

We are sharing these Frequently Asked Questions with you based on the most updated information we have as of May 18, 2021. EEC regulations seem to be changing regularly, and we will update these FAQ's and continue to communicate with you as information and changes are released. Future edits will be noted in green.

The intention of the new guidelines is to minimize the number of individuals with whom any potentially exposed individual is in close contact by limiting contact between groups (e.g., minimal adults moving in between classrooms or comingling of groups); and to minimize prolonged close contacts between individuals within a group to the degree possible.

We understand that it is difficult to make decisions regarding returning to preschool without a clear roadmap. We hope you trust that, despite the image these regulations may imply, we are committed as always to creating a safe and engaging environment for your children to spend their days.

## **General Questions**

### **What date does preschool start?**

September 14 is the first official day of school.

### **What will happen to my tuition if you are forced to close again?**

If all programs are forced to close again due to Covid-19, tuition will not be charged until we reopen. Partial months will not be refunded. In the event of a shut down, the Knowledge Tree would move to a virtual platform. While tuition payments would be put on hold, we would ask that families, whose finances are not impacted, make donations to help the Preschool meet its financial obligations. Tuition will not be affected if your classroom is required to shut down for 24 hours due to potential exposure. Tuition will also not be affected if your child is absent due to a required Covid-19 diagnosis or quarantine.

### **Will my child have to wear a mask?**

Yes, your child will be required to wear a mask **when indoors**. However, there will be designated areas where the children can take a break from wearing the mask while maintaining safe physical distance. Children will not wear masks during snack/lunch,

and at rest time. Beginning Tuesday, May 18 children will no longer be required to wear masks on the playground.

### **Will teachers be wearing masks?**

Yes, the staff will all be wearing masks at all times when indoors and when unable to physically distance on the playground. This (as well as constant hand washing and cleaning) is our best defense against the virus. We will help to prepare the children to recognize their teachers in masks before school opens. We will have an outdoor Student Orientation or a Zoom Orientation if the weather is inclement so that the children are familiar with their teachers. We will also have the teachers wear photos with their smiling faces so that the children can recognize them.

### **How will you schedule drop off and pick up?**

Drop off for all students will take place at Door #2 on the Seton Way side of the building. If there is a situation requiring you to arrive after 9:15, you will have to contact the Preschool to schedule a time for your child's health check, in order for them to enter the building. Students will be picked up from the playground or Door #4, depending on weather.

### **What will drop off and screenings look like?**

- Each school entrance area will have a screening station with an assigned staff member wearing appropriate PPE.
- Each student's temperature will be taken and if they are fever free (temperature under 100.0), the family member will be asked to sign a Health Attestation Form. Screening questions will include confirmation that you and your child are symptom free. Symptoms include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting and diarrhea.
- Screenings will be conducted individually as people arrive.
- The student will be escorted to the coat room to hang up their backpack and coat, and then to the bathroom to wash hands before joining their friends in their classroom.

### **Will parents be allowed in the school?**

For the health and safety of the Knowledge Tree community, only staff and students will be allowed in the building. We made this change after much thought and discussion with other program administrators and EEC. We feel that this is the best way to track

people inside school and to minimize risk. Despite being unable to enter your child's classroom, there will be many home-to-school connections that will allow you to participate in your child's school experience.

**How will children be kept socially distant in the small classrooms? Will my child be in the same seat for the entire school day?**

Absolutely not. Children will be free to move about and we will redirect, if necessary, to encourage them to work/play in small groups. We will also work on reducing the number of children in any given area by increasing the number of learning areas and providing materials that are easily disinfected. On August 21, 2020 The Department of Early Education and Care amended the regulations and have allowed classrooms to return to their original capacity provided that there is 42 square feet of classroom space available for each child. Based on these updated regulations, the Knowledge Tree is able to revert back to its original format of a single classroom.

**Additional Plans**

- Centers will be designed to limit the number of children (2) in any area at a given time.
- We will work in small groups for activities and all adults will wear face coverings.
- We will increase outdoor time and outdoor activities.
- All children will have an individual container for art supplies (Crayons, markers, scissors, glue sticks, etc.)
- Children will be discouraged from bringing any toys from home with the exclusion of lovies for Rest Time.

**Will my child play with other children?**

Yes. It is our firm belief that while we need to minimize close contact, children in the same classroom will play together. As mentioned above, we will do our best to ensure that the children stay in small groups of 2 when playing in classrooms. When we are outside, children will use the field/the playground one group at a time.

**What will monitoring of teachers and students look like?**

We will follow the guidelines proposed by EEC for checks before entering the school daily. All staff will also be required to complete the Health Attestation before entering the school. We will assess staff wellness throughout the day, just as we do children. In addition, we will be checking staff and student's temperatures before school.

**How will you account for asymptomatic transmission?**

We will follow all the protocols for tracing children and staff. Our attendance records will allow us to manage which children are exposed to which staff each day and week. The intention of having the children stay with their teacher for the day and minimize contact with other groups will allow us to better trace contact.

**Will there be routine testing for teachers?**

We have protocols in place for monitoring staff and children. Should a member of staff or a child display symptoms of Covid-19, they will be immediately isolated and sent home. They will also be asked to contact their medical professional for advice on testing, etc. before being allowed to return to the Knowledge Tree.

**If a student or teacher tests positive will the school be on lockdown for a period of time?**

The classroom affected will need to be closed for 24 hours and disinfected. We are required to notify our local board of health and they will ultimately decide on what merits a shutdown. The protocols include notification to both EEC and DOH in the case of a positive test result. All of this information will also be communicated to each family.

**What is the protocol for screening contacts of teachers and students?**

This question is addressed in the self-reporting checklist that every staff and parent will be required to fill out before entering the school each day. We will provide these forms to parents and teachers to sign daily before entering the school. These are kept in a log at the school and parents and teachers are not permitted to enter the school if not signed.

**What process should I follow if a child is sick?**

If a child presents with symptoms, they should not come to school. If a child becomes symptomatic during their school day, they will be sent home immediately. If the child has been exposed to an individual who is COVID positive or presumed to be COVID positive, then they may not return to school for 14 days. If the child has symptoms but not otherwise exposed, then the return to school guidelines in the Parent Handbook should be followed. If a child begins showing symptoms while already at childcare, they

will be isolated, with a teacher, as quickly as possible into a previously-designated area, away from close contact with other children and adults, until they can be picked up.

### **Do sick children always have to quarantine for 14 days?**

If we have questions about closure or quarantine in the event of a sick child or a positive COVID-19 case, we will consult with our local Board of Health. If we are unable to reach our local Health Board for any reason, we will consult with our licenser for more information. For additional questions related to child care settings, please contact the state's dedicated epidemiologist for child care: Dr. Katherine Hsu at [Katherine.hsu@massmail.state.ma.us](mailto:Katherine.hsu@massmail.state.ma.us) or 617-983-6948.

### **How will you ensure that all areas, materials, furniture, and equipment used are safely and properly cleaned, sanitized, or disinfected, including a schedule for cleaning all areas of the building?**

- The Preschool's classrooms, bathrooms and materials will be cleaned by designated staff throughout the day and get a thorough cleaning nightly
- A cleaning schedule will be posted in each classroom and bathroom.
- Air purifiers have been installed in the classrooms.

### **New Health and Safety Guidelines**

Children will wash hands (or use hand sanitizer, with parent permission) upon entering the building, before and after eating, after visiting the bathroom and between classroom activities, after blowing their nose and throughout the day, as needed.

### **Plans to Access the Outdoors**

We know that the safest place for everyone to be right now is outdoors. Our planning includes taking advantage of as many outdoor options as we are able to access. We see our neighborhoods as resources for learning and we are planning on finding new creative way to use the outdoors as our classroom.

### **What To Expect When You Come to School**

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) has produced a wonderful resource at [https://eelead.force.com/resource/1593944251000/Parent\\_Reopening\\_Guide](https://eelead.force.com/resource/1593944251000/Parent_Reopening_Guide)

describing how things will look, generally speaking, when you return to childcare (at the Knowledge Tree). We think it nicely describes the partnership that all early childhood programs have with EEC as we relicense and commit to following the new regulations and health and safety policies. It portrays the collaborative efforts between providers and EEC to create preschool environments that support children and maintain a healthy environment.