



# School in the Hills

## COVID-19 Updated Procedures

Fall 2020

These are unprecedented times. As we get ready to return to school for the fall semester, please know that we have missed you all, completely and utterly over the last few months. Our lives have changed, but our focus has not. The safety and emotional wellbeing of our children is and always has been our first priority. While the below procedures will be best practices we are continuously following, working with children is unpredictable. There will be times when a child is hurt or sad, and they will need a hug for comfort. Young children may get close or take something out of each other's hands. We will be reinforcing best practices, and will have more teachers than usual working with smaller groups of children to mitigate risks as best we can. However, no environment is perfect, and we cannot promise that the school will be 100% socially distant. We will, as always, be 100% there for the children.

### ➤ Schedules and Classroom Routines:

- Updated operating hours of 7:30-5:00 to allow for deep cleaning and disinfecting and to greatly reduce the need for children and staff to combine with different groups.
- Updated half-day hours of 8:00-12:30 for Primary, and 8:00-12:00 for Toddlers, with these children going home before nap.
- Each classroom will have smaller, stable groups of children that will remain with the same teachers as much as possible throughout the day. Any mixing between classroom groups will be severely limited, and when necessary children will remain in opposite "zones" of common areas.
- Hand washing and additional hand sanitizer stations have been added throughout the school. Increased frequency of handwashing and careful monitoring for proper handwashing technique will be implemented.
- Lunch will be eaten inside the classrooms. Lunch and snacks will be served directly to the children, there will be no family style or self-serving of food.
- Lunch and snack menus will be extremely simplified to support these changes, to include finger foods such as sandwiches, easy snack items, fresh fruit and veggies.
- Each group will have separate outside play times, and playground areas, as well as the gym or any other common spaces, will be disinfected in between groups.
- Our Leadership After School program for children coming to SitH for after school care from neighborhood public schools is temporarily suspended in order to reduce the risk of exposure to our fully enrolled students and faculty.
- Extra-curricular classes provided by outside vendors are temporarily suspended to reduce possible exposure being brought into the school community as well as avoid mixing of children from different classroom groups..

## ➤ Staggered Drop Off/Pick Up Times and Health Screenings

- We will be offering staggered drop off times in 15-minute increments, from 7:30 to 8:30 for Elementary students, 7:30-9:15 for Primary students, and 7:30-9:45 for Toddler students. You will have the opportunity to sign up for your preferred time for the fall semester. Please sign up once per family. If you have multiple children in different programs, sign up in the program that is applicable for your oldest child. Drop off times will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis, and priority for early drop off as available will be given to essential workers.
- All drop off and pick up will be done outside the school building – parents and other visitors are not allowed to enter the school building.
- All children and staff will complete a health screening and temperature check before entering the building each day. Parents must wait until the health screening is complete and children are allowed to enter before leaving the campus. Children and staff may not enter the building if they have a temperature of 99.6 degrees or above, or are exhibiting symptoms consistent with Covid-19.
- Once cleared for entry, all children and staff will sanitize their hands before entering the building.
- Staggered pick up times will also be offered in 15-minute increments from 3:30-5:00 for full day students. You will have the opportunity to sign up for your preferred time for the fall semester. We understand that afternoon schedules may vary. Please sign up for the time window that you will pick up on most days. You are always welcome to pick up earlier than your assigned time as needed for appointments or other activities. Like drop off, pick up times will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis, and priority for time windows as available will be given to essential workers.

## ➤ Masks and Face Coverings:

- Teachers and staff will wear masks, please prepare your child for this by familiarizing them with the sight of people in face masks.
- If leaving your car at drop off or pick up time, parents are also required to wear masks.
- Toddler Community – children will not wear masks.
- Primary Community – children will have the option to wear masks, at the discretion of the parent and child *and* if the child is able to successfully wear the mask. Kindergarteners are required to bring a mask to wear minimally during the Kinder period in the middle of the day.
- Elementary Community – children will be required to wear masks when inside the classroom or when social distancing cannot be maintained. Masks will not be required during P.E. or outside when exercising.

## ➤ Social Distancing:

- Children will have designated tables for eating and working in the classroom, and appropriately distanced floor spaces will be designated when working on a rug.
- Larger tables that allow for multiple children to be seated will have a tabletop sneeze guard in place for added protection.
- Room divider partitions have been purchased for the common spaces so that each classroom can use a designated extended area outside of their classroom in order to further distance students as needed.
- Social distancing will be encouraged on the playground, as is feasible and age appropriate.
- While social distancing is an important part of minimizing risk for transmission of COVID-19, the developmental needs of the child, including their social and emotional wellbeing, will be taken into account. Children will need to be comforted when hurt or

sad, children will need to move around the classroom and outdoor environments. We will make balanced, conscious decisions that keep children and staff health and safety as a top priority, while staying true to who we are as a Montessori program.

➤ **Reduction of High-Touch/Shared Materials, Increased Cleaning and Sanitizing:**

- Each student will have their own labeled set of pencils/crayons/markers and other frequently used supplies (as age appropriate).
- Each classroom will have its own set of playground balls and sand toys, which will not be shared with other classrooms and will be sanitized between uses.
- The majority of materials will be assigned to single classroom groups, and will not be shared between groups. Those materials that need to be passed from one group to another will be fully sanitized before the next group uses them.
- Materials will be sanitized and disinfected frequently throughout the day and environments as a whole will be cleaned, sanitized and disinfected each day.
- High touch surfaces and bathrooms will be cleaned, sanitized and disinfected multiple times a day and deep cleaned each evening. Children will return to their own classroom bathroom instead of using public restrooms whenever possible.

➤ **Illness Policy:**

- If your child becomes ill while at school, we will call you to come pick them up. We ask that a parent or other authorized pick up person arrive as quickly as possible, and at a minimum within 30 minutes.
- **If your child is showing signs or symptoms of COVID-19, or has a temperature of 99.6 degrees or above, they must stay home. Children and staff with fever or other COVID-19 symptoms are required to stay home until they are free of these symptoms or fever, without the use of medication, for three consecutive days, or they provide a doctor's note clearing them for return.**
- **Children presenting with two or more symptoms of COVID-19 will be required to get a note from a doctor clearing them before returning to school.**
- In the event that a child or staff member tests positive for Covid-19, that person's classroom will be closed down for a minimum of 24 hours before it is deep cleaned and disinfected to prepare for the children's return. The group of children will be moved to the gym or other suitable space for the remainder of the day and alternate instruction and activities will be provided while the classroom is closed off. We will work directly with the Austin Public Health department and they will guide us step-by-step on what precautions need to take place given the circumstances of the infected person, their time on campus, whether they were wearing a mask, etc. Parents and staff will be notified so that anyone who had contact with that person can be monitored closely for symptoms, while respecting the infected individual's confidentiality.