



*New Discoveries*

*Montessori Academy*

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Dear Parent/Guardian,

Last week, Minnesota Education Commissioner Dr. Heather Mueller sent all Minnesota families with school-age children a letter thanking you for supporting children throughout the COVID pandemic. The letter highlights ways families can continue to support our school community as we observe the number of positive cases rising in our community and state. At the same time, schools received notification from the Department of Education and the Department of Health detailing recent updates and clarifications to best practices recommendations for COVID-19 prevention in schools for the 2021-22 school year. Among the updates is guidance suggesting universal indoor face coverings, regardless of vaccination status.

In response to the updated guidance, our Incident Command Team (ICT) met recently to review New Discoveries Montessori Academy's COVID-19 Preparedness Plan for 2021-22. In doing so, the ICT determined that we would continue to *recommend* the use of face coverings while indoors, but we will not *require* the use of face coverings. Having said this, the following stipulation will be effective immediately:

*If/when the percentage of positive COVID-19 cases at NDMA (students and staff combined) reaches a level of 3%, we will require face coverings for students, staff, and visitors. This translates to 9 positive cases.*

To date, we have not had more than 3 positive cases at one time. That is less than 1% of our student/staff population. If/when we do have to implement the mandate, please be assured that if you have a valid reason for your child not to wear a face covering, we will honor your request for an exemption. This move is not intended to infringe on anyone's rights. It is an effort, though, to respond to the increasing numbers of positive COVID cases in McLeod County, and state-wide.

Thank you for your part in keeping our positive COVID numbers low. The on-site testing we offer staff, and at-home testing we are offering families have helped keep our numbers low. Your vigilance in contacting me when you have exposure at home – allowing for precise contact tracing – has also helped keep our numbers low.

Respectfully,

*Dave Conrad*

Executive Director

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*Providing a quality, comprehensive public education within a Montessori Context*