



**CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

**2020-2021  
Safe Learning Plan**

1611 Ames Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55106  
651-774-5000

[www.cornerstone-elementary.org](http://www.cornerstone-elementary.org)

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## INTRODUCTION

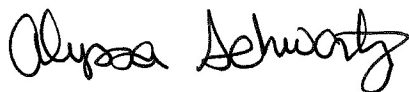
The Covid-19 pandemic has changed schooling in significant ways. We are faced with decisions that can be literally life or death, and the decision to send your child to school or come to work amidst a global pandemic is not one made lightly. What has not changed is our commitment to providing a developmentally appropriate environment for your child to succeed. At Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School, we are committed to supporting your family and our staff in an environment that emphasizes health and well-being, while continuing to deliver the high-quality Montessori program that distinguishes us.

The following handbook outlines the changes that have been made in order to keep our staff and your children and families as safe as possible during this time. The policies contained here take priority over our Parent Policies Handbook and are subject to change, as guidance from the Minnesota Departments of Health and Education evolves. This handbook additionally contains details around the distance learning with supports program that begins our school year together, as well as a timeline for evaluation of transition to other scenarios.

There is nothing “normal” about the year we are about to begin. At the same time, our hope is to create a sense of normalcy for your children and an environment for them to thrive and be healthy, whether that is on-site at 1611 Ames or in your home.

Throughout these pages, we frequently ask you to let us know or reach out when you have questions, concerns, requests, or just want to share an experience. This is not an empty ask: distance learning demands much of you and of the teaching staff, and we must work together for every child to be successful. We look forward to sharing that work with you.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alyssa Schwartz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alyssa Schwartz  
Head of School

## PARENT CONTACT/COMMUNICATION

Cornerstone's guides, specialists, and administration are available to you by phone, email, or text. Please note that staff may not answer messages left outside school hours (8:00a.m.-4:30p.m.), however they will respond within 48 hours.

Parent meetings with the guides or administration will take place over Zoom or by phone, should they be requested by either party. Parent/teacher conferences, to be held October 29-30, will likely be by Zoom; a schedule and more information will be released by the end of September.

### Administration

Head of School	Alyssa Schwartz - 651-583-4181 <a href="mailto:alyssaschwartz@cornerstone-elementary.org">alyssaschwartz@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>
Director of Business Operations	Chris Bewell <a href="mailto:chrisbewell@cornerstone-elementary.org">chrisbewell@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>
Director of Elementary Pedagogy	Liesl Taylor <a href="mailto:lheidetaylor@cornerstone-elementary.org">lheidetaylor@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>
Administrative Assistant	Daylin Galdamez - 651-774-5000 <a href="mailto:reception@mtcm.org">reception@mtcm.org</a>

### Kindergarten Guides

Children's House 1	Brianna Olson-Carr - 651-895-3955 <a href="mailto:brianna@mtcm.org">brianna@mtcm.org</a>
Children's House 2	Molly McDermott - 651-895-3571 <a href="mailto:molly@mtcm.org">molly@mtcm.org</a>

### Lower Elementary Guides

Garden	Sara Wade - 651-370-0823 <a href="mailto:sarawade@cornerstone-elementary.org">sarawade@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>
Pond	Kes'ava Dernovsek - 651-370-3197 <a href="mailto:kesavadernovsek@cornerstone-elementary.org">kesavadernovsek@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>

### Upper Elementary Guides

Forest	Mara Johnson - 651-370-3761 <a href="mailto:marajohnson@cornerstone-elementary.org">marajohnson@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>
Marsh	Jess Goff - 651-370-3788 <a href="mailto:jessgoff@cornerstone-elementary.org">jessgoff@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>

### Learning Specialists

ELL Teacher	Cynthia Crooks - 651-571-1006 <a href="mailto:cynthiacrooks@cornerstone-elementary.org">cynthiacrooks@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>
Literacy Specialist	Megan Riemer - 651-243-2567 <a href="mailto:meganriemer@cornerstone-elementary.org">meganriemer@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>
Math Specialist	Amber Osterkamp - 651-587-8790 <a href="mailto:amberosterkamp@cornerstone-elementary.org">amberosterkamp@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>
Special Education Teacher	Suzi Splinter - 651-370-3789 <a href="mailto:suzisplinter@cornerstone-elementary.org">suzisplinter@cornerstone-elementary.org</a>
Special Education Teacher	Deborah Nystrom - 651-370-3790 <a href="mailto:dnystrom@tceducationconsultants.com">dnystrom@tceducationconsultants.com</a>
Social Worker (Pond/Forest)	Terri Strom - <a href="mailto:terri@mtcm.org">terri@mtcm.org</a>
Social Worker (Garden/Marsh)	Nora Springer - <a href="mailto:nora@mtcm.org">nora@mtcm.org</a>

## **CORNERSTONE POLICIES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

### **ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL**

To promote social distancing, parents may not enter the 1611 Ames facility. If a parent needs to see their child during the day, they should call the front desk and the child will be brought out.

Parents are encouraged to drop off their children between 8:30 and 8:45a.m. Children should exit the car at the front curb, where an administrator will greet each child, take their temperature, and guide them to their classroom where they will wash their hands and prepare for the day.

If a late arrival is necessary, please notify the administration and call upon arrival.

Parents may pick up between 3:45 and 4:00p.m. Please use the car line as detailed in the Parent Policies Handbook: parents will wait in their car or next to their car and their child will be brought out to them.

Staff and families will maintain the six-foot recommended distance during arrival and dismissal.

Children participating in Before Care may ring the bell when they have arrived and they will have their temperature taken prior to being invited inside. Parents should not leave until their child has been approved for entrance.

### **BUS TRANSPORTATION**

Bus transportation will be provided for children living in St. Paul upon request. All children will have assigned seats, based on the order in which they are picked up/dropped off, and must remain in those seats for the duration of the bus ride. Children must wear masks while on the bus.

Parents are expected to monitor their child's health prior to sending them to school; children will not be permitted to ride the bus home if they are found to have a fever or other Covid-19 symptoms while at school.

Parents and children must agree to the Cornerstone bus policy, found on pages 8-9 of the Parent Policies Handbook.

### **DISINFECTION PROCEDURES**

Cleaning in classrooms is always important and we have taken this opportunity to strengthen our cleaning procedures. We use a peroxide solution and QUAT, two chemicals provided by Ecolab that have been proven to kill viruses. The peroxide solution is not

ingestible, so any surface that may come into contact with a child's mouth or with food is rinsed with water and sprayed with QUAT, which becomes inert upon drying.

Light switches, doorknobs, and other high-touch furnishings will be disinfected before and after school and throughout the day as needed, using the peroxide solution.

Tables will be disinfected before and after each meal and additionally as needed through the day, using our peroxide-water-QUAT sequence.

All adults will wear masks and gloves during cleaning and sanitizing, including dishwashing, and food distribution.

### **FOOD AND NUTRITION**

Children who are on-site will be offered breakfast, lunch, and a snack during the school day.

Children will eat at individual tables, situated at least six feet apart. Adults will support eating, conversation, and cleanliness during a potentially high transmission time. Meals will be individually plated prior to service.

Children who are engaged in distance learning may receive a week's worth of meals for pick-up at Cornerstone. These meals may be delivered to families who participate in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program, based on staff availability. Meals must be requested a week in advance; families who fail to pick up meals for two consecutive weeks will be removed from the purchase list unless they otherwise notify the school.

### **HEALTH POLICIES**

If a child or staff member is experiencing illness or has been exposed to a confirmed Covid case, they are required to complete the Cornerstone [screening form](#).

Upon arrival, all children and staff will have temperatures checked with an infrared thermometer. In addition, parents will be asked to confirm that their child has not experienced cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat since the previous day.

If a fever is identified, it will be verified with a second thermometer. Children or staff with a temperature above 100 degrees will be immediately sent home and must remain home until 24 hours after the fever breaks.

Tylenol and medication to reduce fever may not be used to determine the length of time a child is well.

Children will be isolated and sent home immediately if they demonstrate fever, dry cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat. Children experiencing dry cough, shortness of breath, or two simultaneous symptoms (for example, fever and diarrhea) will be sent home following the CDC Covid decision tree and will need to remain home for 10 days. A single

symptom, other than cough or shortness of breath, requires the child to be home for 24 hours after the symptom subsides. Decisions to send children home ultimately rest with the CMES administration.

If an ill child has a sibling on-site, the sibling will also be sent home and must remain home until all children in the family meet the criteria to return to school.

If Cornerstone administration requests a child be picked up due to illness, parents are expected to arrive within 30 minutes.

The most up to date Covid-19 symptom list can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>.

If a child or staff member presents symptoms consistent with Covid-19, they are strongly encouraged to seek testing. Testing locations can be found at <https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/if-sick/testing-locations/index.jsp>.

If a child or staff member is diagnosed with Covid-19, the classroom community impacted will close immediately and follow MDH guidance. Administration will inform all staff and parents of MDH guidance and if additional closures are required.

A staff member or student who had symptoms of suspected or confirmed Covid-19 can return to the program when:

- At least 24 hours have passed since recovery – defined as no fever without the use of medications and improvement in respiratory signs like cough and shortness of breath;

**AND**

- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

**OR**

- It has been at least 24 hours since recovery **AND** the individual has a confirmed medical diagnosis for the symptoms.

If your child has an underlying health condition, please notify administration.

Keeping our children, staff, and parents healthy is a community effort. All constituents are expected to follow state guidelines for safe behavior, and are asked to consider how the entire community is affected when they choose to travel, participate in large social gatherings, or otherwise increase exposure to Covid-19. Parents and staff are asked to consider self-isolating after high exposure activities.

#### **SELF-CARE**

Children will be required to wash their hands thoroughly upon arrival, before and after eating, before and after going outside, after using the bathroom, and periodically throughout the day.

Parents are asked to apply sunscreen to their children before coming to school in the morning. Children will be invited to apply their own sunscreen before going outside for recess.

Children and adults will both change into inside shoes prior to entering the classroom.

Children are encouraged to leave backpacks and other personal items at home.

All children in the Children's House and Elementary will wear masks at all times inside the building. Cornerstone will have extra masks available if needed. Children will be taught proper mask usage and parents will be encouraged to model good mask etiquette with their children. A child may choose not to wear a mask if there is an underlying health condition and the school has received notification of the condition from a doctor.

### **SOCIAL DISTANCING AND MASKING**

All adults and children will wear masks inside the building and when social distancing is not possible outside, unless facial expressions are necessary (as with some language presentations), in which case face shields may be used.

All adults will socially distance (six-feet) at all times.

During a hybrid model and during on-site care in distance learning, children will be expected to socially distance both inside the building and during recess, regardless of mask usage. Children will remain in parts of the building designated for their use.

Recess and use of the outdoor spaces will be staggered so that children do not mix between environments.

During on-site care in distance learning, if there are more than 15 children requiring care, groupings will be established and children will remain in those groupings during the duration of on-site care.

Children will work at individual tables or floor mats, which will be separated from each other by at least six feet, as much as possible.

The only staff who may mix between cohorts of children are specialists, who will socially distance when providing service and will take the utmost caution in avoiding direct contact with children.



## **DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM**

### **GROUNDING PHILOSOPHY**

Our Montessori philosophy has taught us to follow the principles of Cosmic Education. In our practice we must find a way to teach the whole child and ensure that each individual is offered an experience that not only meets the academic standards given to us by the state of Minnesota, but also inspires growth in the construction of a young human being. It is our task to ensure that each child is given lessons in all subject areas and to share the interconnectedness of our lessons. We must ensure that we are presenting the Great Lessons and offering follow-on ideas that are appropriate to the child's current environment and giving lessons from our albums as much as possible. The whole child has always been our focus and will remain the center of our work.

### **ASSESSMENTS**

At this time, it is expected that the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) and the ACCESS test for English Language Learners (ELL) will be administered on-site, following the 2020-2021 Assessment Schedule found on the Cornerstone website.

Parents/guardians may opt out from the MCAs by following the protocol listed on page 34 of the Parent Policies Handbook.

Internal assessments will be completed with children using Zoom breakout groups and online platforms. These assessments include the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), completed with all K-6 children, and FastBridge aMath, completed with all children in grades 2-6. DIBELS and FastBridge help our Literacy and Math Specialists identify children for small group and individual work.

Megan Riemer and other staff trained in DIBELS administration will assess children during their scheduled sessions with the guides early in the school year. Children participating in on-site care will be assessed virtually. Amber Osterkamp will administer aMath during scheduled classroom sessions. Children who need support in completing the aMath assessment may schedule a time to come to the school building.

### **ATTENDANCE**

Attendance will be taken daily for all children. At a minimum, children will be marked present if they:

- Participate in a Zoom conference or collective with their teacher
- Speak to their teacher by phone or email
- Submit completed assignments on a given day.

Children enrolled in kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade may be considered present if their parent/guardian speaks with a teacher on a given day.

Upper Elementary children may have additional requirements for present attendance, including:

- Attend all scheduled collectives, lessons, and appointments
- Complete daily math & language/writing practice, and other lesson follow-on
- Submit follow-on work and demonstrate skill progress weekly
- Listen to daily read-aloud/attend read-aloud conversations
- Complete Work Journal daily
- Submit weekly written reflection & provide Work Journal documentation, as necessary
- Attend any additional agreed-upon scheduled meetings (more frequent check-ins, supported work sessions, as needed)

Children in all grades must participate in their General Education classes in order to be marked present. It is not sufficient to participate in ELL, Literacy/Math, or Special Education services only.

If children are regularly absent, school administration will follow up with the family to identify areas where Cornerstone can support attendance. If administration cannot reach the family after 3 attempts, a wellness check may be requested.

Children must reside in the state of Minnesota to be enrolled at Cornerstone. Please notify administration if you intend to spend significant amounts of time out of state during distance learning.

### **CLASS SCHEDULES AND WORK EXPECTATIONS**

Each child will be provided with a schedule of Montessori presentations, small group collectives, appointments with specialists, and independent work blocks. These schedules will differ based on level (Children's House, Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary) and will provide expectations for a full day of activity.

During Zoom calls, children are expected to be dressed and ready to participate in a community with their cameras turned on. Grace and Courtesy lessons will be given to provide guidance for how to be online.

It is not expected that children be online for an entire school day. Many of the activities that occupy children at school are necessary for distance learning at home, as well: sustained, free outdoor time, breaks for snacks and meals, time for self-care and care of the environment (i.e., contributions to home life). The schedules provided offer opportunities for these times away from classroom expectations, as well as blocks of time for children to engage in paper-based academic work that will be provided to you in bi-weekly packets.

Lessons will be given to the children in small groups or 1:1, during live sessions with their guides and specialists, as well as in asynchronous video recordings that can be accessed throughout the day. Follow-on work will be more prescribed than in a traditional

Montessori environment, so that children have clear expectations for their work and so that parents/guardians do not have to encourage children to think creatively about possibilities. This work will be collected on a schedule determined by each guide, and will ask of you only your help in recording or posting a photo of the completed product.

Each class or level will have breakout rooms or Zoom rooms for children interested in doing group projects or big works, as well as for children to check in with adults during their open work cycles. These rooms will be monitored closely and come with the expectation that these are spaces in which to accomplish work.

Class collectives are the foundation for community-building in our environments. Thirty children sharing space works well in person, less well on Zoom. In order to preserve the community nature of these gatherings, the Lower Elementary classes will meet in grade-level groups daily, and weekly in a whole-class setting. The Upper Elementary classes will meet as a whole class twice per week.

Sample schedules for each level are on the following pages.

## Kindergarten Sample Schedule

When	What	How
Before 8:30 am	<b>Morning Routine</b> (Practical Life)	Make bed, eat breakfast, brushing teeth, get dressed, put pajamas away
8:30 am	<b>Morning Greeting</b>	Log on to SeeSaw and watch morning greeting video
8:45 am	<b>Practical Life</b>	Set up learning space for the day. Guide your child through preparing all of the work materials that will be used throughout the day, based on their assignment
9:00 am	<b>Movement Break</b>	An unstructured opportunity to move around. Don't forget to move around yourself.
9:10 am	<b>Writing Work</b>	Watch writing video for the day and complete the assignment
9:30 am	<b>Movement Break</b>	An unstructured opportunity to move around. Don't forget to move around yourself.
9:40 am	<b>Math Work</b>	Watch math video for the day and complete the assignment
10:05 am	<b>Movement Break</b>	An unstructured opportunity to move around. Don't forget to move around yourself.
10:15 am	<b>Reading Work</b>	Participate in a read aloud with your child, or help them work on assignments that they may have
10:45 am	<b>Movement Break</b>	An unstructured opportunity to move around. Don't forget to move around yourself.
11:00 am	<b>Free Discovery Time</b>	A time for research, building, and learning something new! Use activities provided by guide, or follow your own interest!
11:30 am	<b>Lunch</b>	Your child can help you prepare and clean up lunch during this time as great Practical Life work.
12:30 pm	<b>Large Motor Exploration</b>	Commonly thought of as recess, this is a good time for you and your child to enjoy some down time!
1:00 pm	<b>Quiet Time</b>	You may invite your child to rest quietly in their room, or whichever place will allow them to calmly reset before the afternoon
1:30 pm	<b>Afternoon Work Cycle</b>	Based on the time of your child's scheduled meeting with their guide, schedule your afternoon to include the following blocks: <b>20 minute meeting with guide</b> <b>20 minutes follow on work after the meeting</b> <b>30 minutes Creative Discovery Time-</b> A great time for your child to engage in any creative arts (music, drawing, painting, etc.) <b>20 minutes of Math or Reading work</b> <b>30 minutes Free Discovery Time</b>
3:30 pm	<b>Class Collective</b>	30 minute Zoom with your child's guide and classmates for group learning and community-building.

## Lower Elementary Sample Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00 AM	Eat Breakfast and organize work area				
8:30 AM	Log into Schoology, watch greeting video, and familiarize yourself with the day's lesson and works				
8:45 AM	Grade level zoom meeting - expectations and overview		Whole class zoom meeting - community building activities		Grade level zoom meeting - expectations and overview
9:05 AM	Movement break				
9:10 AM	Watch daily Schoology lesson				
9:40 AM	Work on assigned follow on from the daily lesson				
10:10 AM	Movement break/snack				
10:20 AM	Reading practice				
10:40 AM	Grammar/Handwriting/Number formation practice				
11:10 AM	Math/Geometry practice				
11:40 AM	Clean up work space and prepare for virtual lunch				
12:00 PM	Virtual zoom lunch with the whole class				
12:30 PM	Clean up lunch area				
12:40 PM	Recess/outdoor movement				
1:30 PM	Prepare work space for afternoon work cycle				
1:40 PM	Watch pre-recorded read aloud				
2:10 PM	Writing prompt work				
2:30 PM	Hand work/craft time				
3:00 PM	Afternoon grade level zoom meeting - follow up with daily expectations		Write your teacher a note describing what worked well this week and what was challenging		Afternoon grade level zoom meeting - follow up with daily expectations
3:20 PM	Big work time - Research project, write a letter or story, home project				
3:50 PM	Clean up work space and post daily works				

## Upper Elementary Sample Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:30	Bi-Weekly 1:1 Meetings				
9:00	Mindfulness Mondays	Group A Students - AM Collective			All Group Collective
9:15 - 10:00	Daily Math	Lesson	Weekly Work Submissions & Progress Evaluations	SS/Sci Lesson	Daily Math
10:00 - 10:45	Small Group Math Lesson				ELA Lesson
10:45 - 12:00	AM Work Time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daily Math</li> <li>Daily Language</li> <li>SS/Sci Lesson Follow-On</li> </ul>			AM Work Time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daily Math</li> <li>Daily Language</li> <li>SS/Sci Lesson Follow-On</li> </ul>	
12:00 - 12:15	Update Work Journal, Clean Up & Organize Work and Work Area				
12:15 - 1:15	Lunch & Recess				
1:15 - 1:45	Independent Reading				
1:45 - 3:15	Open Work Support Session Daily Skill Work: Spelling/Vocabulary, Math Facts, Keyboarding, Geography Skills Bi-Weekly Work Meetings with Guide Appointments with Specialists		Weekly Work Submissions & Progress Evaluations	Open Work Support Session Daily Skill Work: Spelling/Vocabulary, Math Facts, Keyboarding, Geography Skills Bi-Weekly Work Meetings with Guide Appointments with Specialists	
3:15 - 3:45	Read Aloud				

## **SCHOOL SUPPLIES**

A school supplies list was sent home in the Back to School packet mailed the week of August 24. Elementary children should have access to the items on that list. If you need assistance acquiring anything, please notify the school and we will arrange a pickup of materials. Kindergarten children will be provided with any supplies they need for their distance learning program.

Materials for work at home will be available in Schoology and as paper packets that will be available for pickup every two weeks. If you are not able to pick up packets, please notify administration and we will make other arrangements with you.

Children participating in on-site care should bring their school supplies with them on the first day of school.

## **SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT**

Distance learning puts stress on children, as well as parents. The lack of in-person contact can cause anxiety, isolation, and fear. Terri Strom and Nora Springer, our social work team, are available to support children through this time. They will participate in weekly collectives with each environment to offer mindfulness techniques, and will offer 1:1 Zoom sessions with children through parent or teacher referral. We ask that you please notify your child's guide or the Head of School if you would like your child to receive support.

Terri Strom will be working with children in the Pond and Forest environments. Her email address is [terri@mtcm.org](mailto:terri@mtcm.org).

Nora Springer will be working with children in the Garden and Marsh environments. Her email is [nora@mtcm.org](mailto:nora@mtcm.org).

Our Children's House lead guides are planning opportunities for Kindergarten children to gather (socially distanced) at a park or in the schoolyard weekly during the warmer months this fall. We are looking into opportunities for elementary children to do the same and will update you in our Stepping Stones weekly newsletter as we finalize these plans. Please make sure you are signed up for NotifyMe so that you can receive our weekly newsletter!

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Special Education services will continue to be provided during our distance learning period. Children qualifying for Special Education services are invited to attend on-site child care in accordance with the decision chart found on page 21 of this handbook. Children participating in on-site care will have direct teacher service minutes provided to them while they are present; children participating in distance learning remotely will receive direct service minutes with their teacher by Zoom.

A Contingency Learning Plan will be created for all children who receive Special Education services, as an addendum to their Individualized Education Plans. Deborah Nystrom, our Special Education Due Process Coordinator, will contact all families early in the school year to discuss changes or adjustments to the child's plan.

New students entering Cornerstone with existing IEPs should expect to meet with the IEP team in the first weeks of the year to plan programming, evaluation and services. It will be important to have a short window of participation in the current format to adequately assess appropriate program supports and services for new student growth and success in their new classroom communities. During the initial window of participation prior to the intake meeting, students will be served in alignment with the student's previous IEP.

We will continue all Special Education Child Find and evaluation functions during distance learning. The process for considering a student for a special education evaluation may be initiated by the student's guide or parents. Guides follow the progress, skills, and development of each child. When general classroom procedures and methods do not lead to the expected outcomes, the guides will discuss the child's progress with their parents. If the child's parents agree, the guide will meet with the Child Find team, composed of Cornerstone's licensed teachers, to consider possible barriers to the expected outcomes, and to design interventions that are intended to improve student success. If the interventions do not provide the growth that is expected, the Child Find team, with the consent of the parents, may refer the child to the special education evaluation team to determine if a special education evaluation is warranted. Evaluation processes are created with the student's parent and may include invitations to participate in activities and assessments on-site with all health and safety guidelines in place.

Special Education ancillary services such as Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, and Developmental Adapted Physical Education will be conducted by Zoom, regardless of where a child is participating in their distance learning.



## **SPECIALIST SERVICES**

All children at Cornerstone are considered general education students first, even if they receive additional support from our ELL Teacher, Math or Literacy Specialist, and/or Special Education Teachers. Accordingly, it is essential that children participate in their classroom lessons and activities during distance learning.

Children are identified to receive Math or Literacy services typically if they are performing below grade level. We expect this year that more children will fall into this category than in typical years. For the 2020-21 school year, children will receive services if they qualify as “high risk” according to the assessments used. Parents/guardians will be notified if children are receiving services from Megan Riemer, Literacy Specialist, or Amber Osterkamp, Math Specialist.

Children receive ELL services from Cynthia Crooks if they primarily speak a language other than English at home. Cornerstone’s English Language Learner Instruction Education Program Plan can be found on the Cornerstone website.

School-based mental health services will be provided this year by Terri Strom and Nora Springer, licensed social workers. Children may access their services through weekly mindfulness sessions with their classes or through parent/teacher referral. Liesl Taylor will also be supporting children’s social-emotional wellness in small groups and through family engagement.

Whenever possible, children’s services will be scheduled at the same time each day during distance learning, using a consistent Zoom link. The number of days per week a child meets with a specialist will be determined by need and, if applicable, the child’s Individual Education Plan.

Children who are participating in on-site care may receive their services directly from the applicable specialist, including Special Education. In these scenarios, all precautions will be taken to ensure that lessons are conducted from a six-foot distance and the appropriate protective equipment is utilized.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

Children will be most successful with distance learning if they have access to an internet-enabled laptop or tablet with keyboard and an established workspace (including table and chair). Children may also find an auxiliary mouse or headset/headphones useful for learning. Families that need assistance in providing any of these items may request support from the school.

Zoom and Schoology will continue to be the primary sources of online learning for children. Google Suite will also be used, largely for Upper Elementary children. Kindergarten children may use SeeSaw instead of Schoology.

Children will access all their appointments with specialists, meetings with guides, collectives, and lessons through a single Zoom link for each classroom. Each classroom will also have a Schoology link, where children will access recorded content, copies of handouts, and more.

Each child in the elementary program (grades 1-6) will be given a Google email address to use in communicating with their guide and classmates and accessing Google Suite products as directed by their guide. While we will give the children lessons in proper email etiquette, please know that this is a powerful tool and our ability to monitor its usage is limited.

Epic Books ([www.getepic.com](http://www.getepic.com)) will once again be available for children to access reading content during the school day. Please speak with your guide or specialist if you need a classroom code. There are many other resources for ebooks – please let us know if you would like suggestions.

Additional online resources such as Freckle and Lalilo may be used by your child's guide or specialist. Those websites and applications will be shared with you as needed.

Just as important as digital technology in your child's learning is analog activity. As discussed in the Classroom Schedule section above, each child's day is designed to include open periods for offline work. When your child makes cookies, gardens, rides their bike, or plays with a younger sibling, they are developing their executive function skills, expanding their mathematical mind, and learning flexible thinking. Distance learning can be an opportunity for your child to engage in an intimate way with your daily home life, and we invite you to encourage these experiences.

## **ON-SITE CARE PROGRAM**

The Cornerstone guidelines for determining the student invitations to on-site learning highlight community safety and encompass community priorities. They have been created from multiple sources of input, information, and experiences. These guidelines are not an exact science and are made with the personal growth and development of each student in mind. They will be revised and updated as new information and events dictate.

The intention of on-site care for essential workers is to care for children when parents/guardians have to go to work, not to support children who have adults at home. If there is an adult at home, the child should stay home.

### **EDUCATIONAL AND HEALTH GUIDELINES**

In order to safely offer children the opportunity to benefit from an on-site experience, we have incorporated all federal, state, local and CMES educational and health recommendations. We will offer only the number of spaces that allow us to follow all safety guidelines for distancing, mask use, and use of common spaces. Each child will be afforded the expected safety measures and adequate supervision to ensure guidelines may be reliably followed. Please see the Policies section of this document; children who are unable to comply with the policies listed may be asked to resume distance learning at home.

### **PRIORITIES**

The health and safety considerations are developed to encompass the above recommendations to ensure student, staff, and community safety. The guidelines incorporate an emphasis on educational equity, with academic and social/emotional considerations at the forefront. Offering an experience with key Montessori elements, consistent with the CMES mission and vision are additional forces driving the decisions.

The CMES guidelines for determining the student invitations were created using input solicited from the CMES community. The experiences of the CMS early childhood program and those of the summer special education programming also helped us to envision possible opportunities for on-site learning. Communication with, and studying the available reflections of, other programs offering in-person services provided valuable insight, as well. It is expected that revisions will be ongoing and fluid to reflect changing community needs and other developments.

### **ELIGIBILITY**

Student invitations to participate on site will be issued in the following manner until available slots are filled.

1. Children of Tier 1 essential workers
2. Children of CMES and CMS school staff

3. Children who qualify for special education services or have been referred for evaluation for such services\*
4. Children whose health and safety will be supported by meals and supervision unavailable elsewhere
5. Children with academic, or social/emotional recovery needs. These groups will be considered in the following order:
  - Children who qualify for ELL services
  - Children whose progress or attendance during spring distance learning show a need for a fall burst of service to regain grade level norms
  - Children who have previously been identified as qualifying for reading or math intervention services
6. Children of Tier 2 essential workers
7. Children of Tier 3 essential workers

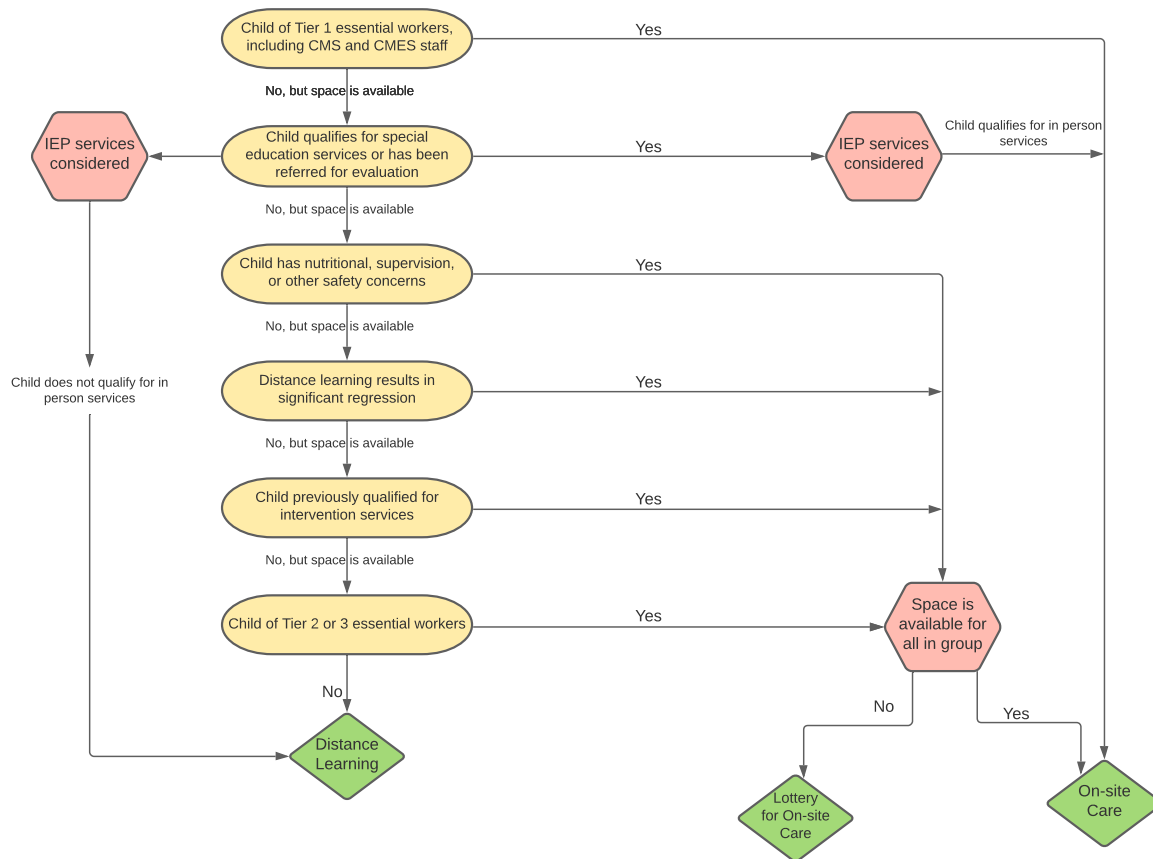
CMES reserves the right to limit access to on-site care to certain groups listed above, based on the Covid-19 case data within Ramsey County, recommendations, from public health officials, staffing capacity, or other reasons determined by school administration.

In the event that CMES is unable to accommodate all students that are a part of each group listed above, students will be offered slots through a lottery:

1. If we are unable to accommodate every student within a given group, the group will be pooled into a lottery for the available spaces.
2. Students selected through the lottery with siblings will have siblings within that priority group invited before additional selections are made.
3. We invite the parents of any student not invited to apprise the administration of any special circumstances that would render your student educationally vulnerable during distance learning for individual consideration.

\*Children receiving Special Education services will be invited to participate in on-site based on individual need, the level of service required in their annual IEPs, and due process considerations. Children with IEPs may be given priority over groups 4-7, but are not guaranteed priority.

The chart on the following page provides a graphic representation of the process for determining access to on-site care:



## PARTICIPATION

Children utilizing on-site care will be guided through their distance learning by our highly-qualified paraprofessionals and classroom assistants. Children receiving Special Education services may be given direct instruction in person. Lessons with classroom guides, ELL, and Math/Literacy interventions will be completed by Zoom. Kindergarten children will receive in-person learning in the Children’s Houses, although Literacy support and any Special Education ancillary services (OT, Speech, DAPE) will take place online. During CMS school closures, Kindergarten children will participate in distance learning under the guidance of CMES staff.

Children who are using their own technology for distance learning must bring their devices to school each day (or leave them in a safe space in their environments). Children who have been offered a school device will receive them on-site. In addition to technology requirements, children should plan to bring the school supplies as designated in the Back to School packet, indoor shoes, a change of clothing, and weather-appropriate clothes for outdoor work and play.

Children participating in on-site care should arrive between 8:30 and 8:45 each morning, unless before-care has been requested (available beginning at 8:00). During each environment's designated lunch and free recess time, the children will eat together (at a distance) and play outside.

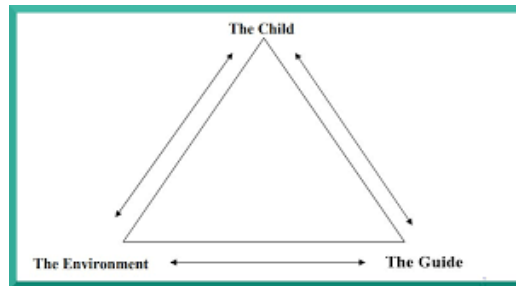
The location of on-site care will depend on the number of children in attendance: if more than 15 children attend, they will be split into Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary groups and will work in Pond and Marsh, respectively. If fewer than 15 children attend, the entire cohort will work together in Pond. Kindergarten children will remain in the Children's House environments.

Children in on-site care must follow all health and social distancing policies as outlined on pages 5-8 of this handbook. Masks are required and children should be prepared to stay six feet apart, both in and outside. Children who are unable to comply with health and safety guidelines may be asked to complete distance learning at home.

If children are ill or have been exposed to a confirmed Covid case, we ask that you complete the screening form found [here](#).

## PARENT-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

We have been thinking so deeply about you, our amazing Cornerstone parents! Dr. Montessori spoke about a triangle with regards to supporting children at school – the child, the environment, and the guide.



In our conversations this summer about supporting families we realized that, of course, a triangle won't do! We needed a new model - a model with four points. Maybe a sturdy trapezoid with the four points being **child, parents, guide, environment**. The trapezoid can sit on a foundation: the systems we're working hard to develop so that you find **Cornerstone** a strong support to you in the unique work ahead.



One sentiment, expressed by many staff on several different occasions, was how much they treasured being more closely connected with you, the parents. One staff person shared that they felt welcomed into a family's living room (through Zoom) each morning to sit on the couch and chat for a few moments before starting work with the child. It was the heartwarming beginning to a much more meaningful partnership and we want to build on that with each of you this fall, in whatever way works the best for your family.

Some of you expressed concern about how much your child learned in the spring – was it enough? It didn't feel like it at times and we agree. We have embraced every opportunity to learn from what went well and what we need to improve immensely on behalf of the children and you all. We chose some key guiding words as we began our planning: **consistency, simplicity, rigor, accountability and joy!** Here is a brief summary of what we learned and what you can expect:

- We were operating in crisis-mode this spring – all of us. Though our current situation is so far from ideal, we are no longer in crisis. Our planning has been intentional. We have looked into and embraced components of your child's

education that fit the structure we have to use, while still holding strong to supporting whole-child development with much hands-on, project-based work.

- Large group Zoom meetings were not productive, especially for the younger children. Zoom groups for Lower Elementary and Children's House will be much smaller and aimed at setting the children up for a successful work day.
- Schedules were complicated! We have put much more structure into what should be a much more consistent schedule for your child. Rather than children having different schedules each day, adults working with your children will rotate, while your child's day stays the same.
- Accountability and often rigor were lacking. We have staffed and scheduled and planned for considerable time to support, track, and hold children accountable to all types of work!
- Remote assessment was messy or non-existent. We have planned baseline assessments for all children in reading and math and a tiered system of supports, interventions and progress monitoring to ensure enough support for each child to progress.
- Parents were largely stressed and overwhelmed. We have spent considerable time planning for more support for you all; we have several ideas about what that might look like beyond the structure and expectations listed above, including virtual book clubs, support groups, and outside home visits from our beloved therapy dog (who misses the children terribly)! We look forward to hearing from you about what you would find supportive.

On our website, you can find *Our Approach to Work*<sup>1</sup>, which details how we help children find their way into engaging activity. We invite you to use these techniques with your children this fall, and to communicate with us frequently as challenges and successes arise.

We are committed to communicating with you frequently this fall about your child's progress and about the important decisions that we must make as a school. Communications to the whole community will be weekly at minimum, through the school's NotifyMe system. Please make sure you are signed up for this service at [www.cornerstone-elementary.org/?PageName=NotifyMe](http://www.cornerstone-elementary.org/?PageName=NotifyMe). The guides will communicate with you about your child's progress through check-in emails or phone calls, office hours, and fall conferences, which will take place October 29-30 by Zoom.

As the conditions change in St. Paul, we will assess whether distance learning continues to be the right decision and whether there are ways we can be supporting you differently. "Flash surveys" will be distributed monthly, and we will use this data and the county case rate to determine changes. Our first assessment point will be at the end of September. If, at any point, you have feedback, suggestions, or requests, please contact your guide and the Head of School.

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[http://images.pcmac.org/SiSFiles/Schools/MN/CornerstoneMontessoriES/CornerstoneMontessoriES/Uploads/Publications/Our\\_approach\\_to\\_work\\_at\\_Cornerstone\\_.pdf](http://images.pcmac.org/SiSFiles/Schools/MN/CornerstoneMontessoriES/CornerstoneMontessoriES/Uploads/Publications/Our_approach_to_work_at_Cornerstone_.pdf)