

CMU Children's School Health & Safety Protocols for Fall 2021

Based on the lessons we learned during last year's in-person programming, as well as scientific evidence about which risk mitigation strategies matter most for preventing the transmission of COVID-19, we have streamlined our protocols for the fall 2021 semester. Please note that these plans will evolve in response to the changing pandemic situation and new guidance from CDC, PA, and CMU leaders.



Vaccination: All administrators and educators are fully vaccinated, and only vaccinated undergraduates will be allowed to work with children as interns or student employees.

Morning Health Assessment: All families will need to complete a health assessment prior to coming to school each morning and only bring the child to school if all the health conditions are met. This year, the morning assessment will be run through the FACTS digital student information system that we have adopted to handle our application, enrollment, tuition payments, scholarships, and much of our broad communication.

Facial Coverings: Children will wear masks while indoors, except during meals / getting drinks and rest/quiet time. Children will also be required to wear masks outdoors while with their group. Families will provide the children's facial coverings, at least 3 per day, and they will take them home for washing at the end of each day. The school will stock extra facial coverings in the event a family forgets to bring one. Educators and researchers will also wear facial coverings, except while eating or drinking.

Handwashing: Because hand washing is the #1 preventive measure to avoid the spread of common diseases, we always explicitly teach, scaffold, and monitor hand-washing procedures that involve the use of liquid soap and running water, with vigorous and thorough rubbing for at least 20 seconds (the length of the alphabet song, sung twice), followed by paper towel drying. Our pandemic protocols involve additional handwashing before and after use of shared materials.

Density and Grouping: We are returning to our full capacity with 24 children in each of our Preschool 3's, Preschool 4's, and Kindergarten classes. Groups will function with practical social distancing within the group except during times when masks cannot be worn, such as snack, lunch, and rest times. Plexiglass shields will provide added protection from airborne germs when children are eating. Children will pass each other in the bathrooms and during greeting and dismissal, but otherwise the groups will remain separate from each other both indoors and outdoors. Administrators and substitutes will need to move between groups to be able to support all classes.

Outdoor Learning: In addition to our extensive playground space, we will continue to use both the open and canopy-covered space in the Reflection Garden between the Children's School and the tennis courts. Unfortunately, we have lost the grassy area

adjacent to our playground because of the need for a temporary athletic facility during the restoration of the Skibo Gym, but we are still able to utilize diverse outdoor spaces on campus.

Food & Drink: Because health guidelines prohibit our serving food in communal ways, each child will need to bring a snack, a lunch, and a full water bottle to school, though water bottles can be refilled from our water coolers as needed. We will allow taste testing as part of lessons, with adults responsible for preparing and serving the food, and use of all recommended food safety guidelines.

Cleaning: Educators will continue to use the enhanced cleaning procedures for classroom materials and high-touch surfaces throughout the day. CMU will continue their usual overnight cleaning of bathrooms, sinks, floors, etc. throughout the school, as well as providing the new midday cleaning service for bathrooms, high touch surfaces, etc.

Ventilation: Since Fall 2020, we have been spending as much time as possible outdoors as one way of mitigating the spread of COVID-19. We will continue that practice this year. To enhance indoor ventilation, CMU installed screens on all of the Children's School windows that open, as well as on the Kindergarten door to the Reflection Garden. We keep these windows open as much as possible. Last year, Carnegie Mellon also installed enhanced technology on the old HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) system for the Children's School spaces to improve indoor environmental quality. This **bipolar needlepoint ionization** system further improves the filtration and has been proven to deactivate the virus. With this enhancement on the HVAC system serving the Children's School, the windows can be closed in extreme cold weather. A brief video explaining how needlepoint bipolar ionization works is available here: <https://globalplasmasolutions.com/how-it-works>. This CMU article also explains the system and includes a shorter video about the technology: <https://www.cmu.edu/news/stories/archives/2020/august/enhanced-hvac-covid.html>.

Parents Visits: Because of CMU's classroom capacity limits, parent visits to the school will be limited and scheduled. If pandemic conditions permit on Wednesday, September 1st, one parent or guardian from each family may attend the classroom orientation and meet the teachers in person, while others attend remotely. Each child may visit the classroom with one or more adult family members at a scheduled time prior to the beginning of school. During the school year, educators will offer opportunities for school visits to celebrate birthdays, attend parent-teacher conferences, etc., but we will not be hosting large group events in person.

Undergraduates and Research: The Children's School will begin involving vaccinated undergraduates during the Fall 2021 semester, beginning with a small number of undergraduate employees, interns and practicum students. The introductory child development course will do their first observation project remotely, and then we will consider an in-person observation opportunity for them during the late fall.

No developmental research methods course is being offered this fall, but some of the graduate students and research associates will be conducting in-person research. Researchers will follow all the educator protocols for interacting with children. They will disinfect all lab materials between children, including computers, tablets, etc.

Changes from 2020-2021 Protocols: Because we now know that surface transmission is not a major mechanism of coronavirus spread, we changed several of our protocols for the June camp and found that they worked well. Children will now be allowed to carry their belongings to and from school in their own backpacks, and they will not be required to have a separate pair of shoes that they keep at school. In addition, we have had a large playground sandbox installed on our playground to replace the one that was removed when sand was deemed unsafe for group play. We are also returning to our pre-pandemic practice of allowing children from all groups to utilize whichever toilet is available in the children's bathroom rather than assigning specific toilets to particular pods.

Coronavirus Cases at School: In the event of a confirmed diagnosis of a COVID-19 case at school, the affected individual must isolate for a period of 10 days and the entire class "pod" will have a period of quarantine with remote learning, while CMU's contact tracers communicate with the individual's close contacts. CMU's CleanIt team will follow their "deep clean" protocol, and we may need to close the whole school briefly, depending on when the COVID-positive individual was last in the building (with at least 24 hours needed). This situation only occurred once for one class last year, and there was no evidence of coronavirus spread within the school.

Our success last year resulted from everyone's diligence in developing and following risk mitigation protocols so that each of us is "all in for each other". We look forward to a similarly positive and productive collaboration among our educators, families, children, and the whole Carnegie Mellon community for the coming year.



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