



2020 / 2021 School Year Reopening News

July 17, 2020

Dear NWMS Community,

Hoping this letter will find all the families from the NWMS Community safe and in good health, we greet you with a deep sense of nostalgia and desire to see you once again.

The saying goes, “desperate times call for desperate measures”. Or here is another one, “when life gives you lemons, make lemonade”. These proverbial phrases could pretty much describe the atmosphere we need to arm ourselves with during these challenging times. It is so because in the face of adversity or misfortune, we need optimism and a positive can-do attitude. We have been in a constant prayerful attitude while at the same time we have been planning and executing those plans as best as we are capable of.

The main purpose of this letter is to share with our school community some of the endeavors we are planning and implementing as we go. Let us start with the Summer Camp. Even though our 2020 Summer Camp has been attended by a considerably reduced number of students, it has been going well and has given us the opportunity to put in practice several safety protocols that have served students and staff members well in our efforts to keep the coronavirus at bay. Those same protocols will be followed at the beginning of the 2020 / 2021 school year and beyond, for as long as we need to observe them. All this, of course, to ensure that everybody involved with the school (students, parents, staff members, etc.) are safe and well protected from any possibility of contracting and/or transmitting the Covid-19 virus.

Just when we thought everything was completely lined up to start the regular school year on Aug. 10, we received a notification from the Department of Public Health from the City of El Paso with new orders for all independent school districts **and private schools** in El Paso County to re-open schools for on-campus, face-to-face instruction until after **September 7th, 2020** (Please see attachment). This new order is due to the rising spikes of the coronavirus in our city. The City Order and its restrictions apply to pre-kindergarten (4-year-olds) through grade 12. This means that our Young Children’s Community and the 3-year-olds Children’s House students will be able to attend school on-campus since they are considered day care attendees and Day Care Centers have continued operating following the appropriate kinds of protocols. Such protocols, as we said before, have been part of our Summer Camp routines.

To say that this letter had gone through some editing changes, is a gross understatement. We have had to practically rewrite it due to the daily changes and fluctuations in the levels of cases contracting the coronavirus according to the local, national and international news and officials. Even the school districts in our city and county have reviewed and modified their calendars for the next academic year. Therefore, we are going to venture and share the following information with you, hoping that no further changes will be necessary from now until the beginning of our next school year.

- I. We will begin by providing you with a **Reopening Survey Form**. In order to answer the survey, you need to login to our webpage and follow the link provided to access it. Please take a few moments to complete this survey and to forward it back to us. This action on your part **is not** optional. The data coming from the survey is absolutely essential for our logistics. We are in the process of planning all the possible scenarios to reopen the 2020 / 2021 academic year and your collaboration is of paramount importance in that endeavor.
- II. Secondly, to complete the 2020 / 2021 school year enrollment process we are including the **Registration Date Form** for your convenience. We kindly ask parents to adhere to the dates indicated in the form for more efficiency.
- III. We certainly need to unpack the procedures we will follow regarding the return-to-school and the beginning of the fall semester process. We truly hope that this information will at least quench some of the understandable concerns expressed by several parents regarding your children's returning to on-campus sessions. As mentioned before, we are about to enter our 6th and final week of Summer Camp and in summary everything is going very well. Of course, we have taken all kinds of precautions to provide disinfected and clean environments for the attending students. Here are some of the protocols being followed:
 1. Every week, **A+ Disinfect El Paso**, a local company provides a disinfection fogging service to the school. The premises are disinfected inside and outside. This includes the portable as well. This fogging gets easily into nooks and crannies that are hard to reach with other techniques. The disinfectant used is USDA Food Grade Approved and is registered EPA Disinfectant for use against SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19). Their technicians recommend service every two weeks; however, we decided to have our premises serviced every week to increase safety.

2. Everyone entering the school building – this includes students, staff members, parents, and general public, are being screened to check their temperature before they are allowed access to the building. If their temperature is equal to or greater than 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit, **they will kindly be asked not to enter the building and students will be returned home.** At dismissal time, children are screened again before they go home. Parents should monitor the health of their children and not send them to school if they are displaying symptoms of illness, let alone of COVID-19. Parents are kindly asked to remain outside of the building at drop-off and pick-up times. The same applies to other persons or day care services in charge of driving the children to and/or from school.
3. Staff members are wearing either face masks or face shields as they are in contact with students. That is, Montessori guides and assistants wear the masks or shields every second they spend with the children. The administrative staff wear masks or shields every time they enter the classrooms, every time they speak to the students' parents and the general public coming to school for the first time, every time they conduct any type of interviews, etc. In other words, we take very seriously the fact that the main purpose of wearing masks or shields is **TO PROTECT OTHERS.** Therefore, as they return to school in the fall, **students from Children's House to Upper Elementary will wear their little masks or shields.**
4. To start the school year, we will follow a block schedule to accommodate all the children registered for school. There will be two block schedules in every environment from Young Children Community to Upper Elementary. We have denominated them **Block "A"** and **Block "B"**. Let us unpack the way it will work:
 - **Block A** students will attend on **Monday, Wednesday and Friday** and will stay at home (working on assignments as applicable according to their levels), on **Tuesday and Thursday** of week one.
 - **Block B** students will attend on **Tuesday and Thursday** and will stay at home (working on assignments as applicable according to their levels), on **Monday, Wednesday and Friday** of week one.
 - **Block A** students will attend on **Monday and Wednesday** and will stay home on **Tuesday, Thursday and Friday** of week two.

- **Block B** students will attend on **Tuesday, Thursday and Friday** and will stay home on **Monday and Wednesday** of week two.
 - The same procedure will be repeated on and on. This is the format we will follow at the beginning of the school year until the COVID-19 threat subsides and we can go back to normal. Since this is a situation that is completely out of our control, **the tuition and other fees will remain in place** as opposed to the leniency we conceded to all the families according to their financial situations and ability to pay during the initial months (April and May) of the pandemic outbreak. We cannot emphasize this point enough.
5. Students are being guided constantly to heighten their hygienic habits, such as washing their hands more frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, covering their mouths and noses with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, keeping the social distance in place (main reason to implement the Block Schedules format), not sharing pencils, color pencils or any other school supplies, etc.
 6. If in the course of the day a student shows onset symptom of an illness, the immediate action taken will be the isolation of the student (in the hallway) and we will call her/his parents prompting them to pick up their child as soon as possible. Upon returning to school, parents need to present a **doctor's clearance note** before the child is allowed into the class environment.

We hope this information to be clear and comprehensive to all the families of our NWMS community. Your prompt response to the survey will be highly appreciated since the planification of our new school year depends heavily on the outcome of it. We thank you in advance for your kind participation and cooperation in this process.

Hoping to see you soon, please take care of yourselves, may God bless you and be safe.

Respectfully and lovingly submitted,

Francisco X. and Ines F. Portillo

NWMS Principal and Academic Coordinator, respectively