

Good Afternoon Families,

Thank you for your support and commitment to adhering to our COVID-19 policies and practices. We know navigating the school's processes can, at times, be frustrating. However, our practices are working. We have been working together and successfully mitigating the spread of coronavirus in our school. As we prepare to enter the cold and flu season, we must be diligent and consistent with our mitigation efforts. Please keep your children home when they or anyone in your household show symptoms of illness. We all have gotten comfortable with the screening questions; however, please pay attention to the questions and provide accurate responses. For example, as we enter the holiday weekend, please adhere to the CDC's guidelines on social distancing and wearing masks. Remember the children at TCS are not vaccinated. If your family does not adhere to these guidelines, please do not bring your children to school. Below are program updates and updated COVID-19 policies and practices. Please review.

Mentor Teachers

Did you know The Clifton School has a Mentor Teacher Program? The program is designed to provide coaching and support to novice teachers. It also provides leadership training and growth opportunities to experienced teachers. The mentor teachers are provided with several hours of professional development and financial compensation for participating in the program. This program has been very successful. We are excited about re-instituting it for the 2021-22 school year. The mentor teachers at the Clifton Road site are Rosy Ferdous, Sha'keema Mason, Usha Raghavan, and Donnisha Walls. The mentor teachers at our Clairmont site are Faiza Andrews, Marilyn Ebron, Sahanta Favors, and Audrea Jackson.

COVID Vaccines

The Clifton School has mandated COVID-19 vaccines for staff. All staff must be fully vaccinated by December 13, 2021. Any unvaccinated staff must have an approved medical or religious exemption and will be tested weekly for COVID-19.

COVID Vaccines are now approved for children ages five years and older. According to the CDC: getting a COVID-19 vaccine can help protect children ages five years and older from getting COVID-19.

- Vaccinating children can help protect family members, including siblings who are not eligible for vaccination and family members who may be at increased risk of getting very sick if they are infected.
- Vaccination can also help keep children from getting seriously sick even if they do get COVID-19.
- Vaccinating children ages 5 years and older can help keep them in school and help them safely participate in sports, playdates, and other group activities.

Help protect your whole family and slow the spread of COVID-19 in your community by getting yourself and your children ages 5 years and older vaccinated against COVID-19. Please click on the links below for more information about COVID-19 vaccines for children.

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/children-teens.html>
- Sesame Street The ABC's of COVID Vaccines <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yPlhRUF2aXA>

Flu Shots Teachers and staff will be protected against the flu virus this season. Kaiser Permanete will be on-site giving no-cost flu shots and biometric screenings to staff. The CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone six months of age and older as the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease. Getting the flu vaccine as soon as it becomes available each year is always a good idea, and the protection you get from vaccination will last throughout the flu season.- www.CDC.gov.

Staff Retention and Recruitment

We have been experiencing difficulty recruiting new teaching staff, and we have also lost a few teachers from our Clifton family. We recognize that working directly with young children during a pandemic is challenging for many early educators. Staffing is an issue impacting the child care industry across the nation. Teachers have additional policies and practices to adhere to while worrying about their students, themselves, and their families getting sick. This adds to the stress of working in an early childhood program. At TCS, we surveyed our teachers and learned that they are still passionate about working with young children and are proud of their essential role in the fight against the pandemic.

However, they also reported:

- missing the camaraderie that comes with working directly with teachers from other classrooms.
- needing additional support in the classrooms.
- wanting more time off to help cope with the overwhelming stress from the pandemic.
- missing face-to-face professional development opportunities.
- missing opportunities to build quality relationships with families.

In response, TCS has adjusted our school calendar to provide more paid time off. We have offered teachers with good attendance records the opportunity to have a workweek with four ten-hour days with a day off. We have brought in food trucks and offered fun activities to help safely establish a sense of camaraderie. We have a goal to provide evaluations and salary increases before the holidays. We often express our gratitude and appreciation for their commitment to the children and families of TCS. In addition, we offer all of the benefits listed below:

- Pay 85% of employee health insurance benefits
- Competitive salaries (our teachers are among the highest-paid child care staff in our community)
- Provide supplemental insurance
- 50% tuition discount for children of employees 65% for those employed >5years
- Professional development opportunities locally and nationally
- Contribution to 403b account
- Employer-match for 403b account
- Tuition reimbursement
- Paid annual leave
- Emergency assistance
- Mentor Teacher Program
- Ongoing teacher appreciation lunches, gifts, activities
- Celebration of Teacher Appreciation Week
- Active teacher council
- Celebrate the Teacher Extraordinaire and Teacher of the Year

We are often asked what families can do to show support and appreciation to our teachers and staff. The answer is to acknowledge their commitment to caring for your children by telling them ‘thank you’. Below are articles about the child care staffing crisis in Georgia and nationwide.

· <https://www.wabe.org/subsidized-by-the-low-wages-of-teachers-ga-childcare-staffing-shortage-worsened-by-pandemic/>

· <https://www.vpr.org/vpr-news/2021-08-19/if-i-lose-one-more-person-i-have-to-close-what-it-might-take-to-fix-the-child-care-crisis>

· <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/05/26/child-care-center-worker-shortage/>

Updated Sick Child Policy

If a child has any of the following symptoms, they must be excluded from the child care setting and can return after 24 hours of being symptom-free and with a doctor’s note. If one of the symptoms is a fever, they must remain fever-free and symptom-free for 48 hours and can return with a negative COVID-19 test.

- Cough
- Sore Throat
- Muscle Aches
- Difficulty Breathing
- New Loss of Taste or Smell
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Headache
- Fever at or above the threshold temperature of **100.4° F** (including temperatures that would meet this criteria, if not for the use of fever-reducers.) *The threshold temperature is 100.4° F, unless a LOWER threshold temperature is imposed in the local jurisdiction or by the specific center.*

If a child has one symptom alone such as: pink eye, sneezing, or unknown rash, the student may return 24 hours after symptoms resolve with a doctor’s note and after taking antibiotics, if prescribed. If antibiotics are not prescribed, the child may return 24 hours after symptoms resolve with a doctor’s note.

Updated Guidance on Child Exclusion for a Runny Nose

We heard your concerns related to our runny nose policy. We will continue to implement this policy because congestion and a runny nose are symptoms of COVID-19, Influenza, RSV, and other illnesses. However, we have modified the policy to reduce the exclusion period.

We will not send children with a runny nose alone unless it’s excessive, needing to be wiped several times for at least two days, and combined with chest congestion. The child should be excluded for 24 hours and can return with a doctor’s note. A **COVID test is not needed for return unless a doctor recommends testing.** If the cause is viral or bacterial, i.e., a cold or ear infection, the note will be good for four weeks (unless new symptoms develop.) If the cause is allergies, the note will be good for 60 days (unless new symptoms develop.)

Sibling Exclusion

We will no longer exclude a sibling while waiting for a diagnosis for a child who is experiencing non-COVID symptoms. However, siblings will be excluded if the child with initial symptoms is placed in quarantine or has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Travel Policy

If you travel by plane, train, or bus domestically or internationally, we ask that you follow the CDC's recommendations for quarantine and testing below. (This does not apply to an individual who is fully vaccinated, and it does not apply if the enrolled child does not travel.) You may have been exposed to COVID-19 on your travels. You may feel well and not have any symptoms, but you can still spread the virus to others. You and your travel companions (including children) may pose a risk to your family, friends, and community after your travel.

- Get tested with a viral test 3-5 days after travel AND stay home and self-quarantine for a full 7 days after travel.
- Even if you test negative, stay home and self-quarantine for the full 7 days.
- If your test is positive, isolate yourself to protect others from getting infected.
- If you don't get tested, stay home and self-quarantine for 10 days after travel.
- Avoid being around people who are at increased risk for severe illness for 14 days, whether you get tested or not.

If you travel domestically by car and maintain social distancing and do not mix households, there is no need for quarantine.

If you travel domestically by car and mix households, we ask that you get a Rapid or PCR test on the third day after your travel. Your child may then return to school with a negative test. (Testing and quarantine are not required if ALL of the individuals you visited were fully vaccinated. If they have children who are not fully vaccinated in their household, then it is not considered a fully vaccinated household.)

*This also applies if individuals travel to visit your household unless all of the individuals visiting you are fully vaccinated. If they have children who are not fully vaccinated, then they are not considered a fully vaccinated household.

*A person is considered fully vaccinated two weeks after the final dose, giving the body time to build antibodies against the virus.

Fall Pictures

We are happy to gift families with beautiful fall photos taken by our talented resident photographer, Marilyn Ebron.

Welcome

Please welcome Safa Sirajud-Deen to our administrative team. Safa is the new business manager. She works with Andrea Bourne and Daneill Gunn on enrollment and managing family accounts and records. Safa has an office at our Clifton Road site. We are excited about having her on our team.

Important dates:

- November 12, 2021 Give Thanks Virtual Sing-a-long
- November 24-26, 2021 Closed for the holiday
- December 24-31, 2021 Closed for winter holidays
- January 17, 2022 Closed for MLK Day
- February 21, 2022 Closed for Professional Development

Be well,

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