



**CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI SCHOOL, and
CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

**2021-2022
Academic Year Safe Learning Plan
DRAFT - pending Board Approval 9/21/21**

DRAFT COPY

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St. Paul, MN 55106
651.774.5000

www.cornerstone-elementary.org

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INTRODUCTION

The decision to send your child to school amidst a global pandemic is not one that is made lightly. At Cornerstone Montessori School (CMS) and Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School (CMES), we are committed to supporting your family and our community in an environment that is developmentally appropriate and emphasizes health and well-being. Please note, that although much is different in our school and programs this year, our utmost priority is still an emphasis on community, learning, and caring for your children safely.

The following Safe Learning Plan outlines the changes that have been made to accommodate in-person learning. Should we need to change to a distance-learning model, this plan will be updated accordingly.

We recognize the importance of families being able to acknowledge their own comfort level with risk, and hope to provide information that will assist all in making the best decision for their children and families. We will continue to update this document as needed, or as mandates, policy, and procedure require.

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.

OUR MISSIONS

Cornerstone Montessori School

Cornerstone Montessori School (CMS) creates a broad community of multicultural and economically diverse families who share the mission to nurture the child's natural desire to learn and grow through quality Montessori environments, leading to a harmonious and peaceful world. CMS is a program of the Montessori Center of Minnesota (MCM). MCM's mission is to transform lives and society by broadening access to the power of Dr. Maria Montessori's proven method of education.

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School (CMES) supports children from culturally and economically diverse backgrounds living in or near St. Paul's East Side through a rigorous and high-impact Montessori program that empowers them to make positive decisions, develop self-discipline, and create a true sense of responsibility for themselves and others in their community.

COMMUNICATION FOR FAMILIES

A CMS/CMES administrator will be on-site during the hours of 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. to respond to immediate needs by phone, emails, or a socially distant in-person meeting.

Guides and support staff will primarily communicate through email.

Meetings with Guides or CMS/CMES administration will take place primarily over Zoom, should they be requested by either party.

Information on how families are informed of potential/confirmed COVID-19 exposure and subsequent measures can be found in the section titled *COVID Testing, Quarantine, and Communication*.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR CMS/CMES

Administration

Note: All CMS/CMES Administration can be reached at 651.774.5000

Alyssa Schwartz <i>Head of School</i>	alyssaschwartz@cornerstone-elementary.org
Say Vang <i>Interim Head of School</i> (through January 1, 2022)	sayvang@cornerstone-elementary.org
Chris Bewell <i>Director of CMES Business Operations</i>	chrisbewell@cornerstone-elementary.org
Catherine Kennedy <i>CMS Early Childhood Program Manager</i>	catherine@mtcm.org
Daylin Galdamez <i>Cornerstone Reception</i>	reception@mtcm.org

Toddler Community Staff (ages 16 months - 3 years)

Lourdes Harris <i>Lead Guide A.M.</i>	lourdes@mtcm.org
Laurie Pittman <i>Lead Guide P.M.</i>	laurie@mtcm.org

Children's House 1 and 2 Staff (ages 3 years - Kindergarten)

Anna Davis <i>CH1 Lead Guide</i>	annadavis@cornerstone-elementary.org
Molly McDermott <i>CH2 Lead Guide</i>	mollym@mtcm.org

Lower Elementary Staff (grades 1 - 3)

Sara Wade <i>Lead Guide - Garden Environment</i>	sarawade@cornerstone-elementary.org
Hayley Bahnemann <i>Lead Guide - Pond Environment</i>	hayleybahnemann@cornerstone-elementary.org

Upper Elementary Staff (grades 4 - 6)

Jess Goff <i>Lead Guide - Marsh Environment</i>	jessgoff@cornerstone-elementary.org
Mara Johnson <i>Lead Guide - Forest Environment</i>	marajohnson@cornerstone-elementary.org

Learning Specialists

Cynthia Crooks <i>ELL Teacher</i>	cynthiacrooks@cornerstone-elementary.org
Megan Riemer <i>Literacy Specialist</i>	meganriemer@cornerstone-elementary.org
Suzi Splinter <i>Special Education Teacher</i>	suzisplinter@cornerstone-elementary.org
Nora Springer <i>Community Social Worker</i>	On leave through December 31, 2021

CORNERSTONE POLICIES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC CMS/CMES SAFE LEARNING PROGRAM INFORMATION

PROGRAM HOURS

Toddler Community, Children's House 1, and Children's House 2:

Hours

Half Day 8:30a.m. – 12:30p.m.

Full Day 8:30a.m. – 4:00p.m.

Before Care* 8:00-8:30a.m.

After Care* 4:00-4:30p.m.

*Please notify administration if you intend to use Before or After Care.

Garden, Pond, Marsh, and Forest:

Hours

9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Before Care 7:30 a.m. -8:45 a.m. (may attend by sign up only)

MASKING

Staff, children, and visitors to the 1611 Ames Avenue facility are required to wear medical masks or nonmedical cloth masks inside at all times, unless there is a medical reason documented by a doctor or the child is in the Toddler Community. 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.

All adults and children will wear masks unless facial expressions are necessary (as with some language presentations), in which case face shields may be used. Face shields are not a replacement for masks and will be used sparingly, unless a mask is also worn.

In addition, staff and children are asked to cover their mouth and nose with their sleeve or a tissue when coughing or sneezing and to avoid touching their face, particularly their mouth, nose and eyes, with their hands. Staff, children, and visitors are expected to dispose of tissues in provided trash receptacles and wash or sanitize their hands immediately afterward. Respiratory etiquette will be demonstrated on posters and supported by making tissues and trash receptacles available to all.

HAND WASHING/SANITIZING

Anyone entering the 1611 Ames Avenue facility is required to wash or sanitize their hands prior to or immediately upon entering the facility. Hand-sanitizer dispensers (containing ECOLA FDA food code compliant and alcohol free concentrated foam hand sanitizer with a Benzalkonium Chloride active ingredient. Concentrated solution is diluted to a 10:1 ratio) have been installed in each of the environments, bathrooms, workrooms, entrances, and exits.

Basic infection prevention measures are being implemented in workplaces and teaching environments at all times. Staff, children, and visitors are instructed to wash their hands with soap and water frequently throughout the day, but especially at the beginning and end of their shift/day, before and after any mealtimes, and after using the restroom. Proper handwashing procedures, including the application of soap and washing of wrists and individual fingers with hot water, are posted in bathrooms and near all hand washing sinks.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Per CDC guidance, Cornerstone has established policies and has implemented strategies to maintain social and/or physical distancing among participants who are not fully vaccinated, indoors and outdoors, of:

- At least 3 feet between all participants within a cohort.
- At least 6 feet between all participants and staff outside of their cohort.
- At least 6 feet while eating and drinking, including among people within the same cohort.
- At least 6 feet between participants and staff.
- At least 6 feet between staff.

Children will remain in parts of the building designated for their use and should not enter other environments. The only staff who may mix between cohorts of children are specialists and administrators, who will be masked and socially distance when providing service and will take the utmost caution in avoiding direct contact with children.

Recess and use of the outdoor spaces will be staggered so that Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary children do not mix between environments. The Upper Elementary environments will share outdoor space during recess, as will the Lower Elementary environments.

ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL

Before and after care for Toddler Community and Children's Houses is available at a cost to parents. Please visit our website for more details, information, and pricing. Before care for elementary children (K-6) is available through sign-up only. Please contact administration if you are interested in signing up.

To promote social distancing, only children may enter the 1611 Ames Facility during any time of arrival or dismissal. If a parent/guardian/caregiver needs to see their child during the day, they should call the front desk at 651.774.5000 and the child will be brought out. Staff and families will maintain recommended distance during arrival and dismissal.

Parents/guardians/caregivers who have not signed their child(ren) up for before-care, are encouraged to drop off their children at 8:45 a.m. Please pull your vehicle up to the front curb, where children can safely exit the car. Here an administrator will greet each child, and guide them to their classroom where they will be asked to wash their hands and prepare for the day. **If a late arrival is necessary, please notify the administration and call upon arrival.**

Parents/guardians/caregivers may pick up their children at 4:00 p.m. If you need to pick up your child at another time during the day, please speak with school administration to coordinate the appropriate timing. Please use the car line as detailed in the *Parent Policies Handbook*. Parents/guardians/caregivers will wait in or next to their vehicle and their child will be brought out to them.

Should you arrive at the school any time before or during arrival/dropoff and administration is not present, please ring the bell and someone will be with you momentarily. It is preferable that parents/guardians/caretakers wear a mask at the door and maintain three-feet of social distance.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

To use bus transportation, your child must wear a mask.

Bus transportation will be provided for children living in St. Paul upon request. Parents/guardians/caretakers and children must read the Cornerstone Bus Policy, found on pages 8-9 of the *Parent Policies Handbook*. COVID-19 policy and procedure set forth by Cornerstone, applies to all busing. Children must wear masks, 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.

Parents/guardians/caregivers are expected to monitor their child's health prior to allowing them to board the bus. 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.

ENVIRONMENTS

Children may enter the environments as early as 8:45 a.m. and will remain cohorted throughout the day to limit the spread of COVID-19 and minimize exposure to other groups. With limited space in the environment, children may be pulled out of class to meet with their Special Education Teachers and Specialists. Cornerstone's COVID-19 cleaning policies and procedures extend to all areas outside of the environments for this reason.

As noted in *Masking*, Children are masked and socially distanced during indoor learning but may be unmasked during recess outside. Lead Guides will have assigned seats, lockers, and or cubby space to store each child's individual items to encourage social distancing.

When weather permits all environments will eat their lunch outside. Lunch times during inclement weather are arranged in a way that half of the class may eat in the classroom and the other half utilizes space within the school building (multipurpose room, or hallways for example). This will allow a safer distance to eat lunch between children unmasked.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

Provided they are in attendance, all children will be offered breakfast, lunch, and a snack during their school day.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) released waivers to provide school meals to all Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School students at no charge for the 2021-22 school year. School meals will be ordered on a monthly basis. To order meals for your children please contact Chris Bewell, chrisbewell@cornerstone-elementary.org with your request.

Children's House and Toddler Communities

Breakfast - Breakfast will be offered to children as they arrive and conclude by 9:15 a.m. An adult will serve items, most of which will be single serving items.

Lunch - Meals will continue to be provided through the Cornerstone Schools' catering service. Families that would like to provide a lunchbox are invited to do so. Children bringing lunch will store their meals in their lockers.

Snack - Snacks in single serving portions will be distributed to children by an adult.

Lower and Upper Elementary Communities

Breakfast - Breakfast is available for CMES children upon arrival (between 8:45-9:15 am) It will be served in the outside areas between Garden and Pond classrooms whenever possible or in the multi-purpose room when the weather requires that meals be served indoors.

Lunch - Meals will continue to be provided through the Cornerstone Schools' catering service. Families that would like to provide a lunchbox are invited to do so. Children bringing lunch will store their meals in their lockers.

Snack - Snacks in single serving portions will be distributed to children by an adult.

Children of the same cohort will eat at individual tables, placed at least three-feet apart. Cornerstone is committed to utilizing the full potential of the 1611 Ames Avenue facility to spread-out. Through a combination of creativity and square footage we will have safe and socially distant meals, outdoors when able and indoors when inclement weather requires.

Meals will be individually plated, in disposable containers, prior to service. Snacks will be available in individual (and where able, individually packaged) options. All non-disposable meal utensils and dishes will be washed in Cornerstone's ECOLAB dishwashing machines, with procedures and chemicals that have been tested and verified by ECOLAB and the MN Department of Health. Staff will support eating, conversation, and cleanliness during all meals or snack.

Should there be a need to transition to a distance learning model, Cornerstone schools will make every attempt to provide meals for our families which will require advanced ordering and prompt pickup.

COVID TESTING, QUARANTINE, AND COMMUNICATION

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) recommends that all children be tested for COVID-19 every two weeks. Staff, including those who are vaccinated, are encouraged to be tested for COVID-19 every two weeks. **Testing resources are available via the MDH COVID-19 testing link at <https://mn.gov/covid19/get-tested/index.jsp>.**

Keeping our children, families, and staff healthy is a community effort. Cornerstone's Safe Learning Plan follows the guidelines developed by the State of Minnesota, which is based upon Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) guidelines for COVID-19, Minnesota Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MNOSHA) statutes, rules and standards, and Minnesota's relevant and current executive orders. All members of the Cornerstone community are expected to follow state guidelines for COVID-19, and are asked to consider how the entire community could be affected if they choose to travel, participate in large social gatherings, or otherwise increase exposure to COVID-19. Cornerstone asks that everyone consider self-isolating after high-exposure activities. Staff and families of enrolled children have been informed of and encouraged to self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. **Staff, students, and children are expected to follow the decision tree published by [the Minnesota Department of Health](#). Upon positive confirmation of a COVID-19 case or direct exposure, parents/guardians/caretakers will be notified within 24 hours. Expectations for quarantine, testing, or other requirements will be communicated at that time.**

DISINFECTION PROCEDURES

We take cleaning and opportunities to strengthen our cleaning procedures very seriously at Cornerstone. In partnership with ECOLAB Inc., the 1611 Ames Avenue facility in its entirety utilizes two products for disinfection and sanitization:

1. Peroxide Multi Surface Cleaner and Disinfectant

- Broad Spectrum Disinfectant that disinfects and deodorizes by killing common germs; Antibacterial, Germicidal, and Fungicidal.
- Peroxide will not harm you if ingested, however, it is recommended that any surface sprayed with Peroxide that may come into contact with a child's mouth or with food is then rinsed with water and sprayed with the SMARTPOWER Sink and Surface Cleaner Sanitizer.

2. SMARTPOWER Sink and Surface Cleaner Sanitizer

- A Food Contact Cleaner Sanitizer that reduces risk of foodborne illnesses by keeping food contact surfaces cleaned and sanitized with a 2-in1, no-rinse cleaner and sanitizer.
- EPA Registered food contact sanitizer with 15-second contact time for SARS - Related Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)

All staff, including contracted cleaning services, are trained in the effective and safe use and storing of these products. Light switches, doorknobs, and other high-touch furnishings and areas will be disinfected before and after school and throughout the day as needed, using the peroxide solution. Tables and other areas that may come in contact with food will be disinfected before and after each meal and additionally as needed throughout the day, using the peroxide-water-Sink and Surface Cleaner Sanitizer. All adults will wear masks and gloves during cleaning and sanitizing, including dishwashing, and food distribution.

Regular practices of cleaning and disinfecting *outside of the teaching* environments have also been implemented, including a schedule for routine cleaning and disinfecting of work surfaces, equipment, tools and machinery, and areas in respective work environments, including restrooms, break rooms, lunch rooms, meeting rooms, and drop-off and pick-up locations, as well as high-touch areas, including phones, keyboards, touch screens, controls, door handles, copy machines, and as needed, Montessori materials.

VENTILATION PROTOCOL

Operation of the 1611 Ames Avenue facility includes necessary sanitation, assessment, and maintenance of building systems, including water, plumbing, electrical, and heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. The maximum amount of fresh air is being brought into the workplace, air recirculation is being limited, and ventilation systems are being properly used and maintained. Steps are also being taken to minimize air flow blowing across people.

In accordance with state-mandated building protocol and safety and occupancy standards, we will continue to complete all required inspections and approvals for the facility on a regular basis. Licensing for the facility requires this. We had proper inspection of its ventilation, heating and cooling systems, plumbing, sanitation and safety protocol at the beginning of COVID-19 and through the spring and summer as the change in temperature/weather has demanded. During times of higher occupancy, when able, doors – including patio, classroom, bathroom, and others – can be propped open within the facility to increase air circulation.

Because Cornerstone is a school and not a hospital, medical center, or pharmaceutical production plant that *requires* air-quality assessment and control risks to maintain ventilation equipment to serve airborne containment control facilities and document their maintenance activities, the HVAC system installed in the 1611 Ames Avenue facility is not now, or has ever been equipped to host HEPA Filters. For our current HVAC system, we have opted to change the filters every month, as opposed to quarterly, which was required pre-COVID-19.

Because the cost to replace the entire unit, and its annual maintenance is out of our financial capability, Cornerstone has opted to purchase a combination of individual Medify MA Air Purifier for every 500 square feet of bathroom space and Heston Air Purifier for every 1500 remaining square feet of space with H13 True HEPA filters. In addition to this, we work with staff to purchase and change the filters prior to the filter replacement indicator prompting.

HEALTH POLICIES

As previously noted, staff and families of enrolled children have been informed of and encouraged to self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. **Staff, students, and children are expected to follow the decision tree published by [the Minnesota Department of Health](#).** The following policies and procedures are being implemented at Cornerstone to assess an individual's health status prior to entering the work or school, and for staff and families of enrolled children to report when they are sick or experiencing symptoms.

Additional Resource - MDH [Best Practice Recommendations](#) for COVID-19 Prevention in Schools for the 2021-22 School Year.

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 found at: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc1KzKpkhYAB0KIRbnvk-KI_8YLdmK3egMsEUCQbV5R2LVniA/viewform.

Decisions to send children home ultimately rest with the Cornerstone administration. The link to the decision tree can be found here:

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/exguide.pdf>

Please note the following policies and procedures:

- If a fever is identified, it will be verified with a second thermometer. Children or staff with a temperature above 100.4 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.
- If an ill child has a sibling on-site, the sibling will also be sent home and must remain home until they are 24 hours free of symptoms. Family members and siblings who do not show symptoms can attend.
- 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/get-tested/index.jsp>

- If staff, children, or families are concerned that they have been exposed to COVID-19 they should self-isolate until status is confirmed.
- If staff, children, or families develop symptoms of COVID-19 and/or have a fever, they should immediately leave the premises. A negative COVID test will be required to return onsite.
- If sick, staff, children, or families are required to stay home until well. All are asked to monitor their health and to monitor their symptoms and take their temperature daily. A staff member or child who has symptoms of or confirmed COVID-19 can return to work or school when:
 - You feel better. Your cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms are better;

AND

 - It has been 10 days since you first felt sick.

OR

 - You have had no fever for at least 24 hours, without using medicine that lowers fevers.

It is absolutely critical that families notify Cornerstone immediately if they have been exposed to COVID-19 or if they have been diagnosed with COVID-19. 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.

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

It is important to note that this does not mean school is a fully safe place. Children, specifically those under the age of 12 and are not eligible, are not all vaccinated and we do not know the full extent of possible asymptomatic transmission. We will err on the side of caution in any event of illness or exposure.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

COVID-19, a year of distance learning, and now returning to in-person learning puts stress on children, as well as parents. Say Vang, Interim Head of School, is available to support children through this time. Say will offer 1:1 sessions with children through parent or teacher referral. We ask that you please notify your child's guide or Say if you would like your child to receive support.

PARENT-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

Following a year of online interaction, we are excited this year to anticipate our Parent Partnership/Education events taking place in person! At the same time, we recognize the advantages that Zoom has, particularly in reducing your time spent out of the home and in getting your children to bed at a reasonable hour. As such, we will look for ways to combine virtual and in-person events, and to alternate as is appropriate. Updated information will come prior to each evening with the model for attendance (i.e., in-person, virtual, or hybrid).

If there are changes necessary to our calendar, whether in response to guidelines from the Minnesota Departments of Education or Health or for other reasons, we will notify you as early as possible. We are exploring ways that we can provide dinner during on-site events in a safe manner and look forward to sharing that information with you closer to these events.

On our website, you can find *Our Approach to Work*¹, which details how we help children find their way into engaging activities. This document will support families who are continuing distance learning, as well as families who find the return to school difficult.

Communications to the whole community are made 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. The guides, specialists, and administration are always available to talk with individual families about concerns and progress. Meetings this spring will continue to be held by phone or Zoom.

Parent Partnership events and other school gatherings will also take place by Zoom (Graduation and Kindergarten Fly-Up are to be determined). These opportunities are valuable for talking with your guides and other parents about Montessori pedagogy, classroom practices, and more. Please refer to your school calendar and/or the Stepping Stones newsletters for details.

1

http://images.pcmac.org/SiSFiles/Schools/MN/CornerstoneMontessoriES/CornerstoneMontessoriES/Uploads/Publications/Our_approach_to_work_at_Cornerstone_.pdf