

# Current Processes to Protect Students and Staff due to COVID-19

Dear Parents,

Below is an outline of our plan for 2020-21. This is our plan as of today. As new data and information come in, and as we progress down the path of exploring some of the precautions outlined below, there may be changes to our plan. We will keep you abreast of those changes as best we can and will continue to take all necessary steps to keep our children and staff safe.

Before diving into the details, I wanted to toss out a few caveats. Carle Auditory Oral School is a non-public special education program, meaning that we still fall under the directives of the Illinois State Board of Education and the governor's office. In the event of a mandated school closure at a state or local level, we will need to close as well.

Additionally, due to our limited number of substitute teachers and our commitment to low student to staff ratios, there is a chance that individual classrooms might be closed in the event of a required quarantine to keep our students and staff safe. We will be in touch if it appears that this step may become necessary.

We don't have any plans to close down for either of these reasons, but the spring semester taught us a lot about the types of things that can happen outside of our control. So, I want families to be aware that these types of situations (that we are aware of) could cause us to close the school.

Okay, back to the plan for 2020-21. Our plan is to be onsite at CAOS full time - that is five full days each week. See below for how we plan to make that work while keeping students and staff safe.

## PLANS TO PROTECT US FROM PEOPLE WITH COVID SYMPTOMS

- Each family will be asked to complete a daily Google form certifying that their child is not experiencing COVID related symptoms.
- Additionally, staff will use an infrared forehead scanning thermometer to confirm temperature within the normal range of children upon their arrival.
- Staff will also complete symptom and temperature checks each day upon arrival.
- The illness policy is updated to exclude children and staff that are experiencing any of the 15 current symptoms related to COVID-19. Children need to be free from fever, diarrhea and vomiting for 24 hours prior to returning to school. Additionally, children are required to provide documentation of a negative COVID test results or a note from a doctor, following a doctor's appointment indicating that the symptoms are related to a diagnosis other than COVID-19. If children do not get tested or visit the doctor, they can return to school 10 days after the onset of symptoms, if symptoms are resolved and they are free from fever, diarrhea and vomiting for 24 hours. Staff return to work will be dictated by Carle's COVID guidance hotline and guidance from ISBE. The full policy is in the Parent Handbook and on the Google form referenced above.
- In the event that someone is diagnosed with COVID, the current plan is that staff and families will be informed that an individual in the school has tested positive for COVID-19 AND either the child/ staff member IS or IS NOT a close contact. The person's identity will not be shared. A close contact is an individuals that is known to have been within 6 feet of the person who tested positive, with or without a mask for greater than 15 minutes. A link to each type of notification letter can be found below.

## **PLANS TO PROTECT US THROUGH SOCIAL DISTANCING**

- We plan to open six classrooms in the fall, with a cap of 5 students per classroom. One teacher and enrichment teacher will be assigned to each classroom. Less people in the classroom will allow us to distance better.
- We are securing small tables for each child in the lower grades and using individual desks for the children in the older classrooms, rather than the large tables to provide more social distancing during classroom activities.
- During snack and meal times, when children's masks are off, children will be at least six feet away from one another.
- Areas used for drop off/ pick up will be marked to support social distancing. Details are included in the parent handbook.
- Visits to cubbies/ restrooms/ water fountains to refill their water bottles will be staggered to allow for social distancing.
- During nap, children will be at least six feet apart, and will lay head to foot or have physical barriers between them.

## **PLANS TO PROTECT US THROUGH MASK USAGE**

- Students and staff will wear masks during all indoor activities and outdoors when social distancing cannot be maintained, with the exception of snack, lunch and nap.
- We will provide support for mask modification (e.g., knots, s-clips, monkeys, etc.) and positive reinforcement to help children keep their masks on - covering their nose and mouth.
- We will support staff to wear masks appropriately - covering their nose and mouth.
- Each child and adult will have a new paper bag daily with their name on it to store their mask when it is not in use.
- We are providing lanyards to each child so they can clip their mask to the lanyard and carry masks with them when they take them off outdoors or during snack/ lunch.

## **PLANS TO ENSURE ACCESS WHILE PROTECTING US THROUGH MASK USAGE**

- Carle has secured a bulk order of The Clear Mask as well as The Communicator Mask for staff to use when interacting with children who are deaf and hard of hearing. We have been looking at acoustical research to learn about how fabric masks, clear masks and face shields impact the acoustic signal we are providing for our children. The type of masks we use throughout the day will be guided by safety, visual and auditory access needs. Families will be invited into the discussion about which mask options might be appropriate at different times of the day. We plan to experiment with the clear masks to see if they can be worn by children to improve visual access for our students with hearing loss who need that most.
- During portions of the day, Plexiglas sneeze guards may be used which would allow staff or students to remove their masks to allow for certain speech articulation and auditory perception work to occur.
- Remote microphones/ hearing assistive technology will be paired with classroom soundfield systems as well as personal devices to ensure adequate auditory access for children who are deaf and hard of hearing.
- Adjustments to children's hearing aids, BAHA and cochlear implants may be made to compensate for the known loss of high frequency information and decrease in overall volume caused by the use of fabric masks.

\*Some students are medically unable to wear a mask, as determined by a physician and documented through a note from a doctor. If your child falls into this category, please talk with your doctor about it. If a child is unable to wear a mask, increased social distancing and potentially an air purifier with a HEPA filter will be used to keep the child, as well as others in the room safe.

#### **PLANS TO PROTECT US BY USING SMALL CONSISTENT GROUPS**

- Three classrooms will be housed on each side of the building. Each side of the building will have deaf educators, enrichment teachers, special/general educators and speech language pathologists that work exclusively with the students on that side of the building.
- We only have one Special Education Teacher, one Social Worker, one Physical Therapist and one Occupational Therapist. These professionals will take extra precautions since they are working with individuals from both sides of the building.
- Each side of the building will have a space allocated to before care and after care in order to limit the number of people each child is in contact with as a function of coming to CAOS.
- Drop off/ Pick up times for school will be staggered by class and utilize two separate entrances to limit the number of adults and children that folks are in contact with while at CAOS.
- Drop off/ Pick Up for Before Care and After Care will utilize the side door to the playground. Parents will call the CAOS cell phone upon arrival to the building to ask staff to come down. This will help to limit the number of adults and children that folks are in contact with while at CAOS.
- Parents will use the CAOS cell phone (217) 493-5836, the CAOS school office (217) 326-284 or the ECHO front desk (217) 383-4375 if they need anything at the school. In an effort to limit the number of people at the school, visitors to the school will be significantly limited.
- University volunteers, practicum students and student teachers will not be placed at CAOS for the fall semester. A decision will be made later in the year about the spring semester.

#### **PLANS TO PROTECT US BY MAXIMIZING TIME OUTDOORS**

We utilize outdoor spaces to the greatest extent possible while weather permits to further limit risk.

- We are moving some class activities to different outdoor areas.
- We are also hosting snack and lunch in different outdoor areas (weather permitting) to increase safety while kids have their masks off to eat and drink. Families are asked to send ready to serve lunches (no heat ups), including an ice pack, drink, napkin and needed utensils, so that we can easily move lunch outdoors when weather permits.
- We are using canopies and tarps to create shady spaces outside of school to make these outdoor activities more comfortable.
- Outdoor spaces will be divided to identify specific areas where each class of children can eat, play and learn at different times during the day. This will limit the number of children and adults that folks are exposed to while at CAOS.
- The playground will be divided into two areas - the climbers/ swings/ woodchips and grass/ bikes/ basketball court. Only one class uses each area at any given time. This will limit the number of children and adults that folks are exposed to while at CAOS.
- The garden will be divided into three areas - garden grass, garden benches and garden sidewalk. Additional areas are located on the walkway to the playground and the walkway outside the playground. Only one class uses each area at any given time. This will limit the number of children and adults that folks are exposed to while at CAOS.
- The sidewalks around the building will be utilized as outdoor eating/ learning/ play spaces as well.

## PLANS TO PROTECT US THROUGH CLEANING

- Our EVS staff has obtained a new backpack vacuum cleaner with HEPA filters that will allow him to better clean all of the carpeted areas of our school.
- High touch surfaces (doorknobs, elevator buttons, office equipment) will be cleaned several times during the school day, as well as overnight.
- Toys, such as magnet-tiles, or dollhouse toys, will be used by 1 or 2 children at a time. Toys will be wiped down with a cleaning substance known to kill COVID germs and allowed to air dry before another child or pair of children are permitted to use them.
- Playground climbers, swings, bikes and balls will be sanitized after use by each group and allowed to air dry before the next group comes out.
- If tables, chairs or indoor spaces are shared, they will be sanitized after use by each group and allowed to air dry before the next group uses them.

## PLANS TO PROTECT US THROUGH KEEPING MATERIALS SEPARATE

- School supplies such as crayons, markers, glue sticks, and scissors will be labeled with each child's name and stored in a container with their name on it. These materials will not be shared.
- Each child will have two cubbies to allow for individual storage of all of their school materials.

After reviewing this document, please contact Danielle with your questions/ concerns.

## SCHOOL DROP OFF PROCEDURE

**\*During COVID restrictions, we will have staggered drop off:**

8:40 - 8:50 **Back door** Ms. Kara's Class, **Side door** Ms. Samantha's Class

8:50 - 9:00 **Back door** Ms. Sarah's Class, **Side door** Ms. Leah's Class

9:00 - 9:10 **Back door** Ms. Kayley's Class, **Side door** Ms. Denisse's Class

- Drop off times will be set for each class. Please plan to arrive during the ten minute block to maintain social distancing.
- **SIDE DOOR:** During your scheduled drop off time, pull your vehicle all the way forward in the designated drop off area on the south side of Park Street. You and your child will line up on a designated space outside of the garden entrance. The teacher will confirm symptom checklist is complete, temperature check, and escort them upstairs. Walkers should follow the same waiting procedure.
- **BACK DOOR:** During your scheduled drop off time, pull your vehicle all the way forward in the circle drive on the south side of Park Street. You and your child will walk the path along the side of the ECHO building toward the back door. Line up on a designated space outside of the back door entrance. The teacher will confirm symptom checklist is complete, temperature check, and escort them upstairs. Walkers should follow the same waiting procedure.
- **LATE DROP OFF:** If you are not at school during the designated drop off time, please park your vehicle across from the school, and call the CAOS cell phone 217-493-5836. You may need to wait until 9:10 when the side door is available for late drop offs. A staff member will come down to confirm symptom checklist is complete, temperature check, and escort them upstairs. We appreciate your cooperation with this policy and helping to keep our staff and students safe.

## PICK UP PROCEDURE

3:00 - 3:10 **Back door** Ms. Kara's Class, **Side door** Ms. Samantha's Class

3:10 - 3:20 **Back door** Ms. Sarah's Class, **Side door** Ms. Leah's Class

3:20 - 3:30 **Back door** Ms. Kayley's Class, **Side door** Ms. Denisse's Class

Pick up times will be set for each class. Please plan to arrive during the ten minute block to maintain social distancing.

- **SIDE DOOR:** During your scheduled pick up time, pull your vehicle all the way forward in the designated drop off area on the south side of Park Street. You will line up on a designated space outside of the garden entrance. Walkers should follow the same waiting procedure.
- **BACK DOOR:** During your scheduled pick up time, pull your vehicle all the way forward in the circle drive on the south side of Park Street. You will walk the path along the side of the ECHO building toward the backdoor. Line up on a designated space outside of the back door entrance. Walkers should follow the same waiting procedure.
  - If for some reason pick-up will be other than the routine, please **send a note or call** to let the school office and/or teacher know. Please do not e-mail the teacher or office coordinator as there may not be an opportunity for them to check their e-mail during the day.
  - In the event that the teacher does not recognize the person picking up a child, they will ask for photo identification and compare the name to the authorized pick up list provided by each family. If the person is not on the authorized pick up list, your child will not be released to them, and will instead transition to After Care. Please ensure that you keep this list current and communicate this expectation to people on your authorized pick up list to avoid inconvenience or frustration.
- **LATE PICK UP:** If you are not at school during the designated pick up time, please park your vehicle across from the school, and call the CAOS cell phone (217) 493-5836. You may need to wait until 3:30 when the side door is available for late pick-ups. A teacher will bring your child down to you when the side door is available.
- We realize there may be unexpected or emergency situations that prevent you from picking up your child during the pick-up window. If this happens, please notify the school office immediately at **(217) 326-2824**. The school office will inform the teacher of your plan for your child's pick up. If your child is not picked up during your 10 minute pick-up window, your child will be brought to After Care. A late pick up charge of \$1.00 will need to be paid at pick-up time or at drop-off the following day in the drop box by the side entrance. This charge will cover your child's participation in After Care until 3:40. Snack is provided at 3:40 each day. Any child who is not picked up by this time must pay for the full drop in rate of \$10.35 at pick-up time or at drop-off the following day. This charge will cover your child's participation in After Care for the day. You may pick up any time before 5:30 p.m.

## BEFORE CARE DROP OFF & AFTER CARE PICK UP

- Before Care operates from 7:00 - 9:00 on each full day of school.
- Parents can drop off their children in Before Care between 7:00 and 8:30 each morning by parking in the designated drop off area, calling the CAOS cell phone **(217) 493-5836** and walking to the side entrance of the building.
- After Care operates from 3:00 - 5:30 on each full day of school.

- Parents can pick up their children from After Care between 3:30 and 5:15 each evening by parking in the designated drop off area or circle drive, calling the CAOS cell phone (217) 493-5836, and walking to the side entrance of the building.
- Families who pick up after 5:15 will find that the enrichment teachers and children have transitioned to the side door area to facilitate pick up. Additionally, this will help our enrichment teachers to get the after-care materials cleaned and the building locked up in time for them to clock out at 5:45. We appreciate your partnership in this process and hope that we have identified a strategy that is mutually beneficial for families and staff. For those children picked up after 5:30, a charge of \$1/ minute will be added to your account.