

TMA's Approach to COVID-19

COVID-19 has disrupted life as we knew it. The health and safety of our students are our highest priorities. Therefore, TMA adheres to required guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Indiana State Department of Health. Please visit the following websites for the most up-to-date information available on the COVID-19 pandemic:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- <https://www.in.gov/isdh/28470.htm>

TMA does not believe remote learning is a satisfactory long-term substitute for open classrooms and teacher/student/peer interaction. Rather, remote learning may be a necessary measure when health and safety conditions and/or government mandates leave no other option.

TMA understands that its response needs to be flexible to respond quickly to changing circumstances in our own school community as well as to conditions in our region. In responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, TMA has been guided by five principles:

1. Prioritize student, faculty, and staff health and wellbeing over other principles.
2. Act in adherence to TMA's Mission and Core Values.
3. Promote face-to-face learning over remote learning whenever it is safe to do so.
4. Ensure hygiene and health related policies are research-based, clearly communicated, effectively implemented, and diligently enforced.
5. Promote practices and policies to reduce risk of virus transmission and support our capacity to be responsive when facing changing community health mandates or recommendations.

The full TMA COVID Response Plan can be found here: [TMA's Re-Opening Plan 2020](#). This document (and page) includes updates to our COVID plan.

COVID Infection Prevention

Physical Distancing

TMA is uniquely situated in our ability to allow students to remain social, but at an appropriate physical distance to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Specifically, the buildings have ample extra space to allow for classrooms and students to spread out. TMA can employ various protocols to limit interaction between classrooms as deemed necessary, including students entering and exiting directly through classroom entry doors (rather than main building entrances), assigned seats and rugs, keeping siblings together when possible, limited interactions between classrooms, one child in the bathroom at a time (for shared bathrooms), and co-curriculars taught in each classroom, as needed.

Air Quality

TMA understands the importance of indoor air quality in the prevention of COVID-19. Therefore, iWave air purifiers have been installed as part of the HVAC systems to help clean the air of impurities (see <https://iwaveair.com/performance-data/> for more information related to the benefits of such purifiers).

TMA has also invested in creating dedicated outdoor areas for learning for each classroom. Teachers are encouraged to prepare schedules of outdoor activities and classes as much as weather permits. Added benefits of the outdoor space are that it allows even more space for students to spread out and a safe place for mask breaks for our students throughout the day.

Masks

TMA requires masks for all faculty, staff and students, with the exception of Toddler students, in line with CDC recommendations. TMA also requires all visitors to wear masks while on campus. While no specific type of mask is required, TMA recommends following the mask protocols outlined by the CDC in response to the highly contagious Omicron variant, which can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/effective-masks.html>.

Preventative Hygiene and Cleaning

Enhanced personal hygiene and cleaning protocols are in place and strictly enforced at TMA. We use the CDC guidelines, along with other occupational and environmental recommendations, to employ the safest and most current cleaning practices on campus. Hand sanitizer is available throughout campus and hand washing is greatly emphasized throughout the day.

COVID-19 Vaccinations

Vaccination is the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic and the most severe consequences of infection. Therefore, TMA requires all teachers and staff to be fully vaccinated subject to medical, religious and other recognized exceptions. Although TMA strongly recommends that all students age 5 and older be vaccinated, we do not currently require students to be vaccinated. For more information about the safety and importance of vaccinations for children, please watch this wonderful discussion hosted by TMA with pediatricians, heart specialists and other medical professionals: [TMA Forum – Children and the COVID Vaccine](#).

The percent of our faculty, staff and students that have provided proof of COVID-19 vaccination as of January 31, 2022, is as follows:

Group/Room	Percent Vaccinated*
Faculty & Staff	98%
Junior High Room 112	56%
Upper Elementary Room 102	65%
Upper Elementary Room 104	71%
Lower Elementary Room 105	79%
Lower Elementary Room 106	74%
Lower Elementary Room 107	55%
Early Childhood Room 2	25% of eligible, 10% of whole class
Early Childhood Room 3	20% of eligible, 10% of whole class
Early Childhood Room 5	44% of eligible, 18% of whole class
Early Childhood Room 6	30% of eligible, 15% of whole class
Early Childhood Room 7	N/A (no student 5 or older)
Toddler Room 1	N/A (no student 5 or older)
Toddler Room 4	N/A (no student 5 or older)

**The above rates are based on documented evidence of vaccination (copies of vaccine cards) voluntarily provided to TMA by parents or other guardians of TMA students and are subject to change. Note that not all students in our Early Childhood rooms (which typically include children ages 3-6), and none of the students in the Toddler rooms (which typically include children ages 18-36 months) are eligible yet for approved COVID-19 vaccines.*

Communication

TMA realizes that even the best plans will only be successful if they set clear expectations for those affected, have a sustainable structure and are flexible enough to adapt to changing realities. In such a case, clear and ongoing communication about the current details of the plan and up-to-date governmental recommendations and mandates is essential. As a result, TMA is constantly in communication with its community through email, newsletters and website updates so that everyone is aware of changes affecting the school, the students and current COVID-19 protocols.

COVID RESPONSE PROCEDURES

Student & Teachers Procedures

	Quarantine Requirements	Testing Requirements
Student or teacher tests positive for COVID	Stay home for at least 5 days from the positive test. May return if fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and symptoms are improving.	Negative COVID test is required before returning to school.
Student or teacher is sick (or otherwise has symptoms) and may potentially have COVID	Stay home for at least 5 days after symptoms began. May return if fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and symptoms are improving.	Negative COVID test is required before returning to school.
Vaccinated student or teacher is exposed* to COVID	No requirement to stay home and quarantine as long as individual does not have any symptoms.	Recommended but not required on the fifth day after exposure.
Unvaccinated student or teacher is exposed* to COVID	Stay home for at least 5 days from the last known exposure.	Negative COVID test is required before returning to school.

**Exposure is defined by the CDC as being within 6 feet for a cumulative total of at least 15 minutes in a 24-hour period.*

Classroom Procedures

As a result of the restricted interactions between classrooms discussed above, TMA is able to target its response to COVID-19 infection on a classroom-by-classroom basis. As of January, 2022, in the event a student or faculty member tests positive, the following applies to the affected classroom only:

- If the affected classroom has a vaccination rate of at least 60%, the classroom remains open for all students who have submitted proof of vaccination (documented vaccinated students). All other students are required to remain out of school for 5 days after the last known exposure and provide proof of a negative COVID test on day four post potential infection before returning.

- If the affected classroom has a documented vaccination rate of less than 60%, the classroom will close for 5 days from the last known exposure and all students other than documented vaccinated students are required to provide proof of a negative COVID test on day four post potential infection before returning.

Room closures and student quarantine and testing requirements and timelines are clearly communicated to all affected families as soon as the known COVID infection is reported to TMA.

Classroom Operations

The first day of any room closure is typically a day of preparation for our teachers. For the remainder of the time the room is closed, the teacher will provide written assignments for students to complete at home. When a room remains open to documented, vaccinated students, teachers will provide written classwork to unvaccinated students unable to attend in person.

COVID Response Success

To navigate this unprecedented public health challenge, mutual respect, trust, and a deep sense of our reciprocal obligations to one another has been essential. Those virtues have always been a part of TMA's Montessori curriculum, so our students, faculty, staff and community have been uniquely prepared and able to adapt and take proper care of themselves and each other.

As a result of the continued diligence of our TMA community and the targeted, scientific and flexible approach focused on keeping students in the classroom, TMA has been open for in-person learning continuously since the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. While individual classrooms have been closed from time to time following TMA's guidelines at the time of any known exposure or positive COVID test result, TMA's approach has resulted in very minimal virtual learning for our students.