

## **Athena Reopening Survey Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Will Athena be offering an Early Arrival Program or an After School Program this year?**

No. At least not in the beginning of the year. With the new licensing regulations that are being mandated to accommodate new health and safety protocols for COVID-19, we are not able to have programs before or after school. If and when the state licensing regulations change with the progression of the virus we will reevaluate the offerings we are able to provide. Our goal as a school has always been to serve working families and we will reinstate some form of early arrival and after school when we feel it is safe to do so, and in a manner that aligns with the philosophy and vision of our school.

### **Will you be taking temperatures of all the staff and children every morning?**

Yes, with no-touch thermometers. Staff will be required to perform self health screens every morning that will be tracked. All families will be interviewed and the child screened at their car before we accept the child into our care. Our admin team will oversee dropoff and pickup procedures daily with extra support staff to assist. Parents will be asked not to come onto campus except in an emergency or for a prearranged situation.

### **What protocols will be in place if a child or staff member has been exposed to or tests positive for COVID?**

We are planning to follow the CDC guidance and our local health authority and Licensing Department's regulations with regard to confirmed exposure of COVID-19 on campus. We will contact our Licensing Representative and the Austin Health Department immediately upon learning of any confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our community. We will follow their guidance with regards to how much of our campus needs to be closed down and for how long. We will notify all families of currently enrolled students and communicate the necessary information while preserving the privacy of the person involved. The current CDC guidelines recommend that we close down the area(s) that have been used by the person who is sick and wait 24 hours to allow respiratory droplets to settle before sending anyone into the space to clean. Once 24 hours have passed, the space(s) should be cleaned and disinfected. We will then wait for guidance from the Health Department to determine when that space can be reopened for use.

### **Will guides be wearing masks in the classroom?**

At this point, yes. We are asking the guides to wear masks upon arrival and departure, during student dropoff and pickup, in public and common areas and whenever it feels safest such as when in close proximity to other people.. We are looking at ways to ensure the safety of everyone while also taking care of the social and emotional needs of the children in any given moment. Teachers will use their best judgement to determine if they need to take their face coverings off in the following situations, needing to

walk away for a moment to take a deep breath, to ensure a child can hear and understand your message and making a needed emotional connection.

**Will current Primary students stay in their same classroom?**

Yes, for the most part. In the event there are more than 20 returning students in a classroom (which there may be in two of the original Primary rooms) we will make a plan with those families as to the best possible solution.

**Will Primary Nappers be sent home on the Half Day schedule?**

No, until and unless we discover that we need to change the plan. Our current plan is to have all the Primary children have a rest time after lunch where they will be read to from a chapter book and lay quietly in their spaces. We anticipate that those children who need to nap will fall asleep, after which the older children will be able to get up and work quietly in the classroom, or in the outdoor work environment, or possibly have playground time. Once we sort out the details for all the class schedules we will let you know.

**I'm concerned about the drop-off transition for my newly-enrolled Tot, they will expect me to go with them.**

We know that the transition from the car to a staff member will take a little time to get used to. Many schools employ a car-line drop off and after the initial settling in period, the children develop trust in the person receiving them. We will take every step possible to ensure smooth drop offs and transitions. We will also do what we can in the weeks leading up to the start of the year to acclimate you and your child to our environment and his or her guide in advance, and talk about drop off routines with you in detail. Once connected to your child's guide, please stay current with them as to challenges you are having so we can accommodate where possible.

**Will classrooms maintain their diversified age structure?**

One of the primary tenets of Montessori philosophy is maintaining mixed age groups in every classroom. The truth is that safety comes first under these new circumstances resulting from COVID-19. During this redesign transition, none of our primary classrooms will contain the robust, multi-age communities that we are used to and that we love. The only way we could create that model this year would be if we were to displace current students who have been in their primary classrooms for a year or two to new classrooms, creating eight multi-age classrooms. After careful consideration, we feel this solution would be a net negative and do not think it is a viable solution for the entire community. Our hope is that all of these changes are temporary, and a primary goal is to maintain as much consistency, quality, and predictability for as many families as possible until we are able to convert back to our original design.

**Can more of the school day take place in outdoor spaces, as those are generally deemed safer than indoor spaces?**

We have always felt that outdoor spaces are an important part of the curriculum and plan to continue to use our outdoor work environments, gardens, lawn, and playgrounds throughout the day. Since children will not be able to mingle with other groups, we plan to divide the outdoor play areas into sections so that more than one class can be on the playground at the same time, but not intermingling.

**How can we feel confident that everyone in the community is practicing social distancing and other precautionary measures off campus?**

We can't guarantee what measures people are taking off campus but we will be requesting that staff and families continue to employ physical distancing and other recommended precautions off campus and will be interviewing staff and families daily to gather information about their practices and movements while away from school.

On campus we will require staff to practice physical distancing and will not be using the front office or teachers' lounge areas for groups to gather or work. Staff will be required to wear masks upon entry to campus and in public and common areas. We will not be able to ensure that the children are kept six feet apart nor the teachers six feet from the children during the class day in the classroom.

**What would a virtual education experience look like in the fall?**

Our first priority is putting in place safe practices and measures for our community on our campus. We will consider and plan for a virtual education experience if the situation dictates more shelter in place for all.

**What will tuition look like in the Fall should on-campus school be cancelled again?**

We will have to cross that bridge if and when we get to it. We would likely again implement a full-fledged virtual educational and community experience should we be made to close campus again. As far as tuition is concerned, it will depend on factors such as length of time of mandated closure as well as availability of loans in order to keep the business afloat. As always, we will be as transparent and timely as possible in our communication with our families in the event that we have to change our current plans for the school year.

**If a family doesn't feel comfortable returning in August, how does that impact a child's return in the spring or next school year?**

If you have enrolled in the coming school year and decide that you are not ready to return in August, your enrollment fee will hold your spot until we are able to accommodate your child once you are ready to return. We won't be able to make any guarantees as to the time frame once school starts. If the new licensing regulations stay in place for the entire school year, and we have filled the vacated spots by the time school starts, it is likely that we won't be able to accommodate your enrollment this school year. However, if the class size limits are released at some point during the school year, we would prioritize any current families who feel ready to return. Either way, we will prioritize families who have already enrolled, but there will be no way to guarantee that we would have room once school is underway.

**Will newly enrolled students have a chance to acclimate to campus with their parents before school begins?**

The CDC's recommendation is that schools only allow students and essential employees on campus in order to minimize exposure. We will be asking that parents do not come on to campus except for in an emergency or for a prearranged situation. We are very sensitive to the fact that the transition of the newly enrolled students will be much different than in "normal" years. We are working very hard as a team and consulting with many therapists and education experts to develop a plan that will help with this transition. This may include virtual "home visits" to help build context around the teachers that will be caring for your child. It will also include "soft start" days where your child will be on campus for short periods of time leading up to the official first day of school.