

Stella Niagara – Forum Chat Questions & Answers

Health and Safety

Q: There is significant evidence that COVID is aerosolized. 6-foot distancing is helpful, but aerosols travel much farther. Why will masks not be worn all day?

A: It is true that COVID-19 is spread via droplets in the air, which is why masks are effective in mitigating the spread. In an effort to allow for mask breaks while still providing physical barriers to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, SNEP has purchased personal space dividers. When children are seated 6 feet apart behind their personal space divider during instruction, they will not be required to wear masks. This means that they will be appropriately socially distanced and have an additional physical barrier to help prevent the spread of droplets. Specials teachers may require masks throughout instruction and this is left to their discretion. Anytime a child is standing or moving around the room, he/she will be required to be wearing a mask.

Q: What if a child tests positive for COVID within the school? The answer provided was that it would be reported to the DOH and would follow those guidelines. I'd like to know what those guidelines are specifically if I will be notified that a child within the school tested positive... or if only the children in that particular class are notified... I'd like a very specific answer to this as it's obviously one of my biggest concerns.

A: If a student tests positive for COVID-19, the Niagara County Department of Health (NCDOH) will contact and notify SNEP. Additional close contacts will be elicited, and quarantine and/or notification will be determined by the NCDOH. The NCDOH will notify additional close contacts. SNEP will support the NCDOH contact tracing efforts with information relevant to who may have had contact at school with a confirmed case. Confidentiality will be maintained. The NCDOH will only discuss names of cases with appropriate school personnel. No other parents or other students will be informed of names or identifying information. SNEP will notify enrolled families that a student has tested positive for COVID-19 via email. *We are asking families of a SNEP student with a confirmed positive COVID-19 test to contact the SNEP administration with this information as soon as possible. We will formally be notified by the NCDOH, however, earlier notification is in the best interest of all of our students, staff and families.

Q: Are there different CDC guidelines for daycares and preschools? Our daycare does not require masks for 3 and 4 year olds?

A: Yes, there are a set of CDC guidelines for daycares and preschools, which our Montessori teachers are evaluating. Any updates to procedures will be provided when available and based on the appropriateness for SNEP and the level of community spread.

Q: In the event that there is a positive case in the school, what is the process as far as informing parents and will there be closing procedures.

A: We have reached out to the DOH and are awaiting a response to answer this question.

Q: Are students required to have a COVID test prior to school starting?

A: No

Q: If children are not following distancing guidelines, how will that be handled?

A: Students will not be reprimanded, they will be reminded.

Q: Will students be allowed to carry their backpacks?

A: Students are encouraged to bring a backpack to and from school everyday. They will not need to carry it throughout the building.

Q: When will the app be up and running? It concerns me that we are running on an honor system but even more that the app is not ready and could certainly crash once all of the Stella users are accessing it. What is the backup plan if the app crashes?

A: It is our hope that we will have the health screening app and corresponding thermometers to be given out next week at supply drop-off nights. We understand the concern of trusting our community to accurately answer the questions and follow the recommendation to attend school or not. Home health screening is the recommendation of the NYS DOH and has been utilized in other states as well. SNEP will be monitoring the app's data, and we trust our community to put the health of everyone before anything else. This app is run by a trusted company that has been tested in other schools, and we do not anticipate any difficulties with access. However, should this occur, the Reopening Committee will have a backup plan for a similar process and survey to be completed at home.

Q: Given each grade has only 1 teacher, if a teacher tests positive for covid is there a backup plan for another teacher to take the class over?

A: SNEP will make all necessary accommodations to prevent any disruptions in instruction if a teacher were required to be quarantined. SNEP is also actively working on hiring substitute teachers to be ready for such cases.

Q: If a child tests positive for COVID does the entire class, then need to be tested?

So will they be able to see the class online (in reference to if the child has to be quarantined)?

A: The determination on who will require testing or quarantining will be determined by the DOH. SNEP will report all potential exposures to the DOH and follow any recommendations received.

Q: If a student is only experiencing one common symptom (cough, etc.)? Are they still required to get a negative Covid test?

A: There is a significant overlap in symptomatology between COVID-19 and other illnesses. All children who fail the daily home health screening will be required to be seen by his/her primary care provider, have a negative COVID-19 test, and have resolution of symptoms prior to returning to school. This is the recommendation of the NYS DOH.

Q: What if someone tests positive and my child does not feel comfortable attending? Will they be able to go online for a period of time as part of their emotional health?

A: These cases will be handled on an individual basis.

Q: Will parents be able to walk their children to their assigned school entrance?

A: No. At this time, in order to minimize exposures as much as possible, parents will be dropping their children off outside. There will be teachers outside and at the entrances to ensure safe entry into the school.

Arrival and Pick-up

Q: Will late arrival/early pick-up work as they did before, with the parent signing the student in/out? I assume that there will be someone at the doors for a few more minutes in the mornings in the event of late stragglers (we know there will be some!), but I'm thinking more along the lines of kids who have doctor's appointments in the middle of the day or whatever. Will we be buzzed up to the office, or will there be some other kind of sign in/out procedure?

A: We are currently working to develop a new procedure for this.

Q: At drop-off in the morning, will the student's teacher be the one at the door to escort the student into the building -- e.g., will the first grade teacher be at C door to escort the first graders into the building?

A: When students are dropped off in the morning, there will be teachers on the sidewalk near the playground, at Door A and Door B, and in the hallways. Homeroom teachers will be greeting their students as they enter the classroom. Students in 1st grade will enter through Door B, not Door C as was originally planned.

Q: Related to this, will a teacher be escorting the students from the entrance door to their room?

A: There will be teachers at Door A and Door B as well as in the hallway. These teachers will guide the students to their classrooms, where they will be greeted by the homeroom teacher.

Q: Finally, we understand parents cannot enter the building, but can two parents bring the student to the entrance, or should it just be one parent?

A: At this time we are requesting that all parents remain in their car for pick-up and drop-off. Teachers will be outside, at all doors, and in the hallway to help children get to their classroom.

Q: How is it going to work exactly, dropping off and picking up?

A: DROP-OFF times will be staggered at the beginning of the academic year. All families will be assigned one of the following times: 7:55 a.m., 8:05 a.m. and 8:15 a.m. We ask that you please drop your students off promptly. In order to alleviate congestion upon entering the building each morning, we will utilize three entrances. As students enter, they will proceed directly to their classrooms.

- o Students in grades K and 6-8 will enter through Door A

- o Students in grades 1-5 will enter through Door B

- o Montessori students will enter through the yellow Center of Renewal Door.

Teachers will be outside, at all doors, and in the hallway to help children get to their classrooms.

We ask that you please remain in your car and do not walk your child up to the school building.

This decision is temporary, and will be reverted when it is safe to do so.

For PICK-UP at 3:00, students who are not staying for after-school clubs will be dismissed. These students will either board their bus or meet their parents at their cars at the pick-up line near the playground. Teachers have been assigned to supervise the students to ensure their safety. Dismissal from after-school clubs will be staggered. Each family will be assigned a designated pick-up time of either 3:50 p.m., 4:00 p.m. or 4:10 p.m. Parents will stay in their cars and drive through the pick-up line, and children will meet them at the cars. Teachers will be in the hallways, at the doors, and outside along the sidewalk guiding students to their cars.

Q: I thought I read that drop-off for pre-K students mentioned a teacher picking them up from their car, is this right? If so, how will this happen?

A: Families will pull up next to the Center of Renewal near the yellow north door. A teacher's aide will be waiting outside (or inside in bad weather). The staff member will greet you and your child and get information regarding lunch, clubs or extended care, pick-up and health screening. If screening did not occur, the staff member will have a thermometer and will screen before entrance. The students will be escorted to the classroom and helped with putting things away and washing hands before beginning the work cycle.

Q: If you have other family members (e.g., grandparents) assisting with pick-up & drop-off, will they be given access to the health screenings?

A: Health Screening will be completed at home prior to departure for school. You will not need to show the application at the door.

Busing

Q: How will the bus work?

A: We are still awaiting details from the bus companies, but at this time we know that masks will be required, and students will be socially distanced.

Q: Will my daughter be able to take the bus some days and not others without a set schedule?

A: Yes.

Q: How will the parents of students who take the bus report the screening/temp?

A: Health Screening will be completed at home prior to departure for school. This will be done using the Kinsa thermometers used for the entire school.

Physical Space / Class Sizes

Q: Any chance you know the class sizes for this year?

A: 26 students are enrolled in Montessori, they will be separated into 3 cohorts (i.e., rooms). 12 students are enrolled in Kindergarten. 14 students are enrolled in 1st grade. 9 students are enrolled in 2nd grade. 16 students are enrolled in 3rd grade. 9 students are enrolled in 4th grade. 10 students are enrolled in 5th grade. 12 students are enrolled in 6th grade. 14 students are enrolled in 7th grade. 17 students are enrolled in 8th grade.

Q: For the smaller classrooms, to be clear, the desks are spaced 6 feet apart in every direction?

A: All desks in all classrooms are spaced 6 feet apart in every direction. Each desk is facing toward the board.

Q: If we decide to enroll our child in public school offering virtual learning for the fall, will they be allowed to return to Stella in the spring?

A: Stella Niagara accepts student enrollment or re-enrollment at any time during the school year. Classes need to be capped this year due to physical space restraints. If there is room in a classroom, all are welcome.

Q: Are there caps to the size limits of each grade? What are they and how are they determined?

A: All classes will be capped based on the space in each classroom.

Q: What is the cap for class sizes at this time?

A: Each classroom size will determine the number of students who can be safely socially distanced.

Q: Has Stella seen a drop in enrollment this semester.

A: A few families have decided to not enroll this year. We have also picked up some new families.

Q: When do we have to make our enrollment decision?

A: As soon as possible please.

School Store

Q: Will the school store be open on supply drop-off night to purchase gym uniforms?

A: Yes. However, only two families at a time will be allowed in the store.

Gym / Swim / Sports

Q: I'm assuming fall sports will not be ongoing this year. Is there discussion to push the swim to a later portion in the year?

A: Fall sports are not taking place this year. The Neumann League has voted to cancel the swim season for the fall and postpone the swim season until the spring. We will pass on any updates as we receive them.

Q: So the swim decision has come from the Neumann League?

A: Yes

Q: How about swim lessons and swim classes?

A: Swim lessons and swim classes will not take place at this time.

Q: What will gym class look like, this will be my daughter's first year (grade 3)?

A: Gym class will take place outside whenever possible. Students will be 12 feet apart and not share equipment.

Q: Will the children be able to use the playground while outside?

A: The playground equipment will be reserved for Montessori students only at this time.

Q: When will SNEP make any decisions regarding sports and swim as part of their Physical Education?

A: There will be no fall sports, and swimming will not be offered at this time.

Q: Will you still be offering ballet?

A: Ballet will not be offered this year.

Communication

Q: Will you update the FAQs with these Q & A's?

A: No. This document will address all questions from the forum chat.

Distance Learning

Q: If a student has to quarantine for 14 days, will their classes be recorded so they don't fall behind?

A: Teachers will make arrangements with a student and their family so that they don't fall behind. Some teachers may live stream, others may meet individually with the student through Zoom, while others may record their classes. We will do all that we can to keep students current in their classes should they need to quarantine.

Q: If my child has to stay home for an extended period of time, how are they expected to catch up on missing classes?

A: Refer to previous answer.

Q: Is there a way to video classes so instruction can be done at home during the time away?

A: Refer to previous answer.

Q: In preparation for the possibility of having to go completely remote again, are we moving to digital textbooks, or are we still using physical textbooks?

A: We are using both, hardcover textbooks as well as digital resources. If we return to remote instruction, teachers who use hardcover textbooks will send them home with the students.

Q: If the school does get shut down again, is virtual learning expected for Montessori students?

A: Yes

Q: My child's grades were affected during the distance learning last spring...if they have to stay home for an extended period of time, how will the grading be judged?

A: Whether instruction is delivered in-person or remotely, we encourage parents to reach out to teachers to discuss any issues, educational or otherwise, that their child may be encountering.

Supplies

Q: What if we can't find things on the supply list?

A: Some things on the supply lists are "stock-up" items, such as paper products. Classrooms may already have some in stock due to early closure in the spring. (definitely in Montessori) If an item on the list cannot be found, please contact the homeroom teacher and let them know. The teachers will do their best to help in any way possible.

Lunch

Q: Can you walk us through how lunch will work in the cafeteria including seating?

A: Students will stand in line 6 feet apart while waiting to buy lunch. They will wear masks until they are seated. The usual tables have been replaced with 6 ft. tables. There will be 3 lunch periods this year to allow for proper social distancing while eating. The dining room will be cleaned between each lunch period.

Q: For lunches, it was specified that students will be 6 ft. apart for when they stand in line. What will the seating arrangement look like beyond the fact it will be assigned seating?

A: Students will be seated 6 feet apart in all directions unless they are siblings.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Q: You mentioned you are hiring a cleaning service? Can you elaborate? Is it a company? or hired through Stella?

A: Stella Niagara employs its own cleaning staff. An extra cleaner has been hired and dedicated to the school to clean high touch areas and any area that will be used by more than one cohort throughout the day.

Handwashing

Q: Do kids need to bring their own hand sanitizer? Or some for the classroom?

A: Students are welcome to bring their own hand sanitizer, but hand sanitizer is available in all classrooms.

Q: What if a child has an alcohol allergy, can they frequently wash their hands in the bathroom instead?

A: Yes.

Uniforms

Q: We had a quick clarification question regarding outdoor education. I believe I saw somewhere we will try to have more classes outside, which is amazing. The question - if kids

have art or any other given class outside, is that considered outdoor ed and thus a no uniform day, or will they still need to wear their uniform?

A: Students will only wear their gym uniform on assigned gym and designated outdoor education days. They will wear their regular uniform all other days.

Montessori

Q: How far apart are the personal work spaces in Montessori?

A: All work tables are spaced six feet apart and will be one student per table. The rug will be divided into 6x6 areas and will be allowed one student and work rug each.

Q: Will Montessori kids' supplies be disinfected every day?

A: Montessori work materials and trays/containers will be sanitized or put aside to rest for 72 hours after each use and before returning to the classroom shelves. High touch areas will be disinfected more than once a day; and classroom tables, chairs, shelves and the bathroom will be cleaned nightly. Any area that is contaminated by a sneeze, cough, etc. will be immediately disinfected.

Q: Will teachers be able to get close to children for instruction? Especially Montessori?

A: The Montessori lessons and developmental needs of the students will require the teachers to be close to children at some times. The teachers are very aware of some childrens' need for comfort and physical closeness. If a student needs and wants comfort from a teacher which requires a hug or holding the child on a lap, it will be provided.

Q: Does Montessori have a supply list we should get ready?

A: Supply lists for all grade levels are posted at <http://stella-niagara.com/>. Click on "Student Life" and drop down to "Parents," and the School Supply List option should appear on the left hand side.

Class trips / SNEP specialties

Q: Will there be an 8th grade class trip?

A: There will be no trips at this time, but this will be discussed within the 8th grade as the school year unfolds.

Q: Will there be pictures taken on the first day of school?

A: There are no official photos taken on the first day of school, although most teachers take photos of their students. Traditionally, the 8th grade class has their photo taken on the steps near Door A. on the first day of school. Although this won't be possible this year, Mrs. Feuerman will be taking individual photos of the 8th graders.

Q: Will the kids still have prayer partners?

A: Unfortunately, we will not be able to have the Prayer Partner program at this time due to our cohort model. We are exploring creative ways to help students connect with each other virtually.

Q: We usually do Parent Night and Family Picnic at the beginning of the year. Are we cancelling those or replacing with some other kind of virtual get-together/forum?

A: Parent Night and the Family Picnic are cancelled at this point. We will have a virtual Stella Parent Partnership (SPP) meeting on August 28th at 7:00 to plan family events for this year. An email has been sent to all parents, please join us to help make these decisions.

Supply Drop-Off

Q: For families with more than one child, can one parent per child come to supply drop-off? Or just one parent per family?

A: One parent per student is welcome.

General

Q: Is SNEP eliminating all risk of COVID-19 infection?

A: SNEP is dedicated to providing a safe community to its faculty, staff, students, and visitors. However, it is impossible for the SNEP to prevent all risk of infection. SNEP has done its best to implement recommended CDC, DOH, federal, state and local guidelines and put in place preventative measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19; however, SNEP cannot guarantee anyone will not become infected with COVID-19.