

"Healthy Together"



2021-22 School Year Health & Safety Plan

Original Release Date
8/19/2021

with Western PA Montessori School

Message From the Head of School

Dear WPMS Families,

The anticipation of back to school is always an exciting time for students, teachers and parents. We look forward to meeting new families, reunite with returning families, as well as get back in the classroom for hands on learning-- all at a time when our health and safety environment continues to evolve.

*In that spirit of excitement, we present "Healthy Together," which serves as our 2021-22 School Year Health and Safety Plan. This document explains our Health and Safety Protocols as we continue to maneuver through the Pandemic. This document updates the policies and protocols that have been developed to support a safe and successful school year for our community, as well as outlines evolving best practices. "Healthy Together" is a living document. We will expand, revise and update this plan to meet changing conditions as new guidance is received or required. Now, more than ever, your patience and partnership will be essential for a **successful** year.*

WPMS has been committed to excellence in Early Childhood Education, continually evolving and elevating our programs for over 55 years. If last school year is any indication, and with your support, I have every confidence that we will continue to raise the bar in the school year ahead.

Welcome back everyone!

Jamie Campbell

Back Together at WPMS!

Our return to school this year will continue to look and feel different. Our Task Force, WPMS Board, and Administration remain vigilant to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment for all. Our goal is to remain in-person, five days per week. We continue to monitor and consult with state and local health departments, Department of Education and OCDEL licensing unit, connect with Montessori and private school professionals, participate in webinars and trainings, and conduct the latest research on best practices related to the pandemic to meet that goal. Our plans may change as conditions warrant. Thank you in advance for your understanding and support in the weeks and months ahead!

Members of the WPMS Task Force:

Jamie Campbell- Head of School & Alumni Parent

Amy Reddig- Board President, Yellow Room & K Parent

Dr. Kirsten Lin- M.D., WPMS Alumni Parent

Dr. Sonia Welch- M.D., Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Blue Room Parent

Kaleena Deah- Physician Assistant, Board Member & Red Room Parent

Dr. Lisa Padilla- Ph.D, Developmental Psychologist, Red Room Parent

Marcus Graham- Esq., Alumni Board Vice President & Parent

Maura German- WPMS Red Room Teacher

Mary Ashton- WPMS Blue Room Teacher & Toddler Parent

Rebecca Knepp- Director of Education, Alumni Parent & K Teacher

Laura Lankes- WPMS Toddler Teacher

We invite parents to contact any task force member above with any questions or concerns related to this Health and Safety Plan or COVID-19. You may also email the Task Force directly at:

wpmstaskforce@wpms.edu



WPMS Learning Scenarios

In-person Pod instruction

- WPMS will begin the year in-person 5 days
- In person instruction will take place in pods with designated pod teachers. Further details in slide 7.
- Students and staff will be wearing masks indoors regardless of vaccination status.
- Masks are optional outdoors when 3ft of distance can be maintained.
- School gatherings and events may be virtual

Remote Learning for whole school or Pod Quarantines if required

- Only quarantined classes will receive remote learning. In-person classes will continue for those students not in the affected classes.
- If the whole school is shut down, no one will be in the building.
- Distance Learning Packets will be prepared and distributed for affected students. A google classroom will be accessible for parents and students as well.
- No in-person activities.
- Affected areas will be thoroughly sanitized before we return to school from a quarantine.

Facilities

WPMS has implemented a number of changes over the past year, and will continue this fall to incorporate best practices for safe school operations:

- Adequate distancing of classroom furniture
- Individualized materials for students use
- Use of open windows with screens and air purifiers for added ventilation.
- Sneeze Guards for tables for snack and lunch time
- Use of an Electrostatic Sprayer for sanitizing

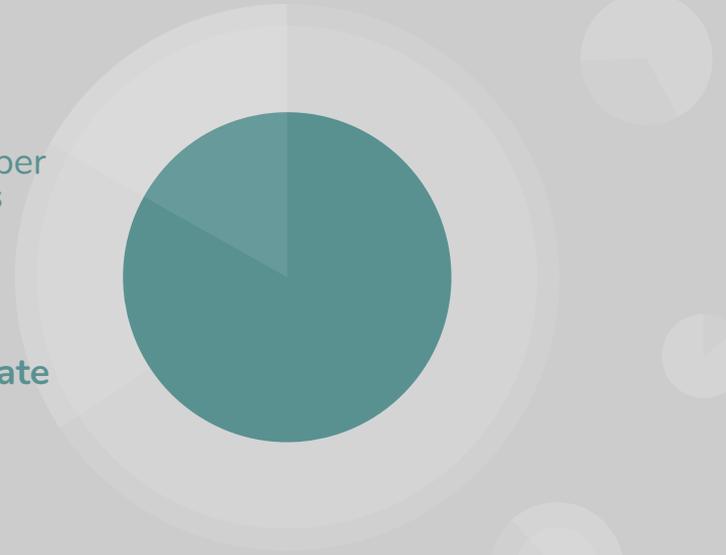


Explanation of Pods

Why Pods? The WPMS Task Force decided to keep students in separate pods again this year to minimize exposure and the number of people in any quarantine situations related to exposure. **Pods help to meet our goal of keeping as many students learning in person 5-days a week.**

What does it mean to have pods?

- Kindergarten will be a separate pod that does not integrate into the regular 3-6 classrooms
- Shared spaces such as the playground will be used at staggered times or areas to avoid mixing of pods
- Students will remain with their pod for Friday Specials
- Assigning designated “Pod” drop-off times during AM car-line
- Separate classroom entrances for pod arrivals
- Only staff who have voluntarily provided vaccination cards will be allowed to cross pods for AM carline, specials classes or substitute teachers.
- Staff will hold virtual staff meetings/in-services and will be separated in pods for lunch



Mitigation Policies and Practices

PPE

- Face masks will be required for all students (2 and older) and staff regardless of vaccination status while indoors. This has proven to be the safest way to slow/stop the spread of the virus. Please be prepared to provide masks for your child (Disposable masks available in the office when needed.)
- Approved face masks cover the face, nose and chin with multi-layered fabric that fits close to the face. Face shields are not an acceptable substitute.

Vaccines

- Our current vaccine policy remains in effect for staff and students (please refer to the WPMS 2021-22 Parent Handbook). At this time, there is no mandate for the COVID vaccine. All staff have been provided access to vaccinations and asked to voluntarily provide proof of vaccine to the Head of School.
- Only vaccinated staff who have provided documentation will be allowed to cross pods or receive children in morning Car-lines. If a positive case among staff arises, those staff who have provided documentation of vaccination will be eligible for paid leave.

Hygiene

- WPMS staff will participate in health and safety training as part of their back to school teacher orientation. Thorough training on best practices for safe classrooms are a part of this year's expanded professional development, with additional sessions to be held throughout the year as new information and recommendations are issued. Students will be given lessons on effective hand washing technique. Hand washing will occur (at a minimum) upon entrance to the classroom, before and after snack and lunch, and after playground time. Students will also be given lessons on cough and sneeze etiquette.

Cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting

- Enhanced sanitizing and cleaning processes are being implemented throughout the building. Staff will follow a daily schedule to manage cleaning protocols.
- Hand sanitizer, as well as soap and water, will be available in each classroom and at main entrances. Each classroom will be furnished with a disinfectant spray that adults will use to wipe tables, chairs, handles, counters, and other high-touch hard surfaces routinely throughout the day.
- Restrooms will be cleaned, sanitized, and disinfected multiple times throughout the school day using CDC-recommended products.
- An Electrostatic Sprayer will be used to sanitize classes at the end of each session and the playground will be sanitized between pod uses.
- Germicidal and disinfecting wipes and cleaners will be on hand for staff use daily.

Lunches and snacks

- Students and staff will be eating in their pods inside or outside, observing distancing guidelines. Each student will bring a lunch and water bottle for their use only. Please be sure items are labeled with their name.
- All students will have the ability to refill their water bottles during the day.
- Care should be taken by all students (parents) and staff to avoid bringing items that need refrigeration or microwaving, as these appliances are strictly off-limits.
- Young students will benefit from practice at home in how to open the boxes, containers and thermoses that contain their lunch.

Naps

- Children will nap in a separate classroom grouped with children in their pod and will be properly distanced and staggered head to toe or with solid barriers in between when possible.

Outdoor time

- Our aim is to provide multiple opportunities each day for students to have time outdoors. Outdoor times will offer fresh air breaks, outdoor lunches, nature-based/garden work, learning activities, and free time. These times will be woven into the schedule of each class and be scheduled for each pod.

Arrival and dismissal

- Families will conduct a health check of each child prior to arriving on campus using the Transparent Classroom Distanced Check-in feature. The screening questions and temperature check must be completed before children are received in the building.
- Families are expected to adhere to the arrival and dismissal schedule, as this is essential to maintaining our social distancing and reduces pod cross-over. Late Drop-offs and Pick-ups are also disruptive and take our staff away from the important work of running the school.

Health Screening Upon Arrival

- Self Monitoring of symptoms will be required for all adults and students (with adult help) who come to school. If any COVID symptoms are present, that person should not come to school.
- A temperature check will be conducted when students arrive in their classroom as well.
- Students and staff will wash hands upon arrival in the classroom.
- Faculty and administration will monitor student health throughout the day and have a designated space in the office if symptoms arise and they need to be sent home.

What happens happens when someone gets sick?

- If a child or staff member becomes ill at school with any of the listed COVID symptoms, the child or staff member will be isolated and sent home immediately. The child or staff member will most likely need to be tested to determine if they have COVID. Results should be reported to the HOS.
- If a child is sick at home, parents should be prepared to provide details about symptoms and dates symptoms began for the student, as well as household members. Parents should consult a physician to determine next steps. COVID testing may be necessary to return to school.
- WPMS will consult with public health authorities to determine the broader implications of a positive COVID-19 test or exposure among students or teachers for classrooms and our school.
- WPMS policies for non-COVID illnesses remain in effect (see parent handbook).
- [Contact Tracing Flowchart](#)
- [Quarantine vs. Isolation](#)
- [Updated quarantine Recommendations](#)



Pod Exposures/Closures Explained

When an exposure or positive case is reported to the Head of School, the Allegheny County Health Department will be notified and we follow their recommendations and guidance for contact tracing and reporting.

The WPMS Task Force has decided to follow the CDC's safest recommendations for quarantine, which remains 14 days for exposure to a positive case. WPMS will not allow a negative COVID test to be released from quarantine, as testing for asymptomatic exposure is less reliable.

When a positive case is confirmed and a quarantine is recommended by the Health Department, the affected pod will move immediately to remote instruction. Distance Learning Packets will be distributed and the Google Classroom will be activated. The Pod will return when the 14 day quarantine is completed, as long as students and staff remain asymptomatic.

Volunteering and visitors

- In order to minimize risk and maintain a healthy environment for our students and teachers, we will begin the school year by strictly limiting access to campus buildings to students, teachers and essential personnel. It is important to note that we will not resume in-classroom volunteer opportunities while students are present at this time. This practice may be re-evaluated throughout the year. Parents will be invited to participate virtually for birthday celebrations, cultural presentations, and reading books.

Preparation for Interruptions and our commitment

Even putting forth our best efforts, there remain circumstances beyond our control. We anticipate, based on CDC predictions, possible outbreaks of COVID-19 which could possibly impact on-campus programming in the future. In the event we are notified by government officials or the health department of the need to close school, school will continue remotely. In addition, we are asking all families and employees to be flexible regarding the school calendar. In the event of mandated school closures, WPMS may shift to operating as “Childcare” licensed by DHS to the extent it is allowed by state and local authorities. WPMS is a licensed child care provider for children 20 months through age 6. Should circumstances require us to operate under this model, we would offer remote learning to Kindergarten students under the Department of Education license.

Regardless of the setting—In-person or remotely—WPMS is committed to full year Montessori Education for our students. WPMS funds teacher salaries, program expenses and fixed costs through tuition. In accordance with our policies and the contract agreement, tuition will be due through the end of the year. Please contact the Head of School with any questions.

Partnership & Commitment in our Community!

WPMS is a community of children, teachers, parents and friends connected by our commitment to education and one another. Mitigating the risk of the spread of the virus and maintaining a safe environment inside our school relies on **all of us** to do our part outside of school. WPMS will adhere to strict protocols (**the safest recommendations from the CDC**) at school and we expect a comparable level of diligence by our families outside of school. Individual decisions can affect our entire school community. We implore all of you to follow the health and safety guidelines as laid out by health professionals worldwide:

- Report any information to the school that will assist us in maintaining a safe environment.
- Be flexible—our plans may change as the situation with the virus changes.
- Restrict your family's exposure to large crowds.
- Practice physical distancing and wear a mask in public.
- Teach your children the importance of thorough hand washing.
- Do not bring students to campus if they have been exposed to anyone who has COVID-19 or is exhibiting symptoms.
- Take the school's self-screening protocol seriously and complete distance check-in daily.
- Follow CDC recommendations regarding travel and consider self-quarantine when returning from travel.
- Look for updates to this plan on the WPMS website or Transparent Classroom regularly and watch for ongoing announcements from The Head of School, WPMS Task Force, Board members and teachers.

Families can prepare students for a safe back to school by doing the following:

- Talking with your child about the expectations at school.
- Modeling and practicing wearing a face mask.
- Encouraging frequent hand washing or use of hand sanitizer.
- Practicing coughing and sneezing into elbows.
- Adding daily temperature checks to your morning routine.
- Following social distancing recommendations as a family.
- Encouraging physical activity and time outside.
- Learning and understanding when to keep your children home.
- Find more information about what the American Academy of Pediatrics says here: [AAP Updates](#)



School Communications

Please stay in touch. Parents should anticipate frequent updates from the Head of School, WPMS office, classroom teachers Task Force and the Board of Directors. These communications may be sent via email, posted on our website at wpms.edu, shared on social media and/or hosted on [Transparent Classroom](#).

It is the responsibility of parents to watch for and read announcements in a timely manner. We anticipate ongoing public health updates that may impact our school. Parents will be expected to be aware of and respond to these directives. As always, please contact the WPMS office right away if you have questions about a particular announcement or regarding other matters. Also, be sure to communicate with us **anytime** there is concern regarding COVID-19 exposure, testing or other information we should be aware of.



You can find the latest updates from our
guiding local, state and federal agencies
here:

[CDC Guidance](#)

[PA Health Department](#)

[OCDEL \(DHS Child Care Guidance\)](#)

[Department of Education](#)

[Archived WPMS Task Force Updates](#)

It takes all of us to remain “Healthy Together” this school year...



Welcome Back!