



# Family Handbook

Revised July, 2023

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# Section 1: About Mountain Pathways School

## Introduction

Welcome to Mountain Pathways School. We are very grateful that you have chosen to be a part of our vibrant Montessori community. This handbook has been developed to help you, as families, understand both what is expected of you and what you can expect of us in return. Our goal is an open and trustworthy community that models the respect and interdependence we hope to cultivate in our children. Questions and comments are both welcome and necessary for us to continue to grow and share the benefits of a Montessori education with more children in our community. Thank you again for your support in building a healthy Montessori community in Watauga County!

## Our Mission

Mountain Pathways School is a community that fosters respect and a lifelong love of learning by nurturing the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical well-being of its children.

## Our Vision

The community of learners includes students, families, teachers, and friends interested in the children's learning. We focus on the whole child, fostering the social, emotional, physical, spiritual, and aesthetic growth of the child, along with the development of intellectual skills and knowledge. Each child's personal learning style and rate of learning are met with instructional strategies and a prepared environment suited to his or her developmental needs. We value creativity and self-expression.

Mountain Pathways School is unique to this region. Our purpose is to provide education of the highest quality for children of all racial, cultural, religious, and economic backgrounds based on Montessori philosophy. The Montessori method of teaching and learning emerged from well-accepted research in child development and learning. We collaborate with the American Montessori Society, International Montessori Council, Watauga County Public Schools and Appalachian State University concerning improvements in education.

## Our Values

As a community we believe in:

- Creating a safe place to explore and express individuality, always mindful of other individuals and the community.
- Cultivating love of learning through the child's choice of experiences.
- Encouraging each child to be internally motivated, to be confident decision makers and to embrace his/her ability to make choices.
- Owning our individual beliefs and recognizing their effects on the community.
- We acknowledge the uniqueness of each individual and the special gifts each one brings. We foster positive self-esteem as a core value that allows us to honor others, our community, and our environment.
- We seek the positive in all situations and enjoy the process. We strive to bring joy, playfulness and laughter to our lives and community.
- We provide opportunities for self-reliance while encouraging and expecting individuals to support each other in building a stronger community.
- We value empathizing with others' needs and situations, and we care for each other as much as we care for ourselves.

Our beliefs about how to treat children: A Decalogue by Dr. Maria Montessori

1. Never touch the child unless invited by them (in some form or the other).
2. Never speak ill of the child in his presence or absence.
3. Concentrate on strengthening and helping the development of what is good in the child so that its presence may leave less and less space for the negative.

4. Be active in preparing the environment. Take meticulous and constant care of it. Help the child establish constructive relations with it. Show the proper place where the means of development are kept and demonstrate their proper use.
5. Be ready to answer the call of the child who stands in need of and always listen and respond to the child who appeals to you.
6. Respect the child who makes a mistake and can then or later correct himself, but stop firmly and immediately any misuse of the environment and any action which endangers the child, his development or others.
7. Respect the child who takes rest or watches others working or ponders what he himself has done or will do. Neither call him, nor force him to other forms of activity.
8. Help those who are in search of activity and cannot find it.
9. Be untiring in repeating presentations to the child who refused them earlier, in helping the child acquire what is not yet his own and overcome imperfections. Do this by animating the environment with care, restraint and silence, with mild words and loving presence. Make your ready presence felt to the child who searches and hide from the child who has found.
10. Always treat the child with the best of good manners and offer him the best you have in yourself and at your disposal.

## A Brief History

Mountain Pathways School (MPS) was founded in 1987 by a group of parents and educators who desired interdisciplinary education opportunities that met the holistic needs of children. They sought to develop an educational atmosphere that would foster self-reliant, self-disciplined children who would grow to adulthood with a life-long love of learning, and the ability and desire to positively contribute to society. The school has grown to its current size of 65 children aged 1.5 to 12 years.

Mountain Pathways adopted the Montessori philosophy and curriculum in 1992. The

Montessori classroom is built upon personal responsibility and respect for the other individuals in the environment. Children who rise to these expectations — and whose parents take these expectations into their home — typically go on to become successful, well-adjusted young adults who do not hesitate to make positive contributions to their community and world.

## Campus and Classroom Space

Mountain Pathways is located on Howard's Creek Road just outside of Boone. The campus is bordered by the gently rolling waters of Howard's Creek and includes more than six beautiful acres of woodland and open fields.

The campus has two houses: the Children's House with our Pre-Primary and two Primary classrooms, administrative offices, and two playgrounds, and the Norwood House, named for MPS founder Ann Norwood, has our elementary classrooms with access to the gardens and greenhouse. Each classroom has been carefully designed to introduce and support developmentally appropriate learning and movement. Additionally, each classroom has dedicated space for snack and lunch as well as quiet time.

## Statement of Non-Discrimination

Mountain Pathways School is committed to diversity and creating inclusive and welcoming spaces regardless of race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation/identity, or (dis)ability. The school strives to accommodate the specific needs of individual children while also deepening understanding, acceptance, and joy in our differences.

## Code of Ethics

Mountain Pathways School is a Full School Member of the International Montessori Council (IMC). As such, we have adopted the IMC Code of Ethics, which can be reviewed on the [International Montessori Council website](#).

## Governance

Mountain Pathways is a private, 501(c)3 non-profit corporation operated by a Board of Trustees and executive staff. MPS is licensed by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Child Development and Early Education and registered with the North Carolina Department of Education. Our Lead Teachers hold graduate-level, accredited, Montessori certifications.



## Board of Trustees

The Board consists of 9 Trustees: Terms are held for two years (except Chair-Elect), and the Board meets monthly. Parents are invited to attend any and all board meetings as observers and may request time on a meeting agenda by contacting the Board Chair in advance. The governing bylaws and minutes from Board of Trustee meetings are available through the school's website <https://mountain-pathways.org/board-of-trustees>.

## Corporation

The Corporation shall be responsible for all decisions that affect the mission and values of the School, the corporate and tax structure of the School, the Montessori curriculum of the School, and defining and determining membership of the Corporation of the School.

The members of the Corporation shall consist of parents/guardians of students currently enrolled at the School and all salaried staff (as defined in the Personnel Policies and Procedures). Parents shall be defined as a legal parent, custodian, or guardian with full or joint custody of his or her child. For the purposes of voting, there shall be one vote per family.

All corporation members will be notified in advance of scheduled meetings. Typically there are two corporation meetings per year.

## Organization Structure

Effective communication is critical to ensure a healthy community. To ensure that your questions or concerns are answered most effectively and efficiently, please use the following organization chart as a guide when deciding with whom to discuss a particular concern.

| Area of Concern                      | Contact  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Montessori Curriculum                | <b>Your child's Lead Teacher:</b>  |
| Child-specific questions or concerns | Bonny Becker: <a href="mailto:bonny.becker@mountain-pathways.org">bonny.becker@mountain-pathways.org</a>       |
| Academics                            | Noran Hussein: <a href="mailto:noran.hussein@mountain-pathways.org">noran.hussein@mountain-pathways.org</a>    |
| Classroom Activities                 | Sara Drum: <a href="mailto:sara.drum@mountain-pathways.org">sara.drum@mountain-pathways.org</a>                |
| Classroom Procedures                 | Tori Pendleton: <a href="mailto:tori.pendleton@mountain-pathways.org">tori.pendleton@mountain-pathways.org</a> |
| Teachers Conferences                 |  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Classroom Donations/Volunteer Opportunities  |   |
| Classroom schedule<br>Snack/food prep need<br>Classroom Laundry  | <p><b>Your child's Assistant Teacher:</b></p> <p>Pre-Primary: <a href="mailto:tenaya.teeman@mountain-pathways.org">tenaya.teeman@mountain-pathways.org</a></p> <p>Primary: <a href="mailto:rach.miller@mountain-pathways.org">rach.miller@mountain-pathways.org</a></p> |
| Billing<br>Attendance<br>Extended Care<br>Tours, Classroom Observations, Admissions<br>Inquiries<br>Substitute Teaching<br>School Calendar   | <p>Nicholas Mihalas: <a href="mailto:office@mountain-pathways.org">office@mountain-pathways.org</a></p>   |
| Leadership & Oversight of day-to-day<br>Operations<br>Community Building<br>Volunteer Opportunities<br>Suggestions for family partnership events<br>Enrollment<br>School Operating Policies<br>Staff and Personnel<br>Professional Development<br>Financial Aid/Scholarships<br>Marketing & Public Relations | <p>Jenny Darcy: <a href="mailto:director@mountain-pathways.org">director@mountain-pathways.org</a></p>  |

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Governance                      | Patrick Sullivan, Board Chair:<br><a href="mailto:patrick.sullivan@mountain-pathways.org">patrick.sullivan@mountain-pathways.org</a>   |
| Board Policies & Membership     | Kelly Pierson, Board Chair-elect:<br><a href="mailto:kelly.pierson@mountain-pathways.org">kelly.pierson@mountain-pathways.org</a>  |
| Financial Planning              | Casey Smith, Treasurer:<br><a href="mailto:casey.smith@mountain-pathways.org">casey.smith@mountain-pathways.org</a>  |
| Personnel Policies & Procedures | Jordan Nance, Personnel Chair:<br><a href="mailto:jordan.nance@mountain-pathways.org">jordan.nance@mountain-pathways.org</a>   |
| Additional Board Members        | Christine Nishiyama, Secretary:<br><a href="mailto:christine.nishiyama@mountain-pathways.org">christine.nishiyama@mountain-pathways.org</a><br><br>Tori Pendelton, Teacher Representative:<br><a href="mailto:tori.pendelton@mountain-pathways.org">tori.pendelton@mountain-pathways.org</a><br><br>Mary Willis, Trustee-at-large:<br><a href="mailto:mary.willis@mountain-pathways.org">mary.willis@mountain-pathways.org</a><br><br>Jenny Darcy, Director (non-voting) |

## COMMUNITY CULTURE & COMMUNICATION

We believe the Montessori method, as a spiritual endeavor, can guide us to act in the best interest of the students and inform how we craft their learning experience so that they can fulfill their most authentic potential. Our actions are consistently and intentionally child-centered and driven by a genuine desire to spark and fuel a lifelong love of learning.

We understand that each person on our staff has chosen to spend their time immersed in meaningful work that is a deeper source of fulfillment at our school. We also understand that the families of our students are our partners and collaborators in this endeavor.

### Positive Community Culture

A positive community culture functions when we together:

- Practice kind and direct communication (avoid passive/aggressive “hints” at an issue)
- Commit to equitably resolve any conflicts that may arise
- Draw awareness to behavior rooted in motives that are negative and counterproductive to a positive work environment

- Contribute our talents, goodwill, and expertise
- Collaborate with the staff to utilize each person's unique talents
- Constantly pursue opportunities for growth and improvement
- Actively listen with the intent to understand
- Treat our staff and campus with respect and dignity

## Unacceptable Behavior

The health of a community culture is compromised if someone:

- Exercises an excessive amount of control over aspects of the school environment
- Micromanages the actions of those around them
- Creates barriers to a child's learning with arbitrary and unrealistic expectations
- Focuses on perfectionism and/or strict adherence to unrealistic expectations
- Dismisses the expertise/contributions of the MPS staff
- Speaks to someone in a disrespectful or dismissive manner
- Behaves in any manner that a reasonable person would find unprofessional, disturbing, or harmful to their psychological health
- Gossips or speaks negatively in a way that promotes a toxic community environment, on or off campus

These types of behaviors are universally recognized for having negative consequences for their recipients, the observers of the behavior, and the organization overall; therefore, they are not condoned or tolerated at MPS.

## Communication

Mountain Pathways School will use a variety of methods to help keep you informed about what is happening at the school on a regular basis.

- Most school-wide reminders and communications will be sent via email to conserve paper and enhance efficiency.
- Lead Teachers have flexibility regarding how they will communicate with the families in their classrooms and will send out at least one monthly email to share happenings from the classroom.
- The school calendar is located on the school's website. Please check the calendar on a regular basis to ensure that you are aware of teacher workdays, holidays, and family information events.
- If a child's families are separated, divorced, or not residing at the same address for some other reason, we want to keep both families informed of their child's progress and other school matters. Given permission, we will send all correspondence to any family with whom the child does not reside. Please notify the Director and your child's teacher if this applies to you. When family/teacher conferences are scheduled, please make every

effort to avoid separate conferences. It is very important that we are able to communicate the same information to both families at the same time.

- Mountain Pathways School has an open door policy between families and staff. Anytime you need to speak with a staff member, please consult the chart on pages 7-9 and contact the appropriate staff member to set up an appointment. We welcome your comments, questions, and observations.
- We use the Remind App to communicate urgent messages, such as inclement weather closings. Please be sure to accept your invitation so you can receive these text messages in a timely manner.
- We use Transparent Classroom to track lessons, activities, photos of your child(ren) as well as required paperwork, incident reports, topical ointment forms, etc.. Please be sure to accept your invitation and set up your account so that you can access this important platform.

The teachers encourage you to send a note or email with any questions, comments, or concerns you may have.

During the day, the teachers are not available until after 2:45 p.m.

Calls/messages/emails received by the teachers during the school day will be returned at the end of the day. The teachers are open to calls, and emails during the evening and weekend hours, however they are often busy with their own families during these times. If you try to reach a staff member outside of school hours, we will get back to you as quickly as we can, but sometimes that may be a day or two later.

We pride ourselves on being a small and close community. Because of this, it may be tempting to discuss school matters with staff/board members at outside social events (i.e., birthday parties, play-dates, etc.). The staff has a set of ethics that govern professional conduct, and, out of respect for the children and the school, cannot discuss school business at such times.

## The Montessori Philosophy

And so we discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being. It is not acquired by listening to words, but by virtue of experiences in which the child acts on his environment. The teacher's task is not to talk, but to prepare and arrange a series of motives for cultural activity in a special environment made for the child ... our educational aim with very young children must be to aid the spontaneous development of this mental, spiritual and physical personality.

-Dr. Maria Montessori

Maria Montessori, M.D. (1870-1952) was the first female graduate of medical school in Italy and brought her training as a physician and scientist to her educational endeavors. As leader in the field of early childhood education, she gained notoriety for her outstanding success first at Rome's Orthophrenic School and later at the first "Children's House." The success of her programs was attributed primarily to her original methods and materials. Dr. Montessori discovered that children have an inherent drive for independence and that their physical, mental, and emotional development is linked to purposeful movement. She observed that even very young children have exceptional powers of concentration. Most importantly, she noted that children learn in a manner that is unique to each age (e.g., the very young child unconsciously absorbs his environment). She concluded that adults do not teach children - children teach themselves. A Montessori classroom is a multi-age setting in which children learn from each other and because of each other. Younger children are excited to "see what is coming" as they observe older children work. Older children reinforce their knowledge as they share it with younger children. Everyone learns to take responsibility for themselves, the group, and the environment. Montessori staff prepare a beautiful, rich, and ordered environment so that each child will feel safe, secure, challenged, and respected. When the child first becomes intensely absorbed in their work, they have taken the initial step toward genuine self-discipline. In the words of Dr. Montessori, "A child who can control himself is free to learn." Our job, as educators, is to assist in this process. The Montessori teacher is often described as the spark that links each child to the environment. They guide the child through the curriculum, based upon observations of each child's interests and periods of readiness. The Montessori method is itself oriented toward the experience of learning so that children learn how to learn. In this way, Dr. Montessori described her approach as a "help to life" rather than an educational system in the conventional sense. A child who is observant, organized, excited, self-disciplined, and task-oriented discovers the feeling of self-confidence that accompanies a job well done. Such a child becomes a life-long learner.

## Section 2: Financial Information

### Tuition and Fees

Current tuition rates, Extended Care rates/packages, and Activity Fees are listed on our website here: <https://mountain-pathways.org/tuition-fees>

### Tuition Deposit

A non-refundable tuition deposit, equal to one tenth of your child(ren)'s annual tuition, is required to secure their spot. Tuition deposits are applied to the last May that your child attends MPS as long as all terms of the Enrollment Contract have been honored.

## Tuition

The remainder of annual tuition (less the deposit amount) may be paid in full, semi-annually by August 1st and January 1st, or monthly. Please note that monthly payments are not paying for that month's tuition, but rather an installment of the annual tuition obligation.

\*For those families starting after the beginning of the school year, tuition will be prorated and is due upon acceptance.

\*No refunds or discounts are given for vacations, sick days, school breaks, or inclement weather closings/delays.

## Sibling Discount

A discount applies for families with multiple children (the youngest student will be billed full tuition and each additional student will be billed at the sibling rate).

## Activity Fee

The activity fee will be used to supply some classroom materials, in-town field trips, music, art, physical education and other activities as deemed appropriate by the MPS teaching staff. Activity Fees are due by August 1st.. Out of town field trips may require additional fees and expenses.

## Late Payment Fee

Any payments received after the 15th of the month will incur a \$25.00 late fee. If payment is not received by the 30th of the month in question, the tuition deposit will be applied to all past due tuition.

## Late Pick-up Fees

For the safety and order of our school and with respect to our staff who have other work to do and families waiting at home, please make every effort to pick your child(ren) up on time.

Late Pick-Up from Homeline (2:30):

- 15 minute grace period

- Any child not picked up by 2:45 pm will be sent to After School and billed for that day at the Drop-In rate.

#### Late Pick-Up from After School:

- 10 minute grace period
- 11+ minutes late = \$5/minute

#### Returned Check Fee

A charge of \$25.00 will apply for any returned check or bank draft. Late payment fees will also accrue until payment has cleared.

#### Miscellaneous Expenses

Other expenses that will occur during the school year include the cost of restocking the food pantry for the classroom for approximately two to three weeks of the school year, purchasing flowers for the classroom, purchasing items for classroom pet care, purchasing items for special days (Juicing Day, Tie Dye Day) and possible field trip fees. You are also encouraged to participate in fundraisers and other optional activities that occur over the course of the school year.

#### Financial Assistance/Tuition Reduction

Mountain Pathways School strives to keep a high-quality Montessori education accessible to as many families as possible. Please inform us if you are in need of financial assistance. A limited number of financial aid scholarships are available to the families who complete a financial aid application and are most in need of assistance. Additional information can be found on the [Admissions page](#) of our website. To be considered in the first round of financial aid decisions, please apply as early as possible.

#### Development

Mountain Pathways School Children's House is a non-profit organization which is funded almost solely by tuition. We are very grateful for all contributions of time and money to further the development of our school.

Donations can be made via:

- Paypal to: mpathways@gmail.com 2) check made out to "Mountain Pathways School" and delivered/mailed to the Main Office
- Selecting MPS as the beneficiary organization through [Amazon Smile](#)
- Link your Harris Teeter VIC card to their [Together in Education](#) (TIE) program and select MPS as your beneficiary school (requires re-enrollment each school year).



- Link your Lowe's Foods VIC card to their [Cart to Class](#) program and select MPS as your beneficiary school (requires re-enrollment each school year).

## Section 3: Admissions and Enrollment

### Admissions Procedures

The [admissions process](#) for Mountain Pathways School can be found on our website.

### Re-enrollment/Enrollment Timetable

Prior to the start of the admissions process each year, Mountain Pathways School will conduct a review of each student's growth to determine if the school can continue to meet the student's needs and will discuss that review with the student's families, if necessary, before issuing a new tuition agreement for the coming year. In order to secure a space for their child for the upcoming school year, families must submit their Enrollment Contract which typically go out in February/March.

The admissions process typically follows this general timetable:

Mid-February.....Re-Enrollment Contracts distributed to current families

Late April..... Prospective Families visit Classrooms

Late-May.....Families notified of admissions decisions (admitted, placed in waiting pool, etc.) Applications continued to be accepted (admitted or placed in waiting pool)

### Class Assignments

Official classroom assignments are released to families during the week prior to the start of the school year or sooner if we are able. Children typically remain in the same classroom for the duration of their 3-year cycle, while enrolled at Mountain Pathways School. The stability afforded by this practice is foundational to the success of a Montessori classroom. We do not generally entertain requests for specific classroom assignments. In the event that a family feels that there are extraordinary circumstances regarding their child's classroom placement, the family may send a written request to the Director explaining those circumstances. The Director will take the circumstances outlined in the request into consideration. It is always our hope that every child admitted to Mountain Pathways School will thrive here, but despite our best efforts, this is not always possible. We sometimes find that even after receiving the benefit of educational support services and intervention strategies as described in our Policy on Learning Differences, a child may continue to exhibit either a lack of academic progress or a pattern of situationally inappropriate behavior that disrupts the student's own learning and/or the learning of others. In these cases, the School may need to meet with the child's families to discuss additional support for the child. In the event that classroom teaching partners will change from one school year to the next, families of children returning to that particular classroom will be notified as soon as possible.

## Withdrawal Notice

Mountain Pathways School reserves the right to request the withdrawal of any student (1) whose behavior or lack of cooperation is deemed unacceptable; (2) whose parents or family are not in alignment with Montessori beliefs and practices; or (3) whose tuition payments are past due.

## Section 4: Health and Safety

Emergency information forms must be completed and on file with the school prior to your child's first day of school. Current copies of all required health, allergy, and medication forms are kept in the school office. Please notify the office of any changes in your child's health.

[COVID Guidance for NC Childcare Centers from NCDHHS](#)

### Communicable Disease/Illness Policy

To maintain a safe and healthy school environment for all of our students, please respect our Illness Policy, which requires temporary exclusion from school when your child has the following conditions:

- Fever of 100 degrees or higher (non-medicated)
- Upper respiratory tract infection
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Strep throat
- Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)
- Ringworm/pinworm
- Impetigo
- Chicken Pox
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough)
- Mumps
- Measles

Your child may return to school after being symptom-free for at least 24 hours (non-medicated). If your child has seen a doctor during their illness, please share the doctor's note with the school. Since Mountain Pathways School does not have an infirmary, home is the best place for a sick child. Thus, if your child is sent home from school due to one of the above health matters, your child may not return to school the next day. If your child becomes sick at school, we will contact you, or your emergency contact if you cannot be reached, to pick up your child immediately. Your child will be separated from other children. If your child is diagnosed with a contagious or communicable disease, please notify the school immediately. We may inform other families about the contagious/communicable disease exposure to their child, (your child's

information will be kept confidential). Physicians and schools are required to notify AppHealthcare of any Reportable Communicable Diseases.

## Head Lice Policy

The School will take prompt action to eliminate the threat of head lice. Head lice do not represent a disease or infection and can therefore be readily treated. Since lice are transmittable, any student found to have live head lice or live nits close to the scalp will be sent home promptly for treatment. The student may not return to the School until treatment has been received and a School staff member has determined that no head lice or live nits are present. The School will provide information to families about head lice, as needed. Any member of the School community who knows of a manifestation of head lice should report this to a responsible staff member.

## Immunizations

All children should have a completed immunization record on file in the school office prior to the first day of school. Immunization records can be collected/uploaded via Transparent Classroom. Children are not allowed to attend school (whether public, private, or religious) or a child care facility unless they have received all required immunizations appropriate for their age. If required immunizations/immunization records are not received on/by the first day of attendance the child's family/guardian shall be notified. The family/guardian shall normally have thirty calendar days from the date of first attendance to obtain the required immunizations for the child. If a vaccine reasonably requires more than thirty calendar days to complete, and a suitable physician reliably verifies this fact, a reasonable extension of time may be granted. At the end of the 30 calendar days or extended period, if the student has not received the required immunizations, the School shall be required to exclude the student from attending school until proof of immunization records are received. The School shall maintain the student's immunization records in the student's file. These records may be inspected by officials of the county or state health departments upon request and without notification to families. When a child transfers from or to another School, arrangements will be made to transfer the immunization records.

## Chronic Health Conditions

If your child has a chronic health condition, such as diabetes or asthma, that affects your child's school day, you must inform the Director prior to the first day of school. We must have information regarding the nature and severity of the health problem, symptoms to be aware of, treatment your child is receiving from a healthcare professional, and any emergency procedures. The Director and classroom teachers, in consultation with you and the child's professional health care provider, will complete an Individualized Health Care Plan (IHCP). The

School will ensure that the faculty and staff receive appropriate training regarding the interventions specified in the IHCP and/or Allergy Action Plan (AAP).

## Emergency Procedures and Medication Policy

Mountain Pathways School strives to minimize accidents by conducting facility inspections on a regular basis and performing maintenance as needed. Should an accident occur despite these precautions, we request your understanding and cooperation with the following emergency procedures.

1. Staff Medical Care: In the event of an emergency medical situation, School personnel who have been trained in CPR and first aid may administer emergency medical attention.
2. Professional Medical Care: When a child needs immediate professional care, paramedics will be called. All emergency contacts must be on file when the school year begins.
3. Treatment of Minor Injuries: Many children react unexpectedly even to simple medical compounds such as hydrogen peroxide or calamine lotion. Therefore, we will not apply medication to a wound beyond soap, water, and bandage, if necessary. An ice pack may be applied to minor bumps or swelling.

Your child's safety is important to us. Therefore, it is imperative that you keep your emergency contact information up to date at all times. Please make every effort to see that your child receives the necessary medications before or after school hours. We will not administer medication during school hours. Please contact the Director to discuss any specific medication requirements.

## Concussion

The School will provide information and staff development on an annual basis to all teachers and other school personnel in order to help staff recognize the signs and symptoms of a concussion and to provide support and assist students who have sustained a concussion in accordance with their learning and behavioral needs. The [HEADS UP to Schools: Know Your Concussion ABCs](#) materials provided by CDC will be used. This annual training will include information on concussions, with a particular focus on being alert for signs and symptoms of concussion and helping students recover from a concussion. The School will include in its annual student health history and emergency medical information update a question related to any head injury/concussion the student may have incurred during the past year. Concussions Procedure: In the case of a potential student concussion, The School shall follow guidelines and procedures, as detailed in the CDC's HEADS UP program, the school will: (a) Be alert for any situations, signs, or symptoms that indicate a student may have suffered a concussion or other head injury and immediately remove the student from any activities that may result in a further risk of head injury (e.g., physical activity at recess or in the classroom, activities that involve a lot of concentration) (b) Notify families immediately of signs observed and symptoms reported by the student and request that families pick up their child as soon as possible, and have their child

evaluated by a healthcare professional experienced in evaluating for concussion. (c) Inform child's teachers regarding removal from learning & physical activity; (d) Solicit expectations regarding annual medical care update from families and determine need for medical care plan/school accommodations in the event of concussion; a. The health care provider is expected to offer guidance to families and staff about when it is safe for a student to return to school and appropriate levels of cognitive and physical activity. School staff will continue to monitor and share observations with families (and health care provider, with proper permission) to assist in the student's recovery.

## Hygiene/Toileting/Miscellaneous

We encourage regular hand washing and support children in learning to take care of their bodily needs (for example, blowing and wiping their own nose, "catching" sneezes in their elbow, etc.), as the Montessori philosophy encourages independence for the child. Mountain Pathways School staff will NOT apply sunscreen, bug spray, or any other over-the-counter substance to your child at school unless they have the required Topical Ointment Form on file in Transparent Classroom. Please be sure to apply all such substances at home before school hours.

## Inclement Weather Policy

The safety of our children and Mountain Pathways School staff is a top priority. In the event of inclement weather or another condition that causes travel to or from school to be potentially hazardous, we will be closed.

We do not follow any other institution's schedule for inclement weather closings. We use the Remind App to text these changes to families. Families should use their judgment to determine whether transporting their children to and from school is safe. Families are always welcome to pick their children up early regardless of the administrative decisions made if they deem the environmental conditions unsafe. When informed of potentially hazardous weather conditions, all attempts will be made to make a decision in a timely manner (by 7:00 AM for delays/all-day closings, if possible) to reduce confusion, to reduce family scheduling conflicts, and to keep people safe.

We believe that time spent playing and exploring outdoors is an important part of each child's development. As such, students will go outside most days that school is in session. While the Lead Teachers have discretion regarding whether to go outside or not, families can generally expect that students will not go outside if the wind chill temperature falls below 20°F. If the wind chill temperature is between 20 and 32°F, time outside will generally be limited to 20 minutes.

## Safety Drills

We will have monthly fire drills as required and quarterly inclement weather/lockdown drills as required. Our procedures and locations for lockdown drills is the same as for inclement weather drills. As such, we have chosen not to discuss lockdowns with the children and do not teach them about the threat of intruders/active shooters as we believe the research on trauma and fear related to these drills outweighs any benefits of disclosure to the children. Our staff is trained on emergency preparedness and we simply teach the children (and have them practice) giving their attention to and following the instructions from their teachers.

## Section 5: Policies and Procedures

### Attendance & Late Arrival Policy

To receive the greatest benefit from our Montessori program, your child's regular attendance is extremely important. Mountain Pathways School requests that families call or email the school as soon as possible to notify the School in the event that their child will be absent.

For a child at any level of Mountain Pathways School (pre-primary, primary, or elementary) to receive the full benefits of a Montessori educational experience, they must attend class and be on time. Our curriculum is rich and challenging and uninterrupted daily attendance is extremely important to foster a positive learning environment for all of our students.

Excessive absences and tardiness disrupt the learning process and environment, not only for the student who is absent/late, but also for the other students and the teachers. Arriving on time (no later than 8:45) will give your child the opportunity to feel like a full member of their classroom community, and to avoid that awkward feeling of entering a situation "late."

Out of respect for the student's routine, formation of organizational habits, and access to classroom lessons, materials and curriculum, it is imperative that children arrive at school on time. Habitual tardiness or absenteeism results in serious lapses in the accumulation of knowledge, enrichment, the development of practical and physical skills, self-discipline, and sense of responsibility.

**For the 2023-2024 academic year, morning drop off will be 8:25-8:45 am.**

Any child who arrives between 7:45 and 8:25 am will go to Before School Care in the Green Room of the Children's House, and be dismissed to their classrooms at 8:25 am.

***No additional students will be admitted after 8:45 am without prior arrangement and/or a valid excuse for extenuating circumstances (see below).*** Late arrivals

without a valid excuse may join their classes during the next transition time when it won't be disruptive to the group.

Excused tardies and absences include:

- Illness or injury
- A death in the family
- Health care appointments
- Court appearances
- Religious observance
- Natural disasters
- Outside educational opportunities

Oral or written communication of the valid excuse must be provided to the main office within 2 business days of your child's absence/tardy, or it/they will be recorded as unexcused. Your child's teachers or the Director will notify you if there are five or more unexcused tardies and/or three or more unexcused absences and will work with you and your child if there is a concern that absences are becoming excessive.

More than five unexcused absences in a semester is considered excessive and will result in a meeting with the Director and your child's Lead Teacher(s) to determine a plan to ensure more consistent attendance. More than ten unexcused absences in a school year is considered grounds for probationary enrollment and potential dismissal should the situation continue.

Late Entry Transition Times:

Students who arrive later than 8:45 am may enter school at the times below. If your child is coming in after lunch has begun, please ensure that they have eaten or are here in time to eat before lunch time ends.

Pre-Primary: 10:30 am - 12:15 pm

Primary: 11:30 am - 12:45 pm

## Staggered Start to the School Year

At the beginning of each year, we have a staggered start, bringing students into the classrooms gradually over the course of the first week. Our returning students in each classroom start in groups, oldest to youngest, followed by students moving up from other MPS classrooms, and

finally having the new students join, oldest to youngest. We have found that this helps students and the classroom as a whole, adjust to the new year.

## Hours of Operation/Drop-off and Pick-up

The Main Office is open 8:00 am - 4:00 pm, Monday - Friday during the school year and 8:00 am - 3:00 pm, Monday - Friday in the summer.

### Drop off

If you have an urgent message or information for your child's teacher at the time of drop-off, please write it in a short note so the teacher can read it after all of the children are safely taken care of. Children should be dropped off at the locations below, depending on their age group.

Pre-Primary at the bottom of the steps to their classroom door.

Primary at the main porch of the building.

### Pick-up (we call this Home Line for students leaving at 2:30)

Pick-up in the same locations for Pre-Primary and Primary.

Children are released only to their families or to Authorized Adults as listed on their Transparent Classroom profile/forms. In addition, families may temporarily authorize another person to pick up the child by submitting such authorization via phone call or email to the Office in advance. Proper identification is required at all times for all authorized persons picking up students. In the event of a changing family situation in which one family has custody of a child, Mountain Pathways School will continue to release the child to either family unless and until the school has received a copy of the legal court order indicating custody arrangements. If at any time, in the best judgment of a staff member, a family or caregiver who is picking up a child is acting in an unsafe or irresponsible manner, the staff member will not release the child until a spouse or other emergency contact arrives.

### Late Pick-up

We appreciate that very occasionally you may arrive late to pick up your child. If you arrive after the pick-up window, please park your car and proceed to the After School location for your child's group. When picking up from After School, the first two times you are late, we will remind



you of the pick-up window. After the second late pick-up, you will be charged \$1 for every minute you are late picking up your child. The late pickup charges will be added to the next month's invoice for Extended Care. Accumulating more than six late pick-ups will result in our requesting a formal meeting to discuss our expectations and your responsibilities as a Mountain Pathways School family.

### Early Pick-up

If you need to pick up your child earlier than their typical dismissal time, please notify the Main Office by phone or email. We ask that you make every effort to let your student's teachers know whenever an early pick-up is planned so as to minimize the impact on your student and on the group. We cannot guarantee that we can have children ready on time without more than 30 minutes notice.

### Clothing

Please label ALL of your child's belongings (Clothes, coats, hats, boots, gloves, etc.) Our Montessori classrooms encourage and foster independence, which means that our students are constantly practicing keeping track of their belongings. Our staff cannot support them in this without knowing which items belong to which children.

Children's clothing should allow them to engage in a wide range of activities. Please help your children select clothing and shoes that allow freedom of movement. All children have outdoor playtime every day and should dress accordingly. Younger children should wear clothing that enables them to dress themselves with minimal assistance. We go outside in all kinds of weather. A one-piece rainsuit like the [Tuffo Muddy Buddy](#) will keep your child dry and comfortable on drizzly days.

The child's ability to successfully dress is a powerful instrument in developing self-image and self-respect. When selecting clothing, please keep in mind that children are expected to use the toilet independently in the Primary and Elementary classes. Each child will be assigned a cubby where they can store jackets, shoes (inside and outside), backpacks, and spare clothing. Having the right gear can make a big difference in your child's day at school.

### Fragrances

Please choose lotions, hair products and detergents that are **fragrance free**. Young children are highly sensitive, and we are trying to create an environment free of sensory distractions to help them to focus and be peaceful. We have children and staff for whom fragrances cause headaches. Your help in keeping everyone focused and comfortable is very much appreciated!

## Outdoor Shoes

Please have your child arrive at school wearing weather-appropriate shoes/boots to play outside that day. Boots, sneakers, slip-on shoes that cover the heel, or sandals with a heel strap are all appropriate. No wheels, no flashing lights, and no flip-flops may be worn at school.

## Indoor Shoes

Each child should bring a pair of lightweight shoes to keep at school and wear indoors. We recommend slip-on indoor shoes that fit snugly, such as [Crocs](#) and [Foamies](#). No boots, slippers, or flip-flops, shoes with wheels, or flashing lights.

## Personal Possessions

No toys, games, or other from home are permitted into the school. Children often want to bring favorite possessions to school and enjoy sharing with friends, but we ask parents to discourage this practice. These items present a distraction in the classroom and are often lost or misplaced. Your child's teacher will inform you if there is a special day for sharing (a.k.a. 'Show and tell').

We prefer that technology (phones, tablets, other handheld devices) not be brought onto the premises by students. We understand that, in some situations, this is unavoidable.

In the case that a student does need to bring technology on to the premises, the device(s) must remain in the student's backpack (not on their body) and be turned off throughout the school day. Elementary students have access to a computer and phones if they are needed for school-related or emergency purposes.

Should staff members find a student using the aforementioned technology during school hours (including recess, elementary going outs, before school care, and after school care), the device will be stored in the school office where the parent(s) may retrieve it at pick-up.

## Items to Bring to/Keep at School

### Pre-Primary and Primary Students Who Nap

#### **Please Bring:**

- A full water bottle – clearly labeled with the child's name (no sippy cups)

- Lunch in a lunchbox/bag
- Several complete changes of clothes including socks and underwear
- Rain boots (add snow boots in winter)

**Bundle bag:** All children who nap at school should bring an additional bag that will be left at school each week containing:

- A small, lightweight blanket or flat sheet (no quilts, comforters, or other thick blankets)
- A small, lightweight crib sheet
- Children may bring a small comfort item that will be kept with their rest mat and only used at rest time (we will send them home on Fridays)

Backpacks and bundle bags must be clearly labeled with your child's name in a visible location.

**Please, please, please LABEL all items that can be labeled!**

## Toys

Children may NOT bring toys, jewelry, or other personal items to school. Books or other educational materials that are consistent with the curriculum are welcome with their Lead Teacher's approval. Please be sure the child's name is marked on any books or materials brought to class.

## Learning Differences/Special Needs

The Montessori Method of education provides a nurturing, supportive environment for children of all abilities and learning styles. This includes children with special needs, including physical disabilities; learning differences in reading, writing, spelling, and/or math; ADHD; and autism spectrum disorders. During the admissions process and beyond, the student's individual needs and the school's resources will be carefully assessed through a partnership between the school and the family to ensure a successful fit. As we become aware of your child's needs, we may refer you to community resources for additional support/evaluation for needs in speech/language, occupational needs, and/or counseling. We will work in close partnership with a child's family in order to best meet each child's unique needs. Nonetheless, some students may need greater accessibility or more support services than the School can provide. We will work together to develop a plan of action that will hopefully result in positive progress for your child.

## Playground/Garden Guidelines

Children have opportunities to stretch their bodies, imaginations and practice their grace and courtesy during daily outdoor time (weather permitting). Our playground/garden area is large and fenced-in. To ensure the safety and comfort of all children on the playground, the following guidelines are in place:

- Show care and respect for all the plants, animals (typically insects), play items, and other people on the playground.
- Keep your shoes on.
- Two people may be on the monkey bars at a time.
- Wait with feet in the grass when waiting for the swings or monkey bars.
- Sand stays on the ground.
- Do not jump from the top of the climber.
- We encourage cooperative, creative, and inclusive play.

## The Montessori Approach to Behavior

As professionals who are trained in Montessori Education, the teachers and staff are committed to providing a loving, nurturing, and safe community for all. By understanding, respecting, and valuing each member of the MPS community, we work together in a supportive partnership with the students, parents and families in our community.

## Student Conduct

MPS expects each student to:

- Treat others with dignity and respect
- Treat themselves with that same respect
- Respect both the work and the property of others
- Bring only necessary materials to school
- Have consistent attendance and punctual arrival

## Normal Peer Conflict

Peer conflict is a part of every child's life experience. As children learn the give-and-take of social interaction and cooperation, conflict naturally occurs. Children are still learning self-control and developing a sense of personal space.

Some examples of typical and developmentally appropriate peer conflict include:

- Occasional pushing and other unwanted physical acts
- Getting upset about not being first in line
- Taking an item from another child
- Disagreeing or saying, “I’m not going to be your friend anymore”
- Arguing about social groups, materials, order of turns, etc.

These types of peer conflict are a necessary part of children’s social development, and do not mean that a bully/victim problem exists. We use these opportunities to guide the students through conflict resolution, and offer them tools for recognizing emotion and calming themselves.

## Bullying

Given the heightened awareness in the popular press about bullying, MPS clarifies its stance regarding the topic. Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Due to the willful and conscious nature, younger children are not typically developmentally capable of carrying out bullying and are more often involved in normal peer conflict.

Each instance of peer conflict at MPS is assessed on a case-by-case basis, by professional and experienced staff/teachers who are building a deep understanding of each student. MPS staff will respond with appropriate interventions as needed, and keep parents informed of any major conflicts/incidents.

The school will accept and review all reports of bullying. The school will consider the ages and maturity of the students involved, the type of behaviors, the frequency and/or pattern of behaviors, the context in which the incident occurred, and other relevant circumstances. Consequences may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension, expulsion, and/or reports to law enforcement officials.

## Parent Conduct

MPS teachers and staff are committed to working in partnership with each student’s parents/family. Research shows that children receive the maximum educational benefit

when parents are engaged and active in their child's schooling. The school expects full parental cooperation in all aspects of the student's life at.

### Parental Conflict/Concern

Conflicts between parents, or parents and staff, should be addressed in a calm and private manner, preferably in person or with a respectful note. Text and email should not be used to express anger, frustration, or criticism. Meetings are to be held by appointment at a mutually convenient time. When a parent has a question, concern, or grievance regarding his/her child, they should make every effort to bring their issue to the appropriate person, as outlined below:

1<sup>st</sup> – Child's classroom teacher

2<sup>nd</sup> – Director

3<sup>rd</sup> – Board of Trustees

- For classroom based issues, your child's Lead Teacher is your first point of contact. If you are not satisfied or the issue is unresolved afterward, you are encouraged to contact the Director.
- At some point, the Lead Teacher may feel a need to meet with you about your child's development or issues that arise in class. If so, they will arrange a meeting time that is mutually convenient and may request that the Director attend the meeting.
- Concerns about non-classroom matters should be addressed to the Administration (Administrative Assistant or Director).
- If the issue is of extreme severity, such as a legal or ethical behavior on the part of a MPS employee, please write a letter to the Board of Trustees. A Board representative will then contact the Administration in writing, requesting a meeting between the Administration and concerned party with the aim of reaching resolution. Information and notes from meetings will be filed by the Personnel Committee for use in the bi-annual evaluation of personnel.
- We respect privacy in these situations and expect all members of the community to do the same.

## Discipline and Procedures for Handling Misconduct

Montessori philosophy regarding discipline is based on the concept of freedom with responsibility. Students are allowed as much freedom as they are developmentally ready for, with the expectation that they will act responsibly. Children are guided to develop an inner discipline so that they need less and less external authority.

Throughout this process, children learn to make appropriate choices and learn from the natural and logical consequences of inappropriate choices. Guidelines for behavior in the classroom are set with the greater good of the community as a focus. The physical and emotional safety of the children is always protected and behavior that threatens this is unacceptable.

Our behavior philosophy consists of the following rules:

- A child may not keep another student from learning.
- A child may not keep a teacher from teaching.
- A child may not engage in any behavior that is not in his or her own best interest.

There are times when a student may exhibit repeated behavior that is troubling or harmful to him or herself, other students, the school's physical environment, or other members of the community. Although the school must retain the right to address issues in accordance with professional discretion based on each unique circumstance, the general course of action the school will follow in working with a child and their parents is outlined in Appendix A: :

1. Conference between teacher(s), parents, and the Director with goals of (any or all):
  - a. Developing an Individual Behavior Plan for the Child
  - b. May include the requirement of seeking counseling, specific diagnostic testing, or full evaluation at the parents' expense
  - c. Developing a student contract (Elementary students only)
  - d. Developing a timeline for assessing the success of the Individual Behavior Plan

2. Probation – A student's continued enrollment will be contingent upon his or her adherence to the Individual Behavior Plan, the student contract, and the Code of Conduct for students.
3. Suspension – A student will be temporarily removed from the school
4. Expulsion – A student will leave the MPS community permanently

Because our school is committed to working with each child and family as individuals, and situations and circumstances vary greatly, the school reserves the right to modify these procedures as it sees fit.

The following behaviors are considered unacceptable at school at any time:

- Damage to, abuse of, or stealing any school or personal property
- Possession, use, or sale of drugs (including unauthorized medications), alcohol, tobacco substances, or inhalants
- Possession, use, or sale of weapons or explosives
- Sexual abuse or misconduct

The school is committed to working together with the student and the family on issues of conduct. At the same, Mountain Pathways School reserves the right to suspend or dismiss any student at any time if, in its sole judgment, the student's continued presence at the school is detrimental to himself, to others, or to the community as a whole.

## Field Trips (In-House and Off-Site)

Mountain Pathways School strives to expand students' knowledge of the world by bringing special programs and resources into the School. In addition, students may take field trips into the community for first-hand experience related to the curriculum. In-House and off-site events are planned in conjunction with the curriculum and are designed to enrich classroom studies. For any off-site educational field trips during the year, we will ask for help with the organizing of dates and travel. Family volunteers will provide transportation (with completion of all necessary paperwork-background check, copy of driver's license, and auto insurance) and each child will have to use a seat belt, booster seat, or car seat, as required based upon the child's age & weight. You will be given information about any off-site trips with plenty of notice about specifics. Off-Site Field trips are generally a great deal of fun for both students and chaperones. However, chaperones must keep in mind that field trips involve significant responsibility for them. In order



for these trips to achieve their intended purpose, and to protect the health and safety of our children, volunteer chaperones are expected to abide by the following guidelines:

1. Please be punctual. Chaperones need to be at school at least 15 minutes before we are scheduled to leave.
2. Please keep emergency information forms given to you by the classroom teacher with you at all times during the trip.
3. Unless instructed otherwise by the classroom teacher, you should remain with your assigned group of students at all times.
4. If a child needs to use the restroom, the chaperone should escort the entire group to the restrooms. At no time should a child go to the restroom by him/herself. If you have children of the opposite sex in your group, please ask a chaperone of the same sex as the child(ren) to escort the group to the bathroom and remain outside the door of the bathroom until all children are accounted for.
5. Children are expected to walk at all times. Children who run ahead of the group or lag behind should be redirected immediately. If a second comment is necessary, that child should be taken by the hand or required to remain right next to the chaperone for the rest of the trip. If this is not effective, please bring the child to the teacher.
6. If the field trip includes one or more meals, please encourage good manners with your group. Children should remain seated while they eat. All trash must be disposed of properly.
7. Please do not buy food or gifts for your child or children in your group unless specifically directed to do so by the teacher. Please also be careful to hold all children, including your own, to the same standards, and to treat them equally during the trip. We will not visit gift shops on our outings.
8. When driving, please use as direct a route to the field trip site as possible. No stops should be made unless they are a part of our outing. Maps will be provided whenever possible. Please check the route ahead of time in case you get separated from the group. Please obey all traffic rules.
9. Upon returning to school, please supervise the children until the teacher arrives. Make sure all belongings are out of your vehicle and return the emergency information forms to the teacher. Please have the children walk calmly and quietly back into the school.
10. Except to the extent provided for in advance, or as otherwise directed by the classroom teacher, volunteer chaperones are expected to pay for their own meals and incidentals. Smoking or drinking alcoholic beverages during the trip are prohibited.
11. If you have any questions about what a child may or may not do, please ask the classroom teacher who is on the trip. Volunteer chaperones should defer to the judgment of the classroom teacher(s) and should take care not to challenge the teacher(s) or question pre-planned arrangements in front of the children.
12. No medication of any kind, including ointments and over-the-counter medications, should be administered by a chaperone to a student, other than to the chaperone's own child, without express written permission from the child's family or guardian.

## Visitor Procedures

The school welcomes and encourages families and other visitors to Mountain Pathways School to tour/observe our classrooms and to participate in the functioning of our school community. However, to maintain a safe campus for our students and staff, we ask that all such visits be scheduled in advance with the Lead Teachers and Main Office. All families and visitors shall report directly to the Main Office to sign in upon their arrival and indicate the reason for their visit. The Director and Administrative Assistant are authorized to: a. Limit campus access to persons, including students, families/guardians, who threaten the safety or well-being of the School community, or whose presence disrupts or is likely to disrupt the School environment; b. Determine if sales personnel may make sales visits to School administrators; and c. Call law enforcement personnel to protect against any threat posed by any person or to remove from the School property any person who refuses to leave after being directed to do so by authorized personnel.

## Holidays

Holidays are presented as cultural events as part of cultural studies. Each Lead Teacher celebrates holidays in their own unique way. Children gain an appreciation of the world by exploring the customs, food, music, climate, language, and animals of other countries. The goal of cultural studies is to help children gain an understanding and appreciation of others and a compassion for all the people in the world. Families are welcome to share their cultural knowledge in classroom presentations arranged in advance with the Lead Teacher.

## Section 6: Family Participation

### The Critical Role of Families in Our Community

Students flourish when families are invested in their educational process. Families are essential resources and critical components of any educational community. Mountain Pathways School depends upon having involved families who provide support, volunteer their time, and create home environments for their children that are consistent with the mission of the school to educate the whole child.

### Making the Adjustment to School

New children in the classroom face more than we adults often realize. They are coming into a building unfamiliar to them, they are meeting new children and, if they have never attended school before, they are leaving their families behind for the first time. All of these new experiences can cause anxiety for children. There are several ways we can ease their entrance into school. The new child is usually looking for clues from the teacher that will tell them that this will be a pleasant place to spend time. Some children are shy and have a difficult time

connecting with new adults. They may not wish to say much or anything at first. If they are allowed to take time to size up the situation before they begin verbalizing, they will feel much more relaxed than if they are pressured by their families or teachers to speak. As a family, you may feel embarrassed if your child is shy and does not greet the teacher verbally. Please be assured that your child is not being rude. They are simply "sizing things up" and taking it all in, which may make it difficult for him/her to carry on conversations with people. Families can help by being positive, and matter-of-fact. Effusive accolades about "school" can make a child suspicious. It is better that it be a wonderful new experience, to be embraced, but without too much "hype." Avoid comments like, "I'll miss you" or "My, you are growing up too fast!" Meeting the other children can be both stimulating and frightening for the new child. Children are respected for their individual personalities, and this includes their ability to integrate during the first few days or weeks. The teacher will endeavor to meet each child's needs individually, as in all respects of the classroom. Separation anxiety is sometimes a problem for the new child. The children will want to make a connection between the home and school, and one way we help them to do this is to have them bring a photograph of their family to school. The children often appreciate this connection, and it often breaks the ice for them. On the first day, we recommend that the "good-bye" be brief and definite. This makes it easier for the child to move into the school activities. If the child is upset, one of the teachers will comfort the child after the family's departure. Soon after the separation occurs, the child is encouraged to engage in mental or physical activity. A word about loveys: some children really want to bring their favorite stuffed animal to school. While this can help ease their transition, we do have guidelines about their presence in the classroom so that they don't become a big distraction. Loveys must stay in a child's bag in their cubby. They can have their lovey at rest time, but not carry it around the classroom. Ideally, they will begin to transition to having their lovey stay at home or in the car so that it will be there to greet them at the end of their day.

## Classroom Observation

One of the fundamental differences between traditional education and Montessori education is paperwork, or the lack thereof. Montessori philosophy emphasizes "learning through doing" and "process, not product." Most Montessori materials involve manipulative "hands-on" lessons. Most young children do not embrace abstract thinking until the ages of six and seven. Families are encouraged to observe the children at work in their classroom in the Fall prior to Fall family/teacher conferences. A great deal can be learned by patient and quiet observation. Please contact your child's teacher ahead of time to set up an appointment to observe in the classroom. Plan to stay for at least 30 minutes, and enter and exit only one time. During the first sensitive weeks of the school year, students (especially younger children) are familiarizing themselves with a new routine and environment. For this reason, we ask families, caregivers, and all visitors to avoid observation during the first 6 to 8 weeks of school. Points to look for when you observe:

- Observe how the children interact with each other and with the teachers.
- Observe how the teachers respond to the children and interact with each other.
- Are the children engaged in the work? Does the classroom have a busy "hum" of activity?

- If possible, observe children working alone, with a friend, and in group lessons. What do you notice about the way a teacher delivers a lesson? Do the children show concentration?
- Focus on the materials. What concepts and skills does each isolate?
- Follow one child. How does the child approach the work? What do they do when the task is finished?
- Do the children seem happy? Do they work with enthusiasm? Cooperation? Do they seem comfortable interacting with the teachers?
- How is discipline handled?
- Is the environment attractive? Are the children able to access work independently? How do children use the various areas of the classroom?
- What makes the environment conducive to learning?
- Is this a typical day? (Please ask.)
- If you are observing more than one class, what differences/similarities do you notice? Depending upon which classroom you are observing, the expectations may differ. You may be invited to sit quietly on a chair or move quietly throughout the classroom. The children will be naturally curious about you, but they are familiar with having visitors. If they persist in chatting with you, politely ask if they have any work to do. Encourage students to keep working so you can continue to observe.

## Conferences/Conference Reports

Teachers prepare two formal conference reports each year; once in November and again in March. We encourage families to observe prior to their child(ren)'s conference. These conferences are not mandatory and need can be determined by the family and teachers, but we encourage families to attend at least one conference per school year. If additional conferences are needed, please contact your child's Lead Teacher. Teachers and families are able to have the most open dialogue if the child being discussed is not present.

## Family Communication

Our teachers are specially trained professionals who are responsive to your child's development. You are a critical source of information that helps us help your child, and it is this team approach that makes a Montessori education such a rich experience for you and your child. As part of this team, teachers will openly share concerns regarding your child's development and success in the classroom with you as soon as concerns might arise. This is a give and take endeavor, however, and we need you to share your concerns, questions and comments with us. Please share any events or life changes that may have an impact on your child. Let us know if you feel that your child is dealing with unusual stress or will need extra support from the teacher/school for any reason. To be in touch with your child's teacher, please use their email address rather than a phone call during the school day. If you have a question or concern, please be in touch with the teacher while the issue is still a small one. There are no "dumb" questions, and if you have a worry or concern, we want to talk with you about it before it gets so big that you are really upset. The best first place to start when you need information about the classroom is with your child's Lead teacher.

## School Communication

We want you to be informed about what is happening at school. There are a variety of ways we will stay in touch. We use email and the Remind App to communicate in real time.

Each classroom sends out monthly emails to let you know what has been happening in the classroom and what is planned going forward. Monthly school-wide newsletters will share information regarding Mountain Pathways events, dates, and important information. The school also maintains a Blog, Facebook page and Instagram account, which we encourage you to follow. The school will host family Partnership events throughout the year to share what is special about Montessori education, show you some “works,” and give you time for questions and answers. We are open to any suggestions that families have regarding topics of interest. Mountain Pathways School has books available for families to borrow to learn more about Montessori education. If you have any questions about the Montessori philosophy and its implementation at Mountain Pathways School, please do not hesitate to ask your child’s Lead Teacher or our Director.

## Volunteer Opportunities & Family Support

Parent involvement provides opportunities to learn more about MPS and Montessori and offers vital assistance, which directly benefits the children and the school community. We appreciate the value of your time and talent and welcome your participation throughout the year. Please contact the office or your child’s teacher about current volunteer opportunities or if you have specific skills or talents you would like to contribute to help enhance our school community.

It is the hope and expectation of our school that parents make every effort to understand and embrace the mission of the school. To support this, we provide opportunities for parents to learn about the Montessori approach by providing parent education and involvement. Additionally, we expect parents to familiarize themselves with the philosophy, policies, and procedures contained in this Family Handbook as well as through other school publications, including our regular email communications/newsletters.

**Families are expected to volunteer throughout the school year with various standing committees, ad hoc committees, and work projects for a minimum of 30 hours/school year. Any volunteer hours not completed by June 1st are billed at the rate of \$15/hr. Our [Volunteer Hours Reporting](#) spreadsheet is used to track your hours/donations as well as to identify needs and tasks that are requested.**

Some examples of how to support MPS include:

- serving as a prearranged volunteer in the classroom
- sharing talents and skills such as art and music
- volunteering on community clean-up days
- Helping with tasks on our Volunteer task list
- serving on the Board of Trustees or on a BoT committee
- contributing to or organizing fundraising activities
- purchasing special materials for the classroom at the teachers' request.

## Applying Montessori Principles at Home

- Observe your child.
- Meaningful encounters raise your child's self-esteem.
- Be non-judgmental so as to see the hidden purposes of your child's behavior.
- Give the child the individual liberty needed to develop, mature and perfect all faculties.
- The child is in the process of perfecting their "self", learning takes time. If a child is engaged in work, repeating work or reflecting on their work or helping others, this is wonderful.
- Mistakes are to be expected. They are an opportunity for learning. By allowing children to correct their own mistakes, we give the message "I know you are a capable person." This increases their confidence, independence, and curiosity.
- The child needs to be "encouraged" to complete a task when mistakes are made.
- Children must see their work as objectively praised. Comment on a child's work rather than praise it. An open-ended question like, "This is very interesting. Can you tell me about it?" is a very helpful way to get descriptions of their activities rather than asking questions that require yes or no answers. Prepare the environment for the child's intellectual needs.
- The child needs independent activity in every room.
- The child needs to be shown how to use the environment.
- The child wants to be with the adults but independent.
- The child is influenced by the words of adults in their environment.
- The child follows the adult out of love. Here are some tips for aiding your child's development at home:

### Aiding Language Development Spoken Language:

- Speak with clarity and precision.
- Use the real words.
- Speak to and around the child often.

### Writing Skills:

- Puzzles with knobs, to promote fine motor skills.
- Provide plenty of writing tools – colored markers, pencils, paper, etc.

#### Reading:

- Read to your child at least 10 minutes every day.
- Provide books dealing with facts that are geared to the age of the child.
- Allow the child to read to you once the child is reading phonetically.
- Encourage your child to 'read' familiar stories to you (tell your own version with the aid of pictures, turning pages, etc.).
- Follow up a story with open-ended questions. ("I wonder why the child decided to walk instead of run?"; "What do you think would have happened if . . .?")

#### Geography:

- Expose the child to multicultural books and geography nomenclature.

#### Music Appreciation:

- Expose the child to music of all types and periods.

#### Art Appreciation:

- Expose the child to art of all types and periods.

#### Science:

- Nature walks are good opportunities for botany and biological nomenclature games.
- Observe the sky at all times of the day.
- Take field trips to farms.

#### Aiding Mathematical Development Counting Activities:

- sorting laundry
- setting the table
- caring for pets at home
- picking up the child's toys
- Cooking Activities
- measuring experiences
- temperature settings
- Telling time
- Introducing money concepts

#### Aiding Motor Development Large Motor:

- pouring activities
- throwing and catching skills
- jumping, hopping and skipping activities
- tumbling activities for balance and coordination
- creative dance experiences

#### Small Motor:

"The hand is the instrument of the intelligence."

- puzzles with knobs
- sewing activities
- clay work
- cutting activities

## Montessori Resources

The Montessori Family Alliance

[www.montessorri.org](http://www.montessorri.org)

Guidepost Montessori's Parenting Blog

<https://www.guidepostmontessori.com/blog/montessori-parent>

Montessori Parenting

<https://montessoriparenting.org/montessori-parenting-in-the-21st-century/>

Tomorrow's Child Magazine

<https://www.montessori.org/tomorrows-child-magazine/>

## APPENDIX A: Ground Rules for Children and Adults at MPS

Ground rules are guidelines for respectful activity in the school environment. There are four basic ground rules. They focus on respecting oneself and each other, respecting each other's work and respecting materials.

RESPECT one's self, others (peers, teachers, parents), materials, animals, plants, and the earth. Some examples are:

- Take turns speaking and listening; in meetings, raise hands before speaking.
- All work is done on a table or rug. This area defines the child's workspace.
- Return all work to its place on the shelf "in order" so that the work is ready for the next person. This action is taken as soon as the work is completed.
- We work quietly and respectfully with our materials. Example: The child is hitting the broad prisms together. First, a teacher intervenes and shows a non-abusive way to use the material; i.e., "I request that you stop hitting these prisms together. The wood is damaged when they are hit together. Move them gently, like this..." If abusive behavior continues, the teacher intervenes again: "I see that it is difficult for you to handle the prisms gently. Let me help you put them away. Perhaps you would like to choose this work tomorrow."
- Upon completion of work, rugs are rolled carefully and returned to the basket. Chairs are pushed under tables in preparation for the next person.



- Hands are kept in their own space.
- We touch each other gently, i.e., we use words, not our bodies, to settle disputes.
- Practicing good manners with grace and courtesy shows respect for each other.
- We encourage concrete and verbal acts of respect, grace and courtesy toward others, the earth, and ourselves. We use and model the words “please” and “thank you” with sincerity. (Give your child opportunities to practice saying “thank you” and “please excuse me.” Model these pleasant words for your child in general dialogue at home and in public).
- Listening skills- look at the person who is speaking. Eye contact shows you are listening. Wait until the person is finished talking before you begin to speak.

### INSIDE:

DO NOT INTERRUPT (with our voices or body) someone else’s work

- Do not interrupt someone while they are working. You may wait and observe silently until that person is finished with his or her work and then say, “Excuse me, will you help me with my work?”

WALK SLOWLY at all times when inside the school building.

- Walk slowly and carefully in our environment.
- Walk carefully around other children’s rugs.
- Walk carefully down stairs and ramps.

SPEAK SOFTLY

- Speak with a quiet voice.
- “Walk to talk”: Go up to the person before you begin speaking to them.

### OUTSIDE

- The fence marks children’s boundaries, unless accompanied by an adult.
- Running is encouraged on grassy areas.

- Children are encouraged to swing and use climbing equipment without adult assistance (skills involved in swinging and climbing independently promote coordination and body awareness).
- Children are encouraged to swing in sitting positions only (i.e. do not twist chains, or stand on seats).

## SUPPLEMENTAL SCHOOL RULES

- No animals/pets can be brought into school or onto the playground unless prearranged.
- All school and personal property is to be used with permission and with care, and to be returned in a timely manner.
- No weapons may be used at or brought to school: real, commercial toys, handmade or symbolic.
- No tobacco, smoking or drugs allowed on campus. Anyone providing reasonable cause will be searched by an approved faculty member.
- Violent play and language is not allowed.
- Toys and costumes stay at home except on special school occasions that are arranged by teachers, such as sharing days, drama presentations, etc.
- The internet is to be used only with supervision by an adult and for educational purposes. Anyone accessing inappropriate content on any school computer is subject to suspension or expulsion.
- All “private body” parts are to remain private on school grounds.
- Children have the right not to be involved in free play games if they do not want to play.
- After-school social arrangements should not be made during the school day.

## APPENDIX B: Mountain Pathways School Discipline Policy

Each classroom spends time throughout the year discussing the ground rules, appropriate behavior and expectations, and attitudes. All children will participate in these discussions, and all will have a clear understanding of these expectations. However, it is expected that the children will challenge authority and test the ground rules from time to time in developmentally appropriate ways. The faculty and staff work together to maintain a respectful approach to discipline which combines problem-solving with logical consequences. If a child chooses to break a rule or forgets a rule, the following consequences will occur.

1. Teacher Intervention: the teacher and child discuss the inappropriate behavior and problem solve to aid in redirection of that behavior. A warning of a logical consequence will be discussed.
2. Teacher Intervention and removal from group: When the inappropriate behavior has already been addressed in step one and the behavior persists, the child will be removed from the classroom and will have a private conference with the teacher. At this time, more problem solving with logical consequences will be imposed on the child. For example: A child is throwing the golden beads, and we are at step two. The beads will be taken away from the child, and the child will be redirected to a different activity. If the behavior occurs again, the Director will be involved and will have a conference with the child and/or teacher.
3. Parent Conference: If the inappropriate behavior continues to persist, the parent will be called in for a conference to discuss their child's behavior. At the conference, the parent(s) will be made aware of the child's continued inappropriate behavior and will be given support to redirect their child. The parent may also be asked to come and observe their child at school.
4. After the conference, if the behavior still persists, the teacher will call the parents to pick the child up for the day.
5. Continuance: If the inappropriate behavior is still occurring, the teacher and/or faculty have several options:
  - a. An Individual Behavior Plan is written, clearly defining the expectations. The child (as age appropriate) and the parents will be asked to sign the contract and full compliance is expected.
  - b. A meeting may occur with additional Montessori-trained teachers and/or

assistants who work with the child. In this meeting, the teachers come together to discuss, brainstorm, and problem solve the inappropriate behavior. From this meeting, the following may develop:

- i. Modification of the child's schedule and structure to enable him/her to concentrate and be successful in the environment.
- ii. An outside professional may be invited to observe and evaluate the child. They will work closely with the Director and teacher to see how the needs of the specific child can best be met.
- iii. In some cases, the Director and Lead Teacher may decide to place the child on a "probationary period" to give the child some time to change their behavior as well as to give the teacher time to re-evaluate the behavior. At the end of this probationary period, the parents, the Director, and the faculty members involved will hold another conference to determine what additional measures can be taken to best meet the needs of the child. In extreme cases, the school and/or family may decide that the best measure for the child is to be removed from the school on a permanent basis.

#### 6. Extraordinary Circumstances

- a. Mountain Pathways does not practice corporal punishment.
- b. No Weapons are allowed on campus at any time.
- c. The school reserves the right to search any student at any time.
- d. Students are not allowed unsupervised Internet access.
- e. Mountain Pathways does not tolerate any sexual misconduct.

In conclusion, it is seldom necessary to go past step 2. However, it is occasionally necessary to move through all of the steps listed above to ensure your child has a safe and secure place to learn.