



Parent Handbook

**"The goal of early childhood education should be to activate
the child's own natural desire to learn."**

- Dr. Maria Montessori

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Welcome to Montessori Schoolhouse of Cheshire County!

We are committed to providing high quality Montessori preschool education and care for your child(ren). It is a commitment that we take very seriously.

A Montessori education fosters curiosity and helps to lead to a love of learning. We look forward to an exciting year filled with growth and new experiences for your child(ren).

Please review this handbook and save it to consult throughout the year. We are happy to discuss any questions you may have.

A. MISSION STATEMENT

At Montessori Schoolhouse of Cheshire County (MSHOCC) we:

- *Provide a safe, nurturing and peaceful environment for young children of all abilities and backgrounds;
- *Work in partnership with parents to explore the potential of each child;
- *Encourage the growth of developmental skills, curiosity, independence and respect for all;
- *Use the principles of Maria Montessori to help children discover the joy and beauty of learning.

Organizational Goals

- *To provide high quality Montessori early childhood education for families in our community.
- *To hire and retain educators who are passionate, child-focused, caring and committed to Montessori methods.

B. SCHOOL HISTORY

Montessori Schoolhouse was founded in 1989 by parents who wanted their children to learn in a loving and nurturing environment. The Montessori philosophy fit best to achieve that goal. A board was formed and 501(C)(3) status was obtained. We also obtained a childcare provider license with the state of New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services due to the younger student age range for our programs. This is required of preschools not associated with a larger school or organization offering first grade and up. We rented space in various locations until 2014, when we purchased our current location in West Keene.

C. PHILOSOPHY

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 includes the following ideals:

- All children are unique and should be helped to develop at their own pace, to their fullest potential, in a non-competitive atmosphere.
- 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.
- 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 or her own pace, from simple activities to more complex ones. In this individualized setting, children work at distinctly different paces and skill levels.

D. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The school has a volunteer Board of Directors that follows an established set of bylaws, with four Officers: President, President-Elect, Secretary, and Treasurer. A list of the current board members and their contact information may be found in the current School Directory or by contacting the school office. Board members are generally current and alumni Montessori parents, with the bylaws allowing up to three positions to be held by non-Montessori parents from the community at large. MSHOCC bylaws prohibit family members of any current staff from joining the Board of Directors.

The Board traditionally **meets on the third Thursday every month during the school year**, unless posted otherwise, to hear reports from the school's directors, review budget reports, receive committee updates, and discuss other agenda items. The Annual Meeting of the Membership is held in September, at which time new Board Members are voted in to fill any vacancies and serve three-year terms. At the Annual Meeting, all families are allowed one vote per membership (one vote per child enrolled at school, including any staff children).

Board responsibilities include; approving operating budget; approving expenses outside the operating budget; reviewing and amending bylaws as necessary; chairing board committees; fundraising; promoting the school in the greater community; and strategic and long-range planning.

Meeting Minutes from the board meetings are public documents and copies may be requested from the Board Secretary or school office. Board Meetings are open to the public, with the exception of executive sessions, and families are encouraged to attend.

MSHOCC requests that **one parent/guardian be an active member of at least one school committee**, including employees with a child enrolled at MSHOCC.

The Board Committees are:

- Finance Committee;
- Buildings, Grounds, & Safety Committee;
- Fundraising Committee;
- Marketing & Public Relations Committee

Descriptions of each committee and its functions are distributed at the Annual Meeting of the Membership, or can be obtained from the school office.

E. PARENT COMMITMENT POLICY

Upon a student's enrollment at Montessori Schoolhouse of Cheshire County (MSHOCC), the parent or guardian becomes a "trustee" of the school with important obligations to support the school. The more parents are involved in the school's overall function and wellbeing, the more children benefit. Parental support helps us maintain a quality program as well as help keep some of our overhead costs down, thereby keeping tuition rates down as well. **We are an "inclusive" school** and work to provide a diverse student body reflective of the greater community and remaining affordable helps us achieve this goal. While many parents naturally volunteer at their child's school, we have established a parent commitment policy at MSHOCC so that the important work of the school is shared equally. If you have questions about the Parent Commitment Policy please contact a Board Member or an Administrative Director.

HOURS

The minimum hours required for each school family is 10 hours per school year. Qualifying single parent families must complete 5 hours per year. To qualify as a single parent/guardian family, there must be no other parent, stepparent, or guardian to help complete the hours.

Families who enroll a child at MSHOCC after the school year has started will be required to complete a prorated number of hours based on their start date. The proration will be the number of months they will have attended at the end of the school year x 1.25 hours per month. For example, if a family joins MSHOCC in January, they would be required to fulfill 5 hours.

Half of your hours should be fulfilled before December 31st and the remaining half of your hours before June 1st with unfulfilled hours billed accordingly in December and June. You will be credited back for any hours fulfilled by June 1st.

Each family will be asked to commit to helping with at least two events throughout the school year - fundraisers, building & grounds, serving on the board. Families who choose not to complete the required hours are expected to pay for uncompleted hours at the rate of \$15 per hour. Families/Parents must pay for the uncompleted hours when the last tuition bill is due in May

You will receive an update during the school year advising you of the number of volunteer hours that you have reported. If you have questions about the number of hours you have reported, please contact the school office.

Unfulfilled hours may NOT be transferred to another family or held for completion the next year.

Extended family interested in helping? Their time can count towards your volunteer hours.

REPORTING

Each family/parent is responsible to report its own hours, and families are expected to use good judgment in reporting hours. Please email the office with the number of completed hours and what was done. Once you have met the expected commitment, you do not need to report any additional hours, although we encourage everyone to volunteer beyond the required hours. **The deadline for reporting volunteer hours is May 1st.** We may, from time to time, have volunteer opportunities in May or June and extend the deadline, or offer to credit those hours toward the next school year.

PROBLEMS/SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

We realize that problems may arise during the school year that may prevent fulfilling hours. Contact an Administrative Director as soon as problems arise so a resolution can be reached. Please do not wait until the end of the school year to request a solution. Remember, it is your responsibility to notify the school of any impediment to completion of your hours.

APPROVED VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

- Assisting with Fundraisers (*work event, event preparation, set-up/clean-up, etc.*)
- Serve on the Board of Directors
- Assisting at Fall and Spring Clean-Up Days
- Attend /Participate in Committee Meetings and Event Planning
- Clean-Up Before and After a School Function
- Property Maintenance/Repairs with prior approval (*examples: brush/debris removal, painting, shoveling, etc.*)
- Other Activities as posted

NOT APPROVED

- Attending/chaperoning field trips.
- Attending functions.

F. EMPLOYEE POSITIONS AND STAFFING

MSHOCC is managed by Co-Administrative Directors and a Licensing Center Director.

The Co-Administrative Directors are responsible for: working with the Board, officers, and committee chairs to meet goals; reporting at board meetings; managing administrative and financial functions; enforcing policies; school inquiries, tours, and admissions; staff scheduling; development and school communications.

The Center Director is responsible for: ensuring the school is compliant with New Hampshire child care licensing regulations; staff development and evaluations; adhering to school policies; educational programs are in alignment with Montessori philosophy and educational practices; coordinating teacher workshop days, and emergency response drills and reviews.

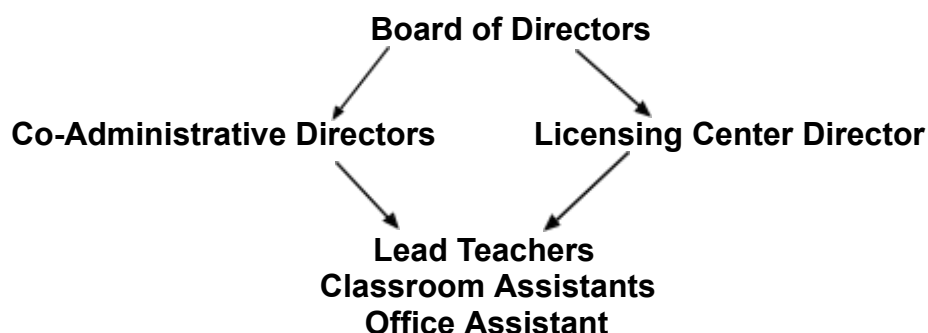
Other positions at the school include the classroom Montessori Teacher, their lead Assistant, and additional Associate Assistants as needed based on class size. We also employ on-call substitutes, and an office assistant as needed.

The Montessori Teacher is a guide and facilitator, helping the students by creating an environment in which they can learn by doing for themselves. Day-to-day, they conduct circle time, present lessons, prepare materials and activities, plan curriculum, and manage the classrooms. They write progress reports, conduct family-teacher meetings, and address any concerns or questions regarding curriculum and classroom expectations.

The classroom assistants aid the Montessori Teacher primarily with supervision and direction of the students so the Montessori teacher can focus on individual and small group lessons and observations without interruption. They assist with bathroom/diapering needs, cleaning and organizing, and other activities related to classroom management. The Assistants do not present lessons unless they have been trained by the Montessori Teacher or Director on how to present a particular lesson(s).

Many Montessori lessons must be presented exactly the same way each time, regardless of the presenter or how often presented, for the student to come to self-awareness of their accomplishment, skill, or error.

G. ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



H. MONTESSORI PROGRAMS

In Montessori schools, each program or cycle is generally intended to encompass three-years. The first program or level is often referred to as 0-3 or Infant and **Toddler**. The second level is often referred to as 3-6, **Primary**, or Early Childhood. The third level is referred to as 6-9 or lower elementary, then 9-12 or upper elementary, and so forth. **We offer both Toddler and Primary levels.**

Toddler Program

Our Toddler Program is for children who are between the age of 16 months and 3 years old on September 1st. We will admit a *limited* number of children between the age of 16 and 18 months. We may admit a child who turns 16 months after September 1st if an opening occurs, only if tuition is paid to do so until the child is old enough to attend.

Our Toddler Program is generally a one-year program. A few students may register for a second year depending on their age, or if it's determined they are not yet developmentally ready for the Primary Program.

Our Toddler Program follows Montessori principles, methodology, and 0-3 curriculum that offers age-appropriate activities, materials, and child-size furniture. **Class hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.** and children may be enrolled for a set three, four, or five mornings a week. The staff ratio is 1:5 or 1:6 depending on the class's average age, with a maximum class size of 11.

Formal parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year to keep parent(s)/guardians informed of their children's progress.

Approximate Toddler Schedule:

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 8:15 - 8:45 | Arrival (outdoors in fall & spring) |
| 8:45 - 9:00 | Lesson Circle |
| 9:00 - 10:00 | Work Time (diaper changes, toileting, handwashing) |
| 10:00 - 10:15 | Story Circle |
| 10:15 - 10:45 | Snack |
| 10:45 - 11:15 | Wagon Ride* |
| 11:15 - 12:00 | Outdoors Play* (diaper changes, toileting, handwashing) |
| 12:00 - 12:45 | Lunch Time (outdoors in nice weather) |
| 12:45 - 1:00 | Half-Day dismissals / Aftercare begins |

**Weather permitting. In general, we go to the playground or on wagon rides if it is 20 degrees or above. If not, we may remain inside for indoor games, songs, and dancing.*

Primary Program

Our Primary Program is for children that are at least **three years old by September 1st** and through age five (kindergarten year). It follows the Montessori 3-6 curriculum and educational methods. Children entering the Primary program must be potty trained, or have no more than the occasional wetting accident by the time they begin.

Current toddler students and new applicants are evaluated by the Primary teacher(s) and/or Program Director to determine developmental readiness. If it is determined that a child is not developmentally ready, they may be considered for a later opening if one occurs and may continue in the toddler program (if applicable).

In the Primary program, ideally a child begins at age three and completes three full years that culminates with the kindergarten year. In the final (kindergarten) year they are important mentors and role models for the younger students. Many children will progress into reading, number functions, and phonetic spelling, while also enjoying activities such as special art projects, science experiments, and other activities that enhance the current curriculum in their culminating year.

We offer a **half-day class from 8:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.**, and a **full-day class from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.** 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. We do offer three or four day options as well.

Minimum of four full days (Monday-Thursday) for kindergarten-age students, with 5 days strongly recommended.

We help promote children's social/emotional growth, develop fine and gross motor skills and foster a life-long love of learning. The Montessori prepared environment is highly organized and richly diverse to encourage independence, self-confidence and learning at an individual pace. Class begins with a morning circle where children are introduced to new lessons or activities, then, they move freely through the areas of the classroom, choosing their own work. During this time the teacher will observe the children as well as engage them in individual and small group lessons to encourage development of skills. The children are introduced to subjects such as science, geography, zoology, biology, art, math, writing, language, practical life skills, and grace and courtesy lessons.

Formal parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year to keep parent(s)/guardians informed of their children's progress.

During the afternoon, children are encouraged to work at their own pace on selected classroom materials, or they may enjoy indoor or outdoor group enrichment activities such as baking, gardening, art projects, or activities.

Approximate Primary Schedule:

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| 8:15 - 8:30 | Arrivals |
| 8:30 - 8:55 | Outdoor time* |
| 8:55 - 9:15 | Morning Meeting |
| 9:15 - 11:15 | Work Cycle/Snack |
| 11:15 - 11:30 | Circle(Story/Music) |
| 11:30 - 12:00 | Outdoor Time* |
| 12:00 - 12:10 | Handwashing/Lunch Transition |
| 12:10 - 12:40 | Lunchtime |
| 12:45 - 1:00 | Half-Day Student Dismissals |
| 12:45 - 1:00 | Lunch/Clean-up/Rest Time Set-up |
| 1:00 - 1:15 | Quiet Reading Time |
| 1:15 - 2:15 | Rest Time/Enrichment Activities (1st-2nd year) |
| 1:15 - 2:15 | Rest Time/Afternoon Lessons (3rd year) |
| 2:15 - 2:30 | Classroom Clean-up/Pack-up |
| 2:30 - 3:00 | Outdoor Time |
| 3:00 - 3:15 | Full-Day Student Dismissals* |

**Weather permitting. In general, we go to the playground if it is 20 degrees or above. If not, the children will have gross motor games/movement activities in the classroom.*

I. AFTER-CARE

After-care is available to 3 p.m. or 4 p.m. for current students. We allow a 15-minute pick-up window/grace period after the hour before we assess a minimum \$15 late pick-up fee, PLUS a \$1 per minute after 4:15 p.m.

Primary After-Care Schedule

| | |
|------------------|---|
| 3:00 - 3:15 p.m. | Hand washing |
| 3:15 - 3:30 p.m. | Snack Time |
| 3:30 - 4:00 p.m. | Indoor Games/Activities or Outdoor Time |
| 4:00 - 4:15 p.m. | Aftercare Dismissals |

Toddler After-Care Schedule

| | |
|------------------|--|
| 1:00 - 2:45 p.m. | Nap Time |
| 2:45 - 3:00 p.m. | Diaper Changes, Toileting, Handwashing |
| 3:00 - 3:15 p.m. | Dismissals |
| 3:15 - 3:30 p.m. | Snack time |
| 3:30 - 4:00 p.m. | Free Play/Outdoor Time |
| 4:00 - 4:15 p.m. | Aftercare Dismissals |

J. SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM

Summer camp is open to children between the ages of two years old and six years old and MSHOCC alumni through age seven. Children between the age of 18 months and two years, who are enrolled to begin with the new school year, may be invited to enroll in the camp program with Toddler Teacher/Director approval (*subject to space after priority deadline for current families has passed*).

Camp generally begins one week after school closes and ends one to two weeks before school begins again in the fall. We offer 5 days or 3 days (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday), and half day from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. or full day from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Optional after-care is available until 4 p.m. Families may register their child for one week or up to all the weeks offered.

Summer camp is packed with creative activities that help engage children in the discovery of the world around them while leading them toward greater independence, concentration, and respect for others. Montessori children learn purely for the joy of learning itself, and our goal is to continue nurturing that desire during the summer months in a safe, caring environment.

Our days are filled with outdoor and indoor play, craft activities, wagon rides, water play (sprinklers and water tables), and educational games and stories. Children tend the vegetable and flower gardens and eat lunch and snacks outside at the picnic tables (weather permitting). During camp, we offer two broad themes that focus on Nature Play, each week incorporating different activities so it will not be repetitive for those attending multiple weeks or all summer.

Current students have priority registration. If openings remain after the registration deadline, alumni students through age 7, and new applicants registered for the fall, can then register for camp to fill any remaining spots.

Camp staff generally consists of *some* of our current staff, school year substitutes, and occasionally new staff and/or high school or college students seeking summer only employment.

K. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Birthday Card Distribution

We realize that, 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. 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, and everyone will receive a copy 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 and mail the invitation for you.

2. Vacation Breaks & Vacation Camps

School vacation breaks occur December, February, and April. See the School Days Calendar for exact dates, which is also located on the school's website.

During the February & April school vacation breaks **we may offer a 3 or 4 day vacation camp, subject to staffing and minimum sign-ups**. Depending on interest, we may offer a half-day and/or full-day camp for 3 days (Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday) or 4 days (Monday through Thursday).

Additional fees apply for these weeks. Please see the current Schedule of Fees for the cost of Vacation Camps. There is a flat rate for a full day and a flat rate for a half day (to 12:45pm). The survey/sign-up deadline is a few weeks prior to the vacation week and includes several schedule options. Families are notified right after the deadline if we reached the minimum and for what schedule option(s), and spots confirmed.

3. Clothing & Toys

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.

Action Figures/Superheroes/Characters

Please refrain from sending your child to school in clothing or with lunch boxes with commercial or fantasy characters on them that promote action figures/superheroes or gaming 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, not by the loudness of their voice or the strength of their shove.

Toys

Please refrain from bringing in any toys to school. Toys become huge distractors, so please leave them at home or in your car. If a child comes with a toy we will ask you to take it back to your car. The only exception to this rule is a small (no bigger than their backpack) snuggle buddy a **toddler** will use at naptime.

Clothes

Please bring in an extra set of clothing for your child in a labeled bag or box that will be kept at school. A set consists of underwear, socks, pants, a shirt, and—during the winter & spring—extra shoes (no slippers/sandals/crocs). Spills and accidents do occur; it helps the child to avoid embarrassment if backups are available. Please check clothing on occasion to ensure that the clothes still fit and are seasonally appropriate.

Your child should not come to school with a necklace, scarf or anything else around the neck as they can present a choking hazard,

We are an all-weather school. We recommend students keep rain clothes in their cubby, especially boots for wet muddy play.

Shoes

Your child should come to school in sneakers or bring them (or other similar shoes) along at all times. During the winter and muddy spring months, we ask that they wear boots to school and bring or leave their sneakers in their cubby to change into after arriving or after outdoor play. **Please, ABSOLUTELY NO open-toed or open-backed sandals, high-heels, slippers 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 playtime.

Outdoor Clothing

At the start of the school year, please send your child with a light sweater or sweatshirt. As the weather starts to become unpredictable, add hats and mittens as it gets cooler.

In the winter, children should bring a pair of **labeled snow pants, boots, hat and mittens (extra hat & mittens if full-day student), and a pair of shoes to change into every day**, as we typically go outside. In

the spring, when the ground is muddy and weather is unpredictable, we ask that you still send them with or bring snow or rain boots for outdoor play and keep that extra pair of shoes to change into. This helps to avoid tracking snow and mud onto the carpets where we sit, play, and have snack circle. 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 all weather.

4. Communications

Blue Folders

Blue student folders are distributed weekly (Wednesdays) at pick-up time with information for your family. Please review the information and return the Blue Folder to school the next day. If you have paperwork or other information for the school, you can place it in the Blue Folder.

Emails & School Message App Texts/Alerts

You will receive email and text message reminders, notifications, and announcements, assuming you completed the Communications Release Form and provided your email, and cell phone number(s) to add to our messaging app.

Website & Facebook Page

The current school year calendar is on our website along with a monthly Google calendar where we post meetings, events, deadlines, vacation days, and days closed. You can scroll through upcoming months on the Google calendar. We will also post events on our Facebook Page, such as fundraisers and other more general events that are for a broader audience.

5. Off-Grounds Walks

During the week, weather permitting, the toddlers will take a daily wagon ride/walk in the neighborhood to nearby locations. A general release form that includes off-grounds walks was included in your school paperwork at the beginning of the school year. On occasion, the primary classrooms may join these excursions or take their own walks. We also do practice walks to our nearby designated evacuation locations.

A notice will be posted on the school doors or sent via message app, indicating their intended location, route for that particular day, and include teacher cell phone numbers.

6. Drop-Off, Check- In, & Promptness

Children should arrive between 8:15 and 8:30 a.m. The person responsible for dropping off your child must **check in directly with their teacher, or other designated person**, who will write in their arrival time on their attendance sheet.

Please make every effort to arrive on time. From your child's perspective, this is an opportunity to get settled in and be ready for the day with friends. As adults, if we are late to a meeting where everyone else is settled in and the meeting has started, we might feel uncomfortable and awkward. Your child may experience the same feelings. It is also disruptive to the other children and the teacher. We understand that sometimes lateness may occur; but it should not be a habit.

7. Emergency Form

An Emergency Information Form must be completed and signed, include at least one emergency contact besides parent(s)/guardian(s), and be on file in the office before your child's first day of attendance. **This form must be reviewed, and signed annually *before it expires***, or a new form completed annually.

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 your child to be transported to a hospital to receive emergency medical treatment.

It's important to complete the form with your child's physician and contact information. The Emergency Form also goes to the ER so the first responders and medical staff have access to this information. Please include your insurance information so coverage can be confirmed at the hospital.

8. Environmental Stewardship

MSHOCC recognizes that it has a responsibility to the environment beyond legal and regulatory requirements. We are committed to reducing our environmental impact and continually improving our environmental stewardship as an integral part of our business strategy and operating methods. We are working to **ban the use of straws and glitter in our school in an effort to protect the oceans.**

Other efforts include,

- Recycling food containers (plastic, glass, aluminum) in designated recycling bins.
- Composting vegetable, fruit, and plant scraps into an outdoor compost container.
(The compost is used in school gardens to enrich the soil)
- Paper and cardboard is recycled for classroom crafts or placed in designated recycling bins.
- The benefits of recycling are incorporated into lessons.
- The children use washable glasses, plates and silverware for lunches and snack times.
- Cloth napkins are provided for lunch and snack time instead of paper napkins.
- Employees are utilizing reusable k-cups *(please do not gift plastic k-cups)*

Montessori families and employees contribute to our environmental impact. We encourage everyone to actively engage in our efforts to reduce our school's environmental impact. We encourage families, employees, and students to recycle aluminum, glass, plastic, paper, and cardboard containers.

Please eliminate single use packaging in your child's lunch.

9. Emergency Evacuation Procedures & Drills

Evacuation Procedure & Locations

In the event of an emergency evacuation or fire where the school cannot be re-entered, the students will be escorted to one of two locations within walking distance from our school.

Students are our first priority and ALL staff, *including administrative staff*, will be assisting with ensuring the children are safe. **Once the children are in a safe location we will notify families using the messaging app and/or email and provide further information and instructions.**

Our two evacuation locations are:

Keene High School Maintenance Building, Arch Street (red building by Alumni field).
They have a large conference room space.

Ahavas Achim Synagogue, 84 Hastings Ave, Keene.
They have a large congregation area as well as classroom spaces downstairs.

If we are unable to reach you to pick up your child(ren), we will contact the secondary emergency contact(s) or alternate pick-up person(s) listed on your child's emergency form. **Please make sure we have your current cell phone numbers at all times.**

Fire Drills

Fire drills are conducted monthly year-round, utilizing various exits, and varying days and hours, to ensure that all children and staff can experience and practice drills. **For at least two drills annually:** the staff and children will practice evacuating and walking to one of the above evacuation locations; and the real fire alarm will be pulled, and a smoke detector alarm used for the other monthly drills.

Other Emergency Response Drills

We periodically practice other types of drills that include Reverse Evacuation, Interior Evacuation, Secure Campus, Lock Down, Shelter-In-Place, and Bomb Threat. During a reverse evacuation drill, when the children are outside, we use a whistle to alert staff and students that they need to proceed indoors immediately. In an interior evacuation drill (for high wind/hurricane/projectiles) the children evacuate to the ground floor center hallway. For an imminent tornado, we would evacuate to the basement.

10. 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 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 5 working days, with any of the following:
 - a. The Lead Teacher
 - b. A School Director
 - c. The President of the Board
2. If the problem is not resolved, the parents may request a meeting with the Board's Executive Directors.
3. At the end of this process, after every effort has been made to reach a resolution, parents/guardians may terminate their child's enrollment if unsatisfied, and we will refund any prepaid tuition and security for remaining school days.

11. Health Form & Immunization Records

Certain information and forms 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 the student's first day.

Immunization Records: A child must have all the required immunizations as set forth by the NH childcare licensing bureau to attend a licensed childcare center in the State of NH*. If a child is not fully immunized due to a health reason, the parents/guardians should obtain a note from their physician explaining the reason (cannot be due to parental choice), and outline their anticipated immunization schedule.

A religious exemption form can be downloaded from the NH DHHS Childcare website, or obtained from the school office if immunizations are against religious beliefs. The completed and notarized form must be submitted to the office prior to attendance. Please note: **There are no refunds if we must exclude your child during an outbreak for which they are not immunized.*

Health Form: A health form completed by your child's physician must be on file within 60 days of enrollment.* The form must show that your child has had a physical within the past year and **expires one year from the date of exam shown on the health form.** We cannot accept fax or photo copied health forms.

The childcare licensing bureau requires we have a new health form on file within 60 days of expiration. If one is not received by the 60th day, your child will be barred from attending until one is received (and tuition will not be refunded or pro-rated), as we will be in violation of licensing rules. Health forms may be obtained from our office prior to your child's appointment, or you may use the clinic's own form as long as it also contains a statement on whether or not they have any concerns about participating in normal preschool activities.

**If a physical examination is contrary to your religious beliefs a religious exemption form for physical exam can be downloaded from the NH DHHS Childcare website, or obtained from the school office, and be completed, notarized, and submitted within 60 days of enrollment.*

12. Holidays/Ethnic Heritage

Children learn about customs and traditions from around the world. We include cultural diversity whenever possible with an emphasis on respecting and appreciating different customs. We encourage you to approach the teachers about sharing your heritage and traditions through foods, games, clothing, instruments, etc. with the children.

13. Illness/Sick Policy

We strive to prevent illness as much as possible. We utilize a cleaning company that disinfects and cleans on a daily basis, and the staff cleans and disinfects surfaces after illness occurs while class is in session. We also run air purifiers in all the classrooms.

The following illness policies and procedures were developed to protect both the students and staff from illness as much as possible. We strongly encourage testing for specific illnesses when symptoms are indicative of a potentially serious/highly contagious illness, or when outbreaks are identified in the community:

Runny Nose and Congestion: Students should stay home and return when excessive discharge has cleared and they can manage their symptoms without extra help. Students can return once they are well enough to actively participate in a learning environment and do not require additional rest periods outside school nap time and are fever-free for 24 hours without use of medication.

Fever: Students with a fever of 101 or higher will be sent home immediately. They must be fever-free AND fever reducing medicine-free for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to school. Students with a fever of 101 or

higher at home may return to school after being fever-free AND fever reducing medicine-free for at least 24 hours.

Vomiting: Students who vomit at school will be sent home immediately. Students must be symptom-free for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to school. Students who vomit at home may return to school after being symptom free for 24 hours.

Covid: Students who test positive for COVID-19 should **stay home for at least 5 days**. Students may return after 5 days according to [CDC isolation guidelines](#):

- If symptoms are not present.
- If symptoms are present and are improving, no new symptoms surface within 24 hours, the student has been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication, and the student can actively participate in a learning environment.
- Upon returning, the student will need to wear a mask through day 10 of symptoms onset according to CDC guidelines. If the symptoms were severe, or the student is unable to wear a well fitting mask, the student will need to isolate at home for 10 days and follow the above with symptoms guidelines for returning to school.
- Students can return sooner and forgo masking requirements if they present a negative COVID test to the office and staff before returning.

Diarrhea: Students who have two bouts of diarrhea while at school will be sent home immediately. Students must be symptom-free for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to school. Students 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. Students with two or more bouts of diarrhea at home may return after being symptom free for at least 24 hours.

Coxsackie (Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease): Students suspected of having Coxsackie will be sent home immediately. Signs/symptoms include sores on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet, inside the mouth, and/or in the diaper area. Students must be fever-free and fever reducing medicine-free for a minimum of 24 hours and sores must be completely dried before returning to school.

Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye): Students suspected of having pink eye will be sent home immediately as it spreads easily and can be very painful. Students may return to school when the inflammation and infection cannot be visually detected - no pink and no discharge.

Rash (Roseola, 5th Disease, etc.): If a student is discovered to have a rash, the parent/guardian will be called and asked to make a doctor appointment for the end of the day to identify the rash. Parents/guardians will be asked to provide a doctor's note indicating the diagnosis. Most childhood rashes appear after the fever and contagious period has passed; therefore, students will not be excluded from school unless other exclusion symptoms are present.

Strep Throat: Students suspected of having strep throat will be sent home immediately. If a rapid strep test performed at a doctor's office is negative, please ask the doctor for a note indicating the results. If the test is positive, students must be on antibiotics for 24 hours before returning to school. Regardless of the test results, students must be fever-free and fever-reducing medicine-free for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to school.

Impetigo: Students suspected of having impetigo will be sent home immediately. Students must be on antibiotics for 24 hours and sores must be dried up before returning to school.

Staph/MRSA Infections: Students with any boils on their bodies will be sent home immediately. The parent/guardian will be asked to bring their child to the doctor for an accurate diagnosis. If their child is diagnosed with Staph or MRSA, they must be on antibiotics for 24 hours, boils must be able to be kept completely covered with a bandage (MSHOCC staff are unable to change bandaging), and boils must not be draining when the student returns to school. If the student is not diagnosed with Staph or MRSA, please ask the doctor for a note indicating the diagnosis.

Lice: Students found to have lice will be sent home immediately. Students must be lice- AND nit-free before returning to school. The Lead Teacher or designated staff will check the student's head upon returning to school and every morning for two weeks before the parent/guardian leaves. All students who were exposed to lice will have their heads checked at drop-off for a period of two weeks.

Chicken Pox: Students suspected of having chicken pox will be sent home immediately. Students with chicken pox may return to school once the pox have healed and they are fever-free and fever-reducing medicine-free for 24 hours.

Other Illnesses: The Lead Teacher may send a student home if they are not well enough to fully participate in their classroom, even if the above exclusion criteria are not present. Upon calling the parents/guardians to pick up the student, the Director will inform the parent as to when the student may return to school.

Dispensing Medication: MSHOCC staff are unable to administer prescription medication, with the exception of emergency medications such as Epi-pens, insulin, and inhalers. If a student is required to have prescription medication while in school, a parent/guardian must administer it. Students may not keep any medication in their cubby or self-administer any medications, including cough drops and vitamins.

Parents must complete an authorization form for nonprescription medication. **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.** This is because most medications are not made for children under the age of two.

State Guidelines: We follow all state guidelines and recommendations for all illnesses as outlined in the NH Child Care Program Licensing Rules under "Communicable Diseases." The NH Child Care Licensing Rules can be found on their website.

14. Injuries / Sudden Severe Illness

The school will notify a parent/guardian in the case of an injury or other sudden illness. Basic first aid will be administered by school personnel, and if immediate transportation to the hospital is necessary, 911 will be called. The signed consent statement (See Emergency Form) will accompany the child so that treatment can begin immediately in the absence of a parent.

15. Lunch and Snack

Please pack a healthy snack in a separate bag or container, and a well-balanced nutritious lunch daily. Write your child's name on their snack container and their lunch box.

We are not able to heat or microwave lunches. A thermos is recommended instead. Bento boxes work great for children. Please observe the following:

| | |
|------------------|--|
| No candy or soda | Use reusable containers |
| No straws | Avoid one-use packaging |
| No drink pouches | Use easy open containers for independence. |

16. Nap/Rest Time

New Hampshire regulations require at least one half-hour rest/nap time for children age 5 and under who attend for more than 5 hours, and to awaken at their own pace within a set block of time set aside as nap or rest time (see *Aftercare Program Schedule*). Those who do not fall asleep after half an hour are allowed to enjoy a quiet activity on their mat or in another area of the classroom.

Children in the Toddler Program may bring a *small* soft snuggle buddy to use at naptime (must fit in their backpack).

17. Parent Expectations

At Montessori Schoolhouse, we believe that every person deserves to be treated with respect, kindness and courtesy. This applies to family members, staff and children. All adults should remember that we are role models for children. Our approach is to be gentle, be safe, be kind.

Additional expectations:

- to pay fees on time
- to respond promptly to requests for your child's medical form, emergency form updates and other information
- to be on time in the morning and at pick-up time
- to follow our illness policy
- to be respectful and courteous in all communications - in person, telephone, written, or online

- to learn about the Montessori method and attend parent conferences
- to help with the needs of the school - clean ups, fundraisers, etc.

18. Parent-Teacher Conferences

Conferences are held twice a year to keep parent(s)/guardians informed of their children's progress: once in the fall and once in the spring.

The fall conference is a time to share how the beginning of the school year has progressed. It is also a time for families to share their own concerns and questions. The spring conference is a time for the teacher to share and demonstrate academic learning and social skills your child is receiving and their progress.

You may also meet at any time with the Lead Teacher outside of class hours during a time that is convenient for all to discuss your child's progress, if desired.

19. Parking

Toddler families should park in the upper lot off Hurricane Road for drop-off and pick-up. Please be mindful of the handicapped spaces, and if the upper lot is full park in the lower lot. Families of primary students should park in the lower lot off Arch Street.

20. Pick-Up, Identification, & Signing Out

Please be prompt in picking up your child. We allow a 15-minute window (see Aftercare section), and if late we will charge the hourly aftercare rate, and a minimum of one hour (see current schedule of fees). If past 4:15 p.m., we will charge \$15 late pick-up fee *plus* \$1 per minute after 4:15 p.m.

Please check in directly with your child's teacher, or other designated person, when picking up. Your child's departure time will be written on his/her attendance sheet and once a week we will ask you to sign the sheet.

Be prepared to show identification. Until we become familiar with all of the new faces, we will ask to see a driver's license to verify identity and that the individual is listed as a parent/guardian or other authorized pick-up person on the child's release form.

If a person must pick up who is not listed on your child's Emergency Contact Form - We require a signed and dated permission slip indicating the person's name, date(s) authorized to pick up, their address (as appears on their ID) and their phone number. When they arrive we will ask for photo I.D. to verify identity so please remind them to have it with them. **If they are unable to produce identification, or you forgot to write a permission slip**, we will not release your child until we can reach you directly to verify. If it results in keeping your child beyond their scheduled pick-up time, you will be assessed the late pick-up fee(s).

21. 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 Lead Teacher or the parents determine that their child has special needs that our program may not meet, the Teacher and parents may explore their options together. If it is ultimately determined that the staff cannot 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. The 30 day notice under the early withdrawal policy is waived.

22. School Portraits

Each fall, in late September or October, we will have a professional school photographer (if one can be secured) come to take portraits of the children and class pictures. The school portrait date will be on our Google Calendar (located on school website) and you will receive a proof with an order form after portrait day. Siblings may be brought in to be photographed together and/or individually. If it is not your child(ren)'s regular day, an adult may accompany them to school just for the photo shoot and must remain with them. School portraits are optional.

23. Snow Days and Delayed Openings

We follow the Keene School District's (SAU 29) lead in calling storm days or delays. If SAU 29 indicates a blizzard bag day or snow day closure, we will be closed. If SAU 29 calls for a two-hour delay due to weather, we will have a two hour delay as well and open at 10:15 a.m. for drop offs with classes starting at 10:30 a.m.

Families will receive an alert through the school messaging App. Closings and delays are also posted on our school Facebook page and on WMUR's School Closings website/station.

24. Snow Make-Up Days

Five make-up days are added to the end of our school year to account for possible storm days or other reasons we may have been closed. (*see school year calendar on website*). These make-up days are not included in the total number of days that tuition fees are based on. **We are open for those five days regardless of the actual number of closures**, and your child would attend their normal schedule for that week.

If we exceed five closings over the school year, then the school directors will determine at their discretion if it is possible for impacted students to make up those additional days or hours before the school year ends. Otherwise, there are no additional make-up days or credit offered unless stated otherwise.

25. Social Media Policy

Since online postings are not private, please do not share confidential information or photos and information about students, staff or other parents. Please do not use our school logo or speak on the school's behalf without permission. In general, please be respectful and kind when posting anything about our school.

26. Student Behavior Policy

In a Montessori learning environment, children develop respect for themselves, others, and their environment. Within the open classroom setting, there is much freedom, and it is freedom with responsibility.

Respect for a child's personality and trust in his/her inner potential are cornerstones of how children are nurtured at Montessori Schoolhouse. Children are encouraged through order and self-discipline in the classroom that no one may interfere with or do anything to disrupt anyone else's work. The children learn quickly that each person has rights, which must be upheld.

Emotional and physical safety of our students is paramount to our mission of providing a safe, nurturing, and peaceful environment for children of all abilities and backgrounds. Each child at Montessori Schoolhouse is a member of a community, and we strive to teach tolerance, respect, and appreciation for one another.

In cases of disputes or misunderstandings, children are encouraged to "talk it out." Our staff will act as role models to guide students in appropriately and peacefully addressing any disagreements that may arise in the classroom or on the playground. A variety of methods are used, including positive guidance, redirection, and setting clear-cut guidelines of permissible behavior.

If a child has chronically disruptive behavior in the classroom, or exhibits physical or verbal violence toward others, the parent(s)/guardians will be immediately informed of the behavior(s). We understand approaching a child's unproductive behavior can be sensitive for both the parent(s)/guardians and the child. It is our goal to work with parent(s) to develop a positive behavior change in the child:

- 1) **Initial Consultation:** A parent/teacher conference will be scheduled. During this conference, the specifics of the behavior and methods of guidance and/or re-direction will be discussed.
- 2) **Second Consultation:** If chronic disruptive behavior continues, another parent/teacher conference will be scheduled. Additional methods of guidance and/or redirection will be discussed along with the consequence if the child's behavior continues to be detrimental to the wellbeing of the child, other children, the classroom environment, or staff members.
- 3) **Final Consultation:** If the child does not exhibit a consistent behavior change, the child will be dismissed from Montessori Schoolhouse. During the final consultation, the child's last day of school will be determined.

Please note: Montessori Schoolhouse reserves the right to immediately expel or suspend a child at any time if a child exhibits uncontrollable behavior that cannot be modified by staff; fails to improve after repeated redirection or guidance during the day and behavior is detrimental to classroom setting; or if he/she exhibits behavior that is harmful to himself/herself or others. A parent or guardian will be called to pick the child up immediately.

L. FINANCIAL

1. Payment Plans

We offer three different payment plans for the total annual tuition fees:

1. Annual- Full annual total, less a 2% pre-pay discount, due August 20th.
2. Semi-Annual- Half of annual total (50%), less a 2% discount, due August 20th and January 20th.
3. 10 Equal Monthly Installments- (10% of annual tuition), due on the 20th of each month, August through May.

You select your preferred payment plan on the Tuition and Enrollment Contract that you receive as part of your registration paperwork. If a payment plan is not selected, families are billed in 10 equal monthly installments.

Payments are due by the due date, and it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to make their payments on time, regardless of whether they received a bill. Any additional charges or fees are due when invoiced or as stated elsewhere. Please contact the office if you have any questions regarding billing and payments.

2. Vacation Camps

See the current Schedule of Fees for the cost of vacation camps. Vacation camps may be offered during the February and April school vacation breaks with a minimum number of students signed up. (*See General Information, Vacation Breaks / Vacation Camps*). **Vacation camp fees are due BEFORE attending vacation camp by the deadline stated on the sign-up form.**

There are no refunds if you sign up for a vacation camp and your child does not attend due to illness or personal reasons. If a snow day occurs on a vacation camp day, you will receive account credit for the day.

3. Discounts

We offer the following tuition discounts, which **apply only to the total annual tuition and aftercare fees:**

- **2% Pre-Pay Discount** if you choose the annual or semi-annual payment plan option.
- **15% Sibling Discount** off additional child(ren) enrolled at same time. Discount does not apply to first/oldest enrolled child.

4. Early Withdrawals

We require 30 days advance notice in writing and submitted to the school office. Tuition and fees are due through the 30 days even if your child doesn't attend through the 30 day notification period. The total cost for your child's attendance from the time they began and through the 30-day notification period will be calculated, less installment payments made to date, and a final invoice sent for any remaining balance or a refund given if applicable.

5. Financial Aid

Families who need assistance to attend our school may complete our Financial Aid Application Form which can be requested from the school office. Your last two years tax returns, recent pay stub(s), and proof/statements for all listed monthly expenses must accompany the application. Both parents/guardians' monthly income and expenses should be included, unless one individual has full custody or financial responsibility (proof may be requested).

Types of financial aid awards:

Scholarships: We set aside a portion of our fundraising revenue to award 1 to 3 small scholarships each school year to applicants demonstrating the greatest need. **The application deadline is June 1st** for awards applied the following school year. Scholarship awards typically range from \$500 to \$1,500 each, and the award is spread over the recipient's installment payments. For example, a \$1,000 award is applied as a \$100 monthly credit.

Should a recipient withdraw their child prior to year-end, all remaining scholarship monies not applied are forfeit.

Tuition Discounts: We award a *limited number* of tuition discounts to applicants demonstrating need. Tuition

discounts generally range from 5-15%, with a maximum of 30%, and apply only to the school year tuition. Financial Aid Applications may be submitted at any time for tuition discount consideration, however applications received by June 1st will be considered for both a scholarship and/or tuition discount for the following school year.

Scholarship and tuition discount awards are for one school year only. Recipients must reapply if they wish to be considered for the following school year.

The school reserves the right to reduce the amount of unapplied scholarship funds or tuition discount for a recipient if other tuition assistance is received, if recipient's employment/income situation changes, or, if the total of all assistance would exceed the cost share due for a state scholarship recipient.

Financial aid applicant information and recipients is confidential and awards are determined by the school's directors.

6. Late Payment Fee

A **late payment fee of \$15** will be assessed on any account not fully paid by the end of the grace period, or the due date if no grace period, as stated below.

The school permits a grace period of up to 10 calendar days after the due date to pay tuition fees or other fees, except for security deposits and registration fees, camp invoices, and the first tuition installment for late enrollees. **The first installment** payment must be received prior to a child attending their first day of school or camp.

After the grace period, on the next 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.

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.

7. Late Pick-Up Fee

Please be prompt in picking up your child. We allow a 15-minute window past the stated pick up time before we charge a minimum of one hour of aftercare (see current schedule of fees), for the 12:45 p.m. and 3 p.m. pick up times. If you are later than 4:15 p.m. **you will be assessed a \$15 late pick up fee PLUS \$1 per minute past 4:15 p.m.** as this puts our staff into over-time.

If you know you are going to be late, please call the school as soon as possible to notify us.

8. 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 office** to resolve any questions and to make arrangements for immediate payment.

If tuition and fees have not been fully paid by the first of the month after the due date, in addition to the \$15 late payment fee, **the school reserves the right to disallow a student from attending classes until all monies due are paid in full.**

Additionally:

- 1) Should any account have **three or more late payments** within the same school year, we reserve the right to request that all fees be **prepaid for the following school year** if that family wishes their child to return.
- 2) A child whose **school year balance is not paid in full by June 15th**, will not be allowed to attend summer camp until the overdue balance is paid in full and summer camp fees are prepaid.
- 3) A child whose **balance is not paid in full by June 30th** will not be allowed to return the following school year unless they prepay or have board approval due to extenuating circumstances.

The school's ability to operate on a sound fiscal basis depends on prompt collection of tuition and other fees. 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.

9. Registration Fee

An **annual**, non-refundable registration fee of **\$75 per student** is required to hold a spot for new and returning students. This fee is subject to change at any time prior to June 1st for the following school year and is due with the registration form.

10. Returned Checks / Insufficient Funds

A **\$25 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.

11. Security Deposit

A security deposit of \$150 is required for each new student upon acceptance to the school. The security deposit is **applied to the final installment payment, returned, or held for the following year if your child is returning**. A security deposit is non-refundable if a student is withdrawn after July 1st before the start of the school year and is **forfeited if a student is withdrawn prior to the end of school year**.

12. State Child Care Scholarships/Assistance

We accept students who are receiving state childcare scholarships or assistance, however it is important to note that **state child care scholarships do not cover the full cost of tuition and other fees**.

Parents/guardians are responsible for paying their state assigned weekly "cost share" plus the difference not covered by the state scholarship (portion state refers to as "co-payment").

We encourage families eligible for state assistance to **complete our Financial Aid Application for consideration of a tuition discount** (see Financial Aid section) to help offset the Co-Payment amount.

Parents are responsible for providing documentation of State child care scholarship assistance. If documentation cannot be provided before enrollment, then the parent must pay the full weekly fees due in advance until documentation is received. Once documentation is received, estimated weekly payments due will be adjusted accordingly, and the child's account credited for state payments received.

Please note that the state only reimburses for the actual hours a child is in attendance, and we do not adjust fees due for absences for any reason. Therefore absences may result in reduced state payments, and increase the balance due from the parent(s)/guardian(s).

Families receiving state child care assistance are provided weekly payment plans.

13. Fundraising

Montessori Schoolhouse is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Tuition alone cannot sustain the growth of the school nor does it cover all of our operating expenses. We conduct various fundraising events throughout the year to raise funds for building repairs, classroom and playground materials, staff professional development, and other special expenses. **Parental participation is key to the success of an independent non-profit school.**