**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS RELATED TO**

**CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19**

**What precautions are you taking to prevent infection?**

A: Valley Preschool will continue to maintain the highest standards to ensure the cleanliness of the school to protect the safety of the students and staff. An important part of this process is disinfecting. EPA-approved disinfectants again COVID-19 will be used at scheduled times throughout the day and when appropriate. Students and staff will clean hands when transitioning between activities. In small groups, students will have their own supplies and will be encouraged by staff to remain socially distanced within both the indoor and outdoor settings. Students and staff will not be permitted to be within 6 feet of another for periods lasing longer than 5 minutes.\*

\*Guidelines suggest preventing close contact for periods of more than 15 minutes.

In addition, we will begin the school year wearing masks for any indoor portions of class time.

Our class routines will be restructured to include even more outside time. Lessons will be modified to incorporate the fresh outdoors whenever possible.

We will continue to monitor and respond to the latest guidelines put forth by the Center for Disease Control (CDC); Minnesota Department of Health (MDH); and MN Licensing.

**I’ve heard children aren’t required to wear face masks in school settings. Is this true?**

A:  The Minnesota Department of Health, along with guidance from the CDC, are recommending all persons over the age of 2 and under the age of 12 – who are reasonably able to do so – wear a face mask when in public and/or in the company of individuals outside their immediate family.

**Will my preschooler have to wear a mask at Valley?**

A: We will continue to have students wear face masks when in the school building when not eating and/or is otherwise necessary to do so.

We are prioritizing every safety measure possible from the onset. We believe starting the year implementing this practice is the responsible course of action.

More information about wearing face masks and keeping them clean can be found here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wash-cloth-face-coverings.html>

**Will my child be expected to wear a mask for the entire year?**

A:  We do not know at this time.

**Will my child be expected to wear a mask for the entire class time / day?**

A: No. When outside children will not be expected to wear their facemasks. Together as a class we will demonstrate when/where we will be wearing our masks.

**What if my child’s mask slips or slides down on his/her face? Will someone help him/her?**

A: Yes. We absolutely will. If there appears to be a continual issue with a particular mask (doesn’t fit; elastic worn; etc.) we will let you know.

**Will masks be provided?**

A: Masks will not be provided on a daily basis to all students. We will, however, have enough masks onsite at all times for each child in our program. This effort is above and beyond the minimums required, but safety is our top priority.

That said, face masks will become part of your child’s school supplies. We ask that at least two (2) clean spare masks (disposable is fine) be kept in your child’s backpack at all times.

**What if my child doesn’t like to wear a face mask? Will (s)he be punished?**

A: No. Your child will never be “punished.” We understand there may be some hesitancy from the start, especially if a child has not had previous experience with a mask. At school, we will use the strategies of encouragement and positive reinforcement we are known for to make this experience a positive one. If a child is having a difficult time we will be sure to communicate this with you and work to determine how to best support him/her.

**Should we be talking with our child about COVID-19?**

A: Yes. There are many great resources available to families to have CHILD-FRIENDLY conversations about this. Please keep in mind: lengthy, in-depth conversations are not developmentally-appropriate for preschool-aged children. Let them know there are “germs” that are making some people sick and we are working together to keep not only ourselves but others healthy as well. Remember: kiddos want to be helpful and do the “right” thing!

When it comes to your preschooler: short, simple and positive is best!

For more information on how to speak with your child(ren) about COVID-19, check out the following links:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/talking-with-children.html>

<https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>

**What if I suspect my child or a family member may be sick with COVID-19?**

A: If you suspect you or a family member may be sick, check out the following link from the State of Minnesota for more information:

<https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/if-sick/index.jsp>

**What happens if my child becomes ill while at school?**

A: A child who becomes ill will be immediately separated from the group and monitored by a staff member until parents are notified and the child is picked up from school. Valley Preschool follows strict cleaning and disinfecting procedures to ensure any area(s) are thoroughly cleaned and safe for future use.

**What happens if my child tests positive for COVID-19?**

A: Following our guidelines for reporting illness (see Parent Handbook for details), you will be required to report to the school’s director, Sarah, immediately upon confirmation of a positive test result for COVID-19.

For more information on what to do if you or your child tests positive for COVID-19, check out the following link:

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/case.pdf>

**What happens if a student in my child’s class tests positive for COVID-19?**

A: Families will be notified immediately if another child in your child’s class tests positive for COVID-19. Although information surrounding who it is will not be shared, the test date and other general information will be shared. It is recommended that in the event a student or staff member tests positive for the virus, that all students and their families be tested immediately.

**What happens if a student in another class (not in my child’s class) or staff member tests positive?**

A: Any confirmed case of a student at Valley Preschool testing positive for COVID-19 will be shared to all families of Valley Preschool immediately. Following MDH & CDC guidelines, it is recommended that any person(s) who may have come in contact with the virus, either directly or indirectly, be tested immediately.

**Will parents receive notifications if anyone in school tests positive?**

A: Yes. All families will be notified within 24 hours if a child or staff member tests positive for COVID-19.

**What happens if Governor Walz shuts down all public schools? Will Valley stay open?**

A: The Governor’s Executive Orders have allowed childcare centers, preschools and other places of business to remain open during the Peacetime Emergency. Because Valley Preschool remains independent of the Stillwater Public School District, we can and have made the decision to remain open so long as it is deemed safe to do so.

We have the benefit of small classes; a smaller school community/student population; and limited-to-no access from outside influences. We are excited about the upcoming school year and remain committed to safe practices and procedures. We ask each of our families to do the same so we can continue to provide the important programming.

**Will my child(ren) able to come to school with a runny nose?**

A: Yes. However, we ask that families monitor closely their child(ren)’s symptoms when illness of any kind presents itself. If your child is not feeling well, we ask that you keep your child home or in the care of an alternate caregiver in the event one is needed.

As the saying goes if all do our part, together, we will come out ahead.

**What additional items do I need to send my child to school with?**

A: As mentioned in a previous answer, your child will need at least two (2) clean, child-sized face masks with them each day at school. Disposable masks are fine. Beyond that, we will issue our school supplies list in the coming weeks. Typical items such as backpacks, slippers, headphones, and a durable folder will remain standard on our list.

This year, however, in lieu of sending a variety of traditional school supplies at the start of the school year, we will instead be asking our families for a small ($15) donation for supplies. This is for two reasons: 1.) we find it challenging at the start of the year to store all the boxes of facial tissue, for example and 2.) our needs are changing to include an increased supply of sanitizers, cleaning agents, PPE, face masks, etc. Similar to the facial tissues, it is a challenge to store all of these items – despite the need for them – all at once.

Thank you, in advance, for your support in helping to keep our supplies well stocked throughout the year.

**What procedures are in place to ensure group sizes are small?**

A: While licensed for a 10:1 student-teacher ratio, Valley Preschool has operated on and will continue to offer 5 or 6:1 student-teacher ratios. These low ratios are extremely rare in early childhood settings and it is an offering we are proud to provide our families. Keeping group sizes small and students spread out by using multiple areas at any given time has numerous benefits, including allowing more physical space between individuals and limiting the potential for germs to spread.

**What happens if guidelines change and the area public schools are required to close during the school year?**

A: As a licensed childcare provider in the state of Minnesota, we are required to follow guidelines set forth by the MDH and other organizations, including licensing. If public schools need to close that might not necessarily mean we will need to. We will work closely with local health officials to determine what the best course of action for our school is. Schools alone are not expected to make these decisions on their own.

As we work with health officials we will report any cases of COVID-19. Health experts will evaluate our program and make determinations that might include temporarily closing for a few days; a week or more; or not at all, depending on the infection rate locally.

**What can I do to help prepare my child in general for school in the fall?**

A: Start by focusing on the positives! Preschool is a FUN time and we are prepared to enjoy another year together with our friends. They will come to love their school family and their place within our group. If they do have fears, acknowledge those and listen to find out what/how they’re feeling. Show support through encouragement and let them know their teachers can’t wait to meet them and together we will have a wonderful time together.

In addition, find school supplies that they are excited about; including a face mask with a pattern or color your child enjoys. To further prepare, together at home practice wearing your masks for a short period of time (maybe while playing a game or watching a show). Share with your little one that these masks help to keep one another healthy. We suggest keeping the conversation positive and “light.” Remember: preschoolers see the world in a different light than we do. They look to the best in a situation! Help you child by remaining positive and focus on the *fun* of school; not the mask.

**Can we expect an otherwise “normal” school year, filled with all the traditions and special activities that Valley Preschool is known for?**

A: Yes! We love what we do and are **committed to you and your child** and each and every day. No exceptions. Yes, the past few months were impactful to say the least but we have only strengthened.

We are a **four-star Parent Aware rating** who just this past year, celebrated **our 50th year as an organization**, with the same passion for encouraging little learners to blossom and grow.

We could not be more excited to enter back together with your child(ren). Thank you for supporting your child(ren) by continuing to observe safe practices. Together, we are going to do great things!