



Whitby School Reopen Plan: Fall 2020

As we look ahead to returning to school in the fall, there are multiple models we have developed to ensure the safety and health of our students, faculty, and families. This document describes the Whitby School plan for continuing to educate our students under the following conditions:

- **On-campus Instruction**, starting on September 1, 2020, for all students under conditions that comply with all applicable laws, Executive Orders from the State of Connecticut, and federal public health guidelines. (Pages 1-2)
- **Distance Learning** for all students if the Governor requires schools in our area to close. (Pages 3-4)
- **On-campus Whitby Early Childhood Care** for Stepping Stones to Primary 2 students if the Governor requires schools in our area to close. (Page 5)
- **Tuition Charges for 2020-2021** for Stepping Stones, Primary, Lower School, Middle School, and Early Childhood Care. (Page 6-7)

On-Campus Instruction Effective September 1, 2020

The [Independent School Reopen Plan](#), developed by the Education Subcommittee in the Governor's Office, requires that "Each independent school develop a plan for reopening that applies public health guidance to meet the structure and operations of its school." The Subcommittee specifies that each plan must include components that address the *repopulation* of the campus, *monitoring* health conditions to ensure detection of the disease, *containment* to prevent spreading of the disease if infection is detected, and a plan to *shut down* the school if infection cannot be contained or is otherwise necessary.

This spring, the Whitby faculty and administrative staff met to discuss how best to meet the stipulations of the Reopen Plan. We organized our thinking into three categories:

1. **Conditions** – Safety and health conditions required in order to open school.
2. **Schedule** – Options for alternative daily, weekly, and monthly schedule models.
3. **Teaching Methodologies** – How to plan for lessons best taught in-person in the classroom and those that are more effectively suited to a distance learning model. This assumes that at some point in the fall term we will be required to close school because of a resurgence of the virus in our area.

Based on the faculty committee review and the recently published Education Committee Guidelines, the following are conditions that will be in place when we open for in-person instruction in the fall.

- All faculty/staff and all students (SS-Grade 8) will be provided an orientation regarding social distancing and other health issues prior to returning to school.
- 6-feet of spacing will be created between all student desks and tables. This will be accomplished by reducing the number of students in a classroom, using individual desks, separating larger tables with plexiglass dividers, and converting non-classroom space into instructional space.
- All faculty and staff will be required to wear masks throughout the day. Students from Lower Elementary-Grade 8 will be required to wear masks.
- Entrance and exit doors will be designated as one-way in order to control the flow of students in and out of the buildings at peak times in order to achieve physical distancing. We will also develop staggered arrival and departure times.
- 6-feet of social distancing will be created in common spaces where students previously gathered (i.e., library, Renaissance Hall).
- Hand-sanitizers will be available at all entrances to the school. Disposable wipes will be available in all classrooms, offices, bathrooms and other shared facilities for wiping down surfaces. Students, faculty, and staff will be reminded to wash their hands frequently. The youngest students will be helped with this to ensure proper washing.
- Campus Access Protocol - All students, faculty, and staff will be asked to self-assess their health condition each morning before coming to school based on a checklist provided by the school. It is the responsibility of all individuals, especially adults, to use good judgement and stay home if there is any indication of being sick. Anyone who fails the assessment is required to stay home.
- Visitor access to the school will be limited and subject to a daily review.
- The health of all students, faculty/staff will be monitored. Those who may be sick or symptomatic will be asked to stay home or to leave school immediately.
- In the case of a COVID-19 infection, the school will require any infected student or faculty/staff member to quarantine for 14 days.

Distance Learning Fall/Winter Terms: Stepping Stones - Grade 8

If and when directed by State authorities, Whitby will transfer to a distance learning model. We have learned a great deal from our distance learning classrooms this winter and spring. The Whitby faculty committed themselves to a process of continuous improvement, and each week faculty continued to adjust and revise methodologies and schedules to enhance teaching and learning.

The feedback parents provided by responding to surveys, speaking directly with classroom teachers, or in the Zoom conversations we held with SS-LE parents have shaped our course planning for the future. Here is a sampling of lessons we learned that we will apply to an improved distance learning model for the 2020-2021 school year:

- Synchronous teaching with the classroom teacher is highly desirable at all levels, but especially with younger children. In all grades there must be far more synchronous learning than asynchronous learning.
- Small group and one-on-one sessions, especially with younger children, are more effective modes of instruction than larger group gatherings.
- A consistent schedule, sent out in advance, makes for more effective planning for students and parents who are assisting.
- Assignments and communication should be conducted on one platform, in developmentally appropriate ways, to simplify tasks for students and parents.
- Packets of materials for Montessori classrooms will continue to be prepared for each week of instruction.
- Parents of younger children have asked that the school develop videos to support them in their new teaching role. Parents want to know and need to learn how a particular assignment fits into the larger goals for the class. One parent told us, “We need more guidance in teaching since we are not teachers!”
- The school needs to develop more opportunities for students to interact socially via distance learning. Social isolation increased the importance of finding ways to nurture social-emotional growth.

Middle School: Grades 5-8

There will be consistent instruction across all grades and all subject areas. Each student can expect:

- Beginning the day in small advisory groups.
- 18 - 20 hours of instruction over 5 days.
- Instruction includes teachers being virtually present to guide meaningful learning with a balance of live instruction, recorded instruction, small group work, and office hours.
- Students will be expected to complete individual work asynchronously to advance their learning.
- Electives will be part of the distance learning schedule to provide choice, balance, and the opportunity for multi-age groupings.

Primary 3 – Grade 4

In Primary 3 through Grade 4, more consistent instruction will be created within and across grades. Each student can expect:

- 17-18 hours per week of instruction over 5 days with two thirds by the classroom teacher and one-third by specialists.
- Instruction includes teachers being virtually present to guide meaningful learning with a balance of live instruction, recorded instruction, small group work, and office hours.
- Students will be expected to complete individual work outside of instruction to advance their learning based on guidance from teachers.

Stepping Stones – Primary 2

In Stepping Stones through Primary 2, the hours of instruction will be slightly less than described above. Teachers will focus on spending more time with individual students and in small groups. The priority will be for classroom teachers to have contact with each student daily.

Whitby will be offering an alternative to distance learning for Stepping Stones – Primary 2 for the Fall/Winter terms. The program details are on the following page.

Alternative to Distance Learning: Early Childhood Care – Fall/Winter SS-PR2

If and when directed by State authorities, Whitby will transfer to a distance learning model for all students in SS – Grade 8 as described above. For SS-PR2 students, Whitby will offer an alternative to distance learning in the form of an early childhood care center.

The Whitby Early Childhood Care Center will accept students in person, five days a week for two sessions: 8:00 AM– 11:30 AM and 11:30 AM – 2:45 PM. The Center will be led by regular Whitby Montessori Children’s House (WMCH) faculty. Children may attend the morning or both morning and afternoon sessions (Extended Day).

The Whitby Early Childhood Care Center will operate under the guidelines of the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood [Guidance for Child Care During Covid-19](#), published May 29, 2020.

The following requirements must be met:

1. Staff must use face coverings at all times. Children in a child care environment and those with medical conditions are not required to wear a mask.
2. Groups must be no larger than 10 children at all times.
3. The ratio for preschool is 1 adult to 10 children.
4. Toddler classrooms must have no more than 8 children under the age of 3 and must maintain a ratio of 1 adult for every 4 infants/toddlers.
5. Temperatures of staff and children must be taken prior to entering the facility.
6. Enhanced cleaning and disinfection must be regularly completed.
7. If possible, child care classrooms shall include the same group each day, and the same teachers shall remain with the same group each day.
8. Drop-off and pick-up times may be staggered to limit contact with and between parents as much as possible.
9. All staff and children will be required to be screened for any observable illness, including cough or respiratory distress, and to confirm temperature below 100 degrees Fahrenheit.
10. The Center will have intensified cleaning and disinfection efforts, including all flat services and toys.
11. Sick children and staff will be required to stay home.

If you would like to know more about Whitby and arrange for a 1:1 conversation with our Admissions team, [click here](#) or email admissions@whitbyschool.org.