



# The Montessori Elementary & Middle School

July 28, 2021

Dear TMEMS families,

We are excited to have students back on campus in just a few days! It will be so nice to start the school year on campus, with students in person, beginning this Monday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>. (Don't forget to check out the new Drop-off/Pick-up times and procedures. It effects the whole school so it is important you know what to expect! The map and info is attached to this email. Drop-off is now from 8:45 – 9:00 am for all K-8<sup>th</sup> grades.)

As we prepare for another wonderful school year on campus at TMEMS (we are currently not offering an online option), we wanted to update you as to what to expect with the latest guidance from NMPED, just released on Monday afternoon, July 26th. Please note, this is subject to change as NMPED updates their guidance throughout the year.

NMPED released guidance on Monday for public schools concerning the opening of Schools for SY 21-22. Here is a quick synopsis as to what it means for your student at TMEMS:-

- Masks are required for *\*everyone\** (parents, students and staff) who enters our building, and the entire time while indoors, regardless of vaccination status, effective immediately (which includes the Open House on Friday). This is in accordance with the latest CDC guidance too. Masks are *\*not\** required for outdoor time, as of right now. It is important to go over these requirements with your student.
  - Face Mask criteria, taken directly from the NMPED Toolkit: Face masks must cover the nose and mouth and fit snugly against the sides of the face in order to contain respiratory droplets. The types of allowable face masks include:
    - Face masks made of two or more layers of cloth.
    - Face masks with a clear plastic window.
    - Surgical, procedural, N95 or KN95 face masks that are approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use by staff performing medical duties or similar close contact assignments.
  - The following face coverings are NOT substitutes for face masks, and cannot be worn by anyone in our TMEMS buildings:
    - Masks that have a exhalation valve or vent
    - Bandanas
    - Scarves
    - Neck gaiters (also known as a neck fleece)
    - Face shields
- In order to help keep the spread of the virus to a minimum, we will reduce the people in the building by only allowing students and staff in the building, beginning the first day of school, August 2<sup>nd</sup>. This means that you are welcome to walk your child to the doors of our campuses, but you will not be able to enter the buildings.
- We are excited to carryover some of the successes from last Spring. This includes classrooms spending as much time outside as possible, including eating outside as weather permits. New this year, students will not be required to wear masks outside, including on the playground. Students are welcome to wear a mask outside if they are more comfortable doing so though.
- Sanitizing the school continues to be a priority too. We have a full time maintenance/custodian on staff and our staff has been trained on how to sanitize in the classrooms.
- We are excited to be able to provide a full-Montessori based education, using Montessori materials, in our elementary classrooms this school year. Teachers and EA's have been instructed on the requirements of how to keep the materials clean and sanitized for our students.

To help stop the spread of the virus and keep are students and staff safe while prioritizing in-school learning, our COVID-safe practices include:

- We have MERV13 filters in all our HVAC systems.
- Each classroom has a portable HEPA filter.
- Hand sanitizer is available in all classrooms and throughout the school.
- Bathroom facilities and other high touch areas are cleaned several times throughout the day.
- Everyone must wear an appropriate mask while indoors at the school.
- We are limiting the number of people in the building by only allowing staff and students in the building. We will be using the same procedures as we had last year.
- During the first week of school, all students will be participating in COVID-safe education and practices, learning how to keep the spread of viruses to a minimum.

As has become clear over the last year and a half, requirements and guidance from NMPED and the CDC are continuously evolving and changing so please make sure to stay up to date with our correspondence throughout the year. For reference, as a public school, we must follow the guidance given by the state.

We know that we have a wide variety of opinions at the school as to the various aspects of COVID policies and procedures. What we can assure you is that we continue to keep the safety, health and wellbeing of our entire community in mind as we follow the guidance from NMPED and the CDC. We are happy to say that we had a lot of success with students wearing masks last school year for in-person learning and anticipate the same for this school year.

Social/Emotional Health education continues to be at the forefront of our minds as we welcome students back to campus. We strive to present a unified community for our students in all grade levels and continue with the wonderful lessons Maria Montessori taught about the importance of community. Our staff has prepared curriculum and lessons which addresses Social/Emotional health for all grade levels at our school.

We want to thank families in advance for your support and kindness as we navigate the new school year. Please know that we will do our best to keep you updated as the school year goes on with any updates or changes.

Thank you and see you on Friday, July 30<sup>th</sup> at our Open Houses!

Sincerely,

Mary Jane Besante & Stan Albrycht