

The Gateway School

COVID-19 Health and Safety Plan



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Introduction

The creative atmosphere at The Gateway School stimulates the imagination and creativity of children through play, music, art, language, drama, special projects and events. Both its brightly lit building and its playgrounds encourage free-flowing interaction and movement so that the children can be well supervised and independent at the same time. Just the right balance of structure and freedom allows the children to grow and develop at their own pace. As an independent, nonprofit school that serves the Main Line, we are determined in our fight against this pandemic. We are prepared to mitigate risks, provide quality education, and offer a safe environment for our children to learn and develop. This plan outlines our approach to providing a safe environment for both our children and our staff. For seventy plus years our mission has been to provide joyful learning for young children and this is the drive we bring to this effort.

Purpose

This document is intended to prepare our community for a safe return to school. Our COVID-19 Task Force and most especially our medical experts have guided us throughout this process. We are incredibly grateful for their generosity of time and talents. We believe opening school is in the best interest educationally, socially and emotionally for our Gateway children and we are determined to take all possible steps to make this a reality. Please know our commitment to you and your children is at the core of our planning.

Our knowledge and understanding of the COVID-19 virus continue to evolve and our protocols and procedures will be updated as more information becomes available. We intend to move forward in planning for a traditional opening of school with a strong emphasis on health and safety measures. Establishing appropriate policies for facial coverings, hand hygiene, health monitoring and physical distancing, will go a long way in keeping our entire Gateway community as safe as possible. We will do everything feasible to curb the risks, and provide a quality learning experience.

Using Scenarios to Plan for What May Occur

It is our intention to return to a full in-person opening where all students are present for a full school day. Scenario planning will guide our thinking in regards to how to proceed should we enter a yellow or red phase. Though no single scenario is likely to play out exactly as imagined, this will allow for better planning across all phases. Below is an outline of our thinking in terms of Green, Yellow and Red Phase projections:

Green Phase: Risk is relatively low and we are committed to opening for full in-person school. We are confident that we have maximized safety through a combination of risk minimizing protocols and procedures.

Yellow Phase: Risk is increasing, and we will consider the need for virtual learning for some of our students. Special attention will be given to our youngest students, as virtual learning would present the most challenges to that age group.

Red Phase: Risk is high and Governor Wolf is likely to mandate a transition to Remote Learning.

Health Precautions

Life during a global pandemic necessitates a change in our behavior. As members of the Gateway community, we must rely on one another to create a safer environment and protect those who are most at-risk. It is the responsibility of each member of our Gateway community to minimize the spread of the coronavirus. The following 4 precautions are intended to minimize spread of the virus while maintaining a joyful learning environment for our little ones. All staff are expected to fully comply with the policies, protocols and guidelines outlined in this document. Additionally, we are expecting all of our families do their part to minimize spread and take precautions to protect the children and our staff. It is particularly important that everyone maintain an open and honest dialogue with the school in regards to travel, illness, suspected exposure and confirmation of coronavirus.

1. **Face Covering:** Governor Wolf mandated face coverings must be worn by all staff and children over the age of 2 while in school buildings at all times as well as outdoors when social distancing is not possible. We will comply fully with this mandate by requiring all staff and students to wear face coverings at all times.

Masks/shields for students will be mandatory until further notice. Please provide your child with an extra face covering if one becomes soiled, damaged or lost. Face coverings must be washed daily and clearly labeled. Please practice wearing face coverings over the summer so children will be comfortable with this protocol in the fall. Our school will make face coverings available to staff and essential visitors who come to school without one. [Order Requiring Universal Face Coverings.](#)

2. **Physical Distancing:** An unchanging group comprised of a small number of children and a teacher--- called a “Bubble” ---will establish a unit to foster the use of safe distancing practices. The bubble group will remain together for the majority of the school day and interact mainly with each other while indoors, with minimal interaction between bubbles.

3. **Hand Hygiene:** Routine hand washing will be scheduled with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. In between hand washings, we will use hand sanitizer as needed. Dispensers will be available throughout the school in the lobby and common areas safely distanced from the children. The entire school community must take care to avoid handshakes, touching one’s face and touching common surfaces as much as possible.

4. **Monitor Your Health:** It is imperative that all members of the Gateway community and essential visitors have an understanding of their own health as well as the signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Check your temperature before reporting to school. If you are a staff member and have a temperature of 100.0 or greater, or any other symptoms of COVID-19, please report this to the Director and do NOT come to school. Staff and students will be screened each day including a contactless temperature check. Anyone with a temperature greater than 100.0 and /or exhibiting symptoms will NOT be admitted to school.

What to Expect

The New Normal: How Things Might Be Different at school. In sync with the four health guidelines outlined above, building safety measures will be in effect upon our return. Every aspect of the day has been considered by our COVID-19 Task Force and a plan was created to enhance safety in many ways.

- Prior to opening we will clean, sanitize, disinfect using an EPA-registered household disinfectant and ventilate all areas of our building using a variety of cleaning techniques including fogging, surface wiping and spraying. Hepa air filters will be placed in each learning space to purify and circulate air. Windows will remain open throughout the school to provide adequate ventilation and fresh air. All learning materials and toys will be thoroughly cleaned, sanitized, and disinfected. Toys will be rotated to allow for a 72-hour quarantine period before returning to the classroom. High-touch surface areas will be cleaned every hour by staff. Deep cleaning will take place twice a week during non-school hours to provide a thorough sanitizing of the entire building with special detail to high-touch surfaces.

- Signs will be posted at all entrance points that read: Mandatory Face Coverings Before Entering the Building. Proper handwashing technique signs will be displayed at sinks to remind children of the need to thoroughly wash hands using soap and water.

- Daily preventative measures will be taken to screen staff and students upon arrival. Every staff member and student will undergo health screening and temperature checks prior to entering the building. Below you will find a copy of the Health Questionnaire. We ask, that as parents/guardians, you familiarize yourself with the questions so you can answer yes or no to any of the symptoms listed when approached at the car pool line. Once you have passed screening, you will proceed to the front of the line and turn off your engine while helping your children from the car. A staff member will escort the children into the building, where they will use hand sanitizer prior to entering the classroom. All lunch boxes will be sanitized before storage. Once the children are in the class, they will place belongings in their individual cubby and then be directed to wash their hands using soap and water.

- In an effort to minimize risk, we ask that you refrain from sending in any unnecessary items from home such as toys, stuffed animals, etc. We would however ask that all children have a clearly labeled, reusable water bottle to be used throughout the day. Water fountains will be disconnected during this time and teachers will refill bottles as necessary.

- Bathrooms will be closely monitored to ensure only one child at a time and proper handwashing. Proper hand washing procedures will be taught and posted by each sink and routine hand washing breaks will be worked into the daily schedule. We will incorporate routine songs to help the children time their hand washing. Phone alarms will be activated to remind staff of handwashing breaks.

- An unchanging group comprised of a small number of children and a teacher, called a “Bubble,” will establish a unit to foster the use of safe distancing practices. The bubble group will remain together for the majority of the school day and interact mainly with each other while indoors. Poetry and poem recitation will replace singing during learning circles to minimize voice projection. Activities such as story time, snack, and sensory bins will take place outdoors as often as possible. Tents and awnings will provide shading for outdoor use. Additional tables have been added to classrooms to facilitate social distancing during project time. During social play, children will be provided with several options to choose from and a maximum of 4 children will be permitted to use a play area at a time. Teachers will monitor numbers using spot markers. When intermixing between bubbles occurs, spot markers will social distance children to a minimum of three feet apart. Using signage, taped off flooring, spot markers and staggered schedules, safe distancing will be facilitated. Children will be taught and encouraged to use “airplane arms” to assure they have adequate distance from other students while transitioning to the playground and down halls.

- Library carts will be utilized to bring books to individual classrooms to avoid shared use of the library. Library books will be sent home and quarantined for 72 hours upon return. Specials will take place outdoors as weather permits. Music class will focus on music theory and rhythm to eliminate singing and voice projection. Creative Movement will use floor markings to provide individual movement areas for the children.

- Each student will have designated learning materials and classroom supplies including scissors, glue sticks, crayons etc. to minimize the spread of germs. Children will have individual sensory bins and manipulatives will be rotated for a 72-quarantine period before returning to the classroom.

- Lunchtime will be done “picnic style” as long as weather permits. When forced indoors, we will socially distance and minimize the number of students per table as well as provide sneeze guards between students.

- Our two separate playgrounds and staggered scheduling will allow one class to use a playground at a time. As much as it hurts us to say this, we will be removing balls from our playground until further notice given the high-touch surface area. Children will wash hands before and after playground use. All playground high touch surfaces will be sanitized after use.

- When picking up children, the same parent/adult should pick up children every day. Your children will be dismissed from the playgrounds weather permitting. Proceed to the front of the car pool line and exit your vehicle. A staff member will bring your child to you. Please engage in social distancing from others and wear a mask at all times while on school property including the carpool line.

- Although transportation can be provided to our kindergarten students via the Lower Merion School District, we ask, that given the difficulty to socially distance while on a bus and the added exposure to those outside of our school community, that our kindergarten families refrain from using LMSD transportation at this time.

- Only essential visitors will be permitted in the building. Drop off/Pick up will take place exclusively outside. If you need to come to school for any reason, please contact the office and we will meet you outside. Additionally, all school tours will take place virtually.

- Staff training will take place throughout the summer via Zoom and two days of in-service training to educate staff about the social distance protocols and procedures.

- Should someone become ill during the school day, they will immediately be quarantined in a separate area until they can be picked up by a parent/guardian. The Director and the teacher will collaborate on decisions to quarantine. We will ensure that they have hygiene supplies available including a face covering/shield, facial tissues, hand sanitizer and proper ventilation. Staff who are monitoring the student/staff member will be required to wear face covering and practice social distancing. The space will be closed off after the ill person leaves. We will wait 24 hours before disinfecting the quarantined area. Proper notification to families will occur immediately via text message and email. The Montgomery County Department of Health will be contacted immediately and all guidelines will be followed to the fullest extent including with regards to testing, contact tracing, and sanitation. Distance learning will be instituted immediately if the Board of Health advises a temporary shut-down. Additionally, if someone you have come in contact with has been diagnosed with COVID-19, please contact the Montgomery County Department of Health, 610-278-5117 and keep your child home until cleared to return.



THE GATEWAY SCHOOL

DATE _____

Have you or someone you live with traveled outside the state, or come into contact with someone who traveled outside the state, in the last 14 days?

YES

NO

If you answered YES where did you travel? _____

Please check off "YES" or "NO" for the following

| Symptoms In the last 14 Days | YES | NO |
|------------------------------|-----|----|
| FEVER AT OR ABOVE 100.0 | | |
| SORE THROAT | | |
| COUGH | | |
| MUSCLE OR BODY ACHES | | |
| CHILLS | | |
| DIARRHEA | | |
| LOSS OF TASTE | | |
| LOSS OF SMELL | | |
| SHORTNESS OF BREATH | | |
| HEADACHE | | |
| NAUSEA OR VOMITING | | |
| FATIGUE | | |
| CONGESTION OR RUNNY NOSE | | |

If you answered YES to any of the questions above, when did the symptoms start?

Have you had any contact with anyone with a confirmed case of COVID-19 or with a suspected case of COVID-19?

YES

NO

If you answered YES please provide details _____

Parent Signature

Date

Student Name

Temperature

Initials of person taking temp.

Sick Policy/Reporting Absences

It is critical that all families adhere to the sick policy of our school. In addition, we ask that if your child is ill, you call the school to report the absence. While leaving a message, please leave the reason for the absence and when symptoms began.

Our policy states:

Vomiting and Diarrhea: Children should remain at home for 24 hours after vomiting or experiencing diarrhea

Undiagnosed Rash: Children with an undiagnosed rash should remain home until the rash is gone or until your pediatrician determines it is not of a contagious nature.

Head Lice: Children with a suspected case of head lice should remain home until they have received proper treatment and after which careful and thorough combing with a nit comb shows no evidence of nits or lice. Families must notify the school immediately even if it is only a suspected case so the school community can take necessary precautions and all families can check their children.

Antibiotics: Children placed on antibiotics should be kept home for at least 24 hours to allow the antibiotic to take effect.

Medicine Policy: No medicine or treatment, except emergency first aid, shall be given to any child without a medical order or prescription from a licensed physician and the written consent of the parent or guardian. Any medicine so ordered or prescribed shall be clearly labeled as to the name of the child, the name of the medicine, the dosage, and the name and telephone number of the child's physician.

Medical Condition Policy: It is the parents' responsibility to notify the school of any medical, physical, or behavioral condition affecting their child. A meeting with the Directors and classroom teacher(s) may be scheduled to discuss the child's needs. Parents may be asked to sign an agreement listing your and Gateway's respective duties regarding your child.

A child with life threatening allergies* must have an Emergency Care Form completed by a physician and provided to the school prior to the first day of school along with any prescribed medications.

Concluding Thoughts

As we approach the start of the new year, it is important that we, the entire Gateway community, make a commitment to embracing and adhering to the rules and procedures created to keep our entire community as safe as possible. Here at Gateway, we acknowledge that members of our community may be exposed during work or school and we are committed to making every feasible effort to prevent this and minimize further spread. We all need to adjust our behavior, even when it feels inconvenient. This shared response will maximize the health and safety of all of us. Thank you in advance for joining us in this important effort.

