KNOXVILLE MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Operating Plan Under COVID-19

“We discovered that education is not something which the TEACHER does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the HUMAN being.” — Dr. Maria Montessori
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Many thanks to the Austin Montessori School for their support in the creation of this school resource.
Overview

After considerable planning and deliberation, the Knoxville Montessori School has decided to reopen our campus for students on August 10, 2020. Reopening KMS entails some increased risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus for all concerned because attending school involves daily human contact among children and staff, who will then be in contact with others in their own homes. Our decision to reopen our campus recognizes that (1) for KMS families and staff, that risk is balanced against the educational, social, economic and other costs of remaining closed, (2) our school must reopen with many new health and safety protocols to do everything we can to responsibly mitigate that risk to the extent possible, and (3) each family and staff member must decide how to balance those risks, and whether to return to campus.

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 reopening our school, KMS will be able to continue to guide the intellectual and character development of each child along a path towards his or her full and unknown potential, in ways that honor the complementary needs of the individual and the group.

The following information explains the policies and procedures we are employing to mitigate COVID-related risks at school. This approach is built around recommended health monitoring and screening as well as procedures designed to reduce the number of contacts during the school day. These procedures include expecting children, staff, and all present on the KMS campus to wear masks and to observe the social distancing expectations. The staff will help guide the children through the usage of masks and all will be provided spaces and times when the masks will not be used during the day, including when outdoors, when 6-foot distancing is possible, or separation barriers are utilized. We believe reopening with these new protocols represents an important step in responsibly living with this virus.

KMS has concluded that reopening our classes under these conditions is in the best interest of the community and that each KMS 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 KMS 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 programs.

All information on school hours and attendance is based on state and federal guidelines as well as decisions made by the KMS Staff and Board and is subject to change. We will continue to closely monitor the impact of COVID-19 at the local level. **KMS will inform our families as soon as possible on which scenario we will follow.** Our goal is to remain open as long as we can do so while reasonably protecting the health and safety of students and staff.

We appreciate the input and feedback that many of you have offered KMS through emails, phone calls, google surveys, etc. Your participation has assisted us in the preparation for the reopening of the school in the fall. Your continued involvement by working as a team in following these procedures will be essential in making the 2020-2021 school year a healthy and supportive environment for our children and community as a whole.
General Preparedness and Planning

The Knoxville Montessori School has and will continue to collaborate, share information, and review plans with 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 to minimize disruption to teaching and learning.

The information in this document is consistent with COVID-19 guidelines and recommendations for schools and childcare programs published by the CDC, American Academy of Pediatrics, Tennessee Department of Education, and Tennessee Department of Health. KMS’ operating procedures meet or exceed the minimum standards of care and will be updated as new information or additional guidelines are made available.

Hours

Class and After Care hours are subject to change based on the scenario KMS is required to follow.

Primary I and II
Arrival: 7:30 - 8:00 a.m.
Departure: 2:30 - 2:45 p.m.

Upper and Lower Elementary
Arrival: 7:30 - 8:00 a.m.
Departure: 3:00 - 3:15 p.m.

After Care Departure Times
Scenario A – program available until 6:00 p.m.
Scenario B – program available until 4:00 p.m.

Arrival and Departure

Our existing arrival and departure procedures, with added procedures for health screening and hand hygiene, meet the guidelines for social distancing and limited contact.

Arrival
- Arrival will be from 7:30-8:00 a.m.
- Until further notice, parking in the KMS lot is not an option.
- All adults must wear a face mask while on campus (even in your car).
- KMS will have the parking lot marked for where to pull through. If the parking lot is full, please DO NOT stop on Kingston Pike. Turn around in Western Plaza and approach the school again.
- When you enter the line, please pull up as far as possible.
• Each child must have a Health Screening Sheet completed by a parent or guardian. We ask that these sheets be filled out PRIOR to arrival to help keep everything moving in the parking lot. _KMS will have spare copies of the sheet available at pick-up time – we recommend having extra sheets available in your vehicle._

• Staff will walk to your car to greet your child. We ask that your child remain seated with his/her seatbelt on.

• A staff member will take your child’s temperature using a contactless thermometer prior to your child leaving the vehicle.
  - If your child has a temperature of 100.0°F or more, the staff member will verify the temperature with another thermometer.
  - A child with a temperature of 100.0°F or more will not be admitted to the school.

• If your child clears the health screening, he or she will be invited to unbuckle the seat belt or be assisted as needed.

• Each child’s lunch box/bag, water bottle, and other items go on the floorboard of the car below his/her seat for easier access by the child.

• As soon as your car door closes and your child is safely away from the car, you may pull up to await your turn to _turn right on Kingston Pike_.

• Staff members will sanitize his/her hands after each child’s arrival.

_Walk-up arrivals must park in the Western Plaza parking lot. For walk-up arrivals, wait in the designated areas in the parking lot along the fence line until a staff member can assist you. Please do not approach other families or vehicles while you are waiting._

**Late Arrival**

Late arrival must be scheduled in advance with the main office. Please follow this procedure:

• Contact the Main Office at 865-525-6042 and indicate the exact time of your child’s late arrival.

• Admin Staff will notify the classroom to plan for receiving the child at the pre-arranged late arrival time.

• At the pre-arranged late arrival time, please pull up to the curb and wait for an Admin Staff to proceed with your child’s health screening.

• Admin Staff will escort your child to his/her classroom, where Classroom Staff will proceed to greet your child and assist him/her with the regular arrival procedure.

**Departure**

• Until further notice, parking in the KMS lot is not an option.

• All adults must wear a face mask while on campus (even in your car).
• KMS will have the parking lot marked for where to pull through. If the parking lot is full, please DO NOT stop on Kingston Pike. Turn around in Western Plaza and approach the school again.

• When you enter the line, please pull up as far as possible.

• We ask that you remain in your car.

• Staff will walk your child to your car and assist, if needed, with securing his/her seatbelt.

• Once your child is secure in the car, you may pull up to await your turn to turn right on Kingston Pike.

Walk-up departures must park in the Western Plaza parking lot. For walk-up departures, wait in the designated areas in the parking lot along the fence line until a staff member brings your child to you. Please do not approach other families or vehicles while you are waiting.

Early Departure
Early departure must be scheduled in advance with your child’s teacher and Admin Staff. Please follow this procedure:

• Contact the Main Office at 865-525-6042 and indicate the exact time of your child’s early departure.

• Admin Staff will notify the classroom to plan for assisting the child with departure at the pre-arranged early departure time.

• At the pre-arranged early departure time, please pull up to the curb and wait.

• Admin Staff will collect your child from the classroom and bring him or her to the car.

Health and Temperature Screening Protocol

Daily employee and child health screenings are important to help reduce the transmission of COVID-19 at school. All children and staff will be screened daily for the following criteria:

• COVID Symptoms –
  o Temperature of 100.0°F or more
  o Fever
  o Cough
  o Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  o Loss of taste or smell

• Have used medications to lower an individual’s temperature

• In the previous 14 days, has had contact with someone with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19

• Is waiting for COVID-19 test results

• In the previous 14 days, has traveled to another state or another country
Staff Self-Screening Prior to Arrival at School
Staff members will conduct self-screening prior to arrival at school. If a staff member self-identifies as having symptoms listed in the screening criteria above, she/he will contact the administrators, not come into work, and follow the procedures in the section COVID-19 Symptoms at School - Staff.

Staff Screening at School
All staff will conduct a temperature check and record their Staff Health Screening form 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. KMS asks our community to be extra cautious during this time. We are committed to keeping our children, staff, and families healthy and rely on one another to do their part in making this possible. A completed Health Screen Sheet for each child must be turned in daily to KMS Staff and ask that these are done prior to arrival at school to help the drop-off process move quickly.

Staff Screening of Child at School
Upon arrival, a staff member will follow the screening protocol:

- Collection of the prefilled daily questionnaire.
- Take your child’s temperature using a contactless thermometer. Additional temperature checks will be taken during the day as needed.
- If the child has a temperature of 100.0°F or more, the staff member will verify the temperature with another thermometer.
- A child with a temperature of 100.0°F or more will not be admitted to the school.
- Staff will make a visual inspection of the child for signs of illness which could include flushed cheeks, rapid breathing, or difficulty breathing (without recent physical activity), fatigue, or extreme fussiness. If the child exhibits any of these symptoms at arrival or at any point during the day, the child will be isolated, and parents will be required to pick up their child.

Face Masks
KMS will expect our children, staff, and all present on the KMS campus to wear a face mask. Face masks are meant to protect our school community in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms. For more information, see the CDC link Use of Face Cloth Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19.

Staff, Parents, and Guests
All Staff, Parents and Guests are asked to wear a face mask while on the KMS campus. This not only helps with the safety of our community, but also sets a good example for our children.
Parents and guests are asked to wear masks during arrival and dismissal, including when in the car. KMS Staff will follow the same expectation except during the following:

- When working with the children during presentations that require clear articulation and visibility of mouth.
- If a child needs to see a staff member’s facial expression.
- When in a designated “no mask” space.

Children
The wearing of masks teaches the children to be responsible citizens, which is a part of the Montessori philosophy. Masks will also help maintain a healthy class community as well as allow the children to be in closer proximity with their peers as they build their social skills.

Spaces and times will be provided for when the masks will not be used during the day including when a child is outdoors, when 6-foot distancing is possible, or separation barriers are utilized.

We recommend that families practice the usage of masks before the school year begins. Start out with a short amount of time and gradually extend the time, while taking regular breaks from wearing the mask. The KMS staff will continue to work with you and help your children in this important practice.

Limiting the Spread of COVID-19 at School

The Knoxville Montessori School does not expect that children will distance themselves totally from other children or adults while at school. Children learn by engaging with their environment, which includes the other people in it. The KMS building is a small space in comparison to many schools, therefore true social distancing (6 feet apart) is not always possible. The Staff will work with the children on the importance of social distancing as well as the usage of masks. In reference to the scenarios KMS is planning for, the following strategies for limiting the spread of COVID-19 will be implemented:

Scenario A
KMS is open with a full day schedule.

- All children will enter and exit the building at drop-off and regular pick-up through their individual exterior classroom door. After Care pick up will be from the front office door.
- All students will remain in their classroom groupings (3 groups - Primary I, Primary II, Elementary) during lessons, group time, meals, and playtime.
- Teachers will assure that children have additional space to work outside as well as single table workspaces inside.
- During meals, the teachers will set the children at appropriate distances, utilizing plexiglass dividers that will allow children to see each other and have their needed social time.
- At nap time, children’s nap mats will be spaced out as much as possible, with alternating head to toe arrangements to reduce the distance between children.
Scenario B
KMS is open with a modified schedule, closing at 4:00 p.m.

- All of Scenario A procedures.
- After Care students will remain in his or her respective class group (PI, PII, Elementary) until final dismissal at 4:00.

Scenario C
KMS is open with a limited number of children present at a time as well as a combination of at-home and in-school learning.

- All of Scenario A and B procedures.
- Smaller assigned groups of children at a time in the building (to allow for more distancing capabilities).

Scenario D
The KMS building closed, at-home learning only.

- Families will be responsible to pick up, at a prescheduled time, the weekly at-home learning package that will be provided by the teachers.

Monitoring Absenteeism
The Knoxville Montessori School administrative staff will monitor absenteeism among children and staff. Any unusual patterns will be considered when evaluating the need for temporary or long-term building closure. Decisions about closure will be made in consultation with the Tennessee Department of Health.

To ensure that the tracking is accurate, families must contact KMS at 865-525-6042 on the reason for any absences. If Administration has not heard from a family by mid-morning on any specific day, the parents/guardians will be contacted by phone.

Parent Contact/Communication

Messaging and Phone
Each teacher can be communicated with through Montessori Compass. Teachers will respond to messages within 24 hours during the work week. Teachers do not respond to phone messages during the day. Time-sensitive contact with teachers can be facilitated by calling the main office and/or sending a Montessori Compass message to the “Administration Team”.

Conferences
Conferences will be held by the teacher via zoom as needed or as requested by the teacher or parent.

Observations
Due to restrictions in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, regular, in person, observations will be postponed.
Parent Gatherings/Meetings
Parent gatherings will occur via zoom and will be communicated to families at least 1 week in advance.

Training
Staff will receive ongoing training regarding State and CDC recommendations and requirements as well as other topics including, but not limited to, mental health, managing stress, and how to stay true to Montessori during COVID-19.

KMS encourages our school community to be educated as well. As resources become available, links, documents, etc. will be shared via Montessori Compass and Google Classroom.

Food and Drinks

Snack
All KMS students in Elementary and Primary, as well as those attending After Care, should bring his/her own snacks. All community shared snacks will be postponed until further notice.

Lunch
For more information regarding lunch policies please refer to the Nutritional Guidelines in the KMS Parent Handbook.

KMS Students will enjoy his/her lunches in their environment with the added safety measures of:

- Each child should bring their own lunch box, utensils, and 2 napkins.
- Microwave use will not be available for any meals.
- Pizza Tuesday will be postponed until further notice.

To keep promoting social relationships among the children, additional safety measures will be implemented by the classroom staff as needed, such as meals outside, fewer children per table, plexiglass barriers, etc.

Water
All students must bring a full thermos or water bottle every day. KMS will provide ways to refill these containers as needed.

Milk
KMS provided milk will be postponed until further notice. Students can bring their own milk in their lunchbox. Any container that the milk came in will be returned with your child at the end of the day. Please do not send flavored or sweetened milk (chocolate, strawberry, etc.) as well as milk containing nuts (almond or cashew).
Food Preparation and Serving Lessons

Knoxville Montessori School will postpone any food preparation and serving lessons in the classroom until further notice.

Healthy Hand Hygiene

As described by the CDC’s link [When and How to Wash Your Hands](#), 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:

- When entering a classroom
- 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
- After handling garbage
- Before and after touching your eyes, nose, or mouth because it’s a common way that germs spread.

Washing Your Hands the Right Way

KMS follows the steps listed below when teaching children about washing hands. Please practice these same steps at home every time to make this process an automatic routine.

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

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

Use of Hand Sanitizer by Staff

Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to get rid of germs in most situations. If soap and water is not readily available, staff members will use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
Cleaning and Disinfecting

The Knoxville Montessori School follows recommendations by the TN Department of Health for cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting. Steps to keep KMS as clean as possible will include the following:

- Staff will routinely clean, sanitize, and disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched.
- All bathrooms will be cleaned and disinfected regularly and as needed throughout the day.
- Electrostatic Spraying Technology will be used to disinfect and sanitize our environments at the end of each day. The electrostatic charge ensures that even the hard to reach places are coated evenly and effectively.

More information on cleaning and disinfecting can be found in the CDC links How to Clean and Disinfect and Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting.

Classroom Materials

- Materials will be cleaned and sanitized regularly throughout the day using the dish sanitizer machine, spray sanitizer, and/or electrostatic fogger.
- Materials that cannot be cleaned and sanitized will not be used.
- 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.
- If a child becomes ill while at school, materials that he or she has been working with will be set aside until they are cleaned.
- Yoga Mats will be used (versus rugs) for floor workspace and will be sanitized regularly throughout the day.
- 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.

Playtime Activities

- Activity supplies will be available for each individual classroom and will be sanitized as needed.
- Activities 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.
- If a child becomes ill while at school, activities that he or she has been using with will be set aside until they are cleaned.

Nap Time Bedding

- Each child’s bedding is kept separate and stored in individually labeled bags and shelving and will be sent home at the end of each week to be laundered.
- Mats are labeled for each child and will be disinfected daily.
Cleaning and Disinfecting Procedures (if staff or child has been directly exposed to COVID-19)
Due to the nature of the small KMS building, if a child or staff member has been exposed to COVID-19 (through a direct family member or sitter/nanny, etc.) it will be necessary for the whole school to close. The building will be closed for 72-hours. This closure period allows for the following:

- Day 1 – Building is empty. This is to help minimize the potential for exposure to respiratory droplets.
- Day 2 – Cleaning and disinfecting of the entire school by wiping all frequently touched surfaces and utilizing the electrostatic fogger.
- Day 3 – Building is empty. This allows the extra time needed if additional cleaning is necessary.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Products
Knoxville Montessori School uses disinfecting products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19. More information can be found in the CDC link Disinfectants for Use Against COVID-19.

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:
  - Classroom staff will take the child to the isolation location in the main office. The office will remain closed to other children or guests until the child has been picked up and the space has been disinfected.
  - The classroom staff will inform the Admin staff of the symptoms exhibited.
  - Admin staff will contact parents to come to school to pick up the child. Parents are required to arrange for their child to be picked up as soon as possible, and NO LONGER THAN 1 HOUR FROM THE ORIGINAL NOTIFICATION.
  - The Admin staff will supervise the child until the parent arrives.
  - Once a parent has left with the ill child, the main office will be cleaned and sanitized by staff.
- Materials, toys, and furniture touched by the child who is sent home will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.
- In the 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 community until the individual has met the criteria for return listed under Children or Staff with Positive Case of COVID-19 on page 15.
• 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.

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

KMS Staff is encouraged to monitor their health and required to perform daily health screenings for symptoms of COVID-19. Staff are encouraged 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:
  o Put on a disposable face mask
  o Leave the classroom
  o Review and complete the [CDC’s Symptom and Self-Checker](#)
  o Obtain a COVID-19 test – [COVID Assessment Sites](#)
  o 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 is assumed to have COVID-19, and the individual may not return to work until the individual has met the return criteria for Children or Staff with Positive Case of COVID-19 on page 15.

• If the staff member has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to work before completing the self-isolation period specified by the Department of Health, the individual must obtain a medical professional’s note clearing the individual for the return based on a negative COVID-19 test.

**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 with the infected person.

**Positive Case of COVID-19 at KMS**

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

• Contact the Department of Education to report the presence of COVID-19 at KMS.
• Notify the Tennessee Department of Health.
• Notify the school community that a child in the school has been diagnosed with COVID-19. Confidentiality will be maintained.
• Close KMS for 2-weeks to allow self-quarantine for all children and staff.
• Complete disinfecting procedures.

Decisions about potential extension of closure will be made in consultation with the local Department of Health.

**Children or Staff with a Positive Case of COVID-19**

Children or Staff who have exhibited symptoms and who have stayed home (home isolated) can return to KMS 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 a negative COVID-19 test.

For more details, please refer to the CDC – [When You Can Be Around Others After You Had or Likely Had COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-were-exposed.html)

**Contact Tracing**

Contact tracing is a strategy used by the Health Department to determine the source of an infection and how it is spreading. Finding people who are close contacts to a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, and therefore at higher risk of becoming infected themselves, can help prevent further spread of the virus. Those contacts might include family members, sitters/nannies, co-workers or health care providers.

**Responding to a COVID Case or Exposure at KMS**

KMS will immediately respond to a positive COVID case or student/staff exposure using the following guidelines:

- If a student or staff member has been diagnosed with COVID-19:
  - An Emergency Health Alert text message will be sent to all families in KMS.
  - A message with more details will be sent in Montessori Compass (confidentiality will be respected, as usual, and names will not be given).
o The KMS building will close for two weeks. A combination of online interactions and two-weeks of prepared educational materials will substitute for in-school learning during the first two-week closure. If additional time is needed, usage of allotted “snow days” or an extension of the school year may be necessary.

o During the closure, cleaning and disinfecting will occur to prepare the space for all to return.

• If a student or staff member has been exposed to COVID-19 (through a direct family member, sitter/nanny, etc.):
  
o An Emergency Health Alert text message will be sent to all families in KMS.
  
o A message with more details will be sent in Montessori Compass (confidentiality will be respected, as usual, and names will not be given).
  
o KMS will be closed for 72-hours to allow for the proper disinfecting process (one “snow day” will be allotted for each school day missed during the 72-hours).

High-Risk Groups

In the link People Who Are at Increased Risk for Severe Illness, the CDC explains that everyone is at risk for getting COVID-19 if they are exposed to the virus, but some people are more likely than others to become severely ill. To protect those at higher risk, it is important that everyone wears a mask and practices healthy hygiene and social distancing.

We learn more about COVID-19 every day, and as more information becomes available, the CDC will continue to update and share information about risk for severe illness.