

PARENT HANDBOOK



Montessori Schoolhouse

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I. INTRODUCTION

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The **Montessori Schoolhouse** was founded in 1989 by a group of parents who wanted the best possible education for their preschoolers and they wanted their children to learn in a loving, relaxed, and nurturing environment. The Montessori teaching methods seemed the best choice to achieve that goal.

Since we began, we have consistently achieved this goal. We are a non-profit Montessori school run by a volunteer board of directors comprised of elected current (and alumni) Montessori parents with the sole purpose of providing a developmentally appropriate toddler, preschool and kindergarten education as well as a complementary daycare program. We are also a licensed child-care provider with the state of New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services.

The Montessori Schoolhouse does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, or religious affiliation in admission policies, administration of our educational policies, financial aid scholarship programs, or any other school programs.

II. MISSION STATEMENT

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The Montessori Schoolhouse's mission is to provide a safe, nurturing, and peaceful environment for children of all abilities and backgrounds. The School works in partnership with parents to encourage the growth of developmental skills, curiosity and the exploration of the potential of each child. Promoting the principles and methodology of Maria Montessori, the Schoolhouse aims to create a place in which children are able to discover the joy and beauty of learning.

III. PHILOSOPHY

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Decades of worldwide success prove that Montessori teaching methods help children develop educational habits that last a lifetime. Based upon those teaching methods and observations, our philosophy is...

First, we believe that all children are unique and should be helped to develop at their own pace, to their fullest potential, in a

noncompetitive atmosphere. Second, we feel that the early years are the single most important period in the development of a person's intelligence. A child's mind from birth to age five is extremely absorbent and should be properly nourished and stimulated. Finally, we have observed that Montessori children learn for the joy of learning. Through this foundation, they grow to be confident, competent learners for life.

The **Montessori classroom** is a *prepared environment* where Children learn the joy in discovering the world around them. The child is free to proceed, with guidance, at his/her own pace - from simple activities to more complex ones. In this individualized setting, children work at distinctly different paces and skill levels. As parents and educators, we believe in our children's innate desire to learn. **Our aim** is to help children build the foundations for a lifetime of creative learning. **Our motto** is "*When learning starts as fun, it stays fun!*"

IV. DR. MARIA MONTESSORI

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Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952) was Italy's first female physician. Using her scientific background, she began observing children in the children's houses of Rome, and her particular genius was in observing the children as they really are, rather than how adults wish them to be, and that they learned best when engaged in purposeful hands-on activities that respected their individual needs and interests.

Her writings suggest many advantageous conditions for the natural development of the "whole child" from birth through maturity, and she developed unique materials, a child-centered environment and was one of the first persons to revolutionize educational thought by stressing respect for the child, freedom of expression, self-education, and training through use of movement and the senses. Her work and methods enabled all children, from the gifted to those with learning disabilities, to become independent, confident life long learners.

Dr. Montessori also strived to create a more peaceful world, and instill a sense of respect and responsibility in the children for their own environment and the world at large. Her approach was, and legacy is, one that is spiritual without being specific to any one religion, that encourages kindness, compassion, and love, peacefulness, acceptance of others, caring for our earth, and respects nature and all it's creatures.

There are many books published about Dr. Maria Montessori, and the school office has a few in its library that may be borrowed if you would like to learn more about her life and work. More information can also be found at the following websites: www.montessori.edu and www.amshq.org

V. MONTESSORI METHOD

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The main purpose of the Montessori teaching method is to develop an environment where the child can unfold spontaneously, developing a love of life and learning that expands continuously, and remains with them wherever they may go.

Rather than “teaching” the child concepts, an environment is designed to stimulate the child’s interest and facilitate their understanding and learning capacities spontaneously, with little or no adult intervention, and for this age, many of the materials are self-correcting.

After small presentations of the materials, this “work” is placed around the classroom and they work independently with the materials. The classrooms contain child-sized furniture, and everything is placed at their level. To a child, the world is unmanageable- it is too big, too complex, and too confusing. By careful selection of materials by the trained and certified Directors, an environment is set up that allows our children to explore life at a level they can understand. Materials or exercises are designed to stimulate independent exploration. This prepared environment entices the child to proceed at his/her own pace from simple activities to more complex ones. Through this process, their natural curiosity is satisfied and they begin to experience the joy of discovering the world around them. The children develop a sense of pride in their “work”, a feeling of confidence, joy and well being begins to manifest itself in the child.

The Montessori Director is trained to carefully plan the environment in the interests and ability of the children and help the children progress from one activity to the next. They are trained to observe and work with each child individually, allowing the child to choose from many activities within their range of ability, and use these observations to choose “work” or activities that continuously change based on the ability of his or her students at any given time.

There are many books published about Montessori methods, philosophy, classroom materials, and how to incorporate some of

these approaches at home. We do have a few books and as well as Montessori Magazines in the school's office that may be borrowed if you would like to learn more, or we can provide information on where to purchase them.

A subscription to "Tomorrow's Child" Montessori magazine is purchased by the school and back issues may also be borrowed from the school office. This magazine covers all kinds of topics of interest to parents and is a great resource.

VI. PARENT OBLIGATIONS

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Upon a student's enrollment, the Parent becomes a "trustee" of the school with important obligations to support the school by attending board meetings, the annual meeting, participating on committees, assisting in the classrooms or office, and with other events when volunteers are requested, as well as paying all fees due in a timely manner. The more parents are involved in the schools overall functions and well-being, the more the children benefit.

Parental support helps us maintain a quality program as well as help keep some of our overhead costs down, thereby tuition rates as well. **We are an "inclusive" school** and work to provide a diverse student body reflective of the greater community. Remaining affordable helps us achieve this goal.

VII. STAFF

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We have four Directors: a Preschool Program Director, Toddler Program Director, After-care Program Director and an Administrative Director. The Toddler and Preschool Program Directors are both American Montessori Society (AMS) certified teachers. Each Director also has a Lead Assistant who is there each day and additional assistants as needed to meet our staff to student ratios of 1:5 in the toddler program and 1:8 in the preschool program.

We require all our assistants as well as our Administrator to attend the summer Montessori Assistant and Advanced Assistant workshops offered by the Northeast Montessori Institute. (These workshops are also open to interested parents and board members, please visit nemontessori.org)

The Program Directors oversee the day-to-day educational operation and curriculum of their program; hire, supervise and evaluate their assistants; and ensure adherence to NH licensing guidelines.

The Program Directors and assistants act as facilitators and create an environment in which the children learn by doing for themselves. The Director presents individual and group lessons, prepares materials and activities, plans curriculum and handles overall classroom management. Assistants aid the Director within each classroom primarily with supervision and other basic activities, as well as classroom management. All staff in each program is responsible for the general cleaning and maintenance of their areas, as well as assisting with the toileting needs/diapering of the children.

The Administrative Director is in charge of admissions; student and employee records; accounts receivable and payable; tax reports; manages budget and reporting; payroll; advertising; communications; and works with other directors to ensure that we are following NH State licensing guidelines and school policies. An office assistant is employed as needed to assist the Administrator throughout the year.

Criminal background checks are conducted on all employees (thru the NH Childcare Licensing Bureau as part of our licensing requirements) upon hiring and then again on all employees every three years as part of our license renewal process.

VIII. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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The school is overseen by a Board of Directors that follows an established set of by-laws. A copy of the by-laws may be obtained from the school office. These are all volunteer positions and generally held by current and alumni Montessori parents with the by-laws allowing for up to three positions to be held by non-Montessori parents from the community at large.

Terms on the board last for three years and generally rotate so that only three terms are up each year. In the event a member is unable to finish their term, the board may vote another individual into the spot to fulfill the remainder of the vacated position's term. The Board has four officers: President; President-Elect; Secretary; and Treasurer. These positions are one-year terms and the Board of Directors votes among them which members will fulfill these positions while serving their terms. A list of the current board members and their contact

information may be found in the school directory published each fall or obtained by contacting the school office.

The board meets on the third Thursday of each month at 6:30pm.

September thru June to hear updates from the Directors, review budget reports, committee activities, and other agenda items. Some of the things the board is responsible for are: setting school policies; approving the fiscal year operating budget; approving expenses outside the operating budget; reviewing and amending by-laws as necessary; and chairing committees. Minutes from the board meetings are available to all parents and copies may be picked up at the office. Board Meetings are open to all who would like to attend, with the exception of executive sessions.

As a tuition paying member and trustee of our school, your presence is requested at the Annual Meeting held the third Thursday of September at 6 pm, prior to the regular board meeting.

Election of new board members is conducted during this meeting, and **a quorum of parents must be present to vote in new officers.** (*A quorum is identified in our bylaws as 1/3 of the current students parents*) An agenda is distributed prior to each meeting and the minutes of all meetings are available for review in the Administrators office.

A. BOARD COMMITTEES

The following are established committees, chaired by board members, and parents are encouraged to join at least one of the committees:

1. Finance Committee-

Works with Administrator in creating, reviewing & monitoring operating budget, financial policies, investments, tuition rates, insurances, tax reports, etc. Presents operating budget and financial policy recommendations and reports to the board of directors. Chaired by Board Treasurer.

2. Personnel Committee-

Selects and hires Directors and conducts their annual evaluations, reviews staff benefits and job descriptions, handles grievances, facilitates employee/parent communications, presents employee related policy proposals to the board.

3. Buildings, Grounds & Safety Committee-

Inspects building and playground regularly for maintenance concerns, schedules repairs as needed(or contacts church

liason), conducts clean-up days, checks sand/mulch levels, addresses all safety concerns. Schedules summer cleaning, painting, and waxing as needed and hires or organizes volunteers.

Sub-Committee – Joint Loss Management

This committee is required by the State of NH of all employers of five or more employees to bring together workers and management in an effort to promote safety and health in the workplace. This committee writes/reviews written safety and emergency plans for the school and ensures all are familiar with it.

4. Long Range Planning Committee-

Conduct annual board/ staff retreats to review school's mission and re-evaluate strategic goals and long range plans regarding program development, building expansion, renovations, relocation or purchases. Conducts research as needed and reports back to board. Identifies and recruits potential board members from parent body and community at large.

5. Fundraising Committee-

Establish, organize, and participate in fundraising activities including the annual fund drive, annual auction, and Pumpkin Festival booth in support of school's goals. Promotes events, parent participation, and what funds are used for.

6. Parent Relations/Social Committee-

Plans and organizes annual social events including, but not limited to: fall and spring picnics; winter family night; coffee hours; and any other social events or activities. Handles school shopping for healthy snack supplies and other general supplies as needed.

7. Communications & Public Relations Committee-

Handles communications between the school and parents, and the school and Keene Community. Publishes school newsletter by soliciting writers for various topics/columns, sets deadlines, edits, assembles and distributes. Submits press releases to local newspapers on events, new board members, school activities, etc. Sends weekly informative emails to parents, maintains bulletin board. Organizes booths at community events or other public relations opportunities, and looks for new opportunities and ways to promote school.

IX. MONTESSORI PROGRAMS

B. TODDLER PROGRAM - MORNING

This program is geared to the early development of the child in the 18 months to 3 year old range. Generally, applicants must be two years old by September 1st, but we will accept a limited number of children who are under age two but have reached at least eighteen months at the start of school. *A spot cannot be held for a child who is not yet eighteen months by the first day of school unless the parent(s)/guardian is willing to pay the full tuition until their child can attend.*

The Toddler Program is considered a one-year program and the children should progress into our preschool program the following year, with the exception being a child between 2.8 and 3 years old who may not be ready for the Preschool program and would be better served by another year in the Toddler Program. This decision is made by both the Toddler and Preschooler Director, with the latter having spent time observing the child as well.

The toddler program follows the Montessori principles and methodology and offers age-appropriate activities, materials, and furniture. Class hours are from 8:30am-11:30am. Children may attend two, three, four, or five mornings a week, same days each week. The staff to child ratio is one to five.

One day a week a local company or other professional will come to our school to conduct a dance and movement classes, or other type of activity at no additional cost. We may introduce the toddlers to dance, gymnastics, or music & rhythm during these classes.

Please note that the following Toddler schedule times are estimates. Our schedule is flexible according to the children's moods and needs.

Toddler Schedule:

8:15 – 8:30am	Arrival/Greeting
8:30 – 8:45am	Circle/Songs
8:45 - 10:00am	Work Time
10:00 - 10:30am	Story & Snack
10:30 - 11:00am	Outdoor Play*
11:00 - 11:30am	Wagon Ride*
11:30 - 11:45am	Departure/Aftercare

**Weather Permitting, if not, we go upstairs to the Parish hall for indoor games, songs, and dancing.*

C. PRESCHOOL PROGRAM - MORNING

This program is for children ages two years and eight months thru five years old by the start of school. Class hours are from 8:30am-11:30am. We encourage parents to enroll their children in the five-day program to provide the consistency which allows for optimum development as recommended by Dr. Montessori, but we do allow a limited number of parents to enroll their children for three or four days as well.

The preschool program promotes independence and fine motor skills through skill building activities and encourages children to explore their world and respect their environment.

During a brief morning circle the children enjoy songs and are given a lesson or demonstration introducing new work that will be placed on the shelves. Lessons and materials introduce subjects such as practical life skills, geography, culture, art, math, reading, writing, language, science, and nature. Children then move freely through two interconnected classrooms choosing their own work. During this time teachers will observe the children and demonstrate an activity or give a lesson in more detail to individuals or a small group of interested children. During this work period the children also have the option of enjoying a snack at a designated table if they choose. At 11am they head outdoors to play until they are picked up by a parent or gathered for lunchtime if staying longer.

One day a week a local company or other professional will come to our school to conduct a dance and movement class, or other type of activity at no additional cost. We may introduce dance, yoga, gymnastics, or music & rhythm during these classes.

Please note that the following Preschool schedule times are estimates. Our schedule is flexible according to the children's moods and needs.

Preschool Schedule:

8:15-8:40am	Greeting and free choice
8:40-9:00am	Group time
9:00-11:00am	Work time (individual and small group)
11:00-11:30am	Outdoor Play*
11:30-11:45am	Departure/Aftercare

**Weather Permitting, if not, we go upstairs to the Parish hall for indoor games, songs, and dancing.*

At 11:30 am those children who are staying for aftercare option 2 and 3 are escorted to the aftercare room to have lunch and finish their day with the Aftercare Director. (*See After-Care*) Those children who are staying for Option 1 will remain with the class through the lunch period until 12:30pm.

D. PRESCHOOL PROGRAM – EXTENDED DAY

Children who are four years old by the start of the school year and deemed ready by the Program Director can participate in the Montessori Extended Day Program. Generally children who are ready for this option are those that have demonstrated the ability to concentrate for longer periods of time and are ready and able to be challenged with more in-depth lessons. (They have also stopped falling asleep during the afternoon rest times.)

In the Extended Day Program the children attend the morning preschool program, have lunch together, and then have a quiet activity/rest time on their blankets for a half hour instead of the longer nap time. Afterwards the children then continue their Montessori work with more individualized lessons with the Director in the classrooms.

The afternoon work is geared for the development stage of the older preschool child and will include, but is not limited to, pre-reading, pre-writing, and math activities. Many children will progress into reading, number functions, and phonetic spelling. The program is completely individualized to meet the needs of the children, who are allowed and encouraged to work at their own pace. They may also enjoy additional activities such as swim lessons, trips to the Keene Library, gardening, and more.

Extended-Day Program Schedule:

8:30-11:30am	<i>See Preschool Schedule</i>
11:30-12:00am	Outdoor Play/Hand Washing
12:00-12:30pm	Lunch Time
12:30-1:00pm	Lunch Time/Clean-Up/Games
1:00-1:15pm	Group time
1:15-2:40pm	Work time
2:40-3:00pm	Clean Up/Group Time to Recap Day
3:00-3:15pm	Departure/Aftercare

X. EXTENDED CHILD CARE

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A. PRE-CARE

Pre-care is available for those children who need to be dropped off between 7:15 and 8:15 am. Please see the current Schedule of Fees for cost. During this time children enjoy free-play in the childcare room, and those arriving before 7:45 am may bring their breakfast with them if desired. Children attending the Toddler Program are escorted to their room at 8:15 am and the preschoolers remain in the daycare room until they are called for class.

B. AFTER-CARE

After-care is offered for those children who need part or full-time care after the Montessori program is over. After-care begins at 11:30am and is available until 5pm. We allow a 15 minute window for picking up your child, however, any child not pick-up by 5:15 pm. is charged a \$1 per minute late pick-up fee on their account.

We offer three different options for aftercare pick-up times (please see the current Schedule of Fees for aftercare costs):

Option 1 – 12:30 pm pick up

Option 2 – 3:00 pm pick up

Option 3 – 4:00-5:00 pm pick up

(Late pick-up fee if after 5:15pm.)

We limit our pick-up times to avoid waking the children during nap-time and to avoid interruptions during aftercare activities. Should something unavoidable come up and you need to pick up your child outside of the scheduled pick-up times, please call us so that we may do not put them down for nap or begin a craft activity that may be difficult in disengaging them from. We may move your child to another room to enjoy an alternative activity while they await your arrival.

A half-hour rest/nap time on mats is required under state licensing regulations for all children under the age of five years.

During this time many children will nap while others rest quietly and listen to soft music. Those that do not fall asleep after a half hour are allowed to get up and enjoy quiet activities within the room or are taken outdoors while those that have fallen asleep continue napping until they wake up on their own or we awaken them (varies between programs) .

Children staying through nap time will need to bring: a crib sheet for the school's mat; a blanket; favorite cuddle toy; and a small pillow(optional). Please send these in a pillowcase, or other bag, labeled with your child's name, which we will keep in a cubby in the daycare room. Each Friday they will be returned to you to take home, wash, and return on Monday.

Nap-time staff to student ratios may be reduced- please note that during nap time after the children are asleep we may reduce our staff by one(if more than one were required to meet ratios) so that they

make take alternating lunch breaks. The person on break does remain on call to return to the room when the fourth child awakes in the toddler group, and the fifth in the preschool group.

1. TODDLER'S AFTER-CARE SCHEDULE

The toddler children staying for aftercare will begin with hand-washing and lunch after they return from their wagon ride. They usually enjoy a longer nap-time than the preschoolers. Those staying the full day (Option 3) may be joined with the preschool children in the childcare room who are also staying the full day, or they may continue in their own rooms from 3 p.m and on.

Approximate Toddler Aftercare Schedule:

11:30-11:45am	Hand-Washing
11:45-12:45pm	Lunch time
12:45 - 2:45pm	Nap time
2:45 - 3:00pm	Gentle Wake-Ups/Free Play
3:00 - 3:30pm	Snack/Story
3:30 - 5:15pm	Free Play/Outdoor Time*

*Weather Permitting, if not, we stay in the child care room and enjoy indoor games, songs, and dancing.

2. PRESCHOOLER'S AFTERCARE SCHEDULE

Preschool children may enjoy a little additional time on the playground then begin aftercare with hand-washing and lunch. Those staying for the Extended Class Program or just for lunch (Option 1) will have their lunch in the Practical Life Room. Those staying until 3 pm (Option 2) and the full day (Option 3) will have lunch in the Child Care Room. Preschoolers in the Extended Day Class who are staying later (Option 3) will join the younger children in the childcare room at 3 pm.

In the Child Care Room children get to enjoy additional craft activities and materials such as dress-up clothes, a kitchen corner, games, reading loft, puzzles, building blocks and other activities.

They also enjoy story time, an afternoon snack, gardening, and more outdoor play.

Approximate Preschool Aftercare Schedule:

11:30 - 11:45am	Clean-Up/Hand-Washing
11:45 - 12:15pm	Lunch Time
1 2:15 - 1:00pm	Clean-Up/Free Play/Story
1:00 - 2:15pm	Nap/Rest Time
2:15 - 2:30pm	Wake-Up/Free-Play
2:30 - 3:00pm	Craft or Art Activity
3:00 - 3:30pm	Snack Time
3:30 - 5:15pm	Free-Play/Outdoor Time

*Weather Permitting, if not, we stay in the child care room and enjoy indoor games, songs, and dancing.

XI. SUMMER CAMP



During the summer months we offer **eight weeks** of summer camp. The only weeks that we are completely closed are the week after school ends and the week before school begins in the fall. Parents will receive summer camp information in their child's cubbie in the spring. Information on camp fees will be distributed at that time, and a deposit, per child, for each week registering will be requested.

While we do not consider summer camp part of the Montessori educational program, our philosophy and principles do remain the same, and we employ some of our teaching staff for camp as well as a few new assistants for just the summer months. Campers will enjoy engaging crafts and activities, stories, games, outdoor water play, and for the older children, local field trips.

Camp is open to current students, students registered for the fall, alumni, siblings, and (with the Director's permission) students attending just for the summer, between the ages of 2 years and 8 years old. Campers may attend 3 to 5 five days a week for half days 9-1 pm, or full days 9-4 pm. Pre-care is available from 8-9 am and after-care from 4-5 p.m for an additional fee. You may sign up for one week or all eight weeks of camp, there are no limits. **We are closed on July 4th.** Payment for the first four weeks of camp will be due by June 20th and for the last four weeks of camp by July 20th.

XII. GENERAL INFORMATION

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A. BIRTHDAY CARD DISTRIBUTION

We realize at this age it is appropriate and better to invite only a few children to birthday parties to avoid overwhelming the birthday boy or girl. But please help us avoid hurt feelings as much as possible by mailing birthday invitations to the children's homes and not distributing them here at school. Our school does produce a school directory to assist with this, which everyone will receive a copy of at the beginning of the school year. If a student is unlisted, you may drop the invitation by the school office and we will address & mail.

B. CLOTHING

Your child should be sent to school in clothing appropriate for floor sitting, creative work, and outside play. We encourage the children to be independent, so please consider this when dressing your child. Impossible hooks and tiny buttons can be frustrating for young children.

1. **Action Figures/Super Heros on Clothing**
Please refrain from sending your child to school in clothing(or with lunch boxes, toys, etc.) **which promotes action figures** (super heros) or characters that use physical aggression to resolve problems or prove superiority. Such things do much to undermine our philosophy of more peaceful approaches to self-empowerment and conflict resolution. We work hard to promote a peaceful environment and teach children to feel good about themselves because of who they are, and not by the loudness of their voice or the strength of their shove.
2. **Extra Set of Clothes**
Please bring in an extra set of clothing for your child in a labeled bag or box that will be kept in their cubbie. A set consists of: underwear, socks, pants, and a shirt, and during the winter & spring-extra shoes (no slippers/sandals/crocs). Spills and accidents do occur and it helps the child avoid embarrassment if back-ups are available. Please check clothing on occasion to ensure that the clothes are size and seasonally appropriate.
3. **Shoes**
 Your child should come to school in **sneakers** or bring them

along (or other similar shoes) at all times. During the winter and muddy springs months we ask that they wear boots to school, and bring or leave their sneakers in their cubbie to change into after arriving or after outdoor play.

Please, ABSOLUTELY NO open-toed or open-backed SANDALS, HIGH-HEELS, or CROCS. These are dangerous on the playground as they can get caught on the climbing structures or come off, causing your child to fall or trip. Should your child

not have safe shoes, such as sneakers, they may have to sit outside or stay inside during the outdoor play time.

4. **Outdoor Clothing**

At the start of the school year please send them with a light sweater or sweat shirt as the weather starts to become unpredictable, adding hats and mittens as it gets cooler.

In the winter children should have with them everyday a pair of **labeled snow pants, boots, hat and mittens (extra hat & mittens if full day student), as we do go outside, and a pair of shoes to change into.** In the Spring when the ground is muddy and weather unpredictable, we ask that you still send them with, or bring, snow or rain boots for outdoor play and an keep that extra pair of shoes to change into. This helps to avoid tracking snow and mud onto the carpets that we sit, play and have snack upon.

We ask that you **do not use slippers for their extra pair of shoes** as we do hold monthly fire drills, and in an emergency evacuation, these would not keep their feet dry and warm in the winter.

C. COMMUNICATIONS

Generally, school notices, messages, bills, and other information will be placed in the basket on your child's cubbie. However, you will also find information in these other areas and should remember to check these daily or read upon receipt:

1. **Bulletin Boards**

The bulletin board in the sign-in room is utilized by the Board of Directors and it's committees to inform you of any events they may have planned as well as sign-up sheets for those

committees, events, volunteers, etc. The program teachers will post notices regarding field trips, sign-ups, etc. on their classroom doors.

2. **School Newsletter**

The Communications and Public Relations Committee publishes a newsletter that will provide reports from the Directors about what's going on in the classrooms, school events, board and committee news, and numerous other articles. The frequency of this newsletter depends upon the availability of the volunteers who join the committee. In the past it has been published anywhere from bi-monthly to quarterly.

3. **Email**

The school's email address is mshocc@myfairpoint.net. You may contact the Administrator directly at this address.

If you provided your own email address for the school directory, then you may get notices from the Administrator or **weekly email updates concerning school events and activities** from a member of the Communications Committee.

D. CHILD CARE ONLY DAYS

Please see the current School Days Calendar distributed to all parents to determine which days are "child care only days" when the regular Montessori program classes are closed.

We generally follow the same calendar as the local school district (SAU 29) with all the same holidays and vacation breaks. We will be closed on the holiday itself (indicated with an 'X' on the calendar) but will provide childcare on the days indicated as "Child Care Only" days around the holidays and during the winter & spring breaks **as long as we have at least six interested students sign up for both morning and afternoon care.**

Child Care Days are not covered by the tuition/aftercare fees that you pay, as not all parents need childcare on these days. Please see the current Schedule of Fees for the cost of Daycare Days. There is a flat rate for a full day (over 4 hours) and a flat rate for a half day (under 4 hours). Parents may indicate which hours between 7:15 and 5:15 that their child will be here. ***For additional information see "IX. Financial, section C. Daycare Days".***

The After-care Director will distribute sign-up sheets a few weeks before each of the daycare days, and if you are interested, simply fill out the sheets indicating which days and hours and return by the indicated deadline.. If we do not reach the minimum required, parents will be notified that we will not be open for daycare that day or only for a half day.

E. DROP-OFF / SIGN-IN / PROMPTNESS

Children should arrive in time to put their belongings away in their cubbie and say their goodbyes and join the classroom by 8:30 am. The person responsible for dropping off your child must **write their arrival time in the attendance book** located in the first room on the right. Please make every effort to arrive on time for class, as both programs begin the day with circle time and it is disruptive to the class as they shift to make room. This is also the time when new activities and materials are presented before they are placed on the shelves. Arriving a few minutes early and allowing for good-byes before circle begins usually allows for smoother separations.

F. EMERGENCIES/ACCIDENTS/SUDDEN SEVERE ILLNESS

The school will notify the parent/guardian in the case of an accident or other sudden illness. Basic first aid will be administered by school personnel and if immediate transportation to the hospital is necessary, the Keene Ambulance will be called. The consent statement (Emergency Contact Form) that the parents have signed will accompany the child so that treatment can begin immediately in the absence of the parent. (See Health/Immunization/Emergency Forms).

G. EVACUATION PROCEDURES/FIRE DRILLS

In the event of an emergency evacuation or fire, and the school can not be entered again, the students will be escorted to the Keene Middle School on Washington Street and parents called (or emergency contacts if unable to reach parent) to come pick up their child at that location.

Fire drills will be conducted throughout the school year utilizing the different exits and conducted on varying days and times to ensure that all children and staff can experience and practice drills. During at least one drill, the staff and children will practice evacuating to the Keene Middle School.

Please call and listen to the school voicemail recording in the event of an evacuation for further information.

H. FIELD TRIPS

We do take several field trips each year, driving or walking, to local a local farm, an orchard, the Colonial Theatre, the fire station, and maybe a few other places. For the fieldtrips within walking distance, parents will be notified of the fieldtrip and date, and we may request chaperones. A general permission slip to walk off-grounds will be distributed to you at the beginning of the school year.

For any fieldtrips that require traveling by auto, we will seek parents to provide transportation and chaperoning. **All autos used to transport children must be registered, inspected and appropriately insured with a current copy of the certificate of insurance placed on file in the office, as well as a copy of the driver's current license.** You may leave your child's car seat at school for use on a field trip if you are not chaperoning. Chaperones will be placed in groups where there is at least one staff person present. Every effort is made to have no more than three children per adult. Drivers must go directly to and from the destination with no stops in between. **Each child must have a permission slip filled out, or group form signed by a parent before participating in any trip.**

All children age six and under are required by NH law to use a car/booster seat. Any child without a car/booster seat may not participate in the field trip and may result in the trip being canceled.

I. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Communication between parents and staff is instrumental in assuring the best possible experience for your child and for your family. In the event that discussions with the staff are not sufficient enough in addressing concerns, the following grievance procedure will be followed:

1. When a problem arises, the parent/guardians(s) have the option of scheduling a meeting which will be held within 2 working days with any of the following:
 - a. The Program Director
 - b. The Administrative Director
 - c. The President of the Board or Personnel Chair
2. If the parents choose to meet with the Board President and/or

Administrator, they will in turn communicate with the school personnel to address/discuss problem. If the parent(s) meet with the Program Director or Administrator, then the Board President will be kept apprised of the situation.

3. If the problem is not resolved, the parents may request a meeting with the Board of Directors.
4. At the end of this process, after every effort has been made to reach a resolution, parents may terminate their child's enrollment if unsatisfied and we will refund any prepaid tuition and security for unused school days.

J. HEALTH, IMMUNIZATION & EMERGENCY FORMS

Certain forms and information are **required by the State of New Hampshire Child Care Licensing Bureau** for all licensed providers to have on file for each child.

Prior to student's first day-

An **Emergency Information/Release form** must be completed and on file in the school office before their child's first day of attendance. This form must be reviewed or completed and signed annually. In case of an emergency, the school is authorized to call 911 and the child's physician, in addition to the child's parent(s) or guardian. By signing the back of the Emergency Information Form under "**emergency medical treatment authorization**" you give us permission to provide simple first aid, and in the event of a more serious injury, give permission for the child to be transported to a hospital to receive emergency medical treatment.

Immunization records. If they do not have the required immunizations due to health or religious reasons you may obtain a religious exemption form from the school office which must be signed and notarized. If you have any questions regarding what the required immunizations are, please contact your child's physician or the school Administrator. ***Please note: No refunds are given due to exclusion as a result of an outbreak that child is not immunized against.***

Within 60 Days-

A **health form** must be completed by your child's physician and on file showing that your child has had a physical within the past year.* ***Fax or photos copies are not acceptable.*** Health forms expire one year from the date of the physical exam indicated on the form (not the date the form was completed). **If your child's health form on file expires during the school year you have 60 days to**

provide a new one. If one is not received by the 60th day then your child will be barred from attending until one is received (and tuition will not be refunded) as we will be in violation of licensing rules. Blank forms may be obtained from our office prior to your child's appointment, or you may use the clinics form.

*We do not require physical examination records for children whose parents object in writing on the grounds that such physical examination is contrary to their religious beliefs.

K. HOLIDAYS/ETHNIC HERITAGE

We do recognize the major holidays and some of those of other cultures and incorporate activities appropriate to the season/holiday with an emphasis on respecting and appreciating our different customs. If your family originates from another country we would enjoy learning about some of its traditions and celebrations. We encourage you to approach the teachers about introducing some of them to the children or sharing your heritage through ethnic foods, clothing, pictures, instruments, games, or other.

L. LUNCH

If your child stays for after-care or the extended-day program you will need to pack a lunch for them. Please put their name on their lunch box. **The school does not heat or microwave lunches**, a thermos is recommended instead, and **do not send in soda or candy in your child's lunch**, as it is unhealthy and can be distracting for the other children. Lunch boxes should be placed in their cubbies.

As cold weather approaches, we will offer hot lunch on Fridays for an additional fee. The After-Care Director will distribute sign-up sheets with the menu each month. If you are interested, just mark the Friday lunches you would like your child to have and return with payment. The food is not prepared by the school, but delivered by nearby local restaurants at lunch time. More information is distributed after school begins.

M. NAP/REST TIME

The State requires at least one half-hour rest/nap time for children attending a preschool and daycare program for over 5 hours. If the children fall asleep, we generally allow them to sleep until they wake up on their own unless the parent has indicated they would like us to wake them up earlier. Those that do not fall asleep, after half an hour

they are allowed to enjoy a quiet activity in the room, or are escorted outside to play if the weather permits, until the other children are awake. Please see Extended Care/after-care section for approximate scheduling of nap times.

N. PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Formal parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year to keep parent(s)/guardians informed of their children's progress, once in the fall, and again in the spring. You may also meet informally at any time with the Program Director outside class hours, that is convenient for both, to discuss your child's progress if desired.

O. PARKING

The school is bordered by Taylor Street and Washington Street. A portion of Taylor Street closest to and before the side entrance is limited to handicapped parking only between the signs. (They do check and ticket there as some parents have discovered!) There is limited 2 hour parking along Taylor Street and directly in front of the church as well as all-day parking north of Taylor Street, along Washington Street. **Please do not park in the church driveway** in front of the ramp (reserved for their Minister) or the neighbor's driveways.

P. PICK-UP / SIGN-OUT / IDENTIFICATION

Please be prompt in picking up your child. We allow a 15-minute window (see aftercare options, page 8) after which we will charge you for an hour of daycare, or if it is past 5:15 pm, a \$1 per minute.

Please write your child's departure time in the attendance book and sign where indicated.

Please be prepared to show identification. Until we become familiar with all of the new faces we will ask to see your drivers license to verify who you are. If someone other than yourself or someone you listed as an alternate pick-up person is picking up your child, we require a signed permission slip with the date and full name of that person. When they arrive we will ask for that person's I.D. to verify they are who you stated, so please remind them to have it on them. We will not release any child without identification and if lack of an I.D. or a written permission slip results in us holding the child beyond 5:15 pm then we will charge you the \$1 per minute late pick-up fee.

Additionally, we ask that you supervise your child at all times

once you have removed them from the classroom and do not let your child enter any of the classrooms not in use at that time unless you accompany them. **The teachers have already carefully set up and prepared the materials and activities in the classrooms not in use** for the following day and we ask that they not be disturbed.

Q. PROVISIONAL ACCEPTANCE

It is **standard procedure** that children are accepted into the school program with the understanding that the **first six weeks are considered a trial period**. During those six weeks should the Program Director or the parents determine that their child has special needs that our program may not meet, the Director and parents may explore their options together. If it is ultimately determined that the staff can not meet the needs of the child in a way that is consistent with the Montessori approach and philosophy then the child may be withdrawn by the parents, or asked to withdraw by the school, and absolved of any further financial responsibility and the 30 days under the early withdrawal policy.

R. SCHOOL PORTRAITS

Each fall we have a professional school photographer come to take portraits of the children and class pictures. More information will be distributed in the cubbies at that time and the date posted. Parents are welcome to bring in any siblings as well and have them photographed together and/or individually, or bring their child just for the photo shoot even if it is not their regular school day. This is optional, parents do not need to purchase a portrait package unless interested.

S. SICKNESS/ILLNESS

It is in everyone's best interest to keep a child with questionable health at home. **A sick child may be sent home at the discretion of the Program Director and the parents must keep that child out of school for 24 hours.** (The 24-hour period may be waived at the discretion of the Program Director.) If a child is not well enough to play outside, or overly tired from illness he or she is not well enough to attend school.

The staff disinfects and cleans on a daily basis. The following illness policies and procedures were developed to protect both the children and staff from illness.

Fever: Children with a fever of 101 or higher will be sent home immediately. Children must be fever free **AND** acetaminophen and motrin free for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to school. If a child has a fever of 101 or higher at home we ask that parents/guardians observe the 24 hour rule.

Vomiting: Children who vomit at school will be sent home immediately. Children must be vomit free for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to school. If a child vomits at home we ask that parents/guardians observe the 24 hour rule before bringing their child to school.

Diarrhea: Children who have two bouts of diarrhea while at school will be sent home immediately. Children must be diarrhea free for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to school. Children experiencing diarrhea due to antibiotics will be allowed to remain at school if they feel well enough to fully participate in their classroom and if the diarrhea is contained in the toilet or a diaper.

Conjunctivitis: Children who have red or pink eyes **AND** colored discharge from the eyes will be sent home immediately. Children must be free from colored discharge and on antibiotics for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to school.

Coxsacki (Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease): Children suspected of having coxsacki will be sent home immediately. (Sores on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet, inside the mouth, and/or in the diaper area.) Children must be fever free for a minimum of 24 hours and the sores must be completely dried before returning to school.

Rash (Roseola, Fifth Disease, etc): If a child is discovered to have a rash the parent/guardian will be called and asked to make a doctors appointment for the end of the day to confirm what the rash is. Please provide a doctors note indicating the diagnosis. Most childhood rashes appear after the fever and contagious period has past, therefore, children will not be excluded from school unless other exclusion symptoms are present.

Strep Throat: If a child is suspected of having strep throat the child will be sent home immediately. If a rapid strep test, performed in the doctors office, is negative please ask the doctor for a note indicating the results. If the test is positive the child must be on antibiotics for 24 hours before returning to school. Regardless of the test results, children must be fever free and acetaminophen or Motrin free for 24 hours before returning to school.

Impetigo: If a child is suspected of having impetigo the child will be sent home immediately. Children must be on antibiotics for 24 hours and the sores must be dried up before returning to school.

Staph/MRSA Infections: If a child is found to have a boil on his/her body the child will be sent home immediately. The parent/guardian will be asked to bring the child to the doctors for an accurate diagnosis. If a child is diagnosed with staph or MRSA the child must be on antibiotics for 24 hours, the boil must be able to be kept completely covered with a bandage (MSHOCC staff are unable to change bandaging), and the boil must not be draining when the child returns to school. If the child is not diagnosed with staph or MRSA please ask the doctor for a note indicating the diagnosis.

Lice: Children found to have lice will be sent home immediately. Children must be lice **AND** nit free before returning to school. The Program Directress or designated staff person will check the child's head upon return to school, and every morning for two weeks, before the parent/guardian leaves. All children who were exposed to lice will have their head checked upon drop off for a period of two weeks.

Chicken Pox: If a child is suspected of having chicken pox the child will be sent home immediately. Children with chicken pox may return to school once all of the pox have healed and the child is fever free and motrin and acetaminophen free for 24 hours.

Please Note: The Program Directresses may send a child home if the child is not well enough to fully participate in his/her classroom, even if the above exclusion criteria are not present. Upon calling the parent to pick up the child, the Directress will inform the parent as to when the child may return to school.

Dispensing Medication: If a child is required to have medication while in school a medication form must be filled out by the parent/guardian. All medication will be stored in the medication box on top of the refrigerator in the check-in room. Medication may not be stored in a child's cubby. All medication must be in its original container. All prescription medication must be in its original container with the prescription label attached. MSHOCC will dispense medication according to dosing instructions on the container unless a doctor's note states otherwise.

Children under two years of age must have a doctor's note with medication name and dosage amount included for all over the counter medications.

We follow all state guidelines and recommendations for all illnesses as outline in the N.H Child Care Program Licensing Rules under Communicable Diseases. If you have questions or would like to see our book of state guidelines please feel free to see our Administrator or one of the Program Directors.

T. SNACK DAY

For the **first week of school we will provide** both the morning and afternoon snacks. **After that**, the morning snack is then **provided for the whole class by the parents on a rotating basis**. A monthly calendar will be distributed indicating who's "snack day" it is and how many snacks are required which includes extras to allow for spillage/drops. Generally, your child's snack day will occur once every month and we will provide the napkins, cups, and water. We encourage you to shop with your child and prepare the snack with your child ahead of time. They like being involved in the decision making and it is an opportunity to discuss making healthy choices with your child, which we encourage. Please bring in snack ready to be served, i.e. fruit cut as needed, cream cheese spread on bagels, etc. The teachers are unable to spend extended time out of the classroom to finish preparing snacks, as they are need in the classrooms with the children.

The State requires that snacks represent a minimum of two of the basic food groups. Healthy snacks are essential for young minds and bodies. Children learn and play positively when their bodies are fueled with healthy foods. Some *suggestions* for snacks are listed - please feel free to be creative!!

-Fresh fruit or vegetables

-Yogurt-*please avoid the "character" brands as they tend to have added artificial colors, sugars, etc. Some of the healthier brands include: Stonyfield Farm, Yobaby, Dannon, etc. (in single serve containers or already portioned into cups)*

-Cheese sticks

-Muffins or breads

-Mini whole grain bagels

-Mini pizzas (*whole grain english muffins, tomato sauce, cheese, and veggies arranged into smiley faces*)

-Ham and cheese or turkey and cheese roll ups

-Whole grain goldfish, graham crackers, ritz crackers,

- pretzels, rice cakes, etc
- Raisins or yogurt raisins
- Trail mix (*variety of whole grain cereal, raisins, yogurt raisins, pretzels, etc*) **please no nuts or m&m's**
- Fruit bars or granola bars (*no energy bars, these are designed for adults, not children*)

We provide filtered water as a drink with snack and during the classes. Please provide cups and spoons, as appropriate, (i.e., when sending in yogurt or pudding which needs to be proportioned out).

Due to food allergies, please do not provide snacks containing peanuts, peanut products or nuts.

Birthdays and holidays are special times and a little more creativity is understandable, but please **DO NOT SEND CUPCAKES**. Muffins with a cream cheese spread are a better alternative. We will try to coordinate the snack days with children's birthdays, so that you may choose to be more creative if you desire, but it is not required!

U. SNOW DAYS

For school cancellations or delays, please **tune your radio to one of the following: WKNE 103.7 FM; WKBK 1290 AM; WOQL 97.7 FM; or WINQ 98.7 FM**. We follow the Keene School District's (SAU 29) lead in calling cancellations or delay's, so if our school has not been listed on the radio yet, but Keene has, you can assume we will do the same. If the weather is questionable on a daycare day when school is not in session, the Director on Duty that day will make the call on whether to close or delay opening and notify the radio station. **The school's voice mail message will also note our opening status.**

On days when there is a **delayed opening**, and school is not closed, **pre-care will not be available**. On a **two-hour delay the school building will open at 9:15 am**, as long as at least two staff persons are present, and all our staff will make every effort to be there by 9:15 am. However, please be aware that some of our teachers do live in areas where the conditions may not be as safe to travel, so verify that there is sufficient staff present to supervise your child before departing, and, that **you may be asked to stay until additional staff arrives**. On a two-hour delay classes will begin at approximately 9:30 am.

Five make-up snow days have been added to the end of our school year, which have not been included in tuition calculations, but

for which we will be open regardless. If we **exceed five** closings in the same school year then the board will determine at that time how those will be made-up.

V. FINANCIAL

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A. BILLING/PAYMENTS

We offer three different payment plans for the annual tuition and extended care options:

1. **Annual**, less a 5% discount. **Due August 20th**.
2. **Semi-Annual**, less a 5% discount. 50% due **August 20th** and 50% due **January 20th**.
3. **10 Monthly Payments/Installments** (1/10th of annual tuition), **due on the 20th of each month**, with the first payment due on August 20th and the last installment on May 20th.

The contracted payments are due by the due date, and it is the **parent's responsibility to make their payments on time, regardless of whether they received a bill**. Any expenses for additional extended care, extra days, or other fees, not due upon sign-up, will be billed. Please see the school Administrator if you have any questions regarding your bills.

B. CHILD CARE DAYS

Please see the current Schedule of Fees for the cost of child care days. There is a flat rate for a full day (over 4 hours) and a flat rate for a half day (under 4 hours). **Payment for daycare days is due with the sign-up sheet**. There are no refunds if you sign up for a daycare day and then your child does not show. Those who wish to cancel and provide 24 hours notice will receive a refund or credit.

C. DISCOUNTS

5% PRE-PAY DISCOUNT

We offer a pre-pay discount of 5% if you choose the annual or semi-annual payment plan.

10% SIBLING DISCOUNT

We offer a sibling discount of 10% for each additional child enrolled at our school by the same family at the same time.

D. EARLY WITHDRAWALS

We require a month's advance notice, in writing, for early withdrawal. No refunds are given, or tuition pro-rated for the 30 calendar days following notification if you elect to withdraw your child during that time.

If you prepaid your tuition and other fees, then the actual cost will be calculated through the 30-day notification period, and any remaining funds returned after your child's final day.

E. FINANCIAL AID SCHOLARSHIPS

The school does have a scholarship application program. The deadline is June 1st of each year for the following school year. The Board of Directors allocates a portion of our total fundraising revenue for this purpose at the end of each fiscal year, and they reserve the right to cancel this program prior to scholarships being awarded, at any time. Scholarship applications may be obtained at the school's office.

We request that scholarship **recipients become active members of the Fundraising or Building, Grounds & Safety Committee** for the school year to which the scholarship is applied (See "Board of Directors" for more information on committees), as well as volunteer six hours of time at one of our major fundraising events. Since the funds are raised completely through our school's fundraising activities, we feel it is reasonable to ask families of the recipients to help with the planning, organization, and labor involved in running these events.

Scholarships are credited against the students bills, divided equally according to the chosen payment schedule. Should a recipient withdraw their child prior to year end all remaining scholarship monies not disbursed will revert back into the scholarship fund.

F. GRACE PERIOD / LATE PAYMENT FEE

As an accommodation to the Parent, the School permits a **grace period of up to 10 calendar days** after the stated due for the Parent to pay tuition and other fees on statements or invoices received August thru April, **with the exception of May, June, and July**. For the **May installment all fees are due on or before May 20th without exception**. Upon May 21st, or the subsequent business day, any account with tuition or other monies overdue will be subject to any of

the actions the school wishes to pursue outlined under the “overdue balances” section of this handbook. For the **June and July** billing periods, which are generally for summer camp, **all money is due prior to camp attendance, which eliminates the 10-day grace period.**

A **late payment fee of \$15.00** will be assessed on any accounts not fully paid by the end of the grace period or the due date if no grace period in that billing month. **Three or more late payments in the same school year may result in the school requesting prepayment before your child can attend the following year.** *Please see “Overdue Balances” section for more information on late payments.*

G. LATE PICK-UP FEE

The School officially closes at 5:15 pm during regular and daycare days. Parents who use daycare services are required to observe closing time. **The School will assess \$1 a minute for each minute past 5:15 pm.**

H. OVERDUE BALANCES

Tuition and other fees must be paid promptly. When a Student's account is in arrears, or when a Parent has a question about the Student's account, **it is the Parent's responsibility to contact the Administrator** to resolve any questions and to make arrangements for immediate payment.

Whenever any late and underlying tuition and other past due fees have not been fully paid by the first of the month after the due date, in addition to a late payment fee, **the school reserves the right to disallow a Student from attending classes until all monies due are paid in full.**

Additionally:

- Should any account have **three or more late payments** within the same school year, we reserve the right to request that all fees be **pre-paid for the following school year** if that family wishes their child to return.
- The child of any family whose **balance is not paid in full by June 15th** will not be allowed to attend **Summer Camp** unless their overdue balance is paid and summer camp fees are prepaid.

- The child of any family who's **balance is not paid in full by June 30th**, **will not be allowed to return the following year unless they prepay**, or, have board approval due to extenuating circumstances.

The School's ability to operate on sound fiscal basis depends in part on its prompt collection of tuition and other fees from parents. In addition to any other remedies the School may have under the Tuition and Registration Contract or under applicable law, **the School reserves the right to sue for any fees not received** in full in the school office by the due date. The parent agrees to pay all costs of collection incurred by the Montessori Schoolhouse, including attorney's fees, if the school pursues this course of action.

I. PROGRAM FEES

Please see current Schedule of Fees for tuition, extended care, and daycare rates.

J. REGISTRATION FEE

An annual, non-refundable registration fee of \$75.00 per student is required to hold a space in the school for new and returning students. This fee is subject to change at any time prior to June 30th for the following school year, and is due with the registration form.

K. RETURNED CHECKS / INSUFFICIENT FUNDS

A **\$20.00 penalty** will be assessed on any check returned for insufficient funds or any other reason. The **returned check and fee must be replaced with cash or a money order immediately**, and may result in a late payment fee being assessed as well. In the event that a second check is returned during the same school year, the school reserves the right to request cash or money order for all future payments as well.

L. SECURITY DEPOSIT

A **security deposit of \$125.00** is required for each **new student** along with their registration form and fee upon acceptance to the school. The security deposit will be applied to the final installment payment, returned, or held for the following year if your child is returning. **Security deposits are non-refundable after July 1st and are forfeit if student withdraws prior to start of school year.** If student is withdrawn after school year begins, then security will be

applied to balance due.

M. STATE ASSISTANCE

We do accept students receiving state assistance and we will submit the Childcare Payment Request Invoices to the state. **Families are responsible for paying the full tuition and all other fees not covered by state assistance.** Tuition is not pro-rated for families receiving state assistance, but they are welcome to apply for a financial aid scholarship thru the school. Parents are also responsible for coordinating all the required paperwork thru the state or other local service provider and notifying the school of any changes in status immediately. Please see the school Administrator to determine the difference between state funding and the current tuition and extended care fees.

State assisted families should note that **the state only reimburses for the actual hours the child is in attendance, while we charge a set rate for tuition and extended care.** If a child is absent due to illness, personal vacation, snow day, or other reason, the state will not reimburse for that day and the parent will be expected to pay the difference. All other policies and fees outlined in this handbook apply to families receiving state assistance.

