



Bluffview Montessori

Safe Return to In-Person Learning, Fall 2021

In effect beginning Monday, 8/30/2021

Bluffview Montessori is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment that supports social and emotional development, access to critical services, and improvements in life outcomes for all. COVID-19 mitigation strategies remain critical to protecting people, including students, teachers, and staff, who are not fully vaccinated, especially in areas of substantial-to-high community transmission levels. We believe it is important that we all remember to respect the decisions and actions of others in our community while we seek the common goal of a safe environment.

Together with local public health officials, Bluffview will consider multiple factors when making decisions about implementing or reducing layered prevention strategies against COVID-19. All protocols are subject to change if substantial or high levels of COVID-19 transmission occur in the local community and in the school.

The primary risk factors considered and monitored include:

- Level of [community transmission](#) of COVID-19.
- [COVID-19 vaccination coverage](#) in the community and among students, teachers, and staff.
- COVID-19 outbreaks or increasing trends in the school (internal) or the surrounding community.
- Ages of children served by K-12 schools and the associated social and behavioral factors that may affect the risk of transmission and the feasibility of different prevention strategies.

CDC Metrics & Thresholds		
Transmission Level	Case growth per 100,000 (cumulative weekly rate)	Positive (7-day rate) - Percentage of tests that are positive during the past 7 days
Blue (Low)	<10	<5%
Yellow (Moderate)	10-49	5-7.9%
Orange (Substantial)	50-99	8-9.9%
Red (High)	≥100	≥10%

Fall Guidance

- MDH [Best Practice Recommendations for COVID-19 Prevention in Schools for the 2021-22 School](#)

- [Year \(PDF\)](#) - Updated 7/28/21
- MDH [Recommendations for Handling a Confirmed Case of COVID-19 \(PDF\)](#) - Updated 7/28/21
- CDC: [Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#)

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I. Federal Government and Minnesota Rule Requirements

Face coverings: All people are required by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) order to wear face coverings on all indoor public transportation conveyances (airports, public buses, etc.), including school buses. See [CDC: Requirement for Face Masks on Public Transportation Conveyances and at Transportation Hubs](#)

Handling a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19: Minnesota Rule 4605.7070 requires any person in charge of any institution, school, child care facility, or camp to report cases of COVID-19 to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). See [MDH: Reportable Disease Rule](#)

II. Face Coverings: Subject to change based on risk levels for COVID-19 transmission.

The 2021-22 school year will begin with a universal indoor masking requirement for all people entering district buildings during classroom instructional hours and after school care hours (7:15 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.), including teachers, staff, students, and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status. It will also apply to school sponsored events that include the use of indoor spaces as directed by administration. Face coverings are not required when outdoors.

The Advisory Team will assess internal and community-level data and shift the requirement from required to strongly recommended based on risk levels for transmission in school and after school care settings. This will be measured through two 14-day incubation periods, as 28 days with low internal/community cases suggests low risks of transmission. Communication will be sent to all students, staff, and families when a shift in the face covering protocol is appropriate.

Exceptions can be made for the following categories of people:

- A. A person who [cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask](#), because of a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.)
- B. [Children under 2 years of age](#) should not wear a mask.
- C. Children’s House students may, prior to exiting for outdoor activities during the “winter season”, remove their face coverings at their hallway cubbies and leave them there. Teachers will ensure that the students line up in classrooms and maintain a minimum distance of 3’ to the best of their ability. Re-entry to the building will take place at the main entrance. Students will be encouraged to maintain the full 3’ of spacing between individuals, remove their winter boots on the rug, proceed to their cubbies and remove hats. Then masks will be put on, and the rest of the outdoor gear will be stowed in cubbies as directed by the staff. *(added 11.18.21)*

Table 1: Face Covering Protocols based on Risk of Transmission

Low Blue	Moderate Yellow	Substantial Orange	High Red
<p>Masking is strongly recommended for all people entering district buildings, including teachers, staff, students, and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status.</p> <p>Transportation: All people are required by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) order to wear face coverings on all public transportation conveyances (airports, public buses, etc.), including school buses.</p> <p>Individuals who begin exhibiting common symptom(s) consistent with COVID-19 while in attendance will be asked to wear a face covering when visiting the health office and while waiting to go home.</p>		<p>Universal Masking requirement for all people entering district buildings, including teachers, staff, students, and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status.</p> <p>Transportation: All people are required by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) order to wear face coverings on all public transportation conveyances (airports, public buses, etc.), including school buses.</p>	

III. Physical Distancing and Cohorting

Physical distancing will be implemented to the extent possible indoors, but students will not be quarantined if they keep a minimum distance requirement. A distance of at least 6 feet will be encouraged between students and teachers/staff, and between teachers/staff who are not fully vaccinated. A distance of 3 feet will be established whenever possible between students and teachers/staff in instructional settings and during mealtimes. When three feet is not feasible, layering of additional mitigation strategies may be implemented.

Cohorting (pods) will be used to limit the number of students, teachers, and staff who come in contact with each other, especially when it is challenging to maintain physical distancing and among elementary students (Grades 6 and under). A minimum distance of 6 feet will be maintained between

elementary cohort groups and unnecessary mixing between cohort groups will be limited when indoors.

Classroom teachers/staff are required to document seating charts/cohort groups to identify close contacts when someone tests positive for COVID-19.

Outdoors, cohorting will not be required between classrooms of the same level. For example, all E1 students will be allowed to interact with each other during outside recess without the restriction of pods.

IV. Health Screening and Staying Home When Sick

Procedures for student admittance, attendance, and elimination from school will continue to follow Minnesota state laws, public health policies, and medical infectious disease guidelines regarding communicable diseases.

Students, staff, and visitors are expected to complete a [daily health screening](#) for symptoms of illness PRIOR to entering the building and must stay home if they are experiencing any “more common symptoms” or 2 “less common symptoms” of COVID-19. BMS will use pathways outlined in the [COVID-19 Decision Tree](#) to evaluate and recommend the best path for all children, students, and staff, regardless of vaccination status, who are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

When applicable, individuals experiencing symptoms will be asked to 1. [Get tested](#), 2. Receive an alternative diagnosis from a health care provider, or 3. Stay home for 10 days until they feel better and are fever-free for 24 hours without using a medicine that lowers fevers.

- A.** *More common symptoms are one or more of these:* fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher; new cough or a cough that gets worse; difficulty/hard time breathing; and new loss of taste or smell.
- B.** *Less common symptoms are two or more of these:* sore throat; nausea; vomiting; diarrhea; chills; muscle pain; extreme fatigue/feeling very tired; new severe/very bad headache; and new nasal congestion/stuffy or runny nose.

V. Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine (V., A. and B. updated 1/17/22)

Isolation protocol for when someone tests positive for COVID-19

- A.** If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, they must stay at home and away from others who live in the house (isolation) for at least 8 days from the time the symptoms started (or the day they were tested if they have no symptoms), and until symptoms have improved and they have had no fever for 24 hours without using fever-reducing medications.
- B.** Siblings and other household members who are not fully vaccinated or have not had lab-confirmed COVID-19 within the last 90 days must stay home and stay away from all activities for either 7 or 10 days of quarantine (number of days determined by MDH quarantine guidance), which starts the day they last had contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19. Siblings and other household members do not qualify for a shortened quarantine period.

Contact tracing and quarantine protocols

- C.** When notified of a positive case that was present and able to infect others, contact tracing will be conducted to review documentation and determine close contacts needing to quarantine. A close contact is someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.
 - 1. **Exception for PK-8 indoor classroom settings only:** For the indoor

classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student where both students were correctly wearing well-fitting masks. This will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the risk of exposure is minimal.

a) ***This exception does not apply to;*** teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting.

- D. Identified close contacts will be required to stay home from all activities for a minimum of 10 full days without testing, or 7 full days with a PCR-negative test (not an antigen test or antibody/blood test) if the test occurred FIVE full days after exposure or later. All individuals must watch for symptoms of COVID-19 through day 14.
- a. Children and staff who are fully vaccinated or who have had lab-confirmed COVID-19 in the last 90 days and have fully recovered may not need to quarantine. To qualify for a quarantine exemption, individuals must meet all criteria outlined in MDH: [Close Contacts and Tracing: COVID-19](#); AND voluntarily provide appropriate documentation of COVID-19 vaccination record or lab-confirmed positive COVID-19 test results PRIOR to the approval of their eligibility to participate/work.

VI. Screening Testing

At this time, BMS will not be engaging in an on-site testing program. We do have some take home antigen kits available as they are available to us. They will be offered as available, but will not count for a shortened quarantine period. Winona Health and the Vault site at the Winona mall are the recommended PCR test sites.

Based on current levels of community spread across Minnesota, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and MDH recommend that all unvaccinated school-age children and school staff should get tested for COVID-19 at least weekly throughout the school year. Vaccinated students and school staff should get tested if they are experiencing [symptoms](#) or were exposed to someone who has COVID-19.

VII. Respiratory Etiquette and Hand Hygiene

Students and staff members are encouraged to build routines of [handwashing](#) and respiratory etiquette into the daily schedule. Employees, students, and visitors will be instructed to cover their mouth and nose with their sleeve or tissue when coughing or sneezing.

Hand hygiene will be promoted during key times, such as arrival (sanitizer is available and suggested at the building entrance) and dismissal; before, during, and after preparing or eating food; after using the bathroom; and after blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing. All students, staff, and visitors are encouraged to use hand sanitizer prior to or immediately upon entering district buildings.

VIII. Mealtimes

All students will be advised to sanitize their hands prior to entering the lunch line and after eating lunch. Students will be assigned to tables and groups sitting together during mealtimes will remain the same from day to day. Students will remain at their assigned tables/seats and there will be staggered dismissal strategies to limit intermixing in lunch lines. All tables will be cleaned in between lunch periods.

- A. Children's House: Will eat in the gym at tables, appropriately spaced.
- B. EI & E2: Seating will be limited to classrooms with documented seating charts for contact tracing purposes. Students may sit on both sides of the table, staggering to avoid facing each other, to the extent possible. Staff should clean and disinfect common surfaces between each group of students.
- C. Erdkinder: Documentation of lunch cohort groups is required for contact tracing purposes. Lunch will take place either in the classroom or the hallway as deemed appropriate for spacing.

IX. Cleaning and Ventilation

Bluffview has consulted with IEA and Winona Heat and Vent regarding the operational capacity of indoor ventilation systems to ensure they are in proper working order in preparation for the school year. BMS HVAC is set to 100% external air intake. All classrooms with windows have fans that may be directed out as well. The system works more efficiently with windows closed. Individual HEPA units have been added to all classrooms and general spaces with the increased transmission of the Omicron variant (updated 1.17.22).

Regular housekeeping practices are conducted by our staff, including twice daily routine environmental cleaning of classrooms and common spaces.

X. Accommodations for Children with Disabilities

Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies and procedures will be provided. To learn more about accommodations, parents/guardians should contact their child's case manager.

XI. Visitors and Volunteers

BMS welcomes visitors, community providers, volunteers, and other authorized adults into district buildings as long as they adhere to relevant provisions of this plan.

All classrooms, and programs are required to keep a roster of visitors and volunteers (name, contact information, date, time, program, site, etc.) for contact tracing purposes.

XII. After School Care

Mitigation strategies remain an important tool in managing the spread among populations who have not had the opportunity to be vaccinated. In addition to all other provisions in this plan, face coverings will be required to be worn indoors by all participants and supervising staff members while in attendance. NOTE: the use of face coverings indoors will still be required AT ALL TIMES for participants and staff who are present at after school care.

XIII. Facility Rentals

Facility rentals will be expected to comply with this plan if they are utilizing the BMS building during classroom instructional hours or after school care. However, following 6:00 p.m., all people who enter BMS are strongly recommended to follow COVID-19 protocols outlined in this plan including the use of face coverings indoors and practicing social distancing.

XIV. Athletics/Activities through WAPS

WAPS allows our students to take part in activities under their banner. This will continue as long as all participants in those activities, as well as coaches and advisors, adhere to the requirements listed below.

- A. Competitions/Games:** All participants, coaches, and advisors must comply with WAPS COVID-19 protocols at home events. All people will be required to wear face coverings on school buses and other transportation vehicles. When traveling to other schools for away events, WAPS participants, coaches, and other persons must comply with away school district's protocols, unless they contradict and are more relaxed than the provisions of the

WAPS Safe Return to In-Person Learning Plan.

- B. Face Coverings:** When distancing cannot be maintained, such as on the sidelines and in locker rooms, student-athletes will be strongly recommended to wear a face covering both indoors and outdoors. Face Coverings are required to be worn by all people on school buses and other district transportation vehicles.
- C. Transportation:** All people will be required to wear face coverings on school buses and other transportation vehicles. Distancing will be implemented to the extent possible and/or student-athletes will remain seated with their cohort assignment.
- D. Physical Distancing/Cohorts:** Student-athletes should remain in cohort groups when applicable, and pods of students should remain 6' from other pods.
- E. Health Screening:** All participants are expected to complete daily health screenings prior to coming to school. Students should refrain from these activities when they have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and should be tested. If students are absent from school due to being sick or in quarantine, they must remain home from after-school activities and athletics.
- F. Contact Tracing and Quarantine:** Contact tracing will be conducted to identify those needing to quarantine. Coaches are expected to have documentation of student cohort groups and seating assignments for transportation. People who are fully vaccinated can refrain from quarantine following a known exposure if asymptomatic, facilitating continued participation in in-person learning, sports, and extracurricular activities.

*Credit to Jackie Henderson and WAPS for generating their plan and allowing us to use their strong work as a template, changing content as appropriate for BMS.