



## Q&A: COVID-19 Policies and Procedures

Updated: **September 9, 2020**

Our mission at NMNS has always been to create a safe, warm and welcoming learning community. We are met with a unique time in history when the importance of health and safety has become a number one priority for all of us. Our goal will continue to be to provide the best learning environment we possibly can while committing to emphasize the health and safety of our entire community. In order to do this, we are calling on all community members, both staff, teachers and families to share the responsibility. We can not keep our community healthy and safe if all members of the community are not committed to the same goal. This commitment to health can be demonstrated in a variety of ways:

- Answering honestly about your child's health or your own health and the health of your family on the screener.
- Answering honestly about any possible exposures that you, your child or family may have had.
- Following policies and procedures laid out to keep everyone safe and healthy.
- Understanding that this is new for all of us and things may need to be changed or adjusted mid-stream in order to adopt best practices. We will be constantly updating our knowledge and practices if necessary, based on the guidelines from our local health department, the school district, Wingra school and the CDC.
- Understanding that things will look different, but NMNS is a strong community that can support each other through change.
- Helping your child understand why things have changed and the importance of the new routines and practices. You can practice handwashing at home. You can give your child an opportunity to wear a mask if it's appropriate and make sure that they are used to seeing others wearing masks.
- Respectfully asking questions and listening for answers if you don't understand why a practice or procedure is or is not in place.
- Providing constructive feedback to help our procedures and policies evolve and improve.
- Reading communications that NMNS provides to you so that you are up to date on procedures and policies. This includes emails from the director or your child's teacher, newsletters, important surveys that may ask for your feedback on important issues and information that NMNS may pass on to you from governing organizations and local experts.

There are a lot of questions about what the coming year will look like, and in truth, also a lot of unknowns. We can plan to the utmost of our abilities and still be confronted with a situation that is new and overwhelming. Please know that through all of this, you could not have chosen a community that cares more about the health, safety, happiness and wellbeing of

your child. Whatever unknowns this year throws at us, we will meet it as a community of families, staff and teachers that love and value children and their learning.

This list of questions and answers is designed to help parents understand the extensive measures NMNS is taking to create a safe and healthy learning environment for our students, staff and families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **What is the school doing to prevent the spread of COVID-19?**

**Will masks be required?**

**How are you keeping the school clean?**

**How will the school schedule change?**

**How will lunch bunch be impacted?**

**What will the class sizes be and how will you determine who gets the slots if there are too many kids?**

**How are you keeping classes separated?**

**What will drop off look like this year?**

**What will snack be like this year?**

**What happens if a child has symptoms of illness at school?**

**What if my child has allergies, including symptoms like sneezing and coughing?**

**What happens if there is a confirmed case?**

**Will I be notified if there is a case? How will people be notified?**

**I am worried about the transition for my child from Willow to Birch to Oak. What will that look like?**

**What happens if the school is required to be closed?**

**Will virtual learning be offered if the school is required to close?**

**What is the cleaning and materials fee?**

### **What is the school doing to prevent the spread of COVID-19?**

NMNS staff and students will have exclusive use of the upstairs wing of the building that contains our classrooms and bathrooms. No Wingra students, parents or teachers will enter our space.

When staff arrive at school, they will complete a health screening, including temperature reading. Sick teachers will not report to work until they meet the requirements for return as identified in the NMNS COVID-19 Policies and Procedures. Teachers will wear face coverings when in the building.

Children and teachers will remain in cohort groups. Our classrooms will be arranged to encourage social distancing; toys and manipulatives that are not easily sanitized will be removed. When in the classroom we will have the windows open weather permitting. The HVAC units in all classrooms are programmed to provide fresh air exchange daily, the amount of fresh air will be increased. The current scientific guidelines confirm that it is very difficult for the virus to transmit outdoors in the fresh air. The teachers are adding more activities to the playground and creating exciting new ways to move more of our school day outside. We plan to spend as much time as possible outside in all types of weather.

Children will bring their belongings in a backpack daily. Children will undress and dress in the classroom and teachers will put their outer wear and backpacks in lockers and retrieve them at the end of the day to minimize contamination. There are going to be some toys and activities that will look different this year at NMNS in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Children in Oak and Birch will have individual art boxes that they keep in their cubbies to use for art projects, so art materials are not shared. Teachers in the Willow classroom will limit the number of art supplies provided and clean them between classes. Teachers will have toys divided into AM and PM or MWF and TR so that the toys are not shared between groups of children. Teachers are already looking for creative ways to offer the NMNS experiences in a way that keeps everyone healthy and safe.

We will either install plumbing in our classrooms or purchase portable sinks for each room that provides hot running water. Students and teachers will wash their hands according to CDC handwashing guidelines and staff will supervise children to make sure they are washing properly. Teachers will also encourage children to cough into their elbow and not touch their face. Hand sanitizer will be available in all classrooms and common areas. Children who become sick at school will be removed from the class immediately.

### **Will masks be required?**

In accordance with the guidance from PHMDC, staff will wear face coverings when in the building. All children in the Oak Room will be required to wear a face covering when in the building. Children in the Willow and Birch rooms are encouraged to wear a face covering if they can do so safely and independently. Staff will be provided with face shields and will use smocks or changes of clothes as needed.

### **How are you keeping the school clean?**

NMNS is collaborating with Wingra School to create and facilitate a building wide cleaning protocol. Wingra School is as committed to providing all students and staff in the building a safe and healthy place to learn and work.

In the classrooms, all commonly touched surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected before and after each group use and in between as needed. These commonly touched surfaces include: door handles, railings, chairs, tables, sink areas, faucets, any shared toys. The bathroom sinks, toilets, urinals and diaper changing table, will be cleaned and disinfected after each use by a staff member. Staff will disinfect the stair railings and the highly touched areas of the play structures on the playground between group use.

### **How will the school schedule change?**

Because of the importance of health screening for each child, there will be a staggered start and end to the day. Each classroom will have a designated drop off and pick up window and location. Caregivers responsible for drop off and pick up will socially distance in a line wearing masks. The timing of the windows will be determined by enrollment and will be sent to parents prior to the start of school. This is what we're thinking at this point:

Birch - AM Drop off: 8:10-8:30, Pick up: 11:10-11:30  
Oak - AM Drop off: 8:10-8:30, Pick up: 11:10-11:30  
PM Drop off: 12:45-1:00, Pick up: 3:45-4:00  
Willow - AM Drop off: 8:40-8:55, Pick up: 11:40-11:55  
PM Drop off: 12:50-1:00, Pick up: 3:50-4:00

This new procedure may affect the start and end time of your child's day. Willow and Birch classes will be 3 hours long, Oak classes will be 2.5 hours without 4K+ and 3 hours with 4K+. Parents should keep the length of the day in mind when making your child's drop off and pick up schedule so you do not exceed the class time. At this time we plan to continue to have a 5 day 4K class AM/PM in the Oak Room and 4K+, as well as MWF/TR AM in the Birch Room, and MWF/TR AM/PM in the Willow Room. We will only be able to offer a 5-day schedule for three year olds if we have the space and staff to create a cohort group. It will most likely be an afternoon class. All schedules and offerings may change based on enrollment.

### **How will Lunch Bunch be impacted?**

We understand that Lunch Bunch is used by some families as extra care, as well as being a chance for children to socialize with others who are not in their class. Because of the rigorous cleaning schedule and need to not mix cohorts of children, NMNS will not be offering Lunch Bunch as we begin the school year. The lunch bunch portion of the first tuition payment will be credited to your tuition account. Your tuition payments will be adjusted to reflect this change. We will consider offering lunch once we have a way to safely offer the program.

### **What will the class sizes be and how will you determine who gets the slots if there are too many kids?**

Maximum class size will be limited to 15 students in Oak, 10 students in Birch, and 6 students in Willow classes.

### **How are you keeping classes separated?**

NMNS has always been very efficient and practiced at communicating across classrooms during the school day. We will continue to use our walkie talkies to understand where other groups of children are in the school and plan our transitions accordingly. If children from different classes have to be in the same space at the same time, teachers will wear masks and will use social distancing to keep the groups apart. Each group will have a scheduled time to use the bathroom as a cohort. Besides those scheduled times, teachers and staff will be able to accompany individual children to the bathroom as needed and employ social distancing when needed.

### **What will drop off look like this year?**

Drop-off and pick-up will occur outside this year. Before coming to school, you will be asked to take your child's temperature and note it. When possible, only one caregiver should be in charge of drop-off and pick-up per family. If you need to bring siblings with you to drop off, please have them social distance from other families. Anyone over the age of 2 who is not a student should wear a mask on school grounds. Classrooms will have up to a 20 minute drop off window depending on enrollment. A socially distanced line will be formed on the sidewalk

to make drop off safe for everyone. Your child will be greeted by a teacher and you will be asked a series of health screening questions, including your child's temperature. After the health questions are completed your child will go to their classroom or the playground with a teacher and meet the rest of the students to begin their day. If you miss your drop off/pick up window you will have to call the office to make arrangements for someone to meet your child.

### **What will snack be like this year?**

After studying the CDC's recommendations for eating at school and researching what other early childhood programs are doing to safely have snack at school, we decided to forgo our traditional snack schedule for this school year. Instead each child will bring their own snack to school in a disposable container. These snacks will need to meet our allergy restrictions for tree nuts and peanuts. The class will enjoy snack together, but will only eat their own food. We will have a small supply of shelf stable snack items on hand in case a snack is forgotten. Children will bring a water bottle each day that will be kept in their cubby and sent home at the end of each day to be cleaned.

### **What happens if a child has symptoms of illness at school?**

If a child has symptoms of illness at school they will be removed from the classroom immediately and their parents will be notified. The child will wait in the care of a staff member or teacher until they are picked up. It will be necessary to pick your child up promptly. Your child will be able to return to school when they are fever and or symptom free for 72 hours. There will be no tuition credits for missed school days due to your child's illness.

### **What if my child has allergies, including symptoms like sneezing and coughing?**

The drop off procedure will include a health screening. In the health screening, you will have the opportunity to share whether your child is experiencing allergy symptoms. This year we will have to err on the side of caution with children's illness symptoms. Keeping our whole community safe and healthy relies on the fact that families and staff are reporting their symptoms honestly.

### **What happens if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 amongst staff or students?**

As required of all child care providers, if we have a confirmed case of COVID-19, the school director will notify Public Health Madison and Dane County to determine next steps. Families need to inform the school immediately when a household member tests positive.

### **Will I be notified if there is a case? How will people be notified?**

All parents and staff will be notified as soon as possible via email if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 amongst staff or students. The identity of the staff or student will be confidential.

### **What happens if the school is required to be closed?**

If the school is closed because of the pandemic for more than half the month families will owe 50% of the tuition payment for that month, otherwise full tuition will be due. The 2nd through 10th tuition payments for the 20-21 school year will be due Oct 1-June 1, to allow for adjustments to payments should school close.

**Will virtual learning be offered if the school is required to close?**

If the school is closed for more than 10 regular school days, teachers will employ virtual learning. The school closure last spring presented our school with a great challenge. Our amazing teachers very quickly created an online learning program. Through that experience teachers learned more about best practices for online learning and how to create developmentally appropriate online programming. The teachers are constantly striving to determine what is best for your child online and in real life. Our goal is to constantly offer the best programming for your child at their age level. In the past this programming included one or more of the following: daily stories read aloud by teachers, art activities, math activities, early literacy activities, movement and outdoor activities, as well as opportunities to meet as small and large Zoom groups. The level and content of virtual learning will depend largely on the age of your child and the teachers are committed to providing the most effective and engaging curriculum they can.

**What is the cleaning and materials fee?**

This year, NMNS is asking each family to pay a one time \$75 fee to help offset the cost of extra cleaning supplies, PPE and materials for students. This year families will not be required to donate school supplies.

**I am worried about the transition for my child from Willow to Birch to Oak. What will that look like?**

The teachers and staff are working together to create a plan to help children transition from class to class as well as those who are brand new to the school. We are looking at the model we use for our youngest students in the Willow room. Instead of our usual open house and first week schedule we will provide a "warm up" to the parents and children in each class, and a slow start to the year. The warm ups will start with a parent only meeting outside on our playgrounds. Each student will be invited to bring a parent to the playground to meet their teacher. For the "warm up" school day each class will be divided in half. This will allow teachers to be able to provide more one on one attention to each student and a smaller group of new faces. On this warm up day parents, children, and teachers can practice the new routines of drop off and pick up. The teachers and staff are currently putting this "warm up" plan together for all groups of children. Information for families about dates, times and groups will be communicated as soon as possible.