



2020-21

# Rancho Viejo Montessori School

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## Re-Opening Plan

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### Introduction

The Rancho Viejo Montessori School (RVS) is home to approximately 100 students, 45 in elementary and 65 in preschool, with 14 staff members. We are a community that cares deeply about our collective well-being.

Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, RVS ceased in-person schooling on March 16th and began offering Distance Learning to our students immediately. Nine out of ten RVS students participated regularly in Distance Learning, and RVS teachers provided a high quality, well rounded education to our students despite the challenges of the COVID-19 closure.

Still, we know that Distance Learning is no replacement for a high quality, in-person Montessori education. For the past several months, RVS has been planning how to safely bring students and families back to school.

We also know that we must adhere to federal, state, and local guidelines to keep our students and staff safe. This plan outlines how RVS intends to follow public health guidance while also providing the high quality, in-person Montessori education our students and families come to RVS to receive.

This plan also takes into consideration feedback from surveys of RVS families and staff.

### Public Health Guidance

Throughout the COVID-19 global pandemic RVS has been guided by public health guidelines. Our reopening plans are consistent with the most recent federal, state, and local guidance. There are three anchor documents that RVS has used to craft its plans: the California Department of Education “Stronger Together Plan”, the California Department of Public Health “COVID-19 Industry Guidance: Schools and School-Based Programs”, and the “Orange County Together: A Guide to safely reopening schools in the COVID-19 era”.

1 <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/documents/strongertogether.pdf>

2 <https://files.covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-schools.pdf>

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3 <https://ocde.instructure.com/courses/669>

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### **What RVS Families can Expect when School Starts on September 8, 2020**

When the 2020-21 school year begins, on-campus school will look much different than previous years due to new health and safety measures.

RVS will open with both distance learning and in-person options designed to meet the diverse needs of our students and families.

If a student is attending school in-person families can expect the following:

#### **Screening at Home and School**

- Families are recommended to take temperatures daily before going to school. Anyone with a fever of 100.4 F or higher should not go to school.
- Fever screening will also occur prior to the start of school by staff via touchless thermometers.
- Students and staff should screen themselves for respiratory symptoms such as cough, sore throat, body aches, feeling tired, or shortness of breath prior to coming to school each day. Students and staff experiencing those symptoms should not attend school.
- Parents will be asked if anyone in their household has been exposed to someone suspected of or confirmed as having COVID-19.
- Staff will visually assess the child for symptoms such as flushed cheeks, rapid or difficulty breathing or fatigue.

#### **Arriving at School**

- Staff will be wearing face coverings.
  - Parents, volunteers, and visitors will have limited access to the school campus (i.e. access only to the front office and pre-scheduled, essential meetings).
  - Arrival and dismissal times may vary depending on grade level to limit group size and car lines.
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- Elementary students shall enter the school at the left Front Door by Mr. Rick's desk. Preschool children shall enter at the right Front Door, by Miss Debbie's desk to limit group size at entrances.

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- Arrival procedures will include fever screening.

### **General Safety Precautions Throughout the Day**

- All RVS staff members are responsible for keeping our environment clean and healthy.
  - RVS will follow disinfection guidelines developed by local public health and the CDC.
    - School facilities will be disinfected several times each day with CDC approved cleaning solutions, such as Lysol and Clorox Disinfecting wipes, and deep cleaned nightly.
  - Staff will wear gloves for cleaning surfaces and treating injuries.
  - Physical barriers are installed in the school's front office.
  - All students and staff will be encouraged to wash and clean hands regularly, including prior to and immediately after eating.
  - Community snack will no longer be provided. Children will bring their own snack.
  - Hand sanitizer, kid safe and EPA Approved, will be available in all classrooms.
  - Teachers shall ensure all students wash their hands using soap and water / or hand sanitizer whenever entering and leaving the room.
  - Students shall be taught and prompted to wash their hands using soap and water / or hand sanitizer after coughing or sneezing, and before and after using the restroom.
  - RVS will limit sharing of supplies and disinfect between uses when sharing is unavoidable.
  - Students and staff will be encouraged to bring a water bottle that can be filled at the kitchen sink.
  - While eating, students will sit at tables ideally 6 feet apart and tables will be cleaned and disinfected after meals.
  - HVAC systems will be set to maximize circulation of air from outside buildings.
  - HVAC systems will be serviced bimonthly including filter changes with the highest MERV rating for maximum ventilation.
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- Windows and doors will be kept open to the extent possible to keep fresh air flowing through indoor spaces.

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### **Other Safety Precautions**

- Face coverings will be worn by staff.
- All elementary and middle school students are required to wear face coverings while arriving and departing from school campus and while moving about the school hallways.
- Students in 2nd grade and below should be encouraged, but are not required, to wear a face covering within their stable classroom cohort. Students in 3rd grade and above must use face coverings when in the classroom even if they are in a stable classroom cohort. Students excluded from face covering requirements include: (1) anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the covering without assistance and (2) students with special needs who are unable to tolerate a face covering.
- Students are encouraged to bring their own washable and reusable face covering. If a family does not have access to a face covering RVS will provide one.
- Gloves are not recommended for use by students.
- All members of the public entering school offices are required to wear a face covering.

### **Physical Distancing**

Local public health departments are requiring that schools maintain six feet of social distancing between students and/or staff. To do so they recommend modifying schedules, limiting visitors, keeping students in smaller groups of stable cohorts, serving meals in small groups, spacing desks or student work spaces further apart, keeping student cohorts from mixing, staggering lunch/recess/transition times, not holding large assemblies and dances, and identifying a sick area for students who are not feeling well to minimize contact.

### **Staff Training and Family Education**

Staff will be trained using California Department of Social Services, Orange County Department of Education, and the International Montessori Foundation resources using frequent meetings and webinars, and the distribution of articles and notices. In-service and thorough training for staff will be conducted the week before school begins.

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Families and staff will be kept up to date on the application and enforcement of the plan through regular emails, posting on our website, and distribution of articles and notices.

### **~~2020-21 Instructional Models~~**

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To meet the needs of RVS families, RVS will offer full time Distance Learning in Middle School and in-person learning for elementary classes. From our surveys we have seen that only 13 percent of RVS families would like to remain in Distance Learning during the beginning of the 2020-21 school year. RVS has developed a program to meet the needs of these families.

RVS Middle School students participating in Distance Learning will continue to be a part of the RVS community they have come to know and love. They will participate with their classmates in Distance Learning lessons five days a week from home.

We have improved upon our Distance Learning program from this past spring by providing more digital textbooks and workbooks that lend themselves well to Distance Learning, purchasing more internet equipped technology devices, providing teachers and teaching assistants with additional Distance Learning training, enhancing our virtual extracurricular offerings, and providing live support to students by their teacher during regular school hours.

### **Full Time In-Person Learning**

To meet the needs of RVS families, RVS will offer full time in person learning for our elementary classes. From our surveys we have seen that over 74 percent of RVS families and 100 percent of RVS Staff would like to return to campus for in-person instruction. RVS has developed a program to meet the needs of these families.

RVS has sufficient space to comply with the six-foot social distancing requirements in all our classrooms by limiting the number of students on site and by maintaining stable cohorts. If RVS were required to use a hybrid model 47% of our families said they prefer a three-day rotation and 53% of our families prefer daily in-person learning on a reduced schedule.

### **Considerations for Complete Closure and Return to Distance Learning**

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In the event a COVID-19 case is confirmed on the RVS school site, the County Department of Public Health will be immediately contacted for guidance regarding the need for closure.

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Options for closure may range from 3-5 days to indefinite. Again, the County Public Health Department will direct RVS's actions.

In the event of a closure, teachers will be prepared to shift to providing Distance Learning that incorporates a combination of direct instruction and independent learning activities.

The precautions we are taking now, with your assistance, will help ensure that RVS does not have to close and disrupt student learning.

### **Social Emotional Well-Being**

- RVS has a robust social emotional curriculum that can be taught in person or virtually.
- RVS has developed a bank of resources for families in need of support.

### **Communication Plans**

- RVS will communicate regularly with staff and families through email.
- RVS will continue using surveys to communicate with parents.

### **Field Trips, Sports, and Extracurricular Activities**

- Public Health Departments are not recommending field trips.
  - RVS will provide virtual field trips to students and will monitor guidance to see if field trips will be recommended in the future.
  - Public Health Departments are not recommending assemblies, dances, and rallies.
  - RVS will work to find ways to bring students and families together virtually or in person in a safe socially distanced manner.
  - In-person music instruction is not recommended. RVS will seek to provide virtual music enrichment.
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**RVS's Ten Commitments to Learning During the 2020-21 School Year**

1. We will ground our approach in Montessori methodology and equity to take a tailored approach to meeting the individual needs of each student.
  2. We will prioritize student, staff, & community safety.
  3. We will support the physical and mental well-being of students and staff and integrate social-emotional learning into our instructional core.
  4. We will measure student engagement; seek to keep students engaged, motivated, and healthy; and take immediate action when we see students not fully engaging.
  5. We will continue student learning by teaching new content across our curriculum.
  6. We will focus instruction on the mastery of essential standards.
  7. We will provide "live" class instruction every day.
  8. We will provide feedback on student work through the progress reports and grades.
  9. We will authentically engage and collaborate with each other in all phases of reopening planning, implementation, and communication.
  10. We recognize that families have different circumstances and commit to meeting families where they are and providing support to the best of our abilities.
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