MSGH’s 2020-21 Fall Re-Opening Plan

Dear MSGH Community,

Welcome to the 2020-21 school year, one that will look and feel different, while we strive to make every possible effort to retain what makes MSGH so special, namely, a commitment to authentic Montessori, a deep respect for children and a steadfast commitment to supporting families. We are all looking forward to our returning and new children beginning to arrive on the MSGH campus, with a start date of **August 26** for many of our returning students. Please refer to your child’s individual transition schedule that you will receive directly to your email.

As shared before, here are some central tenets that anchor our Re-Opening Plan:

- The well-being of students, their families, faculty and staff was our first consideration as we made decisions regarding policies and procedures. We will continue to seek expert advice in how best to mitigate risks to the health and safety posed by COVID-19.
- The vision, mission and core values, as outlined in MSGH’s Strategic Plan 2019-22, along with our deep commitment to Montessori pedagogy, were our reliable guides as we designed any changes to student and family experience.
- A commitment, first and foremost, to in-person learning that is in the interest of children’s academic, social and emotional optimal development focused our planning, and falls closely in line with messaging from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on the importance of reopening schools.
- The flexibility to be attentive to evolving external conditions is ever present.

This is a living document that provides us with a guide to our daily and weekly operations; nevertheless, as with all plans during the COVID-19 time, we must acknowledge and accept that as a more complete scientific understanding of the virus emerges or conditions change locally or more widely, we need to remain flexible and ready to adapt.

We have carefully considered guidelines from the CDC, the Office for Early Childhood (OEC), the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools (CAIS), the CT State Department of Public Health (DPH) and more locally the West Hartford Bloomfield Health District (WHBHD), who works in strong collaboration with our full-time nurse, in the assembling our Re-Opening Plan. We are also paying close attention to any Executive Orders from the Governor and are keeping up-to-date with guidance issued by the CT State Department of Education (SDE). In response to evolving conditions, these organizations’ guidelines continue to evolve. MSGH will remain attentive and responsive to any updates.

Our approach is a multi-layered preventive defense, but please know that even as we do our best to mitigate risks of transmission on school grounds, there is no such thing as eliminating the risk entirely. Outside of school, families are expected to follow applicable
state and local health guidelines regarding mask wearing and other measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19. In school, all members of the MSGH community have a shared responsibility to prevent the spread of the virus, by committing to the health, safety, and operational policies and procedures listed in this and future communications.

We have made adjustments to our routines and protocols to mitigate the risks for students, faculty, and all members of our current community. Please help us by discussing these changes with you child, as is age appropriate, prior to attending school.

Health and Safety

**Cohorts:** As is widely recommended, we will be using cohorts to limit the number of students affected if there is an exposure to the virus. Children will remain with their cohorts throughout the day. Cohorts will have a designated bathroom, hand-washing facilities and play space, along with specific drop-off and pick-up locations, as we make use of the multi-entry points to the building. For the most part, children and adults will remain within their cohorts. There will be limited movement of adults between groups, for example, with our specialist teachers, who will be diligently following virus mitigating protocols. Cohorts will travel in the hallways at different times and will not be using common areas. Children will nap within their classrooms. They will sleep head-to-toe and six feet apart.

**Physical Distancing:** Classroom spaces have been carefully selected, with cohorts in mind, to maximize opportunities for physical distancing. Furniture and tables will be arranged to provide for recommended physical distancing. We will avail of every opportunity to extend classrooms into our adjacent outside garden areas.

**Cleaning:** Protocols for intensified cleaning and disinfecting will be implemented. Frequently touch surfaces (e.g. table tops, door handles, faucet handles) will be cleaned and disinfected by staff throughout the day. We are prioritizing routines for cleaning indoor and outdoor materials. When appropriate, children will have their own supplies e.g. art supplies, scissors, aprons, mat etc. Products that meet EPA disinfection criteria and are safest for children will be used. We have an ample stock of all needed cleaning supplies. We are installing an extra commercial washer and dryer for greater laundry capacity.

Janitorial staff has received extra training in CDC cleaning guidelines and protocols. Deep cleaning procedures will carefully follow all CDC recommendations at the West Hartford Campus, daily, and at the New Hartford Campus, twice weekly.

**Hand/Respiratory Hygiene:** Regular and frequent hand washing (for 20 seconds with soap and water) by both children and adults will be incorporated into daily routines. Bathrooms are equipped with no-touch handwashing soap and paper towel dispensers. For Adolescent and Elementary children, when hand washing facilities are not available (for example, on the bus), adult supervised use of hand sanitizer will be allowed. Our school has
been equipped with multiple wall-mounted hand sanitizing units for easy access by all adults.

Adults will practice good respiratory hygiene by coughing and sneezing with tissues (disposed of immediately) or into the corner of the elbow. The same will be carefully modeled for and expected of children, as is age appropriate. We encourage parents to reinforce good hand and respiratory hygiene.

**Face Masks:** All staff members are required to wear masks. Parents are asked to please supply their Primary, aged 3 years and older, Elementary and Adolescent child(ren) with two face masks every day. We encourage you to model for your child(ren) how to properly wear and remove a face mask. Fabric masks should be laundered daily. While families are being asked to supply face masks, we will have a stock of disposal masks available if needed. Children will have frequent opportunities for mask breaks. At this time, it is important that families support this practice and model it positively for their children.

**Training:** Staff will receive training on health, safety and wellness protocols prior to the first day of school. Ongoing training will be provided as protocols are updated. All MSGH substitutes will also receive training. For our children, staff will carefully model and reinforce all health, safety and wellness protocols, as is age appropriate.

**Food:** Food preparation activities or self-service snack will not be included in the classroom routines. At this time, we ask that all families send their child with snack(s) and lunch, daily. We have developed safe protocols for providing and serving food to our Toddler students as this is a part of the curriculum. All food items should be peanut/nut free as we have children with nut allergies. Please have snacks and lunch clearly labeled. There will be no sharing of food. Please use an icepack for food that requires refrigeration. We will make every effort to picnic outdoors when the weather allows. Elementary and Adolescent students should also bring their own reusable water bottle. Primary teachers will advise their families on the use of water bottles. Water is available to all children throughout the day.

**Health and Wellness**

**Health-Screening Prior Arrival at School:** Parents are asked to be on the alert for all signs of illness in your children and it is very important to keep children home if they are sick. Parents are asked to let the school know, on that day, why your child is absent and the specific symptoms that prompt the absence. All illness-related absences will be reported to MSGH’s school nurse, Lisa Fichandler.

Each morning, before drop-off and ideally before you leave for school, you are asked to take your child(ren)’s temperature and complete (one for each of your children) MSGH’s quick health screening questionnaire. This will be provided in the form of an easy to use app. Children with temperatures above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit will not be permitted to leave their cars or enter programming.
**Illness:** If your child presents with COVID-like symptoms during the day, our school nurse will be notified. She will come to the classroom and escort your child to a designated place, away from the other children. You will be called to come and pick up your child, which we encourage you to do as quickly as possible, ideally within a half to one hour. Please provide at least two emergency contacts who are able to pick up your child from the school, if you are not able to do so. Please be assured that your child will always be in the care of a familiar adult.

**Important next steps:** Whether you report your child’s illness before coming to school or your child becomes ill during the day at school, here are the important next steps:

1. You will be asked the following questions:
   - Has your child had any known exposures to COVID-19 or to individual(s) with a heightened exposure risk?
   - Is anyone else at home showing symptoms of illness?
2. You will be instructed to contact your child’s doctor.
3. Our nurse will contact the West Hartford Bloomfield Health District (WHBHD), with whom she will be working in close collaboration on next steps and on any decisions regarding exclusion.
4. You will be required to provide a note from your child’s doctor clearing him/her to safely return to the program or a documented negative COVID-19 test result.

**Quarantine and Contact Tracing:** If a student or employee has a COVID-19 infection, our school nurse and school administrators will support the WHBHD's efforts for contact tracing and enforcing quarantining of those infected and their contacts.

**Exposure:** If anyone in your household has been notified that they were in contact with an individual infected with COVID-19, you are asked to proactively notify the school nurse. Based on the circumstances, you may be asked to keep your child at home for a quarantine period or provide a negative COVID-19 test to return to school.

The school will be following guidance from the WHBHD and recommendations from the CT DPH in all matters related to short-term closures of cohorts, or the school, if necessary. Should this situation arise, the school with strive for open and transparent communication with parents, while complying with privacy and health laws.

**Travel outside of Connecticut:** Please avoid unnecessary travel and, in particular, we ask that you minimize travel in the two weeks before school starts. In keeping with the State of Connecticut guidelines, if you or your child has traveled to a state listed in the Regional Travel Advisory, you are required notify the school.

**Medical Forms & Emergency Contacts:** Parents must complete and submit all required student medical and emergency forms prior to the first day of school.
Logistics and Operational Planning

MSGH has designated a specific drop-off and pick-up spot for each class in order to effectively manage the flow of children entering the building. Details regarding procedures around these times of the day will be communicated to families closer to the first day of school. Adults, and Elementary and Adolescent Program students should wear masks for drop-off and pick-up.

**Early Morning Drop-Off:** MSGH plans to provide Early Morning Drop-Off starting at 7:30 a.m. for families who pre-register. We cannot accommodate children before 7:30 a.m., as staff will be preparing for the day. The New Hartford campus cannot accommodate children before 8:15 a.m.

**Regular Drop-Off:** Our new staggered arrival times are as follows:

- Adolescent Program: 7:30 a.m. at the West Hartford Campus
  8:15 a.m. at the New Hartford Campus
- Elementary and Primary: 8:00 to 8:15 a.m.
- Toddler: 8:15 to 8:30 a.m.

**Late Arrival:** We strongly urge that all families strive to be on time. Due to our careful “cohorting” of groups, staff are not as readily available to assist with late arrivals, so we sincerely ask that you support our efforts to provide the optimum and safest experience for your children by arriving during your scheduled window. Of course, we understand that there may be unexpected and unplanned delays, so if you arrive after 8:30 a.m., please, park your car, and call the main office. Bring your child to the front door where you will be met by a staff member who works with your child’s cohort.

**Regular Dismissal Times:**

- Toddler and Primary: 12 p.m. and 3 p.m.
- Elementary: 3:15 p.m.
- Adolescent Program: 3:00 p.m. from New Hartford Campus, or 3:45 p.m. if availing of provided bus transportation to West Hartford Campus
- All Day Toddler: 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.*
- All Day Primary: 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.*
- Afternoon Enrichment (El & AP): 3:15-5:30 p.m.**

*We will be providing two pick up opportunities (4:30 and 5:30 p.m.) for our All-Day Toddler and Primary communities.

**At this time, we are in the process of making a decision regarding the availability of Afternoon Enrichment Programming for Elementary and Adolescent Students.
**Visitors:** At this time, every effort is being made to limit visitors to the building. For this reason, we encourage parents not to plan to enter the building, unless in an emergency. If it becomes necessary to do so, please call the Main Office. On arrival, all visitors will receive a health-screening (questionnaire and temperature check) and will be asked to provide contact information. Please, plan to wear a mask and maintain a six foot distance from others.

**Closures:** Should the Governor order a broad closing of schools, MSGH, following all OEC health and safety guidelines, may continue to offer programming to the families of Toddler and Primary students. At the Elementary and Adolescent Program levels, we will exhaust all creative means at our disposal as an Independent School, while strictly adhering to health and safety requirements, to offer in-person learning.

**Distance Learning:** Should circumstances warrant it and it becomes necessary to move to a Distance Learning Model, for a short or more extended period, we have and are investing in learning materials, technology, extra staffing and gathering resources, so we will be ready should that be our required mode to keep everyone safe.

**Communication:** MSGH will strive to maintain clear and transparent communication on all policies, procedures and decisions. Please, ensure that all of your contact information with us is current. To stay informed, read the MSGH Bulletin and visit our website. Should there be any changes to the Re-Opening Plan, parents will be notified.

If you have any questions, please contact the Main Office at 860.236.4565 and your question will be answered or directed to the right person.