

MEMO

To: Spruce Tree Parent Community

CC: Spruce Tree Staff

From: Sabrina Binkley, Head of School

Date: April 21, 2021

RE: **Phased Approach to COVID Mitigation**



Phased Approach – A Responsible, COVID-conscious Path Toward Normalcy

In an effort to promote safety while moving toward normalcy, a phased approach is the best option. This allows time for observation and assessment of wellness, and further progress toward community-wide herd immunity. We will continue to follow CDC and State guidance as we move forward in order to make data-based decisions that are in the best interests of our school and greater community.

For the foreseeable future, a number of mitigation practices will remain in place. They are:

- Symptoms control: Students and staff are required to stay home when they are sick.
- Hand hygiene: Frequent hand washing required by students and staff.
- Face coverings required indoors for students at all times and staff when among students.*

- **Phase 1, effective May 7, 2021.** The following revisions will be made to the STMS Covid Mitigation Plan:

- Face coverings will be optional for students/staff when outdoors as outdoor activities are active in nature, offer ample spacing, and are non-contact. Outdoor activities include: on the playground for recess, PE or Sunset program, nature walks, outdoor snack/lunch times, and outdoor field trips.
 - This is a change from the current mitigation plan and is supported by CDC, PAC, Staff, and the Parent Survey.
 - This change **does not** include the outdoor patio classrooms for Children's House students as face coverings will continue to be required in both indoor and outdoor classrooms for Taiga and Boreal children.
 - This change **does** include the outdoor patio classroom for elementary aged children. The older children spend more focused time outdoors and move less frequently

between spaces. Also, at their age and developmental level they are more adept to the responsibility of removing/replacing their face covering as appropriate.

- All outdoor classrooms have boundaries and there is no mixing of cohorts.
- If you would like us to ensure that your child wears a face covering when outdoors, we will do so. Please contact your teacher.
- *Face coverings will be optional for fully vaccinated staff when not among children; i.e. when working in classrooms alone or among adults before/after school, in the teacher office, Peace Room, lobby, or in Sabrina's office, and during team or staff meetings.
 - This is a change from the current mitigation plan which requires face coverings for all at all times in all spaces; this change is supported by CDC, PAC, Staff, and 83% of surveyed parents.
- Temperature checks will no longer be performed for students or staff upon arrival. We will however continue to take a child's temperature if they are not feeling well or appear feverish and send them home if they have a fever. This is because:
 - Since the pandemic began, we have never had a feverish child come to school, meaning our thermometer has never indicated a temperature higher than 100.4.
 - Data shows that temperature is not a conclusive symptom of Covid.
 - The accuracy of touchless thermometers is not 100%.

Thank you for your participation in our recent STMS COVID Mitigation Plan Survey. Your input is highly valuable. The intent of the survey was to gather perspective and feedback from all Spruce Tree stakeholders in order to inform the best path forward for our school community. It was not used as a pure decision mechanism. The PAC and I read and considered all survey comments and the three letters we received by email. We hear you. And we're here for you.

Our decisions reflect the majority on 2 of the 3 actionable survey questions. The other three questions were for reference (cohort question) and data (vaccination questions). And with serious consideration of the opposing feedback on Question 1 related to lifting the face covering requirement for students and staff in all outdoor spaces (playground and patio classrooms), we modified the decision with practical and developmental purpose.

I am pleased with the intentional direction we are heading and the pace at which we are going. I acknowledge we are not at the end of the tunnel... yet, and that our continued vigilance is critical. We have done our part all along and we will continue to promote wellness and protect our community.

Sincerely,
-sb