

new york city

**montessori**

charter school



***School Reopening Plan***

***2020-21***

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# Communication/Family and Community Engagement

*Regular and frequent communication between schools, families, and the wider community has always been an essential element of effective family and community engagement. With all the uncertainty surrounding COVID's spread and its impact on local communities, communication and family engagement will be more important than ever this year. When families, schools, and communities work together and keep each other informed, students are more successful, and everyone benefits.*

The New York City Montessori Charter School (NYCMCS) has prioritized communication with our families and students through the use of surveys, emails, phone calls, and school messaging software. The teachers at NYCMCS work as the intermediary between the school and families because they are remotely accessing our families homes daily. Parents are encouraged to reach out to their teachers with any concerns or questions that are then relayed to school leadership.

Currently, the main mode of communication at the school is email and phone calls. Parents who do not respond to the translated emails that are sent weekly are given follow up phone calls. During instruction teachers make three attempts to connect with the students and families for each lesson being taught.

Mailers, information packets, and automated messages will be utilized as our primary methods of communication to get school started and will be shifted as needed to ensure we are remaining responsive to the needs of our families.

## Health and Safety

*Focused on preventive actions, schools will be required to: perform health checks and screenings, per DOH guidance, and recognize signs and symptoms of illness in students and staff; develop plans to maximize social distancing; develop plans to manage and isolate ill persons until they can be sent home; instruct students and staff in proper hand and respiratory hygiene; require wearing appropriate face coverings; and develop cleaning and disinfecting procedures for the school in accordance with CDC and DOH guidance.*

NYCMCS is working closely with city and state agencies to ensure that all mandated safety protocols are followed. Currently we are responding to the following requirements in the following ways:

1. Social Distancing

- a. NYCMCS has done a survey of all available space in the school building, and identified and repurposed spaces based on their ability to render 50sq ft of space per individual in each space. Additionally, we have created protocols for bathroom use and movement through the building that will limit cross contamination between student groups.
- b. Children in each classroom will be spaced 6ft apart with all of their materials for the day pre-stocked at their work station as to limit the passing out and collecting of materials.
- c. Students will consume all meals and receive all instruction in their assigned pod and will only leave that space if required for related services.
  - i. In the event that a child leaves for services they will wear all the necessary safety equipment for the service they are receiving and will submit to hand washing and socially distanced escort through the building.
- d. All specialized instruction (gym, health, work cycle) will be projected into the classroom and taught remotely by the specialist responsible for that subject matter. Students will remain in their pod with their assigned teachers.

## 2. Recognizing Illness

- a. All staff will be trained in the expectations as indicated in the CDC guidance for identifying signs of COVID 19. In the event that a teacher feels a student is displaying signs of illness that were not identified during their entry screening, said student will be escorted to the medical floor.
  - i. The medical floor at NYCMCS is located on the mezzanine and is serviced by its own stairwell. This floor comprises of the Nurses office, a holding area, and an isolation classroom for instruction while students wait for pick up.
    1. Students who seem ill will be sent to the nurse. The nurse will determine if the signs of illness are symptoms of COVID and will send that child to the waiting area. If the student's parents cannot be contacted the student will engage in remote instruction (if reasonable; based on health) from the isolation classroom until their parent arrives.

## 3. Screening Students

- a. Students will be temperature checked as they enter the school building. This screening will be conducted by a distance kiosk in the lobby that will approve or disapprove admittance to school based on the CDC recommended temperature.
  - i. Students who are healthy will then be ushered toward the main stairwell where they will get a pump of hand sanitizer and then ascend the stairs to their classroom pod.
    - 1. Once at their pod, students will sanitize their hands a second time before entering the classroom.
  - ii. Students who do not pass the temperature screen will be sent up a secondary stairwell to the Nurse. They will then remain in isolation until a parent can come pick them up.

#### 4. Screening Staff and Visitors

- a. Staff and visitors will be temperature checked in the lobby upon arrival. They will then be required to answer the following screening questions:
  - i. Have you knowingly been in close or proximate contact in the past 14 days with anyone who has tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 or who has or had symptoms of COVID-19?
  - ii. Have you tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 in the past 14 days?
  - iii. Have you or a housemate experienced any symptoms of COVID-19, including a temperature of greater than 100.0°F, in the past 14 days?
  - iv. Have you or a housemate traveled internationally or from a state with widespread community transmission of Covid 19 in the past 14 days?
- b. Staff and visitors who are not well will be sent home and allowed to use necessary sick time or asked to work or communicate remotely while self quarantining.

#### 5. Personal Hygiene

- a. For staff there will be in depth online training focused on handwashing, mask purpose and use, PPE purpose and uses, as well as how to build the appropriate understandings and systems for students.
- b. For students there will be two student orientations. The first orientation will be conducted virtually for the entire population and will cover all of the in school and in life expectations as handed down by the CDC. Then a secondary student orientation will be held for onsite students to help clarify the expectations when onsite.

- c. Sinks and supplies are in each classroom and handwashing will be a pre scheduled part of the day preceding and following meals, contact with mucus or saliva, and as needed based on teacher observation and concern.

## 6. Increased Filtration

- a. NYCMCS is working with our HVAC providers to increase air flow and filtration. Once results come back from our survey of the systems additional air purifiers will be added as needed and stairwell doors to the outside will be left open for periods of the day to increase air flow.

## 7. Face Coverings

### a. Face Masks

- i. NYCMCS has purchased face masks for all staff members. The school also has disposable masks for students as needed due to lack of having one or destruction of a parent provided mask during the day.
- ii. NYCMCS is providing the following to teachers:
  - 1. Face Shields
    - a. These are reserved for hall monitors, support staff, and anyone who moves between classrooms.
    - b. Face shields are also being stocked in the classrooms of our students who have emotional or medical limitations when it comes to face coverings. These will be worn in addition to substantial social distancing.
  - 2. Clear
    - a. Clear masks have been purchased for teacher use particularly in our 12:1+1 classrooms and in the lower grades and ELL classrooms. Facial expressions are a large part of building strong communication skills and NYCMCS is committed to creating as close to a “normal” pre COVID classroom as possible.
  - 3. Cloth Masks
    - a. Branded NYCMCS face masks have been purchased for all teachers. They are fully washable and meet the CDC guidelines for face coverings.

## 8. Personal Protective Equipment

a. Staff

- i. For staff that move throughout the building we will provide full personal protective equipment.
  1. Gowns
  2. Gloves

9. Cleaning and Disinfection

- a. NYCMCS has changed cleaning companies to ensure that we could have the increased cleaning and disinfecting needed to respond to this current situation.
- b. The building will be cleaned on three schedules:
  - i. High Traffic Areas- 4-6 times a day.
  - ii. Moderate Traffic Areas- 2-4 times a day.
  - iii. Low Traffic Areas- 1-2 times a day.

10. Returning to school following illness

- a. If a person (student or staff) is not diagnosed by a healthcare provider (physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant) with COVID-19 they can return to school:
  - i. Once there is no fever, without the use of fever reducing medicines, and they have felt well for 24 hours;
  - ii. If they have been diagnosed with another condition and has a healthcare provider written note stating they are clear to return to school.
- b. If a person (student or staff) is diagnosed with COVID-19 by a healthcare provider based on a test or their symptoms or does not get a COVID-19 test but has had symptoms, they should not be at school and should stay at home until:
  - i. It has been at least ten days since the individual first had symptoms;
  - ii. It has been at least three days since the individual has had a fever (without using fever reducing medicine); and
  - iii. It has been at least three days since the individual's symptoms improved, including cough and shortness of breath.
- c. Clearance to return to school will be handled by the Operations team at the direction of the school nurse; all of whom will keep records of students being moved to remote learning only.

- d. Parents will be instructed through written media, phone calls, and video conferencing to assess their child's wellness before bringing them to school. Parents should ensure that their children do not have any of the symptoms below that are closely associated with Covid-19 and should send documentation from the doctor if any of these symptoms exist in relation to another disorder.
  - i. Fever or chills
  - ii. Cough
  - iii. Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  - iv. Fatigue
  - v. Muscle or body aches
  - vi. Headache
  - vii. New loss of taste or smell
  - viii. Sore throat
  - ix. Congestion or runny nose
  - x. Nausea or vomiting
  - xi. Diarrhea

#### 11. Accommodations for High Risk Groups

- a. Students
  - i. Students with health conditions that make them more susceptible to Covid-19 will be allowed to select Remote only learning as their preferred method of instruction. Should a student or parent choose to come to school anyway despite this concern the school will work diligently to ensure that the student is in the smallest possible group of students and given a wider breadth of social distancing for the sake of their health.
- b. Staff
  - i. Staff who require accommodations due to high risk medical concerns will be afforded the opportunity to have enhanced PPE, remote teaching assignments and alternative work assignments as they are available.

#### 12. Supplies

- a. The operations team at NYCMCS is consistently ordering all of the required supplies and equipment thus ensuring that the school has enough for the school year if necessary. Currently there are quantity limits on what you can buy so the school is making weekly orders at the maximum allowable limit with its vendors to stockpile enough supplies for the year.

## Nutrition

*Schools and school districts should include food service directors in reopening plan discussions so they are able to: provide all enrolled students with access to school meals each school day whether school is in-person or remote; address all applicable health and safety guidelines; ensure compliance with Child Nutrition Program requirements; and communicate with families through multiple means, in the languages spoken by families.*

NYCMCS is working closely with the school food office to ensure that all students are more than adequately able to access nutritious meals prepared by the School Food staffers. Students will consume breakfast and lunch in their classrooms with their classmates and teachers while observing all social distancing requirements. Students will be able to bring lunch from home and said lunch will remain with the student only until it is consumed. All children will be seated and no one will be allowed to move around the room while masks are removed and students are consuming meals. When done eating, all students will don their masks and proceed with teacher-led work, bathroom breaks, and classroom routines as seen necessary by the classroom teacher.

Access to food will be provided by the operations staff and all children will be able to consume allergen free, balanced meals as provided by the Office of School Food.

## Social-Emotional Well-Being

*Social emotional well-being must be schools' and districts' top priority in supporting school transitions, not at the expense of academics, but in order to create the mental, social, and emotional space for academic learning to occur.*

NYCMCS is deeply committed to closing the achievement gap through building equity for all students. One of the main focuses of our Montessori approach is focusing on the needs of the child. This included a strong social and emotional component. Our planning has centered largely around creating space for our students mentally, emotionally, and socially. We plan to address these concerns in the following ways:

1. Social Wellbeing

- a. Students will have pre-planned mask breaks, meditation/relaxation time, room walks and verbal games and activities that will facilitate community, social interaction without physical touch/shared materials, and relationship building. Teachers will guide students through class norms that can be used to support one another, show that we care, and share disagreement in an appropriate and safe way.
- b. Teachers will utilize Morning Meeting as a vehicle for this.
- c. We will be planning virtual experiences for our students that will allow them to see new things “together” as a group.
- d. NYCMCS is engaging with local restaurants to create exploratory experiences through food in an effort to create memories and community.

2. Emotional Wellbeing

- a. Students will participate in the second step curriculum to address their social interactions and personal emotional regulation.
- b. Systems in the classroom will be redesigned to help reduce stress for teachers and students and limit sharing of materials.

3. Mental Wellbeing

- a. Regular check ins will be scheduled with our classroom teachers to subsequently check in with their students about what they are experiencing and thinking about when it comes to this new normal.
- b. Students will participate in groups with teachers, counselors, and leadership staff virtually as required.
- c. The school will offer referrals to programs and professionals who can offer mental health support services for the students.

As a school community NYCMCS will be creating an advisory board of family members, teachers and administrators that will regularly meet to review and discuss the response plan for the current school year.

## Facilities

*Schools and school districts should promote social distancing while maintaining existing safety requirements designed to protect students. To accomplish this, schools may expand their physical footprint or change the way they utilize space. Schools should also continue to meet or exceed ventilation requirements and may wish to consult with design professionals to increase ventilation and filtration.*

NYCMCS is deeply committed to promoting social distancing and meeting all of the safety requirements currently being handed down from the CDC. Currently we have surveyed all of the possible spaces in the school that can be used for instruction and have been able to ensure the appropriate spacing of students in classrooms and non-traditional instructional spaces while also allowing for the required square footage per person.

NYCMCS is engaging our HVAC company and a building inspector to ensure that we not only meet but exceed the ventilation requirements. In the coming weeks following the deadline for this report more detailed next steps will be outlined.

Currently, NYCMCS is installing signage, reminders, and expectations for handwashing and social distancing in all hallways, classrooms, and bathrooms. Students will be taught explicitly how to conduct themselves in all of these spaces and will be monitored (from an appropriate distance) by hall monitors and teachers where possible.

NYCMCS will continue to monitor and ensure compliance of the following:

1. All Alcohol-based hand rub dispensers are in accordance with FCNYS 2020 Section 5705.5
2. All bathrooms meet the standards of BCNYS and are appropriately distanced.
3. Drinking water is available from filtered systems in every classroom.

# Transportation

*The school bus is an extension of the classroom and services should be provided to all students with consistency and equity. Each district will be required to: perform regular school bus disinfection measures; train school bus staff regarding social distancing on the bus, at stops, and at unloading times; and train staff regarding the wearing of masks. Students will wear masks and social distance on the bus. Districts will continue to provide transportation to homeless students, students in foster care, those who attend religious, independent or charter schools – and those with disabilities – just as they always have.*

NYCMCS currently uses bus services provided by the DOE and we are awaiting final decisions about how bussing will be handled. In the meantime NYCMCS is getting quotes from other approved transportation vendors and attempting to construct secondary options for parents who require transportation.

# Budget and Fiscal

*All schools and school districts must continue to meet existing state aid reporting requirements. Additionally, the content of data submissions, such as attendance data, will remain consistent with past practice, except where modified by law, regulation or executive order.*

NYCMCS is currently in a great position as it pertains to fiscal health and oversight. Through very smart maintenance of our building utilities and supplies NYCMCS has ended the previous fiscal year in the black and is projected to continue this way through the current fiscal year even with all of the new requirements.

# Chronic Absenteeism

*School policies and procedures must focus on the academic consequences of lost instructional time and address absences before students fall behind in school. It is critical for schools to use a variety of creative methods to reach out to students and their families who have not engaged in distance learning.*

NYCMCS has seen an improvement in student absenteeism during the course of the COVID 19 shut down. During this time we required that teachers make multiple attempts to contact students in the course of the day. When students could not be reached teachers followed up with leadership who would intervene through the use of community connections and

knowledge of what connections, relationships, and associations existed across our school. As a result very few students were unreachable and therefore attendance improved.

For the coming year we plan to address attendance issues with remote learners in the same way. Teachers schedules for remote instruction allow for “make up” periods during the course of the day to help ensure that students are in class and getting the instruction that they require.

## School Schedules

*Schools must create a comprehensive plan for a schedule that includes in-person instruction, remote instruction or a hybrid of both in-person and remote. All plans should be clearly communicated, with as much advanced notice as practicable, to students, families and staff.*

NYCMCS has conducted an initial parent survey to assess parent preferences with regards to school schedules. Roughly one third of families who have completed the survey would prefer to have their children participate in remote instruction only. As a result, NYCMCS plans on offering both full time in-person instruction and full-time remote instruction. To maintain flexibility and ensure that parents continue to receive choice, instructional units will be designed on a trimester basis to facilitate an instructional program where students can transition back and forth between in-person and remote instruction every 12 weeks. NYCMCS is also conducting a second enrollment survey to confirm parent preferences and finalize school schedules.

## Teaching and Learning-Requirements

*Mandatory teaching and learning requirements include: clear opportunities for equitable instruction for all students; continuity of learning when using any instructional model; standards-based instruction; substantive daily interaction between teachers and students; and clear communication plans between parents and schools.*

NYCMCS is ensuring equitable instruction for all students by carefully designing and aligning two educational programs; on-site instruction and remote instruction. Each program will consist of a separate instructional team so that teachers can more easily hone in, and plan and design instruction for their specific group of students. Each program will maintain

continuity of curriculum and assessments to facilitate an appropriate transition between instructional models every 12 weeks. All instruction and curricular materials are standards-based and research-based with actual live teacher instruction in all subject areas. All program components and scheduling will be communicated to parents prior to the start of the school year, and at the beginning of each trimester.

## Teaching and Learning-Flexibility

*To allow for schools and districts to adapt to complications caused by the pandemic, certain flexibilities will be authorized including: flexible student/staff ratio in prekindergarten; extended time for prekindergarten and kindergarten screening to be completed; a waiver allowing districts to convert UPK seats from full-day to half-day (not applicable to Statewide Universal Full Day Pre-K programs); flexibility with the 180 minutes per week Unit of Study requirement; flexibility in the delivery of physical education; allowance for a blend of hands-on and virtual science laboratory experiences; and when appropriate, districts and charters may utilize remote or virtual work-based learning experiences for CTE and CDOS programs.*

NYCMCS is ensuring that all minimum requirements are met or exceeded. State guidelines are being observed for class size and programming, as well as in all other areas. NYCMCS has the space capacity to offer full time on-site instruction to all families who prefer this kind of programming. Flexibility in programming and staffing will allow us to meet safety and healthy guidelines, and provide equitable instruction, to all students both on-site and remotely.

## Technology and Connectivity

*Sufficient access to a computing device and high-speed broadband is essential for educational equity. Districts and schools must: have knowledge of the level of access all students and teachers have in their places of residence; to the extent practicable, address the need to provide devices and internet access to students and teachers who currently do not have sufficient access; and provide multiple ways for students to participate in learning and demonstrate mastery of learning standards in remote/blended models.*

*In addition, schools and districts should provide instruction on using technology and IT support for students, teachers and families and provide professional development for teachers and leaders on designing effective online/remote learning experiences.*

NYCMCS has assessed, and will continue to assess, the technology needs of staff and students. Laptops, document cameras, and stylus and tablets are being provided to each teacher. Projectors are being provided to each classroom. NYCMCS will also continue to offer laptops and wifi to all students who do not have access.

During instruction, both in-person and remote, instruction is differentiated in terms of the content, process and end product required of the student. Students are provided with multiple ways to participate in learning and teachers are encouraged to always maintain flexibility and creativity when accommodating for student needs and strengths.

Professional development, technology training and social-emotional check-ins are a priority. NYCMCS offers opportunities for families, staff and students to communicate needs, receive support and engage in specific professional development and training routinely. More specifically, teachers will engage in professional development in various technological tools as well as in adapting instructional approaches for two weeks in August. Training in various areas that affect instruction, safety and mental well being will continue weekly throughout the school year.

## Special Education- Mandatory Requirements

*Schools and school districts are required to provide: a Free Appropriate Public Education consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities and those providing special education and services; meaningful parent engagement regarding the provision of services to their child; collaboration between Committee on Preschool Special Education/Committee on Special Education (CPSE/CSE) and program providers representing the variety of settings where students are served; access to the necessary instructional and technological supports to meet the unique needs of students; and documentation of programs and services and communications with parents.*

NYCMCS is committed to providing equitable and effective education to all students. NYCMCS maintains a relationship with the CSE/CPSE and we collaborate to ensure that each student is receiving an appropriate education. NYCMCS is offering in-person SETSS, ICT and 12:1+1 placements for all students with IEPs. NYCMCS is collaborating with the Department of Education to provide all related services and paraprofessionals for students. NYCMCS is also offering remote intervention and small group support sessions for students daily.

## Special Education: Recommended Elements

*Schools and school districts should consider in-person services a priority for high-needs students and preschool students with disabilities whenever possible and consider contingency plans developed by the CPSE/CSE to address remote learning needs in the event of intermittent or extended school closures.*

NYCMCS prioritizes Special Education and is offering daily in-person services to all students with disabilities. We recognize the importance of flexibility, and, although we encourage all families of high needs students to enroll in on-site instruction, we will provide additional intervention and support to students who are unable to participate in-person.

In the event of intermittent or extended school closures, we will continue to provide additional intervention and small group support virtually, while also creating daily opportunities to make up any missed Math or ELA instruction during the regularly occurring daily lessons.

## Bilingual Education and World Languages- ConsiderationsPractices

*Schools and school districts should: Align policies to the [Blueprint for ELL/MLL Success](#); ensure coordination content and ENL/BE teachers; adopt progress monitoring tools to measure ELL proficiency; provide social-emotional learning supports to ELLs in their home language; continue utilizing technology in ELL instruction; support SIFE and other vulnerable populations; ensure EMLL Profile supports early learning; and support completion of the NYS Seal of Biliteracy.*

NYCMCS is committed to supporting the needs of ELLs/MLLs. We will ensure that all teachers receive training and professional development in designing and delivering instruction that is appropriate for diverse learners. ELL/ENL teachers at NYCMCS provide both integrated and standalone services, prioritizing the coordination of content in our ELA curriculum.

Teachers of ELLs/MLLs use classroom observation and assessments, NYS Exam analysis, and the NYSESLAT and NYSITELL to further understand their students' language development and to inform instruction. Progress monitoring occurs regularly and parents receive a formal report three times per year. Additionally, our school culture team and ELL/ENL teachers work to support students' social-emotional learning through regular check-ins (PBIS CICO) and RTI (non-mandated small group counseling) as needed.

## Staffing and Human Resources

*As schools and school districts create their plans for the 2020-21 school year, they: must ensure that all teachers, school and district leaders and pupil personnel service professionals hold a valid and appropriate certificate for their assignment; can continue to utilize incidental teaching when determining how to staff their classrooms; can employ substitute teachers to address staffing needs for the allowable amount of days given their qualifications and teaching assignment; should work with educator preparation programs to identify appropriate*

*ways in which student teachers can support classroom instruction; and should consider whether their currently approved APPR plans may need to be revised in order to be consistent with their plans for re-opening under an in-person, remote or hybrid instructional model.*

NYCMCS is deeply committed to employing the very best instructional staff. The school leadership is always looking for mission aligned individuals who are already certified or highly qualified for their position under current charter school guidelines. Teachers are assigned to classroom and grade teams based on expertise, skill and area of certification. These partnerships work perfectly for the dual programs being offered. On each grade team one teacher will offer remote instruction while others offer live in classroom instruction.

NYCMCS employs substitute teachers on staff that will teach remotely for more than one group if needed. Additionally, all students will be in class (physically or remotely) and will be able to interact with all of their teachers. Additionally, NYCMCS has partnered with Hostos Community College to offer additional support to learners remotely in collaboration with their education department.

Principal and teacher evaluation will continue following the same expectations from previous years. Teachers will be expected to adopt the new standards for school operation and implement them effectively in the classroom. Additionally, the board of directors will evaluate the principal in the same way they have in the past adding in the new measures in response to the pandemic.

## Reopening Plan Timeline

NYCMCS remains very aware of the unprecedented situation the world is in at this time and the overwhelming burden this puts on the children in our society. As a result we plan to aggressively work to make students acclimation to being in school as smoothly as possible. As a result NYCMCS plans to reopen following the timeline below based on parent feedback, state guidance and staff input:

1. Whole School Virtual Opening on August 31st.
  - a. All students work remotely.

- b. Teachers will teach from their school based classroom to help acclimate students to expectations for when they return.
2. Dual Programs Commence on September 10 (subject to change based on August 1st guidance)
- a. Remote Learning- Will continue for students whose parents have selected this program.
  - b. Onsite learning will begin for some students and increase to capacity in the following way:
    - i. September 10- PreK and all 12:1 students.
    - ii. September 11- PreK- 1 and all 12:1 students
    - iii. September 14- PreK-3 and all 12:1 students
    - iv. September 15- PreK-4 and all 12:1 students
    - v. September 16- All Students