

## Fall 2020 Reopening Plans

Asalaam Prairie Families,

After reviewing both regional and national guidelines regarding school reopening, consulting with medical experts regarding the health and safety of both students and staff (*many thanks to our community health professionals: Dr Waheeda Samady, Dr Saira Doja, and Dr Adil Anvery*), and meetings with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), we are excited to present Prairie's reopening plans!

Recently, the American Academy of Pediatrics has urged government officials to NOT close elementary schools as attendance is “fundamental to the child development and well-being.” We pray this will be the case this year, however in preparation for the worst-case scenarios, Prairie leadership has evaluated and developed several plans, including return to phase 3 or shelter in place.

The following information will review our plans for return to school in the Fall in Phase 4.

Bismillah

### Start Date

Prairie will re-open inshAllah on **Monday August 10, 2020**. The decision to start earlier than we have done in prior years was made due to concerns regarding a second wave of infections that may cause complete or partial shutdown to school activities later in the school year. If this is the case, this earlier start date allows for students to have more in-person social, emotional, and instructional learning time with their teachers and classmates. Additionally, if there are further city-wide school closures, this can reduce the amount of material that will be covered in a home-school model, decreasing pressure on students, parents, and teachers. If there are no further shutdowns during the year, then school will just end early in late May instead of late June inshAllah.

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## Safety Measures During Phase 4

Alhamdulillah, Prairie Academy is blessed that it can address many of the state mandates without making massive structural changes as our classroom sizes and teacher-to-student ratios are small compared to other public and/or private schools. Nonetheless, we evaluated every aspect of our school day to ensure both safety and social-emotional wellness of our students and staff.

**1. Health and safety practices:** Protocols for frequent hand washing and cleaning of surfaces (tables, computers, etc) will be in place for all students and staff.

**2. Small learning cohorts:** Students will be grouped into 4-6 student cohorts in order to reduce exposure to larger numbers of students. These cohorts will be based on a child's developmental level to ensure they are able to continue to learn and grow among their peers. Our large classrooms allow us to keep cohorts separated more than 10 ft apart if in the same room. However, we will also be utilizing all the available spaces (gym, front office, etc) to ensure students cohorts are appropriately distanced. Lunch will be eaten in the classrooms with appropriate distancing. Mixing of classes will be reduced unless outside.

**3. Face coverings:** In compliance with the IDPH, masks and or face shields must be worn by all students and teachers while indoors. When considering the importance of seeing each other's faces, hearing each other's voices, and the overall comfort of our students and staff, we are asking that all students wear [face shields](#) or [face shield hats](#).

**4. Outdoor Instruction:** We will also significantly increase our outdoor activities and instruction to increase safety, expose children to the fresh air, and to support their social and emotional health.

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**5. Ventilation of Classrooms:** All of Prairie's classrooms and the front office have several windows which will remain open to ventilate the rooms. Fans can also be used to circulate the air as needed. During the hotter days in August/September, we will use fans or smaller AC units to keep classrooms at a comfortable temperature. If there is a heat wave and it is challenging to keep room temperature comfortable, we will close windows but alter the daily activities so there is more physical distancing amongst children. As the building retains heat very well, these windows can remain open even during winter months.

**6. Air Filtration:** Several air purifiers will be purchased and placed in classrooms to actively filter and clean the air.

**7. Screening:** Any students and/or staff with even mild symptoms of illness (cough, congestion, etc) will not be able to come to school until all symptoms have cleared. Parents will be asked to complete a screening questionnaire daily regarding potential symptoms of COVID-19 as part of the check-in process. This will be a simple task that can be done via mobile phone/text. Similar to years prior, children cannot come to school unless they have no fever and have not needed a fever reducing medicine for at least 24 hours. Upon arrival, all students will be asked to wash their hands prior to joining their morning group. Temperature checks will also be done either at home or at school based on IDPH guidance.

Additionally, any student and/or staff member with known exposure to COVID-19 will also be required to stay home for 2 weeks or until they have been cleared with negative COVID-19 testing.

**8. Isolation of any child with signs of illness:** Children who develop signs and/or symptoms of illness while at school will be separated from other children and quarantined in designated and well-ventilated rooms. Parents and/or caregivers will be required to pick children up from school immediately.

**9. Virtual Access to the Classroom:** Due to the strict adherence to isolating children with any signs and symptoms of infection or COVID-19 exposures, there will be times where students will still want to participate while in quarantine.

Prairie will make the classroom accessible to these students virtually so that they

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can continue to learn and see their friends despite having to quarantine at home. We will optimize audio and visual equipment and other needed supplies for each cohort so that children can see their classmates/teacher and they can see them as well, thus children who are required to quarantine at home will have the option of interactive remote learning experience and will not miss out while waiting for symptoms to clear etc.

For Pre-K children where the virtual model is less effective, we will coordinate with the family to have kids join circle time, songs, books, and exercise sessions virtually if they wish as more active sessions may be more entertaining for pre-K children. We will also send arts and craft packets home so caregivers can do these with the children at home (if they wish) while waiting for symptoms to clear.

Even prior to COVID-19, we were all used to children missing school due to illnesses throughout the year. It is possible that some of the health and safety practices we are enforcing this year may decrease those infections as well as decrease risk of contracting COVID-19 (insh'Allah!). Nonetheless, parents must be prepared to keep their children home when they have mild symptoms of illness. **This is imperative to the safety of Prairie students and staff.**

**10. Teacher Safety:** The safety of our teachers is of utmost importance to us and we will structure instruction time to maximize time during which teachers are able to remain 6 feet away. Teachers will wear either face shields or N95 masks depending on their comfort, and all efforts will be made for them to wear face shields so that students can see and respond to their facial cues and expressions. Interactions between students and teachers that are less than 6 feet away will be limited in time. Teachers will limit interactions with other teachers to maintain adequate physical distancing and with masks. In order to keep our staff as safe as possible, parents and caregivers must wear masks when dropping off their children and maintain a safe distance. Parents will not be entering the classrooms during this time.

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## Phase 3 shutdown Plan

In the case of school closure and return to Phase 3, Prairie will institute a small cohort model for all students. For KG and upper classes--this will allow 3-4 students/class to be at school at one time where teachers will continue in-person instruction. This will be at alternate times with independent assignments when children are at home. Outdoor sessions will be maximized to allow for classes to gather. Virtual sessions will be used as needed.

For Pre-K, cohorts of 3-6 children (based on what IDPH allows during Phase 3) will be allowed to attend in-person. We will provide crafts/activities for time not in school as well as virtual read alongs, songs, and dancing. Outdoor activities will be maximized.

This will allow more developmentally appropriate teaching and support the social and emotional needs of children. More details about this model will be sent out in a separate email.

## Shelter in Place Plan

While we all are praying that we will not have to return to Phase 1 or 2 shelter in place, Prairie Academy is prepared to continue supporting families if this occurs.

As we will have started several weeks in advance, we can reduce the school days/week and allow more free time/vacation days during this time. Thus, the amount of material that needs to be covered during this time will be reduced, resulting in less pressure on parents, students, and staff.

For KG and upper classes, we will incorporate feedback from the spring virtual sessions to enhance the virtual class experience. We will keep our small cohorts of students during virtual sessions so children can feel more involved and no sessions will be conducted on “mute”. For subjects like Arabic, we will incorporate one-on-one sessions, so students get more direct instruction.

For Pre-K, staff will interact with students in groups of two several times per week. If it is safe to do this outdoors in-person, we will do so. In addition, we will create more interactive and physically active virtual sessions—such as dancing, exercising, singing, and playing games together for small student cohorts (2-3 students). For

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subjects like Arabic, we will incorporate one-on-one sessions, so students get more direct instruction.

*We look forward to starting school again with our amazing students, and bringing back our beautiful community. We are dedicated to both the health and safety of our students and teachers and are also committed to making the school experience fun, interactive, and educational.*

As always, we are always open to your feedback! Feel free to reach out with questions.

With love and prayers for safe and joyful school year,

**Prairie Academy**