labeled cubby.
- Staff will ensure children wash hands prior to and immediately after eating.
- Staff must wash their hands before assisting children and after helping children to eat.
- Food serving and preparation equipment must be washed and then sanitized in the sanitizing dishwasher between uses.
- Practical Life will no longer have food work as a choice.

## **Vulnerable/Highs Risk Groups**

Based on currently available information and clinical expertise, older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. To protect those at higher risk, it is important that everyone practices healthy hygiene behaviors.