

MILL FALLS

SCHOOL RE-START PLAN

TEACHING & LEARNING IN THE AGE OF COVID



AUGUST 2020

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Educating Our Students in the Time of COVID

The current COVID-19 pandemic has presented all corners of our society with unprecedented challenges. There are new-found stresses on every sector and area of human life, and this is forcing us to face these challenges with creativity, empathy and courage. As a learning community, we find ourselves in the center of the complexity that the virus presents.

At Mill Falls, it is our responsibility to ensure that students and staff are provided with a safe and engaging educational experience, one that allows our students to make or exceed expected academic progress as our staff nurtures their social and emotional well-being, and safeguards their health. All of this is more complicated due to the presence of the COVID-19 virus.

Returning to school for in-person learning during the pandemic is not risk-free. The nature of this virus makes that impossible. The pandemic presents us with a 'new normal' that requires us to expect fluidity and create nimble systems that can quickly adapt to change. It also demands an expanded level of personal responsibility – now more than ever our actions, or inactions, can have serious health implications for those around us.

Vision Statement for Restart Efforts

The Mill Falls 2020 School Restart Planning is based in our school's mission to provide an educational environment where our students progress toward independence, self-motivation and self-confidence as they strive to become well-rounded, engaged and curious learners. Our planning has been driven by putting the health and safety of our students, staff and families at the fore.

The Restart Planning has been designed with the goals of establishing creative structures for schooling that feature:

- Our celebrated and robust public Montessori approach to learning;
- Systems that support our students and staff in the pursuit of student academic curiosity and success alongside social/emotional health and growth;
- A physically and emotionally safe setting along-side a community-wide acknowledgement and understanding that teaching and learning in the age of COVID cannot be provided risk-free given the nature of the virus;
- Nurturing connections across the entire school community.

Restart Planning Summary & The MFCS COVID Think Tank

COVID-19 is the most severe public health crisis our country has experienced in modern times. On March 13th we pivoted to remote learning amid growing awareness and concern about the virus locally and nationally. That remained our instruction model through the end of the 2019/20 school year. Our staff, students and families responded with incredible energy and commitment, creativity and grit. We continue to live in uncertain, trying and anxiety-provoking times, but we know this – Mill Falls will restart in the fall with our educational mission intact, *and* the safety of our school community as our focus.

Even before last school year came to a close, the Administration and the Board of Trustees had begun planning for the fall. This summer, the COVID Think Tank - a group of Mill Falls Staff Members led by Executive Director, Meryl Levin, and Educational Program Director, Laura Wrubleski, came together to analyze the spring remote learning model, consider new resources, develop protocols for possible in-person learning, and identify and acquire tools and resources in preparation for the coming year.

This document serves as the Think Tank's best thinking and analysis based on the information that is available at this time. It is founded on two learning models for school restart – Hybrid Learning & Fully Remote Learning. However, much is still unknown about how the COVID-19 pandemic will unfold during the remainder of the summer and through the school year.

Therefore, our plan and implementation are designed to be flexible and fluid. As an organization and learning community, we must prepare ourselves to work together to meet any challenges we may encounter. When we restart learning this fall, the experience will not be the same as before the pandemic. There will be significant shifts in instructional practices and routines to meet this moment. However, by working in partnership we can, and will, engage in meaningful and creative learning that maximizes opportunities for students, understands the realities for educators, and acknowledges the needs of our community. This partnership, based on trust, open communication, commitment and cooperation, creative problem-solving and our Montessori values of Grace, Courtesy & Respect will support us in this challenging journey together.

~ MFCS Admin Team: Meryl Levin, Laura Wrubleski and Jen Avery & the Mill Falls COVID Think Tank Members: Mel Decowski, Shannon Helie, Colleen LaCroix, Kristin Lang, Sue Lambright, & Meghan Sirois.

*Solidarity among human beings is very beautiful,
arising from antiquity and projecting itself as it does
into the future, binding the past to the present and the
present to the future, for all eternity.*

- Dr. Maria Montessori

Overview of Teaching & Learning Models for Fall 2020 School Restart

The Mill Falls School Restart Plan for Fall 2020 has been developed by the Mill Falls Administration in collaboration with the COVID Think Tank and the Mill Falls Board of Trustees. We have stood together, collaborating every step of the way.

This is an enormous responsibility that requires considerable planning and detailed implementation. In preparation, we have worked with our Montessori Coach, Elizabeth Slade of Montessori in Action, the NH Department of Education, the NH Department of Health & Human Services, the Manchester Department of Health and we have reviewed plans and procedures from other states, districts and countries in developing our teaching and learning models for the start of the 2020-2021 school year.

Alongside the health and safety measures, we have determined that successful academic programming in the age of COVID must include:

- Clarity around attendance & academic expectations;
- Reliable ways to ensure that the academic expectations are upheld at home, as they are at school;
- Systems designed to provide robust delivery of instructional lessons allowing students to meet academic expectations;
- Live instruction and interaction even when students are learning remotely (alongside recorded lessons and other learning resources);
- Opportunities for small group lessons to be delivered and designed with physical distancing for in-person learning;
- Opportunities for students to work collaboratively and safely when at school and at home;
- Reasonable and clear expectations of parents in relation to staff accessibility to foster a healthy life/work balance; and
- A stronger-than-ever Parent/Guardian-School Partnership built on trust, cooperation, personal responsibility, strong communication woven together with Montessori values of Grace, Courtesy and Respect.

Summary of Learning Models

Given the physical size of our school, as well as our commitment to attending to the strong recommendations by healthcare professionals for physical distancing during this pandemic, **we are preparing two teaching and learning options at this time:**

- Hybrid Learning Model
- Fully Remote Learning Model

Details about each plan can be found on the following pages. It should be understood that some of the finer points of both models will evolve. As is part of our Montessori philosophy, as an organization we will reflect and seek to improve systems as we learn through the experience of practice.

In order to complete our final steps of preparation, all families were required to select their learning plan for each of their children enrolled at Mill Falls for the first trimester by Monday, August 3rd. While Families may choose to flex out of the Hybrid Model into the Remote Model once the school year begins, they will not be able to step from Remote into the Hybrid Model until the end of the first trimester.

Following the unexpected plan approved by Manchester's School Board on August 10th, we revised some of the details of our offerings. Therefore, parents of our Kinder and 1st Year Students were offered the opportunity to re-consider their child's Teaching & Learning Plan for the first trimester, in light of the adjusted School Re-Start model for *those* students. The details of the plans for our Kinder & First Year Students can be found below.

Circumstances on the ground, such as community health, increased case numbers or staffing levels, and/or significant scientific or a shift in medical data – may cause a change in the learning model offerings at any (perhaps many) points from the start of the year, forward. It is possible that we may need to engage in Remote Learning for individual classrooms or the entire school during the year.

Protecting Vulnerable Individuals in Our School Community

According to current guidance from healthcare professionals, the impact of underlying medical conditions and whether they increase the risk for severe illness from COVID-19 is limited and may change as the science evolves. Mill Falls seeks to protect people with or caring for those who may be at increased risk of experiencing severe illness due to COVID-19. Staff and students in this category are strongly advised to continue to minimize their potential exposure to the virus. As noted earlier, the Remote Learning Model will help serve this purpose, in relation to teaching and learning in the lives of those at higher risk.

The CDC currently considers the following people to be at high-risk for severe illness due to COVID-19:

- Older adults
- Children who are medically complex, who have neurologic, genetic, metabolic conditions, or who have congenital heart disease
- People who have underlying medical conditions, including:
 - Chronic lung disease (COPD)
 - Serious heart conditions
 - Compromised immune system
 - Diabetes
 - Chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
 - Obesity (body mass index of 30 or higher for adults or a body mass index at or above the 95th percentile in children)
 - Sickle cell disease

The CDC may add additional conditions for which people might be at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. See CDC document: People with Certain Medical Conditions: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>.

Teaching & Learning Models in Greater Detail

Our public Montessori Learning model is experiential and hands on. Our nurturing staff provide support for students' social and emotional growth alongside their academic work. Our goals are to create engaged and curious learners who can independently access the curriculum to prepare them not just for success at school, but for success in life. No matter what model we employ, we are fully committed to protecting our Montessori Heart. That said, the Fully Remote Learning Model will have limited access to the Montessori experience as materials will remain in the classrooms. Therefore,

we will support our remote learners with non-Montessori tools and resources alongside our Montessori instruction.

Education should no longer be mostly imparting knowledge, but must take a new path, seeking the release of human potentials."

- Dr. Maria Montessori

Our Decision to Plan & Execute Hybrid & Full-Remote Learning Models

This decision to provide both models of instruction (until/unless circumstances on the ground change) is driven by:

- Space limitations in our building to support physical distancing guidelines;
- Rates of illness, hospitalizations mortality rates, locally, regionally and nationally;
- Staff concerns for themselves/their families AND for their students/students' families;
- Balancing the risks/concerns involved in in-person learning while attending to the needs of our students;
- Successful development of models that can address these risks/concerns in ways that are reasonable and achievable.
- The final schedule for the Hybrid Model has been dictated by the August 10th plan adapted by Manchester's School Board, due to our special relationship with Manchester which includes: our busing agreement, special education matters, the fact that many of our families have other children in Manchester schools, as well as our geographical location within the district.

The Hybrid Learning Model

This plan involves a combination of in-person and remote learning for students, limits the number of students to 50% of the usual class size, to maintain 6' physical distancing. It also establishes stable groups (cohorts), a practice which is currently part of the state and federal guidelines aimed at reducing the spread of disease in schools. While in the building, students and staff will be required to wear facial coverings (*as noted on page 17*).

Our All-School Hybrid Learning Model Schedule features two distinct student cohorts, with the following in-person learning schedule, which allows for regular flow for students in and out of school each week without too much time between in-person learning time:

- **Monday / Thursday:** Cohort A
- **Tuesday / Friday:** Cohort B
- **Wednesday:** At-Home Learning Day for both cohorts

In-school learning days will include Montessori Work Cycles, small group lessons, classroom meetings, and many of the usual activities of our classrooms (as can be done safely given the distancing requirements). The schedule for cohort in-school learning days is part of the safety and health protocol and may not be altered.

Hybrid Implementation for the First Trimester

- **Kinders:** Barring any significantly negative changes in community health related to COVID, we will begin this school year implementing the Hybrid Learning Model with Kinder students

based on the schedule and cohorting outlined above schedule. We have only one Kinder classroom.

- **First Year Students:** Barring any significantly negative changes in community health related to COVID, we will begin this school year implementing the Hybrid Learning Model for First Year Students differently. These students (24 max if all selected this plan) will be spread out in their 3 Lower Elementary Classrooms. They will be in school 4 days per week with everyone at home for Big Works Wednesday. *If /when circumstances change, and we are able to open Hybrid Learning up to all of our students, then the 1st Year Students would return to the Hybrid Schedule noted above (2 days in school, 2 days home, & required Big Works Wednesday).*

Remote Learning Model Schedule & Expectations

In this plan, all learning, Monday – Friday, will take place at home. This model will be offered to those who are not able or willing to attend school in person. This model will also be accessed if circumstances require that the whole-school or individual classrooms need to return to remote learning.

- Students will conduct all schoolwork at home;
- Student will be required to remotely attend daily classroom meetings including the morning meeting;
- Student will be required to remotely attend at least one support check in daily;
- Students will be required to remotely attend live lessons and access recorded lessons as directed by their teachers;
- Students' daily work must be completed and submitted by 3:15 pm to be counted as a school day (*please also see the Attendance section on pg. 13*);
- If, on remote learning days, families can't support student work expectation/completion, parents/guardians must work with the school to collaboratively develop a plan so that the student can meet Mill Falls' academic work expectations.

We are creating measures to support our students' at-home learning time to be sure it includes elements of our Montessori method and philosophy. However, the Remote Learning Model can only offer limited access to Montessori instruction, as our classroom materials will remain in the classrooms. As mentioned, we will use hand-made materials and non-Montessori tools to support our students while they are learning remotely.

Remote Learning Model Implementation for the First Trimester

We will begin the school year with our 2nd through 6th Year Students in the Remote Learning Model, echoing the Manchester school start plan, for the first Trimester. Any Kinder or 1st Year students may also choose this plan. *If our busing partners, Manchester and the MTA, are able to offer an affordable busing plan that is safe and supportive of our students, we may be able to phase into hybrid for our 2nd thru 6th Year Students in this first term. Were that to happen, that would also cause a shift in our schedule for our 1st Year Hybrid Learners, as noted below.*

Big Works Wednesdays for ALL Hybrid & Remote Learners

- **Students:**
 - Required Big Works Day;
 - Additional time to catch up on the work output expectations which some students / families may need.
- **Staff:**
 - Planning / Lesson Recording / Collaboration / Material Preparation;

- Additional Time to check with students as needed;
- Additional classroom organization.
- Facility cleaning.

Instructional Time*

*See above for specific details about the 1st year students enrolled in the Hybrid Model at the start of the school year. Students will follow established instructional schedules and expectations, either in person or remotely.

The in-school Instructional day schedule - Monday / Thursday or Tuesday / Friday - students enrolled in the Hybrid Learning Model will remain consistent from week-to-week as part of the health and wellness protocol.

If it becomes necessary for Mill Falls to close due to COVID, or for particular classrooms to suspend in-person learning (due to illness, quarantine or staffing levels), we will pivot to a total remote learning environment.

These All-School Remote Learning days will utilize live and/or recorded lessons and provide opportunities for live class time. Members of our support staff (Interventionists, Reading Coach, English Language Learner Coordinator) may be redirected to assist in supporting our staff and students as needed.

School Day Schedule*

*At this time, we are still waiting to learn more about Manchester's transportation schedule, this may impact our schedule. Guidelines regarding transportation, daily health checks, physical distancing and robust hygiene practices will certainly have an impact on the daily school schedule. The plans for busing are determined by the Manchester School District, and this too may impact our calendar and scheduling.

Special Education

Our Special Education Staff will work in collaboration with the sending school districts. As was true during the first phase of COVID-19, services will be dependent on state guidance and protocols established by each child's sending school district. The final details of the various district plans have not yet been made known to us. It is understood that existing IEP plans may need to be adjusted for students and families during this health emergency and in relation to the Teaching and Learning Plans in which they are enrolled.

Technology

This year, students will be issued a school-owned Chromebook for their individual use either at home or in the school building. Students enrolled in the Hybrid Learning Model, will be expected to bring their Chromebooks to school each day of their in-person learning. The strategy is to both keep students from sharing technology devices for health reasons, and to help support our students' ability to be independent learners both at school *and* at home.

The Mill Falls Computer/Network/Internet Policy and the Agreement Form remains in effect. In addition, a parent/guardian of each student will be required to sign a Chromebook Loan Agreement for the school-issued device. The Agreement includes that the student's family will use the approved carrying case (to be purchased from Mill Falls) and accepts all responsibility to return the device in the same condition it was received. Should a Chromebook be damaged, lost or destroyed, the family will be required to pay for repair or replacement, as per the agreement.

Cleaning procedures for devices will be published to users.

This year, we will continue with our use of Google Classroom for our Upper Elementary Students. Our Lower Elementary and Kinder Classrooms will utilize SeeSaw, which will replace the work grid used last spring. The grid presented many challenges and we expect SeeSaw will be more user-friendly and straight-forward. Training for both parents and students will be available on Google and SeeSaw. Our students will also continue to use Keyboarding without Tears in support of their typing skills, among other tech-based learning tools.

Mill Falls will continue to provide technical support for families as was offered during the spring of 2020. Parent informational meetings will be held remotely, as needed. Teachers, including our Technology Instructor, will work to support our students in their use of technology.

Cohorting

Cohorts are a consistent group of students who stay together for the duration of the school day. This includes learning time as well as lunch, recess, and transitions. Cohorting, a national and local guideline for schools with limited space, seeks to minimize exposure to large, mixed groups and to facilitate physical distancing by reducing the number of students in the classroom on any given day.

When establishing cohorts, Mill Falls will assign cohorts and in so doing will consider ways to keep families/siblings together. We will also consider our students' Special Education needs, the multi-age design of our classrooms, sufficient time for classroom instruction, friend groups and cultural and racial diversity. We will work with the classroom teachers and creatively with our Interventionists, Specialists, Reading Coach and English Language Learner Coordinator to determine their schedules in these two Learning Models.

Addressing Potential Instructional Gaps

When we transitioned to remote learning on March 16, 2020, we began a slow roll-out of curricular expectations on both the Google and Zoom platforms, providing lessons, supports and classroom interaction. Student work expectations were reduced given the emergent nature of this pivot during the first phase of this healthcare emergency. Therefore, some standards that are typically addressed were not taught. Additionally, for some students, attendance and participation was inconsistent.

Teachers have identified standards that were not addressed during remote instruction. When the children return to learning (either in the Hybrid Model or the Remote Model), their teachers will utilize our usual assessment tools in math (Scholastic Math Inventory), in reading (DIBELS - Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills & Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Reading), and writing (6-Traits Writing Rubric) to determine individual student levels in these areas. In addition, the state is requiring that all public schools also administer the NH SAS Interim Assessments for a state-wide view, which in our case will be for students in grades 4-6.

These assessments will give us a clearer picture of the learning gaps that may exist for students entering the 2020/21 School Year. We will then design our students' instruction to their individual academic needs, which is the core organizing principle of our public Montessori program. Our multi-age, multi-grade Montessori classrooms provide us with great flexibility to meet the children where they are and determine a path for them toward expected academic growth. Instruction will be differentiated with the goal of catching students up who are behind and maintaining annual growth for all.

Expectations & Partnership

We **STAND** Together!

There are many unique considerations for us to take into account as we return to Teaching and Learning. Our Montessori Coach, Elizabeth Slade, and her team at Montessori in Action has helped give structure to these considerations, with a focus on in-person learning time, she reminds us that “there are five common daily practices of a safe return...” She describes them as:

Screening each day
Together we can do it
Always have a face covering
Necessary hygiene
Distancing

The acronym **STAND** reminds us that if we hold these elements in mind for everyone in our community, they will keep us in good standing. We must stand together as we navigate through this ‘new normal’ brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Partnership Built on Trust: The Key to Our Success

We approach this year with a renewed sense of the key role that the School-Home Partnership will play. Given the complexity of these COVID times, we come to that with a particular sensitivity to the physical and emotional health of adult and child members of our school community.

Goals of the School-Home Partnership include:

- Commitment by staff and families to fully engage in the school model and partner to set the stage for student success;
- Maintaining open, two-way communication and personal responsibility;
- Transparent and immediate reporting of COVID-related symptoms;
- Transparent and immediate reporting of confirmed or suspected exposure to someone with COVID-19 and/or confirmed positive test;
- Transparent and immediate reporting of travel outside of the New England states;
- Commitment by all adult and child members of our school community to holding our zero-tolerance for stigmatizing or rumor spreading related to illness, suspected illness, or other hardships related, or unrelated to COVID.

We view all of this as part of the Montessori Grace, Courtesy and Respect - core operating principals at Mill Falls - which, as always, extend to include the adults in our community as well as the children.

Online Learning: A Component of Both Teaching & Learning Models

Remote learning preparations are a necessary component for both of the learning models we are designing. As stated earlier, given the nature of the pandemic, Mill Falls may need to close for a period of time, which will create a situation where all students will be learning remotely.

Our staff will be prepared to maintain educational continuity no matter where students are learning. To that end, we are working to establish online routines that parallel classroom routines and these expectations will be modeled from the start of the 2020/21 Academic Year, providing ample opportunity for students and parents to practice and familiarize themselves with systems and expectations.

We will make every effort to continue to improve upon our Remote Learning methods and tools and work to ensure that the transition to and from online learning be as seamless as possible for students and families. We will implement clear and consistent expectations regarding participation, platforms for instruction and communication, record keeping for attendance, and assignment completion and Montessori-style observations no matter where the children are learning.

Equally important is the family commitment and collaboration to supporting their children's learning.

Attendance Expectations

Regular and consistent attendance is the bedrock of solid learning. Therefore, no matter the learning model, it will be expected that all students will be present and ready for learning each school day, just as in pre-COVID times.

Teachers will take attendance daily for all students by either physical presence in their classroom or during remote learning "check-ins".

Whether the child is learning in-person or remotely, families are expected to call or email if a student will be tardy or absent or needing early dismissal on any given day.

Should a student - either expected for an in-person or a remote school day - be absent from the morning meeting, families will be called by the front office by 10:30am.

Please see the handbook for implications of repeated tardy or absenteeism.

Tardy: Hybrid In-Person Learning Days

Tardiness for in-person learning will mimic our usual attendance policy and it is expected that a parent will contact the school if the child will be tardy.

When students arrive late for in-person learning, they will need to have a health screening performed by a Mill Falls staff person before they are permitted to enter the building (*see below for details*).

Tardy: Remote Learning

If a Remote Learner misses morning meeting or any live lesson or daily check-in, but turns in work on a given school day, the student will be marked 'tardy'. It is expected that parents/guardians will contact the school in advance of the start of the day if their child's schedule will impact their learning schedule and cause tardiness on any given day.

Early Dismissal During Hybrid In-Person Learning Days

Early dismissal during an in-person learning day will mimic our usual attendance policy. Additionally, it is expected that parents/guardians will contact the school if their child will need to end their day early.

A reminder, parents and guests will not be permitted in the building until further notice to minimize traffic and viral risk to our students and staff. Therefore, parents/guardians will need to park, wear a facial covering, and walk to the exterior doors to buzz the intercom and alert the front office that they are on campus, as previously arranged, to pick up their child early. Their child will then be brought out to meet them, and signed out at that time by their parent/guardian.

Enrollment

All enrolled Mill Falls Charter School students will remain enrolled regardless of the Teaching and Learning model in which they are participating. All enrolled students are expected to follow instruction guidelines and meet academic work expectations. Enrolled families are asked to communicate any unusually challenging issues which would prevent the student from meeting these expectations. Students who choose to remain at home due to COVID-19 will follow remote instruction guidelines for enrollment and attendance as described above.

As always, should a family choose to unenroll from our public charter school, they are expected to inform the school administration as soon as possible, before the unenrollment date. Families are asked to keep in mind that as a NH public charter school, the per-pupil funding we receive from the state is based on total daily enrollment. Therefore, keeping our student body at the full 168 count is extremely important for our budget, especially in these challenging times.

Health & Safety Measures for In-School Learning

In the past, it was not uncommon for staff to come to school feeling a bit under the weather, or for children to arrive at school sick. Runny noses and mild coughs were par for the course in a typical school day. In these new COVID times, we can no longer come to school sick. If any of us are feeling unwell, it is required, for the good of the whole learning community, that we stay home. To assist with this, we will now require a daily screening process for all employees and students.

Health officials currently report that COVID-19 is mostly spread by respiratory droplets released when people talk, cough, sing or sneeze. It is thought that the virus may spread to hands from a contaminated surface and then to the nose or mouth, causing infection. Therefore, personal prevention practices such as [handwashing](#), [staying home when sick](#), as well as cleaning and disinfection are important principles that are covered in this document.

At Mill Falls, new safety and cleaning protocols include a heightened hygiene and cleaning program, with reminders, hygiene stations throughout the building, no touch adaptations to fixtures in our bathrooms, a new bottle filling station, as well as required facial covering to be worn by all when inside the building. (*please see page 17*)

All of this is going to require a new level of diligence and personal responsibility by everyone in our school community – staff, students and families. It won't be easy, but protecting ourselves and one another is key to help us to continue to provide in-person learning

Daily Health Screening for Staff & Students

COVID can be sneaky often starting off like a common cold, and it is reported by healthcare professionals that it plays out differently in different people. In the short time we have been living with the virus, the known symptom list has evolved. Nonetheless, it is clear that daily health screening can help keep our community safe.

At-Home Daily Health Screening for Students

As per state recommendations, it is expected that parents/guardians of students in the Hybrid Learning Model will screen their child/children for symptoms or risk factors **daily** before allowing the child to travel to school for their in-person learning day.

- We will provide parents and guardians with a checklist of criteria to determine if a child is well enough to attend school.
- If a child or staff member is feeling unwell, or exhibiting any of the symptoms known to be associated with COVID-19, they must stay home to protect themselves, and those around them. (*please also see COVID-19 Health & Wellness Flow Chart on page 16*)
- Parents/guardians should not mask or disguise any symptoms with medication.

In-Person/At-School Daily Health Screening Details

Students and staff must complete this screening each day in order to enter the school building. If there is a 'yes' answer to any of the questions, then that person must stay home from school. No exceptions. [Staying home when sick](#) is a new responsibility you must take on to protect those in the extended Mill Falls Community.

Mill Falls Staff members will greet our students outside as they arrive by car or bus each morning.

The screening will include a no-touch temperature check as well as the following questions:

1. Do you, or anyone in your household, have a fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, nasal congestion or a runny nose, diarrhea or nausea?
2. Have you or anyone in your household been exposed to someone with or suspected of having COVID since last you were at school?
3. Have you traveled outside of the New England states in the past 14 days/since last you were at school?

Findings will be recorded. The screening questions may continue to evolve as health professionals learn more about the virus.

Students or Staff arriving by car:

- If be found to be unwell, or
- Answers yes to any of the wellness check questions

he/she will not be permitted to enter the school building.

Any student or staff person riding in the car with student found to be unwell:

- Will be sent home for the day because of possible exposure.
- If the student or adult is symptom-free the following day, he/she may attend school - as per the current guidelines.

Note: Family members or others living in the same home as the person experiencing symptoms and/or in quarantine awaiting test results are not required to quarantine. However, the NH DHHS STRONGLY encourages them to do so.

Students arriving by bus:

- If found to be unwell, or
 - Answers yes to any of the wellness check questions
- will be brought to a dedicated seclusion area and their parent/guardian/emergency contact will be called to pick up the child immediately, no longer than 30 minutes. If the situation is emergent, 911 will be called.

To assist in accurate wellness assessment and reporting for our younger students who arrive by bus, we will require parents to complete a form daily to be shared with the front office.

Late Arrival Screening Protocol:

- Parent/Guardian parks their car and walks their student to the school's exterior front door;

- Adults and students must wear facial coverings from the time they exit their car, until the screening is complete;
- The family will be met by a Mill Falls Staff member who will administer the morning health check outside the building.
- The student with a clean health screening will proceed into the building, wash their hands, and join his/her class.
- Should a student arriving by car be found to be unwell, he/she will not be permitted to enter the school building and will be sent home with the accompanying adult.

Lunchtime Wellness Check

There will be a second round of wellness checks with students daily, before lunch.

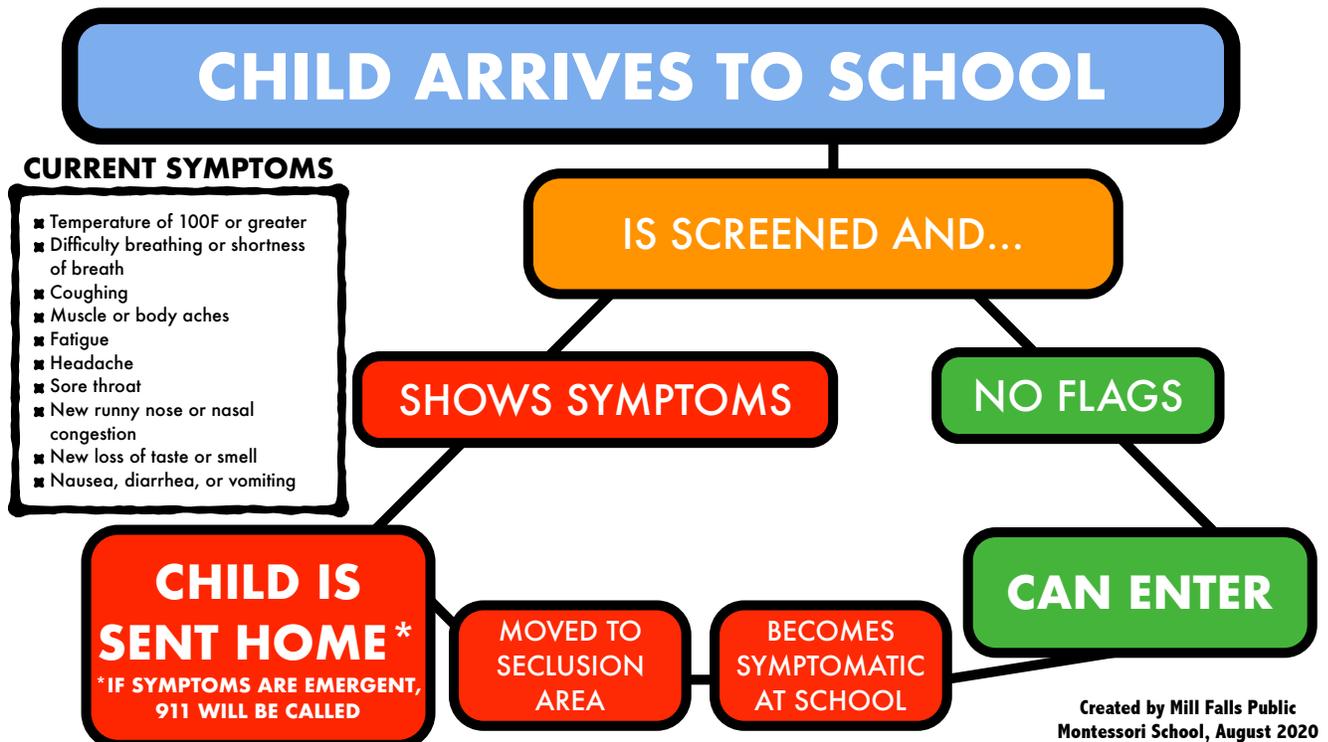
- At any point during the day if a student is found to be unwell, their family will be called to immediately (not longer than 30 minutes) retrieve their child who will wait for them in a seclusion area, as per state guidelines.
- If the situation is emergent, 911 will be called.

Additionally, physical distancing, traffic patterns, stable cohorts, and hygiene protocols will be maintained during arrival and dismissal procedures as well as throughout the day. Adults doing drop-off and pick-up must wear facial coverings and until further notice will not be permitted in the building as part of the safety protocol.

Health & Wellness Flow Chart

Scientists are discovering new information about COVID and that is informing our health and wellness protocol. It is currently understood by health professionals that COVID symptoms may develop 2-14 days after exposure, and that people with the identified symptoms may be shedding COVID-19 virus before they feel ill. Further, medical professionals are reporting that while symptoms in children are similar to adults, children may have milder symptoms. Reported symptoms in children include cold-like symptoms such as fever, runny nose, and cough. Children with COVID-19 may not initially present with fever and cough as with adult patients.

The flow chart below has been designed to present our current health and wellness protocol:



Hand Washing & Sanitizing

As part of our Grace, Courtesy and Respect Curriculum, Montessori-style lessons will be taught in proper sanitizing procedures. Hand washing is our strongest defense to the spread of illness and requires at least 20 seconds with soap and water. When soap and water are not readily available, we will use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Lessons in hand washing, reminders and signage will aim to keep good hygiene practices at the forefront of everyone's mind. Students will be expected to wash or sanitize their hands upon arrival at school and several times throughout the day.

To assist in this effort, hand sanitizing stations will be provided containing CDC recommended hand sanitizer. Additionally, we are seeking to install 'camping sinks' throughout the building to provide additional hand washing stations and help control bathroom traffic. Families are asked to practice good hygiene with their children at home as well.

All students, staff and contracted service providers should engage in hand hygiene at the following times:

- Arrival to the building, and any time they re-enter the building;
- Before and after eating, handling food;
- After using the toilet;
- After coming in contact with bodily fluid;
- Before and after handling facial coverings/face shields;
- After playing outdoors;
- After handling garbage;
- Before and after cleaning;
- After staff breaks;
- After assisting students with handwashing, staff should also wash their hands;
- Before and after administering medication or medical ointment.

We will encourage the use of hand lotion to support healthy skin for students and staff.

Facial Coverings

All students, staff and contracted service providers will be required to wear allowable facial coverings while in the building. In addition, some may choose to also wear facial shields.

Facial coverings are meant to protect both the wearer and other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected with COVID, but does not have symptoms. It is especially important in situations when maintaining 6' distance is challenging. They are not replacements for, and do not function as surgical masks or respirators or other medical personal protective equipment (PPE).

Facial coverings have been added to the 'back to school list, and it is expected that families of students enrolled in the Hybrid model will provide facial coverings for their children. Reusable face coverings should be washed at the end of each day, so staff and students will be asked to have at least five (5) reusable facial coverings.

Types of allowable face coverings include: reusable face masks, disposable mask, facial coverings with clear plastic windows to support communication, religious face covering. Based on guidance from public health officials and studies, bandanas, scarves, gators or facial coverings with an exhaust valve or that are made out of fleece, are not permitted.

The covering must cover the nose and mouth completely, should not be overly tight or restrictive and should be comfortable to wear. Please note, each child will need to be able to put the facial covering on and off independently (i.e. a facial covering that ties behind the head might be too complicated, ear loops might be simpler).

There will be facial covering breaks throughout the day, and the coverings will not be required during snack, lunch or recess. Staff members having snack or lunch, working alone in their offices, classrooms, vehicles, or other job locations during times with no person-to-person interaction are not required to wear their facial coverings.

Collaborative work is a key element to our Montessori philosophy. If students are working collaboratively and that requires less than 6' of distance (not less than 3'), then they will also be required to wear a face shield for extra protection. This and other safety measures will be woven into our Grace, Courtesy and Respect Curriculum and taught in our Montessori lesson delivery style.

Our teaching staff will demonstrate to their students the proper ways to use, wear and care for facial coverings. For additional information, proper use, wearing and cleaning of face coverings can be found here on the CDC's website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wear-cloth-face-coverings.html>.

Facial Coverings will be worn by Students and Staff when:

- Entering or exiting the school building;
- Arriving or leaving a classroom;
- Inside the classrooms and other assigned work-spaces (except in identified 'mask free' areas);
- When transiting in hallways to bathroom or other designated areas;
- While in the bathroom.

If a student enrolled in the Hybrid Learning Model will not wear a facial covering during indoor time on in-person learning days, or their family will not allow their child to do so, and the child does not have a documented developmental, medical, or behavioral health condition that would prevent the student from doing so, the student will be required to enroll in the Remote Learning Model.

We will work on a case-by-case basis on accommodations for those students enrolled in the Hybrid Learning Model whose documented developmental, medical, or behavioral health condition(s) may make it more challenging, or even impossible, to tolerate face coverings during indoor time at school.

Physical Distancing & Adjustments in Classrooms & Learning Spaces

In the Hybrid Learning Model, classrooms will be populated by no more than 12 students - half of the usual number of children. Our Montessori classrooms and common spaces will be re-arranged to accommodate 6 feet of physical distance. In the classrooms, this will mean one chair per table with areas for floor work taped out or otherwise indicated.

In addition to arranging for adequate physical distancing, as noted above, there will be **"mask"-break areas** for children as a way to provide sensory relief.

We will work to establish meaningful ways for our students to engage in **collaborative partner work** – a core aspect to learning in our Montessori setting - while still keeping safe physical distance (*please see facial coverings above for reference*).

Snack & Lunch in the age of COVID will be a one-person activity since facial coverings will not be worn while children are eating. The children will sit one to a table, floor table or mat. Additionally, there will be a clear before and after-eating cleaning protocol for hygiene.

Students will be expected to bring a reusable water bottle to school each in-person learning day. We have installed a **new bottle filling station**; all water bubblers will be closed as part of our health and safety protocol.

Signage & Visual Reminders

Mill Falls will utilize and display visual reminders for students and staff regarding healthy practices such as coughing/sneezing into your elbow, maintaining a 6' distance from others, frequently sanitizing/washing hands for at least 20 seconds and staying home when you are sick. We will also employ markers in hallways, classrooms, and outdoors as necessary as reminders of where to stand, sit and walk, and how to maintain safe distance from others. Measurement lessons to understand "six feet" will help children to support and practice social distancing.

Classroom Supplies

Rather than our usual classroom community supply shelves where children go to collect what they need in order to complete their work (paper, rulers, colored pencils etc.), this year students will have their own individual supplies including, but not limited to: pencils, hand pencil sharpener, colored pencils, ruler, scissors, glue stick as well as binder of paper or notebooks which will be labeled and safely stored in the classroom.

Each teacher has modified their Back-to-School Supply List to reflect this adjustment for safety. Parents/Guardians of student enrolled in the Hybrid Model, are asked to consider purchasing enough supplies for remote learning time as well. Classrooms will also have additional supplies on hand in order to minimize sharing of high touch materials to the extent possible.

New to the supply list this year will be our request for each student to have his/her own Montessori "rug", which this year will be a towel brought in from home, and designated for this use. Teachers will share specifics of this item. This towel will be washed weekly at home. Assigned classroom tables/chair and floor-tables will also be available work surfaces.

We will also implement a cleaning regimen for our hands-on Montessori learning tools (aka works/materials). *(please also see cleaning section, page 20)*

Personal Property

All student belongings will be stored in student cubbies in the classrooms, which will be organized by cohort and allow for physical distancing. If personal items are brought to school, they must be labelled, and use should be limited to the item owner.

Integrated Arts

Will occur inside the classrooms to limit student cohort mixing and to maximize physical distancing. Group activities with the potential to generate increased respiratory droplets and aerosols will be avoided. This includes activities such as singing (e.g. choir, glee club, a cappella groups, musical theater, etc.) and music that involves woodwind or brass instruments.

Transitions/Hallways

All efforts will be made to maintain social distancing while traveling throughout the building. In as much as possible, students will spend their learning time in their assigned classrooms and outdoors with members of their cohort; student support staff will work with groups of students from the same classroom to minimize classroom mixing.

Arrival/dismissal routines will be clearly indicated, and carefully orchestrated to limit two way traffic flow in our common spaces, and maintain physical distancing through high travel times.

Recess

- We will keep our usual schedule of two classrooms outside at any time.
- We will utilize more outdoor areas, to increase the students' ability to physically distance.
- Classrooms won't be mixing when outside.
- Each classroom will have their own set of recess items for indoor and/or outdoor use.
- Facial coverings will not be required during outside recess (unless public health guidance changes).

Bathroom Use

Bathroom use will be monitored to limit the number of students in the bathroom at once. Additionally, we have installed no-touch sink controls, paper towel and soap dispensers. There will be scheduled classroom bathroom breaks to help minimize the mixing of students from different classrooms, though of course students will be able to access the bathroom individually outside of the breaks when needed. After these breaks, high touch areas will be cleaned by the attending adult.

Cleaning Protocols

Thorough care-taking of the learning environment has always been an important element of the Montessori classroom. Now it will need to be even more of an important responsibility between the adults and children.

- In our Kinder Classroom, after using learning materials, children will place them on a designated table or shelf in the classroom. Adults will disinfect and return items to shelf for a new learner to use.
- In our Lower and Upper Elementary Classrooms, after using a material, each user will participate in the shared cleaning protocol taught and modeled by their teachers.
- Classroom tables, chairs, bathrooms and all high-touch areas will be similarly wiped down regularly during the school day.
- Healthcare professionals advise that students' books, art supplies and other paper-based materials such as mail or envelopes, are not considered high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning or disinfection procedures.

At the end of each day, our contracted cleaning company will perform on going and environmental cleaning and disinfection of high-touch areas (including door handles, light switches, tables, chairs, faucet handles, toilet handles) as part of their all-school nightly cleaning regimen. They will follow current best practice of cleaning before disinfecting. They will utilize EPA/CDC approved cleaning supplies, which will be kept securely out of reach of the children. We will continue to consult the EPA/CDC guidelines as understanding of the virus and related cleaning guidelines continue to evolve.

Safety Drills

Fire and safety drills must continue to occur according to regulations. Administrators and our Staff Safety Committee will develop protocols in collaboration with the fire and safety departments so that this may be done with appropriate physical distancing of staff and students.

Bus Transportation

As of this writing, we do not yet know the plans of the Manchester School District (MSD) and their busing partner the Manchester Transit Authority (MTA). Manchester resident-students enrolled at Mill Falls are able to take the bus to and from school as per charter law. While busing is a necessity for some families, some families may be able to arrange alternatives that reduce stress and enable parents to rotate picking up and dropping off when possible.

As a reminder, Mill Falls does not have any control over busing protocol, systems, routes or times that the MSD/MTA will use to transport students. Given the guidelines for physical distancing on school buses, MSD/MTA has said they are facing a shortage of buses. We have been told to expect that Mill Falls may no longer have buses assigned just to our school, instead there will be hubs used to move students around the city.

We will update our school community as we learn more from MSD/MTA as it becomes available.

School Calendar / COVID-Related Changes

Mill Falls maintains a school calendar that features 175 student learning days, 6.5 hours each with built in weather days. Typically, teachers return 4 days prior to student arrival for our Staff Opening Days. This includes time for training, collaboration, introduction to new systems, team building and so much more.

The 2020-2021 school opening poses many new challenges and a need for expanded training and preparation time in a variety of new school-wide protocols and procedures, as well as technology resources. Therefore, Mill Falls plans to utilize the three additional planning days that the Governor has granted this year at the start of the year, moving our first instructional day to September 9th. This is a match to the Manchester School District, whose schedule we aim to replicate as closely as possible. It is possible that future calendar modifications may be necessary. As per the Governor's plan, these days do not impact instructional time and will not extend the school year.

Limiting Non-Essential Traffic in the School Building

Only employees or contracted service providers for the purpose of special education or required support services, as authorized by the school, will be granted entry.

- They will submit to a daily health check; be required to follow our physical distance protocols' and required wear an approved facial covering in the building;
- Until further notice, Conferences, Special Education and 504 meetings will be held virtually;
- Non-essential visitors and/or volunteers will be limited to activities that can be done virtually until further notice.

Mill Falls ChildCare Programs Update

At of this writing, we are not able to commit to providing ChildCare (BeforeCare / AfterCare). The relatively small number of our in-person learners as well as the complexity of mixing students from different classrooms and organizing staffing around the distinct cohorts in those programs presents multifaceted challenges which we are still working through.

Events, Activities, Meetings & Services

- In-school group events such as **Read-Ins, All School Meetings, performances, school-wide parent meetings** or other large gatherings are suspended until further notice.

- To minimize mixing of cohorts, staff members, Trustees and guests, we will continue to hold virtual meetings between families and staff and other organizational meetings as appropriate.
- **Field trips and Montessori Goings Out** are suspended until further notice.
- **After School Student Programming** will take place at the discretion of the school administration.
- **Pizza 'Friday'**: Renamed this year as simply 'Pizza Day' will be an option one in-person learning day per week for both cohorts of students enrolled in the Hybrid Model
- **MFCS Food Pantry**: We do plan to continue to operate our Mill Falls Food Pantry, which may be especially meaningful to our families given the harsh economic conditions many families are experiencing as a result of the virus, related closures and high unemployment rates.

Handling Suspected, Presumptive or Confirmed COVID-19 Cases

PLAN NOTE: At the time of this writing, the state's protocol is still being developed. It is possible that the plans and protocols here will evolve once that information has been shared, and may continue to evolve thereafter.

Protocols to Keep Our Students, Staff & Families as Safe as Possible

Students or staff exhibiting any of the symptoms known to be related to COVID-19, or feeling at all unwell must stay home. The virus calls upon us to work together to help protect those in our school building, and by extension, those in the homes from which they come. To that end, we have established strict protocols to support as healthy a school environment as possible, and outlines in the following pages.

Addressing Currently Known Symptoms of COVID-19

Any child or staff member will not be permitted to enter (or remain) at school if they are experiencing the following symptoms currently known to be associated with COVID-19:

- Temperature of 100F or greater, feels warm to the touch, or gives a history of feeling feverish;
- No fever, but has chills;
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath;
- Cough;
- Muscle or body aches;
- Fatigue;
- Headache;
- Sore throat;
- Runny nose or nasal congestion;
- Loss of taste or smell;
- Nausea, diarrhea or vomiting.

Those who are sent home (or who stay at home because of COVID-related symptoms) will also be required to do the following, unless their illness is associated with a known COVID case (see below for details):

- Provide a negative COVID test;
- Be fever-free for at least 1 day/24 hours *without* fever reducing medication;
- Experience improvement of symptoms including cough and/or shortness of breath

Note: Family members or others living in the same home as the person experiencing symptoms and/or in quarantine awaiting test results are not required to quarantine. However, the NH DHHS STRONGLY encourages them to do so.

Chronic Conditions Including Migraines & Allergies:

Students or Staff with chronic conditions, such as migraines or allergies, must provide documentation of their chronic condition **prior to start of school or prior to start of the condition**, for consideration other than our COVID symptom protocol noted above.

Health officials report that headaches are associated with COVID symptoms. A child or staff member with a **documented history of migraine headaches** who reports a headache will be required to stay (or go) home and rest until that condition resolves, and must be symptom-free for 24 hours before they may return to school. If the headache does not resolve, they would be asked to see a doctor and required to provide a negative COVID test.

Allergy symptoms are similar to some COVID-related symptoms and can mask the presence of COVID. A student or staff member with a **documented history of allergies**, who reports a *new onset* of typical mild sore throat, sneezing, runny nose, etc. will be sent home to rest. If the symptoms don't improve, they will be strongly encouraged to see a doctor. They must provide a doctor's note confirming that the symptoms are allergy-related, as well as a negative COVID test.

Defining Exposure & Related Protocols

The CDC currently defines exposure as:

- 10 minutes or more in close contact, with someone, with or without a facial covering confirmed to have or strongly suspected of having COVID-19.

Close contact is defined as:

- Less than 6' distance, *with or without a facial covering*;
- Less than 12' when singing or playing a wind or brass instrument.

If a student or staff member has been exposed and is deemed to be a close contact:

- **They are required to inform the school** which must notify local and/or state health departments (*see Role of Health Dept below*).
- The person will **not be permitted to attend school for at least 14 days after the day of exposure**.
- Because the window for testing after exposure is not precise, **a person cannot "test-out" of the 14 day quarantine after being knowingly exposed**.
- If, after 14 days since the last close contact, the person does not develop any symptoms, he/she may return to school and **MUST present their *NH State Release From Quarantine Letter***.
- While out, Student/Staff member(s) may participate in remote learning/teaching.
- Should the exposed person develop symptoms, they will need to do the following before they can return to school:
 - Contact Public Health Officials;
 - Provide a negative COVID test;
 - Follow the guidelines for isolation and quarantine as outlined in this document or as directed by Public Health Officials.

Note: As is required by the state, the family members (parents, siblings, etc.) or others found to be in close contact with the person diagnosed as COVID-positive, must quarantine for a period of no less than 14 days which begins on the last known day of contact with the person who is positive.

Travel Outside of the New England States & International

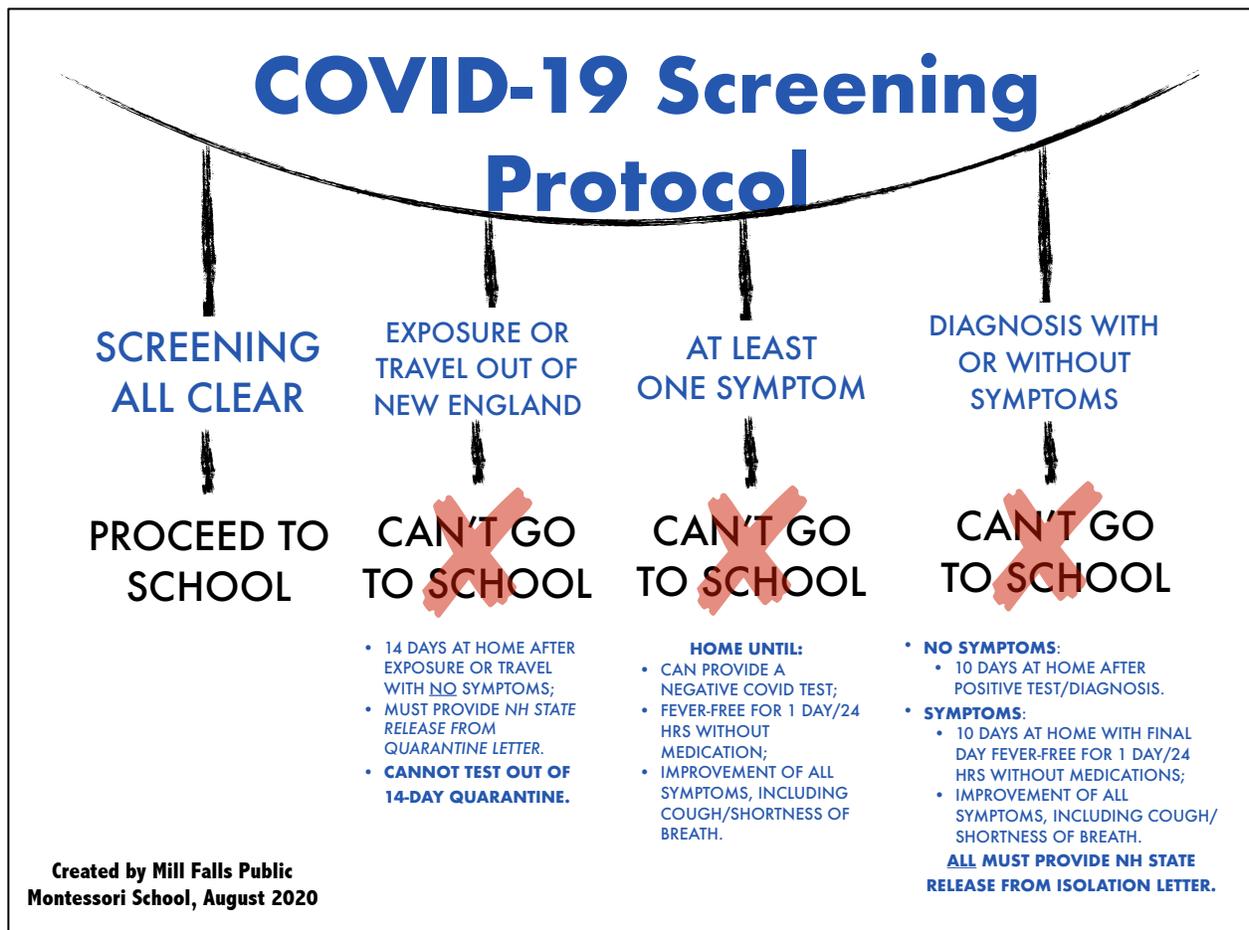
If a person has traveled outside of New England (New England currently named as Massachusetts, Maine, Connecticut, Vermont and Rhode Island) they must quarantine, and may not return to school until 14 days from last day of travel. This includes international travel. Students or staff who are feeling well during this quarantine will be expected to engage in remote teaching & Learning.

Positive Test/Diagnosis & Related Protocol

The protocol for those who get a positive COVID Test/Diagnosis is somewhat similar for those with or without symptoms:

- If the person remains asymptomatic, they will have to wait 10 days before returning to school;
- If the person develops symptoms, then they must:
 - stay at home for 10 days and
 - be fever-free for 24 hours, without use of medication.
- In order to return to school, the person **MUST** present the *NH State Release From isolation Letter*.
- If a person is symptomatic but person refuses testing for COVID-19, they must follow the same guidelines as if they had a confirmed case. Additionally, they will need a doctor's note to return to school.

Note: As is required by the state, the family members (parents, siblings, etc.) or others found to be in close contact with the person diagnosed as COVID-positive, must quarantine for a period of no less than 14 days which begins on the last known day of contact with the person who is positive.



Role of the Local & State Health Departments

In the age of COVID, local and state health departments play a pivotal role in managing public health. One of their roles is to lead the investigations into cases. Contact tracing is a strategy used to determine the source of an infection and how it is spreading. Finding people who are close contacts to a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, and therefore are at higher risk of becoming infected themselves, can help prevent further spread of the virus.

Contact tracers from the state or local health departments call people who have tested positive for COVID-19. They ask the patient questions about their activities within a certain timeframe – to help identify anyone they have had close contact with. Close contact is currently defined as being closer than 6 feet apart, for more than 10 minutes with or without a facial covering, while the person was infectious. Those contacts might include family members, classmates or coworkers, among others.

The state or local departments will also work with the school. We have been advised by the state's epidemiologist, Dr. Chan, that we do not need to report all symptomatic students. However, as a school, we are required to report confirmed cases and, if it occurs, high numbers of suspected cases. Additionally, if we have a high degree of suspicion for COVID-19, or a symptomatic student and the parent/guardian refuses testing, we are expected to notify the state or local public health department.

Should there be a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the school, the member of the state's contact tracing team will reach out to that person and the school to assist in identifying close contacts. The contacting tracing team will also work with the school administration to determine next steps regarding exposure to students and staff. If there is a cluster of cases in the school, the Health Department will work with school administrators to address and mitigate the situation.

If there is a Confirmed Case of COVID-19 at Mill Falls

Upon notification that there has been a confirmed case of COVID-19 among our students or staff, we will take the following steps:

- As required, we will report any person who has been at our facility with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 to the Manchester City Health Department and/or NH Department of Health & Human Services (NH DHHS). The Manchester City Health Department can be reached at (603) 624-6466. The NH DHHS can be reached at (603)-271-4496 (after hours call (603)-271-5300 and ask for the public health nurse on-call).
- The Health Departments' staff will be the liaison for the COVID case investigation and the follow up.
- They will work with Mill Falls as well as those who have received a positive COVID test/diagnosis to determine close contacts;
- They will notify all families and staff identified through their investigation who they determine to have been exposed through close contact;
- This process will establish the quarantine needs based on the exposure to the confirmed COVID case.
- People who have been determined to be close contact to an individual with confirmed COVID-19 will be notified immediately by the health officials, and will be required to quarantine for 14 days, unless they test positive and then the above steps related to persons with positive COVID test/diagnosis apply.
- As of this writing, close contact is defined by the CDC as anyone who has been within 6' of the infected person for 10 minutes or more. It is currently understood that facial coverings protect those around a person who may be infected, but may not be aware they are COVID

positive. And further, that facial coverings provide reduced rates of infection, but they are not medical-grade personal protection equipment (PPE), so they cannot be relied upon to fully prevent infection.

- Given the age of our students, and the Montessori model of learning, this will likely mean that the entire classroom where a student or staff person is based will need to quarantine for 14 days. In that case, both in-person Hybrid Model learning pods within said classroom would likely move to remote learning for the 14 days (of required quarantine after exposure noted above), as the teacher(s) may also be found to have been considered in close contact. This may be the case for other staff members in the building as well.
- Anyone who become symptomatic in that time will follow the aforementioned protocols.
- Steps will be taken to maintain confidentiality of the student(s) and/or staff member(s) as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.
- If there is a confirmed case within the school building the entire school will close a minimum of 24 hours to ensure thorough cleaning and proper contact tracing. The length of closure will be made with the advice and guidance of our public health officials.
- During such a closing, and as per CDC guidelines, we will discourage all staff, students, and their families from gathering or socializing anywhere. This includes group childcare arrangements, as well as gathering at places like a friend's house, a favorite restaurant, or the local shopping mall.
- Students who are feeling healthy while in quarantine, will be provided access to remote learning during quarantine.
- Staff Members who are feeling well under quarantine will be expected to carry on their responsibilities, remotely.
- **NOTE:** We have been told that the state is developing protocols to address situations where there are multiple cases at a school within a certain period of time. We will address that when the state clarifies the steps to be taken.

Contingency Planning & Potential Causes for a Shift to All-School Remote Learning

As of this writing, our nation is struggling to determine what factors will impact the need to go fully remote and trying to balance and comprehend the risks involved with opening schools, and keeping them open, to in-person learning. The NH guidelines for the reopening of schools leaves much of this decision making to 'local control.' This highlights the commitment required of each member of our school community to follow our established protocols.

Considerations for Pivot to All-School Remote Learning

The following will be taken into consideration as part of any decision to move Mill Falls to All-School Remote Learning:

- Viral spread and other data points, in our school city, state and region and related to changes that threaten the safety of our Mill Falls community, and beyond;
- Evolving CDC guidelines, and other policies/protocols or any changes related to other safety measures;
- Subsequent scientific or medical data regarding significant impact on the projections for future spread or risk could cause us to re-evaluate our learning model offering plans at ANY time.;

- Assuredness that the procedures and protocols we've put in place allow for the safe physical distancing we have planned;
- Insufficient number of staff to safely care for and instruct our students, because:
 - We are a small community, with a limited number of adults employed to service our 168 students;
 - Any required quarantine, illness or other circumstances could adversely affect our staffing numbers;
 - Therefore, we will need to be continually responsive to our capacity to properly care for/attend to our student body.
- **NOTE:** We have been told that the state is developing protocols to address situations where there are multiple cases at a school within a certain period of time. We will address that when the state clarifies the steps to be taken.

Should circumstances require All-School Remote Learning, the school building would be closed to students in this scenario. Depending on the reason for closure, employees may or may not enter the building. Remote instruction would be implemented for students in all areas of academic study. This option may be necessary at any point during the school year for a few days, weeks or months depending on the reason for the closure.

Communication Systems

We will continue to provide clear, consistent and regular communication with staff, students, families and community members with regard to COVID and non-COVID related school information. Those tools include, email, our weekly newsletter and some intermittent alerts. For emergencies, or sudden changes, we will utilize our all- school alert system (calls and/or texts) through ALMA (our student information system), and we may also post any emergent closings on WMUR. Our communications may include information about policies, protocols, and operations, such as health screenings, drop-off/pick-up, classroom arrangements, schedules, etc.

This year we will also address the new COVID-related policies and procedures via inserts that will be added to this year's Handbooks. These include but are not limited to:

- Information about COVID and appropriate safety measures;
- Information on how to recognize the signs of infection and directives not to come to school if sick;
- Measures families can take to stay safe when not at school;
- Expectations about supporting student learning and attendance (in both the Hybrid and Remote Learning Models);
- Clear direction when to keep a student home and the process for notifying the school;
- Expectations for modeling physical distancing, wearing facial coverings, staying home when sick and supporting employees who need to take care of sick family members;
- Reminders about the importance of mandatory immunizations for more general health;
- Clarity about our zero-tolerance for misinformation about COVID-19, or hurtful stigmatizing of individuals in our community, all of which can create fear and hostility and makes it harder to keep everyone healthy.

Social Health of Students & Staff

The COVID-19 pandemic has directly or indirectly affected staff, students and the parents/guardians in our Mill Falls Community.

As we plan for School Restart, we are aware that staff and families will need support to feel comfortable in returning to our learning models – either Hybrid or Remote. They will also need assistance in learning to implement and follow the new guidelines due to COVID-19.

As a community, we must recognize that students and staff are having different experiences during the pandemic. Not everyone in the school will be in the same place emotionally. While we expect many students and staff will be excited to be back to learning, some may be anxious and unsure, some may be grieving, some may be exhausted from added responsibilities at home, some may have experienced trauma including food insecurity and homelessness. It is important to understand these experiences because they can affect a person's decision-making ability, how they learn and attend, and how they respond overall as they return to school this fall.

In order to successfully transition students and staff back to teaching and learning with models that look different than when we were last together in March of 2020, we will need to provide time and support for addressing the new expectations and practices. Students, no matter where they are learning, will need social and emotional support as they adjust to new expectations in our School Restart Program. Learning habits have likely been altered by the experience of last spring. Time will be deliberately designated to reorient our children to their teachers, friends and new classroom and learning norms.

The administration is putting together professional development programming for staff in preparation for welcoming back our students to this new learning landscape. In addition, we will seek ways as an organization to further support our staff as they, themselves, recover from the experiences of the last many months. One aspect of this will be greater control of the staff work/life balance. Something we will work on as a team – as so many of us need to reset our expectations so that there is energy for the long journey.

We will gather resources for students and families as well. We hope to partner with local organizations for additional supports. This may include referrals and/or connections to community services for students or families with targeted needs.

We will also hope to empower all members of our school community, in age appropriate ways, to screen themselves, take care of themselves and protect themselves during COVID-19. And, alongside all of this, we may need to prepare all of us for yet another round of remote learning, should circumstances require it. Besides leaning on community resources, we will also lean into our Montessori Grace, Courtesy and Respect Curriculum to assist in teaching our students and supporting one another.

Conclusion

Mill Falls understands that there may be changes in guidance as we move through the summer into the fall and beyond. It is important to note that the plans and ideas outlined in this document represent our current best thinking based on the information that was available as of the writing of this document.

We are prepared to make changes necessary to meet future guidance and recommendations and the needs of our school community. As the challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic continue, our educational professionals are preparing to provide the best possible care, connection, and continuity of learning to our students and families, and we look forward to partnering with our families every step of the way. Thank you in advance for committing to this learning journey with us.

*The unknown energy
that can help humanity is that
which lies hidden in the child.*

- Dr. Maria Montessori