

# 2020-2021 PreKindergarten Parent Handbook



Santa Catalina  
Lower and Middle School

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# Santa Catalina PreKindergarten Parent Handbook 2020-2021

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## Santa Catalina Lower and Middle School

Dear Parents,

Welcome to PreKindergarten!

Our greatest goal is to help your child become the best that he or she can be. This booklet contains information about our classroom that will help you understand some of the learning opportunities that will be available for your child. In planning for your child's learning, we will take into consideration his or her special strengths and interests.

Our learning environment will be one that encourages active participation on the part of each child. Children will learn as they explore, observe, and interact with each other. They will be encouraged to express themselves through mathematics, art, science, language arts, music, physical education, and prayer.

Our program is fully licensed by Community Care of the State of California.

We value your participation in the education of your child and encourage you to get involved! We are looking forward to working with your family.

Sincerely,

Christy Pollacci  
Head of Lower and Middle School  
Santa Catalina Lower and Middle School

# Santa Catalina School

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## Mission Statement

Santa Catalina School exists to develop in each student a striving for excellence, a maturing awareness of moral and spiritual values, a sense of responsible purpose, and a determination to serve the world with courage, grace, and compassion.

## Motto

*Veritas*, truth, is the motto of Santa Catalina School. Underlying all actions, relationships, and communications is the assumption that this standard exists. Only with this principle clearly acknowledged and firmly in place is the school's mission worthy and possible.

## Core Values

Santa Catalina School embraces a number of core values that serve to distinguish us:

### A Particular Academic Approach

The Catholic Intellectual tradition teaches that life has meaning and purpose, that there is a moral right and wrong, and that faith and reason are complementary in the search for truth. We believe that our approach to teaching enriches the academic experience for all of our students.

### Openness

A spirit of welcome and openness is characteristic of Santa Catalina School. We embrace the true meaning of the word "catholicity" (from the Greek words *kata* and *holos*, meaning "inclusive of everyone") with an invitation and welcoming spirit to all of our students. With this foundation of our Catholic heritage, we affirm, celebrate, and embrace the rich religious diversity of our student body.

### Service

Students at Santa Catalina learn of their responsibility to serve others. We believe that service activities help raise the consciousness of our students, with the impact of these efforts ultimately being realized in the school community and beyond.

### Relationships

At Santa Catalina, we believe that students learn and grow best in a loving and supportive community. This emphasis on the value of relationships has been Santa Catalina's charism, or "special gift," since the founding of the school. It has been one of our enduring strengths and it is what has made attending Santa Catalina such a powerful experience for so many.

## Lower School Vision Statement

Our vision is to continue to be the outstanding school on the Monterey Peninsula committed to providing an environment that inspires curiosity, exploration, and excellence in academics, service and character.

## Middle School Vision Statement

Our vision for the Middle Schools is to provide outstanding preparation for high school and beyond by educating the whole person and cultivating each student's intellectual, social, physical, and emotional well-being.

## Upper School Vision Statement

Our vision is to be the premier all-girls school in the United States with an educational program and leadership opportunities that best prepare young women to be supremely capable, confident, and self-aware.

## Community Expectations

In order to pursue significant educational and personal goals that are an integral part of Santa Catalina, members of the school community must believe in and practice three major qualities. These are respect, kindness, and a sense of the spiritual.

Students and faculty alike must respect each other as fellow human beings of intrinsic worth and possessing an intrinsic right to this respect. A community requires that each respect in the other individual differences of personal belief; of personality; of racial, cultural, economic, and social background; of attitudes formed by this background; and of personal needs emerging from all these differences. It is essential that all respect the value of challenge and of satisfaction found in the hard-won goal. Respectful appreciation of these several facets of human experience will enable members of the community to approach each other with a common basis of trust and treat each other with kindness.

Kindness begins in attitude, in an internal conviction that evokes the virtue of Christian courtesy. Kindness compels each member of the community to speak to and of others with care and to treat them considerately, fairly, and without judgment. Kindness insists upon the benign interpretation of each member's behavior and assumes the goodwill of all.

A sense of the spiritual takes each of us beyond ourselves. It allows us to appreciate that, whatever our particular religious background or persuasion, we are all called to responsibilities for the human family; the responsibility to be of service to others and to leave the world a better place, the call to be a strength and comfort to all we meet, and the privilege of living graciously with others while sharing a common purpose. While it is clear that respect, kindness, and a sense of the spiritual grow within each individual over a lifetime, it is expected that a significant beginning in the growth of these qualities and a true appreciation of their worth will be evident in the day to day life of all members of the Santa Catalina community. These three values are basic to the life and purpose of the school, and all other attitudes and behaviors emerge from them.

As professional educators, faculty share the responsibility for all aspects of school life. To that end it is essential that faculty know and appreciate the contents of this Handbook so that each individual is able not only to act in accordance with school philosophy and policy but also to interpret the culture of Santa Catalina positively and accurately within the school community and beyond.

### **The Promise: Do Well. Do Good.**

Santa Catalina's brand promise is quite simple: Do Well. Do Good. No matter the size or scope of the undertaking at hand, we must always do our best. Do Well. No matter the time, the circumstance, or the site, good must be the goal. Do Good. Santa Catalina School speaks definitively to its community: find your purpose; shape the world. *Do Well. Do Good.*

## **Philosophy**

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Our PreKindergarten classroom is set up to encourage children in all areas of development: intellectual, social, emotional, physical, creative, and spiritual. In our classroom hands-on materials are readily available as children learn best from active involvement with real materials. We believe children learn by doing.

Communication is also encouraged! Children are given many opportunities to interact with their peers and their teachers through cooperative projects and learning centers. We view our classroom as a joyous place for learning opportunities to occur.

We believe our job as teachers is to be responsive to the needs and interests of each child. The child is at the center of the curriculum. Each child's language skills and unique cultural background are respected. As teachers, we begin with what the child knows and move forward from that point. Learning is viewed as a continuous, ongoing process. Each child is expected to learn and develop according to his/her individual background and potential. Children are encouraged to take risks and try new things without the fear of being penalized for a wrong answer. Mistakes are viewed as a means for learning something new, and approximations are celebrated!

Children are encouraged to work together in an atmosphere free from competition and undue stress. They learn to be thoughtful and show compassion and respect for each other's differences. These are skills that will help them become caring and successful citizens in the real world. Most importantly, as teachers, we want children to come to PreKindergarten because they WANT to, not because they HAVE to! School should be a fun and joyous place to be.

## Active Learning

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Learning is ACTIVE! It involves observing, touching, communicating, investigating, making comparisons, predicting, and MUCH MORE. There is no end to the number of things to see, to hear, to touch, and to understand.

Where there is excitement, there is rarely SILENCE. Children and adults who are actively engaged in meaningful projects or in conversations are usually not aware of the sounds that surround them. Their intense interest in what they are doing diminishes the sounds in the background. Noise is usually only noticed by the outside observer who is not actively participating.

Parents are always welcome to observe or participate in all PreKindergarten activities. If you do join us either in the classroom or on the playground, we ask that you remember that our primary responsibility is to the children at that time. We must keep conversations with parents to a minimum during classroom or outdoor playtime. We must give the children our undivided attention for optimum learning and care to occur. If you need to talk to a teacher regarding a concern, we would prefer you schedule an appointment before or after school.

## Cooperative Learning

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We were each born with special gifts and abilities. When we are willing to work together and to share these gifts for the benefit of others, we take a step toward building a better world for ourselves and for future generations.

As we work together to accomplish a task, we are learning to communicate, to cooperate, and to share responsibility. These skills help children become successful, not only in school, but in life. The result of many cooperative projects is much more than a sum of the parts. As we put our minds together to solve a problem, we come up with solutions and possibilities that would never have been thought of if we were working alone. This year our class will have many opportunities to work together on common goals and projects. We want to build a world where we all can thrive because we choose to work as a team.

## Curriculum

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PreKindergarten children learn through play! Play encourages curiosity, creativity, and learning development. Children have the opportunity to explore their world through dramatic play, blocks, puzzles, puppets, sand play, art, and many manipulatives. In addition our PreKindergarten math curriculum consists of *Math Their Way* and an early introduction to the precepts and strategies of *Singapore Math™*, as well as FOSS (Full Option Science System) for Science. Our Language Arts program is a balance of developmentally appropriate reading and writing. We use a combination of Guided Reading and the Orton Gillingham method of multi-sensory, direct and cumulative reading instruction. When children are ready, we introduce decodable texts, and early emergent books. For writing, we use the *Handwriting Without Tears* curriculum.

This curriculum is a careful blend of teacher-initiated activities and children's self-directed activities. We work individually as well as in small or whole class groups. The children have many opportunities to explore, experiment, discover, and create through various "hands on" activities.

We visit the library once a week for a story-telling session with the Lower School librarian. While there, we listen to stories, explore information through technology, and have the opportunity to check out books! We also visit the school gymnasium three times a week for Physical Education with the P.E. teacher.

Another important component of our PreKindergarten curriculum focuses on spirituality. We attend chapel once a week for a special lesson. We use the "I am Special" program. We learn about kindness and caring for others, and to appreciate and celebrate God's love and goodness through scripture, music, stories and prayer. Prayer is also an important part of our daily program.

Music is a big part of our PreK curriculum. We use the Orff Schulwerk method, a completely integrated approach to the instruction of music as it relates to the developmental age of children. Non-pitched and pitched percussion instruments, and eventually, when the children are ready, orff instruments are introduced for use with age appropriate songs and movement. Music reinforces literacy, math, and science curriculum. The children are introduced and exposed to the concepts of sound/symbol relationships (i.e. musical notation), pitch, rhythm, and meter throughout the year. Music is incorporated into almost every aspect of our curriculum in PreK.



As teachers we attend to each child's social development in all that they do. We work on both self-reliance and self-regulation. To foster independence children are given the opportunity to make appropriate choices and decisions throughout the school day. We model caring, helping, sharing, and problem solving.

We feel it is important to demonstrate respect and understanding of others at all times. Positive disciplinary techniques are used throughout the day. At times we may redirect children to more appropriate activities. Logical consequences, rather than punishments, follow a child's behavior.

## Earthquake Bags

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Earthquake Bags will be due on **Orientation Day**. Each child is asked to bring in a backpack or small tote bag labeled with his or her name, containing the following required items:

- one can of soup or canned food
- one can of juice
- granola bars or energy bars
- a family photo, a note from parents
- a small stuffed animal
- a lightweight blanket
- a change of clothing

As a service, the Student Senate sells the above food items. If you order food items from the Student Senate, they are added to you child's bag. The bag is returned to you at the end of the year so that you are able to use the bag next year.

## School Communications

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In the new academic year, recurring communications from school are distributed electronically to all families, eliminating most of the paper copies of newsletters and calendars. Please read all electronic and printed publications. They always contain information for the up and coming events at Santa Catalina and in the classroom. Feel free to drop us a note if you have any questions for us. You will also receive emails regularly outlining information on upcoming events.

The Cougar Connection is our Lower and Middle School newsletter. We distribute it to parents via email every two weeks. The layout is easy to navigate with sections for school news, announcements, upcoming events, and links. Parents tell us that reading Cougar Connection helps them keep up with all that is happening on campus.

Additionally, our PreKindergarten class uses the learning management system, Schoology, as our primary means of parent communication. The user-friendly *Schoology PreK Parents Course* includes regular updates, interactive and multimedia newsletters, shared media albums, and all parent permission forms needed during the school year.

### Parent Portal

Parents can find required forms and answers to many of their questions in the Parent Portal. We are in the process of upgrading the portal and will share details with you this fall.

### School Website and Social Media

We have a section on our website exclusively for parents of Santa Catalina students: [santacatalina.org](http://santacatalina.org). You can find school calendars, important phone numbers, FAQs, forms, and handbooks in this section.

We invite you to "like" or follow the Santa Catalina Lower and Middle School Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts. This is a great way to keep up with daily activities, learn about upcoming events, and connect with other members of our school community. Links to these social media accounts can be found on our website. Additionally, photos taken throughout the year of various events are uploaded and available for parents to download (at no charge) from the school's SmugMug account. A link to this account can be found on our website.

## Snack

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Please let us know in WRITING if your child is allergic to anything. We eat snacks together daily. Santa Catalina provides both a snack from at least two food groups, as well as a beverage for each child. If you would like to send in a special snack on occasion, please let us know, and we can plan accordingly.

## Arrival and Dismissal

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Our doors open at 7:30 a.m. in the morning. Children are **tardy after 7:55 a.m.** The morning session ends at 12:00 noon. The optional Afternoon Enrichment session ends at 3:15 p.m. Because we plan a very full day for our PreKindergartners, it is essential that children arrive on time. Likewise, we rely on your courtesy in picking up your child on time. Should an emergency arise which would make you late in collecting your child, please call 831.655.9363, and we can make the necessary arrangements.

For both arrival and dismissal, our parents follow a simple and safe routine. Cars are driven up the driveway; a U-turn is made around the trees at the end of the driveway; and the car is driven to the PreKindergarten steps. A PreKindergarten teacher receives your child from the car. Please follow this procedure on each school day, beginning on the first day of school. (If your child needs to be walked to the classroom that day we certainly want you do what is best for your youngster.) **Under no circumstances should a child be left at the steps with no adult supervision to help him or her into the classroom.** Our routine works best if the line of cars keeps moving. Should you wish to speak to a teacher when you bring your child to school, please follow our routine, then park your car and walk up to the classroom. Once all children have been dismissed the teachers are free to talk with you.

## Afternoon Enrichment Program

Children who are enrolled in the afternoon session need to bring a lunch to school that can be stored in their locker (please include an ice pack to ensure freshness). Unfortunately, we are unable to accommodate hot lunches. We eat our lunch together at 12:00 p.m. after our morning session is concluded. Nap/rest time immediately follows. Sleeping cots are provided for each child and are stored in our classroom. Please provide your child with appropriate bedding. State guidelines require that each child bring a sheet or blanket to lay on top of the cot, and a separate sheet/blanket to cover the child. A small stuffed animal or other sleep “lovey” may be brought to school if your child would like one. All these items should fit in your child’s backpack so that we can store them in their individual bins until rest time. We return these items at the end of each week for washing. A snack later in the afternoon is provided by school.

Dismissal for children who attend the afternoon session is at 3:15 p.m. Parents may pick up their PreKindergarten student by following the regular carline procedure described in the *Lower and Middle School Family Handbook*. The PreKindergarten students are walked to their cars by a teacher.

## Carpools

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Carpools can be time and work-savers for parents and can also provide socializing time for children. Carpools seem to work best when they are highly organized and when the children know that expectations are the same, no matter which parent may be driving.

## Health

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### Illness and Absence

Children must remain home if they have any of the following conditions:

1. fever (They must be without fever for 24 hours before returning.);
2. loose stool or vomiting;
3. wracking coughs;
4. conjunctivitis (Pink Eye) (It is safe to send them after treatment has begun and the eye is no longer weepy.);

5. flu, strep, head lice, chicken pox, or any other infectious disease (They may return after the chicken pox when all blisters are scabbed over.);colds that involve heavy sneezing or coughing;
6. noticeable nasal discharge.

**When returning to school following treatment of head lice, students must be checked in through the nurse's office.**

**Please call the classroom at 831.655.9363 if your child will not be in school.**

We ask you to exercise caution in seeing that your child is really well when attending class. This serves as a protection for all. If the nurse determines that a child should not be in class, she will call you and ask you to pick up your child.

From time to time parents request that children be excused from playing out of doors. Since experience has taught us that this inevitably places hardship on the child, we ask that you only send your child to school when he or she is well enough to take part in our full program, including outdoor play.

## Health Form

The health form requested in May should be returned to school by Orientation Day. State law requires that all health forms be completed prior to a child's first day of attendance.

## Uniforms and Clothing

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Uniforms are to be worn to school on all days except those designated as days of "free dress." Children's general appearance, hair, and uniforms should be kept neat and tidy. Boys must wear their hair above the ears, and the length of hair may not touch the collar of the shirt. Buzz cuts may not be any shorter than 1 mm.

On rainy or threatening days, please send a raincoat or jacket with your child. When children are properly clothed, we will be able to take walks to the chapel or gym even on rainy days! We ask that no umbrellas be brought to school. Please **label** all clothes, raincoats, jackets, sweaters, sweat pants, and backpacks that come to school. Girls may wear a headband, although we ask that it be a plain band without extra adornment. Please refer to the *Lower and Middle School Family Handbook* for a complete list of School's uniform policy and requirements.

## Toys, Jewelry, Etc.

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Toys, jewelry, hats, candy, gum, and purses are not to be brought to school. Girls with pierced ears may only **wear simple stud earrings** to school. **Nail polish is not allowed.** Please **do not send backpacks with wheels.** They do not fit in the cubbies. Sometimes a child brings a backpack full of toys to class. Although the toys stay in the backpack during class, he or she often has insufficient room in the backpack for papers, books, and a sweater when it is time to go home! We appreciate you helping your child to use the backpack for necessary school items only.

## Birthdays

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We celebrate each child's birthday with fun and simplicity. The children enjoy bringing in decorated party napkins and edible treats to share with their classmates. **No party favors should be brought.** We request that it be an easy-to-serve treat. In general snacks of the "healthier variety" are encouraged. However, we realize that a party without a sweet is just not a party to many of our youngsters. Please check with your teacher about any known food allergies. If your child has a birthday during school vacation and would like to celebrate at school, please call to arrange an "unbirthday" celebration; we have found that celebrating half-birthdays for our summer birthday children makes the day a little more special, rather than just picking any other day. The idea of celebrating a birthday at school is to recognize each child's special day, not to have a birthday party at school.

Birthday parties held outside of school are often a part of a child's celebration. If you are planning such a party, we ask you to send invitations through the mail unless one invitation is going to each child in the class. (In this case, you may send invitations to class and they will be distributed.) We also ask you to arrange transportation to the party with this in mind: a young child does not understand being left out when he or she sees friends driving off together to a party. One way to handle this is to park your car and wait until all the other youngsters have been picked up before collecting the children you are

transporting to the party. Please arrange to deliver packages discreetly, thus avoiding discussions of whom the present is for, who is going to the party, etc. These are only a few ideas for handling birthday celebrations. We trust that your sensitivity to the feelings of **all** children will stimulate more ideas to handle this situation with your usual great care! We also believe that your child, by seeing and understanding your sensitivity to the feelings of others, will learn a valuable lesson in human kindness.

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## Field Trips

PreKindergarten students go on various field trips throughout the year. We welcome parent volunteers on these field trips. However we ask that you not bring siblings. We always take the Santa Catalina School bus on our field trips. News of our plans and a permission slip are sent to you prior to any field trip via the *Schoology PreK Parents Course*.

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## Communications

Parent communication is vital to our program. If there is any change at home, it is most helpful to your child if we are informed. We also want you to feel free to call us if any question or problem, no matter how seemingly minor, arises at school. Our school number is 831.655.9363.

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## Observation Room

Santa Catalina PreKindergarten provides an observation room for you to observe your own child and his or her development. You may make an appointment to observe for one hour between the times of 8:30 a.m. and 11:40 a.m. Please call Christy Pollacci at 831.655.9350 to schedule a time to observe.

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## Book Orders

You have the opportunity to purchase GREAT books at a GOOD value. Information on how to pay for book orders either via check or through the online class order is shared with each order from throughout the year.

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## Primary/Intermediate Assemblies

Each week we have an assembly for PreK– grade 5. They are held on Fridays at 8:15 a.m. Parents and families are welcome and encouraged to attend.

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## Trimesters

Santa Catalina Lower and Middle School's calendar is based on trimesters. In addition to an orientation conference prior to the beginning of the school year, we have two scheduled report card conferences with each family. We discuss your child's progress during these two conferences. Your child's final report card is mailed in June.

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## PreKindergarten Admission

At Santa Catalina PreKindergarten we want to help your child grow to meet his or her full potential in all areas of development. Since PreKindergarten is an important building block for future academic and personal success, we want to help ensure that your child has the most positive, beneficial experience possible. For this reason, the PreKindergarten program is for students who celebrate their fourth birthday on or before July 15 of the current calendar year.

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## Kindergarten Screening

Research in child development and developmental psychology clearly suggests that schools must be extremely careful about the danger of admitting children too early to their kindergarten and primary grades. As a school we are very aware of the

distress that placement in the wrong grade can cause a child and inevitably, the child's family, who must suffer with him/her through an experience of school that becomes an agony to be endured rather than an adventure to be anticipated and enjoyed.

In light of current knowledge of child development as it bears on appropriate grade placement, and considering the crucial necessity of children's physical, social, and emotional readiness, along with their cognitive readiness, for success in a structured program, Santa Catalina is understandably very careful in the admission of younger children to Kindergarten. For this reason, the Kindergarten program is for students who celebrate their fifth birthday on or before July 15 of the current calendar year. All applicants to Santa Catalina Kindergarten participate in our kindergarten screening process. It is important that each child start his or her career with the best possible chance for a positive school experience. The purpose of this screening is to determine, quickly and efficiently, whether there is any possibility that a child might need additional support services. The screening is a starting point. Our screen looks at the whole child—his or her intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development. The screening activities are non-threatening and enjoyable. The areas we focus on are number concepts, auditory skills, paper/pen skills, language concepts, visual skills, and gross motor skills.

Please note that enrollment in the PreKindergarten program does not guarantee admittance into Kindergarten. All applicants are notified regarding the Kindergarten decisions for the following year.

## **Notes**

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## Notes

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**2020-2021  
PreKindergarten  
Parent Handbook  
ADDENDUM**

In early June, Monterey County received preliminary approval and guidance for reopening schools for the 2020-2021 academic year. We are using guidance from the Monterey County Health Department, the California Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to design the school day and the organization of our teachers and classrooms in order to align as closely as possible to these recommendations. We are also adhering to all current requirements from the California Department of Social Services Childcare Licensing Department for preschool-aged students for operation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Continued monitoring of information from all of the above departments will inform any changes to the following procedures.

All procedures listed below are also informed by Santa Catalina School's Mission and our commitment to the education and nurturing of the whole child based on the research and guidance from School's advisory committee of physicians, architects, trustees and school leaders which was established earlier this spring:

## Daily Procedures and Policies

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### Arrival and Dismissal

- Masks
  1. PreK-Grade 2: Students must wear either a mask or a clear face shield.
  2. Grades 3-8: Students must wear a mask.
- The school will conduct daily wellness checks for all teachers and students including:
  1. Temperature screening
  2. Symptom screening
- Modified drop-off and pick-up procedures:
  1. All students will remain in carline to receive wellness checks (as listed above) by faculty/staff before entering the classroom.
  2. Carline will begin at 7:30 a.m. First academic period will begin at 8:15 a.m.
  3. Carline pick-up times will begin at 3:15 p.m.
  4. At this time, no visitors will be permitted in school buildings.
  5. We ask parents to remain in cars and **WAIT** in line for their turn in carline to exit the campus.
- At this time, no lockers will be used—all students will keep individual supplies in their backpacks or containers provided in classrooms.

### Parent Communication

- Parent/teacher communication should be via email or phone call.
- Please call Lower and Middle School Office to arrange:
  1. Early or late pick-up or drop-off
  2. Delivery of materials or lunches
- Parent/teacher conferences will take place either in person or virtually. Format to be determined at the time of scheduled conferences.

### Safety

- A full-time registered nurse has been added to nursing staff and will be on duty during school hours.
- Enhanced janitorial and cleaning procedures including:
  1. PreK classroom teachers adhering to all cleaning requirements outlined by CDSS for the environment and materials used by preschool children.
  2. Trained staff will conduct daily cleaning of surfaces and common areas using approved disinfectants.



- Special training by the school for all faculty and staff in the following areas:
  1. Personal protection
  2. Group protection
  3. Physical distancing guidelines and daily screening practices
  4. COVID-19 information: Specific symptom identification
- Windows and doors will remain open during school hours for ventilation.
- At this time, all field trips or large group gatherings are postponed.
- Small cohorts of up to 12 children maximum will be with the same teachers each day.
- Additional hand washing stations will be located throughout campus.
- All students are required to bring their own water bottles to school. Water fountains will not be in use at this time.
- At this time, no after-school enrichment classes past 3:15 p.m. will be offered (Note: PreK afternoon session from 12:00 - 3:15 is still offered.)
- Visual guides for moving around campus, including marked pathways, reminders of 6-foot physical distancing and designated entry and exit doors will be in place.

It is important that families understand that even with all of these precautions in place, as a result of being on campus, your child may be exposed to COVID-19 and contract the disease; your child may transmit the disease to others, including members of your household; and, as a result, your child and household members may experience COVID-19 symptoms and may require isolation, quarantine, and hospitalization.



Santa Catalina  
Lower and Middle School

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