



Parent Guidebook

Reopening Guidelines
&
Procedures for Remote Learning
2020-21

Welcome and Overview

Welcome to this new day in Montessori education where, activated by a world pandemic, we are called to be adaptive and to return the roots of our Montessori method. This guidebook is a consolidation of the many developing resources. It is meant to guide us in returning to school under these new conditions, while continuing to offer adults and children a safe and vibrant Montessori learning experience.

This guide presumes that there will be at least six months where we will be called to work both remotely and within the prepared environment of the school. It, therefore, lays out the essential considerations for navigating this new approach without compromising our method, and while continuing to value and support all members of our community. We ask you to take some time to familiarize yourself with the important information contained in this guide. From what we have learned already, we know the healthier we keep our community the more days we will have in the prepared environment of the classroom. The measures we are facing may feel burdensome and even unreasonable; however, they will allow us time with Montessori materials, in a setting that fosters development.

Families have sent a clear message: they want options for their children. Many are excited to return to our school campus; many are still unsure. All families will have a choice between face-to-face instruction and a full remote learning model.

We are committed to growing the excitement for the first day of school and all that follows. The first day is magical - it comes with wonder about new relationships and new moments of pride and accomplishment. Please join us in building enthusiasm for the grandest day of them all - the first day of the 2020-21 school year!

This guide outlines what IMS will be doing based on current recommendations, along with how our families contribute to maximizing a safe and healthy learning environment for children.

With Deepest Respect,

Your IMS Administrative Team

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Overview of the IMS Safety Approach

Decisions in the methods and procedures for opening our school are based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). Guidance from these groups are subject to updates. If and when the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic change, our plan may also change.

The infographic features the IMS logo at the top, followed by the title '2020-2021 DIALED APPROACH PLAN'. A central circular diagram shows three segments: Plan A (blue), Plan B (orange), and Plan C (green), with 'IMS DIALED APPROACH' in the center. Below the diagram are three sections detailing each plan, each with a 'What turns the dial to Plan X?' header and a list of 'What Does Plan X look like?' items. A final section provides 'Additional notes about IMS's Dialed Approach'.

IMS's goal for the 2020-21 school year is to care for the mental & emotional health of children by striving to provide face-to-face instruction for IMS students, while taking reasonable measures to help keep our students and staff physically healthy.

What turns the dial to Plan A?
COVID-19 is a MINIMAL risk to the IMS Community and the Governor has announced schools may opt to use this plan.

What Does Plan A look like?

- Modified Drop Off and Pick Up- Staggered procedures will accommodate symptom checking and social distancing
- Modified Full-Time Montessori Classroom Environment- Students remain in classrooms and do not mix for recess or specials
- Modified Full-Time Routines- Social distancing and cleaning procedures will adjust schedules and procedures in Montessori works.
- Remote Model- Family choice to be virtual, fully online, is available.

What turns the dial to Plan B?
COVID-19 is a MODERATE risk to the IMS Community and the Governor has announced that schools may opt to use this plan.

What Does Plan B look like?
This is a hybrid model, where all levels operate within small cohorts, alternating between weeks of face-to-face and online learning.

On Campus Model- Face-to-Face

- Students and teachers will wear masks according to the NC Toolkit for Schools.
- Modified Routines- Social distancing and cleaning procedures will adjust schedules and procedures in Montessori works.
- Modified Classes- Students are placed in small cohorts and scheduled for 1 week of face-to-face in a 3 week cycle.
- Modified Classrooms- Students remain in their classrooms and classes do not mix for recess or specials.

Remote Learning Model- Online Virtual Work with Google Classroom

- Modified Routines- Sample schedules will be posted to help families, and flexibility for work cycle timing will be given.
- Modified Classes- Students are placed in small group virtual classrooms for two weeks, where lessons are recorded and/or given live, just as small group lessons are in the Montessori classroom (with follow-up work and practices).
- Modified Classrooms- Material kits and virtual classrooms are made available (online will mirror the pillars of Montessori: order, self-direction, interaction, spontaneous activity, conceptual learning, and grace and courtesy).
- Remote Model- Family choice to be virtual, fully online, is available.

What turns the dial to Plan C?
COVID-19 is a HIGH risk to the IMS Community and the Governor has announced that schools may only use this option.

What Does Plan C look like?

- Whole School Remote Learning- All classrooms will operate remote through Google Classroom.
- Modified Routines- Sample schedules will be posted to help families, and flexibility for work cycle timing will be given.
- Modified Classes- Students are placed in small groups, virtual classrooms where lessons are recorded and/or given live, just as small group lessons are in the Montessori classroom (with remote follow-up work to complete and practice).
- Modified Classrooms- Material kits and virtual classrooms are made available (online will mirror the pillars of Montessori: order, self-direction, interaction, spontaneous activity, conceptual learning, and grace and courtesy).

Additional notes about IMS's Dialed Approach- reflective of the "Lighting Our Way" North Carolina State Information and NC School Toolkit:

- Adjusting the dial will be evaluated using the Governor's orders and the needs of the school. The IMS community acts independently of New Hanover County schools.
- While in Plan B, cohorts may be moved to Plan C, while others remain in less restrictive plans based on COVID-19 exposure.
- The option for families to utilize "Remote Learning" if not comfortable returning or are ill, or are in quarantine, will be available. If choosing remote based on level of comfort: a 9 week commitment will be required.
- Video call format available for parents/teachers in all plans.
- Daily illness and symptom protocol are in place for all staff and students.
- Communication will be consistent through weekly teacher newsletters and classroom websites.

Additionally, we follow closely the guidelines of The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), whose current recommendation states:

“Schools are fundamental to child/adolescent development and well-being and provide our children and adolescents with academic instruction, social and emotional skills, safety, reliable nutrition, physical/speech and mental health therapy, and opportunities for physical activity, among other benefits. Beyond supporting the educational development of children and adolescents, schools play a critical role in addressing racial and social inequity.”

Our [Dialed Approach](#) plan to support the education of our students begins with the belief that each of our voices are critical in designing strategies to best support the health and well-being of our students! We join together, unified in creating a plan, with confidence that we are capturing the needs of our school community. Adaptability and flexibility are essential ingredients to our success, along with how well we effectively work together to communicate with one another throughout this time.

This year, children will enter instructional spaces that are different from the prepared environment they have grown to know and love in our Montessori school. Our teachers have embraced this moment as a powerful opportunity to adapt our environments and prepare our students to embrace and grow

with these changes. We will work vigorously - and safely - pursuing our vision to prepare all students for the joy of reaching their full potential as lifelong learners.

Our approach is organized into four pillars; three pillars of safety and procedure, with the fourth defining the Montessori experience. Below, each pillar is briefly defined.

- ❑ Screening and Approach to COVID-19 Cases
- ❑ Hygiene and Sanitation
- ❑ Social Distancing Procedures
- ❑ Culture of Learning

Screening and School Guidelines for Cases

Daily Health Checks play a crucial role in keeping any infectious disease, including Covid-19, out of our community. Staff are required to complete a Daily Health Check questionnaire each morning before starting their day. Responses are monitored by administration. Parents are required to screen their children each morning for new or otherwise unexplained symptoms. Upon arrival at school, students will have their temperature taken by staff and answer a Daily Health Check questionnaire concerning symptoms. Once a child has been checked and has no elevated temperature or other symptoms of illness, they will be directed to assigned entry points and washing stations or sanitizer stations before joining class.

Hygiene and Sanitation

Increased diligence in cleaning and sanitizing our campus is already implemented. We understand that good hygiene practices are among the most effective ways to prevent the spread of illness, especially in a school environment. All on-campus staff were trained before opening classrooms on basic measures to prevent the spread of infection. Teachers will give lessons in class to students about these measures, as well as monitor student hand washing and sanitizing throughout the day. Face coverings, especially face masks and face shields, are an important piece of our strategy. We have secured adequate PPE. Per North Carolina guidelines, all adults and youth, K-8th, grade children are required to wear face masks or cloth face coverings at all times while on campus. This includes family members and caregivers waiting outside to drop-off or pick-up children. We will have face masks available on an as-needed basis.

Distancing

We will be continuing social distancing per the North Carolina order, and ask families to continue social distancing practices outside of school. At school, children will remain with their set classroom group of no more than 10 students. Teachers will stay with their assigned group throughout the day. We are also implementing drop-off and pick-up procedures and staggered outdoor play timeframes to avoid any class groups interacting throughout the school day.

Culture of Learning

Our goal is to use the three pillars above to support our fourth pillar, by creating a culture among our learning community in which staff, children, and parents are proudly participating in keeping one another safe and healthy, so we can enjoy the Montessori Environment. Thus, by designing a strong remote learning plan, acknowledging our shared responsibilities in remote learning, and understanding the expectations of remote learning- we will sustain a strong Montessori learning culture.

Screening

Symptom Awareness and Knowledge

COVID-19 Symptoms

As outlined by the CDC, the COVID-19 symptoms used in screening and determining metrics of health and safety (with or without being diagnosed with COVID-19) include:

- Recent feeling of fever (100.4)
- Chills
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing
- New cough
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Headache
- Gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea)

Children must be free of any symptoms potentially related to COVID-19 to be on school campus. Most importantly, children who are feeling unwell or have a temperature of 100.4°F should not come to school.

Home Symptom Screening Guidelines

Knowing the symptoms and understanding how to screen your children along with us, using the symptom guide above, is an approach that can drastically reduce the spread of disease- thus providing a healthy space to continue learning in the classroom. Staying home when sick is a new responsibility to our community, one we are all motivated to do in order for our children to have more time in the physical Montessori environment.

Children are required to have a health screening at home and when arriving at school. All children should have their temperature taken every day at home before coming to school. Use this checklist for your at-home screening:

- ✓ Check your child's temperature- Do not come to school if their temperature reads 100.4°F or higher.
- ✓ Children must be free of any symptoms potentially related to COVID-19 (listed above) to come to the school campus.

School Symptom Screening Procedures

Screening Upon Arrival

Upon arriving on campus all students are screened before exiting their cars at drop off in the morning. The screening process is two parts:

- 1- A symptom-screening checklist questionnaire administered on an iPad through Google Forms
- 2- A temperature check and recording using a touchless thermometer.

Privacy of the families and students will be upheld to the greatest extent possible when screening children.

If a child is deemed to have a temperature, health concern, or if the screening questions show exposure; the child will not be permitted to come on campus and you must return home. The classroom teacher and/or administration will reach out to family that day to connect and support.

Symptom Identification During School

If a child begins to not feel well while on campus, shows signs of illness, or becomes sick during the day, they must immediately tell a staff member who will notify the front office. If a staff member notices a child not feeling well while on campus or observes a sign of illness, they will directly notify the front office. After contacting the front office, children who are feeling unwell or have a temperature of 100.4°F or higher will be held in an isolated health waiting area. Employees will contact the child's parents/guardians to pick them up from school promptly within 30 minutes.

Reporting of COVID-19

We will report suspected, presumptive, or positive cases of COVID-19 to New Hanover Health Services and work with them for follow-up and contact tracing. Privacy of the families and children will be maintained to the best extent possible. In the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a school, the affected areas will be closed for 24 hours, then systematically disinfected. The classroom teacher and/or administration will reach out to the family that day to connect and support.

Suspected, Presumptive, and Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19

The resources above help you know when to take responsibility and keep your child(ren) at home. If you have any questions regarding the best decisions you can make in sending your child(ren) to school or keeping them home, please refer to our Guidance in [Diagnostic Guidelines for Returning to School](#) and contact our school for additional questions.

Guidelines For Returning to School

Once displaying symptoms, being in contact, or being tested for COVID-19, the guidelines below must be followed to determine a safe return to school.

This table below provides the information from the [NC Safe Schools Toolkit](#). Their Infographic is found [HERE IN THIS LINK](#)

Students who have...	EXPERIENCED AT LEAST ONE COVID-19 symptom, WITH or WITHOUT being diagnosed with COVID-19	Been DIAGNOSED WITH COVID-19 but DO NOT HAVE SYMPTOMS	Been EXPOSED* TO COVID-19 and DO NOT HAVE SYMPTOMS
Can I send them to School?	NO	NO	NO
When Can I send them back to School?	ALL MUST BE TRUE (or *see documentation) 1) It has been at least 10 days since they first had symptoms. 2) It has been at least 24 hours since they had a fever, without using fever-reducing medicine. 3) It has been at least 3 days since the symptoms have improved, including cough and shortness of breath.	Once 10 DAYS HAVE PASSED since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test.	Once 14 DAYS HAVE PASSED since the date of their last exposure, even if they test negative for COVID-19.
Do I need a Doctor's Note or COVID Testing Documentation?	NO **BUT- If students have a negative COVID-19 test, they can return to school <u>once there is no fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines and they have felt well for 24 hours.</u>	NO	NO

*Exposure is defined as being within 6 feet of someone diagnosed with COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more.

Healthy Hygiene Practices

Measures of Personal Protection

All staff are trained on basic measures to prevent the spread of infection, including washing hands frequently and covering one's coughs and sneezes. Teachers will give lessons in class to students about these measures, as well as, monitor throughout the day. Signage for these measures of personal protection can be found through the school and in all of the classrooms.

Handwashing and Hand Sanitation

Teachers will be giving frequent lessons on handwashing in the classroom, modifying flexible schedules to include handwashing breaks throughout the school day, and reinforcing handwashing during key times throughout the school day, such as:

- ✓ Before and after eating
- ✓ After using the restroom
- ✓ Touching shared objects
- ✓ After recess
- ✓ When entering school/classroom

If a child is unable to access a hand-washing station, hand sanitizer (containing at least 60% alcohol) will be provided. Hand sanitizer stations are at the entrance to each classroom. Children will be expected to use the hand sanitizer when entering the classroom each morning.

We will encourage children and staff to wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or with hand sanitizer, especially before eating, after going to the bathroom, or after wiping their nose, coughing, or sneezing.

If your child experiences sensitivities to hand sanitizer, please communicate this with your child's teacher and front office staff so they can provide your child other opportunities to clean their hands.

Covering a Cough or a Sneeze

Teachers will provide lessons on how to sneeze and cough into a tissue. Children will be encouraged to take the following actions when coughing or sneezing:

- ❑ Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash your hands.
- ❑ If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve or arm.

Face Masks

All children K-8th grade are required to wear face masks. All teachers and staff, as well as any adult who must enter the building are required to wear face masks. As directed by the state Department of Instruction, if a child or family refuses to wear a face mask, they may be asked to attend IMS only through full remote learning at home. Some exceptions apply:

- When a child is eating, or engaged in strenuous physical activity and able to maintain 6 feet distance from another person
- Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious
- Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance
- Anyone who cannot tolerate a cloth face covering due to developmental, medical, or behavioral health needs

If a child has a medical condition that does not allow for face masks, that child may be asked to work remotely from home. This decision will be at the discretion of IMS Administrators.

Should safe opportunities throughout the school day present, and when adherence to social distancing guidelines can still be met with utmost safety and precaution, teachers and staff can lead guided, short breaks from wearing face masks. Guided breaks may occur during snack, lunch time, and recess, or as long as the child is engaged in physical activity and with appropriate social distancing.

Maintaining Healthy Facilities

Facility Sanitation and Cleaning Procedures

Facilities staff has reviewed the [EPA's list of products](#) that are effective against coronavirus and stocked up on appropriate materials. For a list of products we have on campus and their usage instructions, please contact the school office.

For each protocol, IMS will use an EPA-approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Further, a Lysol sprayer with hospital grade disinfectant will be used daily after school, along with an electrostatic disinfectant sprayer to clean and disinfect the facility. Current cleaning and disinfecting protocols will continue to be reviewed and enhanced in terms of frequency and intensity.

All cleaning supplies will be kept locked and out of reach of children. All products being used are safe and appropriate for use in classroom settings. Stronger products that could potentially produce fumes will be applied at the end of the day to allow for proper drying and ventilation.

Responsibilities of the Nightly Cleaning Team

Mid-day Cleaning Protocol

- Disinfect the bathrooms
- Disinfect door handles, light switches, hallways, steps, and railings, and all outdoor gates.
- Check all paper towel, soap, and hand sanitizer dispensers.

Nightly Cleaning Protocol

- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces: bathroom floors, sinks, toilets, urinals, and stall handles
- Monitor hand sanitizer, soap, and paper products.
- Use electrostatic disinfectant sprayer in the entire school building.

Responsibilities of the IMS Staff and Faculty

Classroom Cleaning Protocol (throughout work cycle and during recess)

- Check cleaning checklist from the previous day to ensure the room is clean and disinfected
- Prepare the environment and cleaning stations
- Disinfect tables after use
- Disinfect Montessori materials after use
- Disinfect all touched surfaces (tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, faucets, sinks, etc.)

Outdoor Playground Cleaning Protocol (after each cohort)

- Disinfect all high-touch surfaces between use
 - Ninja course, climbing structure & rock climbing wall
 - Picnic tables, handrails & door knobs
 - Forts and wooden shade structures
- Remove any materials that are difficult to clean
- Clean all outdoor equipment (balls, jump ropes, cones etc)

Common Areas Cleaning Protocol (beginning of the day and mid-day)

- Sweep of playground and building
- Sanitize drop-off areas
 - Handwashing and sanitizing stations
 - Tardy clipboard, Early signout clipboard, and pens
 - Restock gloves and other PPE equipment
- Sanitize playground equipment between each class
- Sanitize kitchens and office equipment throughout day and after use
- Clean high-touch areas
 - Door handles
 - Railings
 - Water coolers
 - Copy machine buttons
 - Light switches
- Sanitize pick-up areas
- Final clean of classrooms and hallways after all children have left

Scheduled or Unscheduled Restroom Break Cleaning Protocol

- Disinfect surfaces with Lysol after each use
- Clean high-touch areas
 - Door handles
 - Light switches
 - Sink handles
 - Paper towel dispenser
 - Soap dispenser

Material Cleaning Protocol

All materials that are frequently touched are included in our cleaning protocol. This includes tables, chairs, cubbies, and Montessori shelf works. Teachers will educate children about not sharing materials or supplies before a staff member completes sanitizing.

- When children have finished using materials, they place them on a “to be disinfected table”. Teachers clean and sanitize materials before placing them back on the shelf for use.
- All materials that are not easily cleaned/disinfected have been removed from each classroom environment.
- Books/paper materials do not need additional cleaning or disinfection unless exposed to bodily fluids.

Limited Building Access

In an effort to protect the health and safety of our community, only essential visitors are allowed on our school campuses. Essential visitors will be approved by the Administration ahead of access to the building. These measures in minimizing the number of people on site, limit unintentional exposures in our school environment.

All efforts will be made to keep necessary visitors to a minimum, including the use of virtual or telephone meetings with families and guests. Before entering the building, necessary visitors are required to follow all face covering guidelines, receive a temperature check, and complete the screening questionnaire.

Social Distancing

Building Social Distance Awareness

Our school has taken actions to ensure our environments support measures of health and safety that honor social distancing. We have evaluated the daily procedures our children follow from the time they arrive until the time they are dismissed. Each environment we have prepared, naturally lends itself to promoting social distance and gently alerting children to be aware of social distancing. The actions take to prepare arrival/dismissal areas, hallways, bathrooms, and outdoor areas include:

- ✓ Signage to remind children of social distancing practices
- ✓ Floor marking in all hallways and congregating areas to mark 6 feet
- ✓ Appropriate placement of equipment in recess and sidewalk area to help provide spacial awareness

Social Distancing for Classes

At school, students remain with their cohort group of no more than 10 students. Teachers stay with their assigned group throughout the day. The following procedures are followed:

- Each classroom has their own set schedule and will not combine with any other class during the day.
- Classes will not share spaces, unless they are sanitized after the use of a prior group
- Classrooms have staggered playground times and restroom breaks to avoid mixing and allow disinfecting in between groups.
- All specials will be done in the classroom and for a period of nine weeks.
- At lunch/snack times, staff and children are socially distanced at individual tables or mats.
- The Montessori classroom environment enables children to work independently. Tables and chairs have been rearranged to encourage distance during the work day. Individual spaces are assigned for children to work in each day.
- Teachers will work with children to develop and implement social distancing practices. Strategies include segmenting areas for children to play, modeling social distancing behaviors, and talking with the children about ways to interact with one another 6 feet apart.

Arrival Routines for Social Distancing

Procedures for Arrival and Screening

Our campus opens at 7:45 for the group(s) scheduled on campus following the [cohort calendar](#). If you have a child attending the Children's school, please drop them first, exit onto Golden Road and return back into our parking lot to drop off your Charter School student(s). Please wear your mask in the car while staff approach to complete health screenings. When arriving at school please follow the procedures below:

- 1- Drive down the gravel road and around the circle. (Please refer to the map below)
- 2- Keep your child(ren) in the car, and all persons in the car must wear a mask.
- 3- A staff member will approach your car to administer the school health screening on the iPad and complete a temperature check using a touchless thermometer.

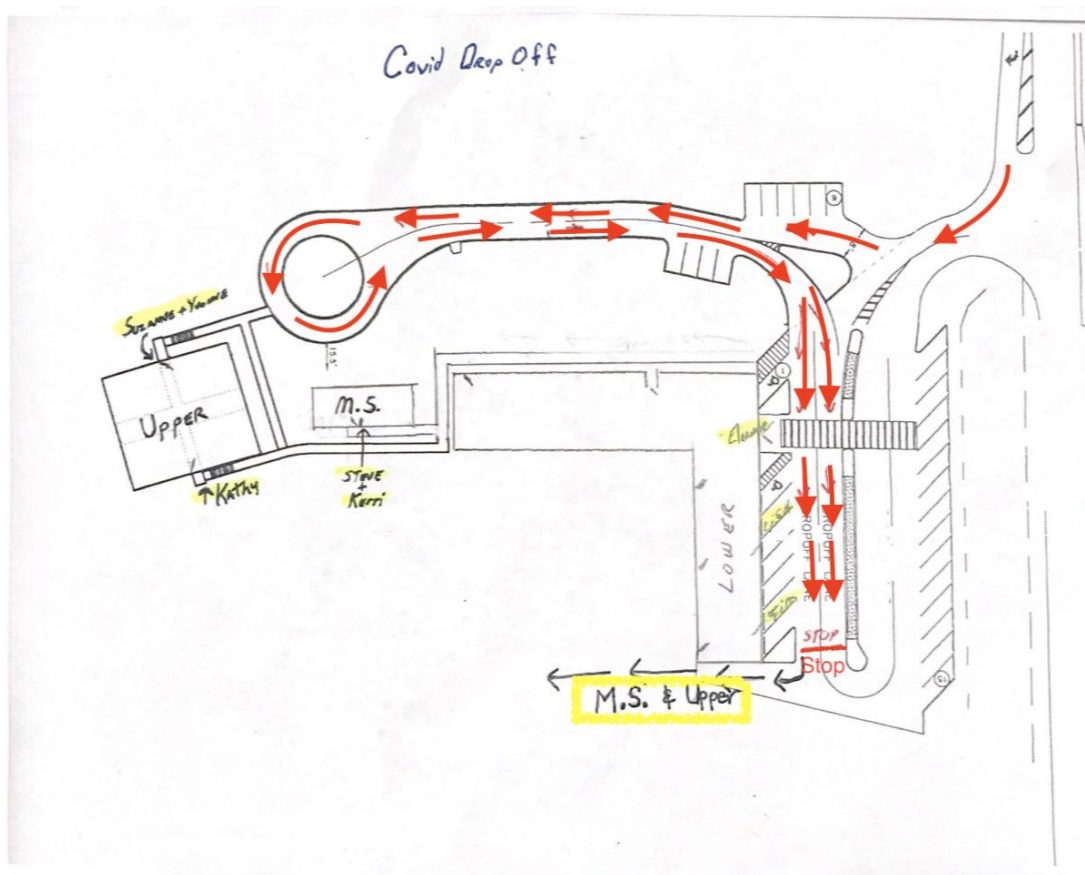
If a child is deemed to have a temperature, health concern, or if the screening questions show exposure; the child will not be permitted in the building and you must return home. The classroom teacher and/or administration will reach out to your family that day to connect and support.

If the result of the screening determines the child can enter the building, they may exit the car and head toward their building point of entry. The children will report directly to their classrooms.

As stated by the CDC, we are to avoid areas where children may congregate or mix in cohorts. Thus, children will enter in designated locations monitored by staff for social distancing.

Lower Elementary Students will enter through specific doors that lead directly to their classroom. Upper Elementary and Middle School students will enter through the side gate and walk around the playground area of the school towards their buildings. Ms. Suzanne and Ms. Yvonne's students will enter at the back end of the Upper Elementary building. Ms. Kathy's students will enter in the front end of the building. Middle School students will enter up the ramp of the Middle School Building.

The graphic on the following page outlines the flow of traffic and student entry points for arrival.



Procedures for Late (Tardy) Arrival

If you arrive after 8:15, and are a scheduled group(s) following the [cohort calendar](#), the doors will be locked. Please follow the procedure below when tardy.

- 1- Call the front desk to alert the front office of your arrival.
- 2- Park in one of the designated spaces and wait in the car prepared to use a mask when staff arrives.
- 3- Wait for a staff member to come to your window for the health questionnaire and temperature check.
- 4- The sign-in page with a sanitized pen and clipboard will be brought to you.

Dismissal Routines for Social Distancing

Dismissal Procedures

Dismissal begins promptly at 3:00pm. You are required to place your sign with student name(s) in your dashboard. In order to safely dismiss following social distancing requirements, please be prompt and aware of the flow of traffic. Please see the procedures below:

- 1- Drive down the gravel road and around the circle. Two lines will be formed, as shown in drop-off map.
- 2- Have your student name sign in the front window.
- 3- A staff member will approach your car and walkie talkie for your child.
- 4- Once the group of students' names have been called, children will walk out of their designated doors, to the crosswalk, and to your car.
- 5 - Once all children are in the car, the group will be signaled to drive forward. Then the next group will be called.

Early Pick-Up Procedures

If you need to pick up your child early, please be certain to do so by 2:15pm. Between the times of 2:15pm and 3:00pm, we kindly ask that you refrain from an early pick-up. With new dismissal procedures in place to accommodate social distancing, your arrival in this time frame will cause an irregular traffic flow. When picking up your child early, follow the procedures below:

- 1- Call the front desk to alert the front office of your arrival.
- 2- Park in one of the designated spaces, wait in the car prepared to wear a mask when staff arrives.
- 3- Staff will assist your child in arriving to your car.
- 4- The sign-out page with a sanitized pen and clipboard will be brought to you.

Late Pick-Up Procedures

Students who have not been picked up by the end of dismissal will need to remain in their classrooms until their parent/ride is at the school. Please note that late students will inhibit teachers from completing end of day sanitation and planning. To support our staff, please try to be in the carline by 3:00. If you are late, please follow these procedures:

Please reference the parent/student handbook about our [late pick - up policy](#).

- 1- Call the front desk to alert the front office of your arrival.
- 2- Park in one of the designated spaces, wait in the car, prepared to wear a mask when staff arrives.
- 3- Staff will assist your child in arriving to your car.

The Montessori Experience- A Learning Culture

Choosing your Experience

Family Commitment

Our teachers are maintaining two prepared environments when in hybrid learning. Planning for each child, following each child, and setting up the needed environment now requires additional preparation. In order for our teachers to prepare the environment for your child, so they can grow and learn, we ask our families to understand the following school policy:

Commitment in Electing The Full-Time Remote Learning Experience

Families opting for their children to enroll in remote learning will remain enrolled for the duration of the nine weeks. Families may elect for children to return to the in-person school environment at the beginning of the next quarter, or nine-weeks if the school deems it safe and feasible.

Commitment in Electing The Hybrid/Blended Learning Experience

Families will need to read and be knowledgeable in the information below, as their children will be held to the same standards during not face to face weeks. If during the nine weeks, your family decides blended/hybrid learning presents a concern, and you wish to move into full-remote learning, IMS will accommodate. Once full-time remote, you must remain enrolled for the duration of that nine weeks.

Culture of Shared Responsibility in Remote Learning

Replicating as best possible what happens in our classrooms is the work of our teachers and families together. Our goal is to work in collaboration with families to keep alive the culture of learning that is unique to Montessori, and provide families with support and activities that match the developmental needs and characteristics of the child. For us to accomplish this goal together we all must have a clear understanding of the role we play in achieving.

On the following page, we have outlined the responsibilities of our families and the school in supporting the Montessori Remote Experience.

Parent Responsibilities

Parents play a crucial role in the success of their child's education, and remote learning is no exception. IMS staff are committed to providing children a learning experience to help them reach their full potential and achieve. All the while, parents commit to take on the role of learning coach at home. This means parents should:

- Update your contact information with teachers and staff: phone number and email
- Engage with teachers regularly to discuss student progress
- Check email, SchoolCues, school and class websites and other communication platforms for updates from the teachers or administration
- Ensure child(ren) engages with scheduled works and lessons for learning
- Provide a learning environment conducive to a remote school setting
- Monitor and maintain academic integrity
- Assume responsibility for student's school attendance as required by the school handbook.

Student Responsibilities

Remote learning environments provide an opportunity for children to learn from home allowing for flexibility in pacing. Montessori is founded upon freedom within responsible limits. With the benefits of flexibility in remote learning, comes the responsibility of understanding a high-quality, remote work ethic. Children will be held accountable for their attendance, assignments, and assessments. A student who is effectively engaged in remote learning will:

- Prepare for and engage in works and remote lessons as assigned by teachers
- Maintain active communication with teachers
- Check Google Stream announcements and emails daily
- Complete assignments as indicated by the teacher with academic integrity and honesty
- Follow all remote learning procedures established by the school
- Demonstrate positive digital citizenship by:
 - Protecting private information from unauthorized online applications;
 - Respecting yourself and others in your words and actions while engaging in online discussions;
 - Respecting copyright and the intellectual property of others.

Parent & Student Remote Learning Agreement

Prior to the beginning of remote learning, parents and children enrolled in any type of remote learning are asked to read and sign this handbook as the remote learning agreement. Teachers will help guide parents and children in understanding what the statements in the agreement mean. The intent is to help parents and children understand their roles in the remote learning environment.

Island Montessori Responsibilities

IMS will maintain parent and student help videos posted on social media platforms including; Facebook and/or Instagram, and school and classroom websites. Support videos for their individual classes are posted to Google Classroom. IMS also has Google/IT Support for families through the use of a Google Form, which is located in the Google Classroom, the class website, and school website under IMS Virtual.

Teachers and administrators have established and will sustain a remote learning environment based on our shared curriculum, while focusing on the children' social emotional well being.

- Provide and maintain communication with weekly parent newsletters each Friday, so families and plan their upcoming week
- Balance synchronous and asynchronous learning
- Meet live with children regularly as defined by IMS
- Participate in staff development, staff meetings, and team meetings
- Design lesson plans grounded in Montessori and submit for the Head of School and Curriculum Coordinator to observe and evaluate remote environments.
- Provide individual student conferences to promote social presence and relationship building
- Timely and personalized feedback to all children via Google Classroom
- Provide Office Hours for children to check-in daily and provide instructional support
- Provide opportunities for parents and children to offer feedback
- Lead with strong communication to define and disseminate information about school remote policies and procedures to parents, children, teachers and community
- Maintain an operational student help desk/support method to address all remote learning needs related to technology devices, digital resources being used for instruction, etc.

Culture Built on Attendance

Parent and Student Role in Attendance

Regular attendance of children is a vital component of the Montessori experience- even remotely; the children who benefit the most from the learning environment are the ones who attend regularly. Children must be present to be full, contributing members of the learning community. Island Montessori staff expect parents to support the mission of our school by encouraging and motivating your child(ren) to be a daily part of our vibrant Montessori community.

The primary responsibility for school attendance rests with children and parents. Island Montessori has the responsibility for properly recording absenteeism and tardiness, notifying parents when needed, and discouraging excessive absences in accordance with state law. G.S. 115C-307 (f).

TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

Below are the recognized IMS supported methods of remote learning communication in order to be marked PRESENT in daily attendance.

You must communicate daily with your lead teacher. If your lead teacher is out, please communicate with your TA.

- 1 ZOOM**
Attend a scheduled Zoom session (either with your class or an individual session) where you and your teacher can talk and exchange learning ideas.
- 2 GOOGLE CHAT**
Message your teacher (through Google Chat while signed into your Google Classroom or reply to a message sent to you from your MS teacher in Google Chat).
- 3 GOOGLE COMMENTS**
While in a work being completed, turned in, or returned, you include a comment to your teacher or reply to a comment from your teacher in the Google Document, Sheet, or Slides.
- 4 GMAIL**
You send an email to your teacher and your teacher replies OR your teacher sends an email to you and you reply.
- 5 GOOGLE MEET**
Attend a scheduled Meet session (either with your class or an individual session) where you and your teacher can talk and exchange learning ideas.
- 6 PHONE CALL**
You and your teacher talk on the phone together about your work, your work plans, or an individual check in.

ISLAND MONTESSORI REMOTE ATTENDANCE

Remote Attendance Overview

Please reference the [Attendance Policy for Students](#) to review excused and unexcused absences as well as attendance policies for frequent absences. This is an excerpt from the Parent Handbook.

Remote attendance procedures are enacted in the following scenarios:

- On regularly scheduled remote calendar days ([S.B 704](#))
- During a state of emergency without loss of resources (such as a pandemic)
- During a state of emergency with loss of resources (such as a weather event)

Attendance requirements in each of these scenarios are established based on the expectations from the Remote Learning Plan. Thus, attendance during remote learning is aligned with these expectations for continuity in the Remote Learning Plan.

Guidelines For a Mark of Present- Two-Way Communication

An attendance mark of *present* is defined by daily two-way communication between the LEAD TEACHER and STUDENT. If the lead teacher is out for the day, an attendance mark of *present* is then defined by two-way communication between THE TEACHING ASSISTANT AND STUDENT. Two-way communication is a form of conversation or transmission of content or work in which both the student and teacher are involved discussing the information.

Two way communication can occur through:

- Google Classroom Applications such as: Google Chat, Gmail, or, Google Meet;
- Comments through Google Documents, Sheets, or Sides;
- Zoom;
- Two-way communication may also occur via direct phone calls

Children, Staff, and Families should review this graphic to be familiar with [how IMS defines two-way communication](#) within each of the above mentioned.

Guidelines For a Mark of Absent

An attendance mark of *excused absence* will be given when a parent notifies the LEAD TEACHER of absence. An attendance mark of *unexcused absence* will be given when there two way communication does not occur between LEAD TEACHER/TA and student AND there is no contact from the parent stating reason for absence.

Remote Learning Attendance in State of Emergency- Loss of Resources

IMS will follow the state of emergency plans outlined by state and local representatives as to the requirements for carrying out remote learning and attendance. We will communicate our knowledge with families as it is received.

Monitoring Absenteeism in Remote Learning

When in remote learning, absenteeism will be recorded and monitored, just as it is on a traditional school day. Please reference the [Attendance Policy for Students](#) to review excused and unexcused absences as well as attendance policies for frequent absences. This is an excerpt from the Parent Handbook.

Remote Learning and the School Calendar

The Remote Learning Plan adheres to the school calendar outlined in [S.B. 704](#). Children are expected to attend class remotely when school is scheduled to be in session for remote learning days or when the school has enacted Plan B or Plan C as outlined by Gov. Roy Cooper- [N.C. Strong Schools](#). The [calendar](#) may be accessed on the Island Montessori School website.

Technology and Connectivity for Attendance

Families selecting any remote learning option are encouraged to provide access to high speed internet and a device. Families in need of a device, may request via the IMS Home Access survey. An IMS Chromebook, will be provided. Outlined below is the technology checkout system for IMS.

- Device sign-out is available for families that need a device to support remote learning in the home.
- Pick up times will be scheduled with families prior to the beginning of remote learning.
- Devices will be collected by school staff on or before the last day of remote learning or upon student withdrawal from school. Additionally, if the device is not returned or damaged, the student and the student's parent/guardian will be assessed the full replacement cost of the device.
- Parents and children will review and sign the Chromebook/iPad Parent and Student Agreement form which outlines responsibilities including all fees.
- If the device malfunctions in any way, the student will immediately report the problem using the IT Hardware Form.

Children without connectivity in their remote learning environment will be guided and assisted by IMS and/or community partners. When possible, IMS will support connectivity issues families may experience. Children without connectivity outside of school will be provided learning packets of print materials as necessary.

Building a Montessori Remote Learning Experience

The Fluid Prepared Environment

One of the cohering elements of blending face-to-face and remote instruction is a shared curriculum. While the Montessori method lends naturally to a shared curriculum, our teams have worked diligently to further develop and create a method of providing lessons while students move fluidly between home and school. Embracing a shared curriculum is an assumed aspect of the success of learning remotely. This accommodates long-term planning to ensure student growth within this new way of learning. In building our new plan, we have worked to be as weatherproof as possible to enter the fall. We have proactively accounted for all considerations that will allow the growth and development of learners' skills and abilities, honoring their whole selves.

Our remote Montessori methodology can be summarized in one sentence: You can do Montessori without the materials, but you can't do it without the philosophy. We have worked tediously to ensure our shared curriculum is designed to create consistency and stability through order and structure for the children and IMS families. Here are the key elements for stability across all learning environments:

- All classes will record and follow the attendance policy found in this handbook, regardless of face to face or remote.
- All classes will use a similar scope and sequence to support seamless transitions from face-to-face to remote learning and vice versa to promote growth and independence.
- All children will get appropriate support and services through the general education program, EC services, 504 plans, English as a Second Language (ESL), and intervention.
- All virtual classrooms are designed with the same foundational components so the Learning Management System looks the same for each class and level.
- All school staff will continue to focus on establishing effective relationships and a community environment.
- Weekly newsletters and agendas following the school template will be provided and communicated ahead of each new week, for each class and level to support families.
- Parent education and technology assistance is provided on multiple levels to assist children and families in finding success.

Even with the above measures in place, we recognize that the prepared environment still may feel tremendously compromised without the materials and traditional class community. We acknowledge our philosophy is what strengthens our school community, even without the materials. Secondly, we acknowledge that our shared strengths as a Montessori community allow

us to provide lessons grounded in our Montessori philosophy, despite being in a prepared environment remotely. Two important elements of a prepared environment challenged by remote learning are: order and structure, and freedom with responsibility. For these critical elements of an authentic Montessori environment to transcend remote challenges, we all must take ownership of our responsibilities. Thus, we ask our families to support the philosophy of the Montessori prepared environment when children are working from home environments.

The needed support for this unique prepared environment in your home is listed below:

- An established a predictable schedule and an agreeable place to work to benefit the child's confidence in independent learning.
- Preparation of all necessary supplies and materials required for the day's work ahead of time.
- A morning check-in for prioritizing various daily assignments to promote an awareness of what needs to be accomplished, while allowing the child the freedom to complete them in a self-chosen order.
- A system of accountability and freedom within limits, by allowing the child to pace their work week, as the adult inquires about progress using the agenda as a guide.

The adaptations teachers have made for this unique prepared environment in support of your role at home are listed below:

- Utilizing impressionistic charts and materials that can “cross environments” to support the lessons they give.
- Creating lessons that give children various opportunities to debate, discuss, negotiate, and collaborate.
- A teaching/learning model utilized consistently for remote learning by all classes and all grades for independence in the procedure of locating, completing, and submitting works in the work cycle.
- Strong, consistent, and uniform communication methods to connect the child and parent to the work.

Montessori and Remote Learning Design and Structure

Children will use Google Classroom for their work cycle. Posted on Google Classroom will be a combination of teacher created materials and online learning materials/lessons. Each will afford children the opportunity to practice and develop with a specific focus on following the child as we prioritize academic skills appropriate for their developmental level and plane of development. Teachers will have all work cycle assignments, pre-recorded lessons, and scheduled live lessons for the coming week posted to go live Monday mornings for children. Teachers will place an entire week of work cycle in the classroom, with suggested pacing to help children achieve their work weekly.

Children are expected to complete each posted assignment by the end of the week. Using this weekly set of assignments and a planner, as they do in the classroom, they will choose and record their daily accomplishments, while organizing their works with their teacher's guidance in the virtual classroom.

Childrens' assignments will be differentiated so that, like in the classroom, students are accessing skills that are at the right academic level for skill development.

The growth of the child will be nurtured by the following:

- Prioritized learning goals or objectives for each lesson
- Utilize work plans to organize remote learning
- Whole group instruction videos with modeling
- Small group instruction (recorded) videos or live sessions
- Small group and independent activities through choice boards
- Assessment/progress monitoring with rich feedback
- Teacher office hours for individual or small group student support

Assessment and Evaluation of Progress

Children participating in any remote learning option will receive formal feedback, evaluation remarks, and rubrics, as they would in a traditional Montessori classroom. The overall progress earned by children while they are enrolled in remote learning will become part of the final progress report.

Special Populations

Island Montessori School is committed to providing an inclusive learning experience for all children, including those children with disabilities whose needs are served under IEP or Section 504 plans. The Exceptional Children's staff will continue to collaborate and plan with the general education teachers and provide services in a remote learning setting to assist children in meeting their IEP goals. Each student will be created a contingency plan to support the delivery of service minutes and accommodations to support learning in the remote setting.