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MARIA MONTESSORI: THE WOMAN, THE EDUCATOR

The Montessori experience is the result of the observations and genius of Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952). Upon graduation as the first woman medical doctor in Italy, Dr. Montessori became interested in the education and training of young children.

Dr. Montessori's observations of children convinced her that each child carries within himself or herself the person he or she will become. Each child's potential is reached through a process of striving, guided by a growing sense of order and self-discipline. Each child must be free to develop at his or her own rate. Montessori designed materials and techniques that allowed her students to work in a way previously considered beyond their capacity. Montessori quickly saw a new and valuable relationship develop within the classroom. No longer was the student dependent on the teacher. The child was now free to use the environment and other children as tools in his or her learning.

The teacher (director/directress), through the study and observation of children, prepares the environment to attract the child. As the child is drawn toward learning, the director/directress is free to provide small lessons and observe each child. In turn, each child is free to choose enticing work and repeat it continuously, if desired, until he or she is satisfied. Thus fostered at an early age, concentration and self-discipline become the cornerstones upon which the child's confidence and competence as a learner are built. Montessori children grow learning to observe, to think and to discern. Natural curiosity and tendencies toward learning become the roots from which the older child evolves and emerges as a socially confident and intellectually disciplined adolescent.

Dr. Montessori died in 1952. Today, after 100 years of international application, the Montessori method thrives in many countries. In the United States, more than 3,000 schools have been established since 1957. In addition to the national Montessori certification now available to ensure quality Montessori care and education, the National Independent Schools are preparing to include Montessori schools in their certification process.

HISTORY OF THE CORNERSTONE SCHOOL

THE CORNERSTONE SCHOOL: HANDBOOK 2007-2008

The Cornerstone School was incorporated in December 1985 as a non-profit organization with the goal of meeting the growing need for a non-traditional private preschool and elementary experience in the seacoast region in New Hampshire. Parents of Montessori students immediately joined to establish the school and continued to work in support of the school's mission.

Classes were first in session in September of 1986. The school opened with two classes: one primary and one elementary. The founding student body was comprised of forty-two students ranging in age from two and one-half to twelve years of age. We have added to the original classroom building to accommodate our growth at all levels and to provide a quality before and after school care setting for our students. In 1992, additional class space was completed to house the expansion of the elementary program. The Common Room/Gymnasium and classrooms were opened to students in the winter of 1997. Renovations during the summer of 1999 provided an opportunity to establish the 'Junior House' in the center of our facility.

Although we have enjoyed rapid growth, we are committed to a school that is small enough to maintain a feeling of community. We currently enroll approximately 160 students in the facility at High Street. This number allows diversity within both the student body and faculty. Thus we can maintain individual attention and foster the development of each child in our care.

While the faculty maintains individual memberships in several different organizations, the school is affiliated with the American Montessori Society (AMS). In order to qualify for that standing, the school must meet national standards for the faculty and the facility.

ADMISSIONS

Children eighteen months to twelve years of age may be considered for admission. Admission shall be determined after consultation between the administrator and the director/directress of the appropriate class.

The administrator arranges a tour of the facility with parents. To be considered for acceptance, each family must apply and pay a one-time registration fee. Following the initial visit, a second appointment allows directors/directresses to meet with the student candidate; the administrator chats with the parents. Admission priorities are in accord with the following school policy:

Toddler:

1. Siblings of older students at Cornerstone
2. Developmental readiness
3. Eighteen months and older

- Primary:
1. Siblings of older students at Cornerstone
 2. Montessori transfer students
 3. Children between three and five years

- Elementary:
1. Children with satisfactory Cornerstone experience
 2. Montessori transfer students
 3. Siblings of Cornerstone students

Because a complete Montessori education is built on a series of three-year cycles from Toddler's House through the Junior program, admission to the program at extended day, six to nine-year-old level and nine to twelve-year-old levels without prior Montessori experience is considered only after careful discussion with parents.

All admissions are provisional for new students. The first six-week period each year is one of observation and adjustment for the students and the faculty. If for any reason during this time it is apparent that a Montessori placement is not appropriate for a newly admitted child, the director/directress will be in direct contact with the family to consider an extended transition period with specific goals to be achieved within our classroom or to examine alternative placement possibilities. If a child is asked to leave or a new family chooses to leave during this time the tuition contract is non-binding, but the deposit and materials fee are non-refundable.

If any student leaves the school after the six-week period (with the exception of any child relocating out of the area), the tuition contract is binding and the payment is expected in a timely fashion. Materials fees and deposits are non-refundable in any case.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The Cornerstone School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, or religion.

BUSINESS OFFICE

All business transactions should be directed to the office. The office is located inside the front entrance of the school on the right. Office hours are between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday during the regular school year.

During summer vacation the administrative staff works a limited schedule, but messages may be left by calling or writing the Cornerstone office.

ENROLLMENT

The enrollment process includes submitting admission forms and a one-time application fee. Admission will be provisional until the parents submit the following fees and forms: tuition deposit, materials fee, developmental history and personal data sheet, emergency forms and physician's report (which covers the child's general health, physical and emotional status, special needs or problems and immunization).

A child may be exempted from the immunization and medical report requirement if: a) his or her physician recommends against immunization on a medical ground or b) his or her parents sign a notarized medical exemption application based on religious beliefs. Parents exempting their child in this way must be aware that no childcare institution is required to admit a child who waives immunization. Also, if an outbreak of measles or other contagious disease occurs, any child who has not been immunized must be kept home until the contagious period for all the children is over.

PARKING

Cars entering and leaving the school driveway should proceed around the drive in a counter-clockwise direction. Students enter and exit vehicles from the right lane and right side of the car only. Cars will stop at the appropriate walkway for children to enter the building. Be prepared for cars to stop, park or pull out to exit.

If it is necessary for you to park for any reason, please pull into one of the parking spots opposite to the building. Proceed to the building using the crosswalk and the sidewalk. Parking spaces close to the building will be used by the directors/directresses. In this way, we can more easily control traffic on the circle during drop-off and dismissal. It is essential that we move traffic through the parking area smoothly in order to avoid lines or parking in the street. **There is never any parking on High Street.**

Please do not leave unattended cars parked in the driveway while running, even if locked. **Do not leave children unattended in cars.**

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Cornerstone is proud to be part of a rural setting. Please respect the calm of the surroundings by approaching the school slowly and safely.

Arrivals: The school day begins at 8:15 a.m. for Toddler's House and 8:15 for Elementary and 8:30 a.m. for Primary. Children may arrive between 8:15 and 8:30. Children entering the building prior to 8:15 will be considered part of the Children's House program and will be charged accordingly. It is important to have your child arrive at school on time (see LATENESS). The morning greeting and plans for the day are a valuable part of your child's day. All Primary children will be greeted by a staff member from the child's class and escorted into the school. Elementary children will go to the appropriate classroom and check in with their director/directress.

Departures:

- **Carpools only will be dismissed at 2:50 pm.** All carpools should park in spaces opposite the school and wait for students to cross. Faculty will not park on that side in order to open parking spaces. A faculty member will walk all carpool students across the drive.
- **Students leaving in single family cars (individuals and sibs) will be dismissed at 3:05 pm.** Single family cars will pick up students from the following spots:
 - Primary and Children's House: Gym Lobby
 - Lower Elementary: Their side door, by the field drive
 - Upper Elementary: Handicapped spaces above the flag pole
 - Juniors: Their front door
- At 3:00 pm toddler parents may park and walk to the dismissal area to get toddlers.
- Families that require the loading of gear in trunks, or have other needs to stop, must park
- Cars should come in off the street if the line fills the driveway, and find a place to park. Students will be brought to the cars.
- For dismissal to work smoothly it is important to adhere to these dismissal times. Students will not be released from class earlier than 2:50 or 3:05. Arriving early only bottlenecks the driveway.

Late dismissal: A late fee and appropriate fees are charged when a child is not picked up by 3:15. Children leaving Children's House after 3:00 must be signed out at the Children's House room.

NO CHILD WILL BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE THE SCHOOL WITH SOMEONE OTHER THAN THE DRIVER AUTHORIZED BY PARENTS WITHOUT WRITTEN PERMISSION OR A CALL BY A PARENT TO THE SCHOOL OFFICE ON THE DAY OF THE AUTHORIZATION.

We appreciate your understanding of this policy. However inconvenient it may seem, it safeguards your child against an unexpected or confusing incident.

Car seat and seat belt regulations are mandated by the State. We urge parents to stay current with the regulations. We also want to encourage children to be independent on buckling and unbuckling seat belts. Teachers will greet and dismiss students at their car door. Procedures for parents to help with buckling during transition times will be given by the Primary and Elementary classes.

Early Dismissal: Parents are requested to inform the office in advance if they plan to pick up their child prior to his or her scheduled dismissal. This will help the director/directress to prepare the child in a timely way without disturbing the classroom.

Rainy Days: On rainy days, children will be kept under cover. Staff members will escort children from the normal exits.

LATENESS

Repeated unexcused lateness to school is observed and recorded by the director/directress and reported to the administrator. The parent is contacted by phone and asked to correct the problem. In the event that tardiness is disruptive, it must be stopped within twenty-four hours of the request. Otherwise, a week is allowed for adjustment.

In the event that the request for ending tardiness is ignored, a conference with the parents, administrator and director/directress will be called and a request in writing for punctual arrival submitted. If an agreement cannot be worked out, the director/directress and the administrator may elect for a child not to return.

ABSENCE

Regular attendance at school is crucial to your child's academic and social progress. We expect families to respect and adhere to our school vacation schedule. Should you choose to schedule vacations in addition to the school's planned holidays, your child will miss important activities. Teachers cannot be expected to repeat all experiences introduced during an absence. Absence that affects a student's progress may be noted in conference and in academic reports. High School application requests a statement from the faculty regarding attendance.

VISITORS: FRIENDS, ALUMNI, NON-CORNERSTONE STUDENTS

We often have requests for others to visit with our students during school hours. All visits must be approved through the office to determine if the timing for a visit is appropriate. Visits will be planned to enhance our students' experience, not for the convenience of parents.

OBSERVATION OF THE CLASSROOM

After the first six weeks of school, parents are invited to make appointments to observe. One observer is welcome to the classroom at a time, so be aware that impromptu class visits may not be possible. Please check in at the office before visiting the classroom. After signing in, an observation sheet will be given to you with guidelines for your stay. You will be escorted to the classroom. Please sign out at the office after your visit and leave the observation response there. The director/directress will call you to answer questions concerning your visit.

PARENT/DIRECTOR CONFERENCES

Parent/director conferences are required three times annually and are scheduled as part of the school calendar in the early Fall, Winter and late Spring. Junior Class conferences may be scheduled independently due to high school admission requisites. If an emergency conflict on conference day makes an appointment inconvenient, early release days have been scheduled to provide an alternative to the conference dates. A director/directress may invite a child to a conference when appropriate. Reminder! Junior and Upper Elementary attend their conferences. The school or the family may schedule special meetings at any time during the year as desired.

Please Note: These are child-centered environments. The classroom, coatroom, the playground and during class hours are not times for conferences and conversations with teachers. During school hours their attention is to be focused

on the children. Please understand the teachers will excuse themselves from conversations to rejoin classroom activities. Each class will publish office hours during which teachers will be glad to conference by phone or in person. Please call the office to set an appointment. **In case of emergency only**, teachers can be reached at home no later than 7:00 p.m.

SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Cornerstone will publish a newsletter every two weeks that will include news of the school community, individual classes and announcements of school and parent events. Each class will write a class newsletter to parents periodically to inform families of class activities, words to songs and upcoming events. Newsletters will be available and archived for your convenience on our website, www.cornerstoneschool.org.

DISCIPLINE

The Cornerstone School enrolls students from eighteen months through 14 years of age. In order to provide an environment that promotes respect and safety for each individual and the space we share, the following policy will be applied as is developmentally appropriate.

If there is a problem at school, parents will be notified. The student and the teacher will work toward a resolution. During that time we appreciate parental support. If there is a persistent problem and it is necessary to involve parents, it is done with a spirit of cooperation. Through conferences, goals will be mutually agreed upon. If the goals are not met within an allotted time, further professional help or other school placement will be discussed for the child. Parents or directors/directresses can call upon the Administrator as facilitator at any time.

When further consequences after inappropriate behavior are necessary the Administrator will determine them following consultation with the faculty. Consequences may include community service, suspension or expulsion.

Should it become apparent that a family is not able to be supportive of the school's mission or goals, the Administrator may notify them not to return for the balance of the year, or for the coming year.

The Board of Directors is notified in the event that disciplinary action is taken.

PERSONAL CONDUCT AND ACADEMIC HONESTY

A cornerstone of Montessori philosophy is respect: respect for self, respect for others and respect for the environment. Because this is an educational environment, intellectual honesty is a quality that we hold dear. As a community, trust is earned through caring and working together.

The faculty at Cornerstone takes their work with each student seriously. We work with both their academic and social needs. It is our expectation as a teaching community that through our modeling and community efforts the students understand and do not take for granted the importance of respect and integrity. Should it become apparent that a student is not clear about the importance of these qualities and how they relate to academic issues, we will take the following course of action.

1. A student must discuss the value of trust, respect and intellectual honesty with their current and past teachers. This exchange should be a meaningful discourse so both student and teachers come to understand the circumstances leading to the incident of concern. This should be a learning experience for all involved.
2. A student should have a period of time to reflect on the discussion with faculty and be prepared to make a presentation to their teachers of record concerning community responsibility and intellectual honesty. The Administrator will determine whether the student is suspended for this period.
3. Upon returning to school, the student will make their presentation at the faculty's convenience.
4. Following the presentation and subsequent discussion between faculty and the student, the student will leave school until a time agreed upon by the faculty.

SAFE SCHOOLS ACT

In 2004 the State of New Hampshire enacted the Safe Schools Act to address, specifically, bullying in schools. Bullying or harassment of any student by another student, faculty, or employee is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Parents of all children involved will be notified. Bullying and harassment

includes “insults, taunts, or challenges, whether verbal or physical in nature, which are likely to intimidate or provoke a violent or disorderly response”.

Inherent in Montessori philosophy is respect and tolerance for all individuals, their work, and their learning process. Teaching the skills and the value of grace and courtesy is an important part of our curriculum. Acquiring social skills and emotional intelligence are also incorporated into the classroom culture. Therefore, we rarely have problems that would come under the heading of “bullying”. In the unusual instance that we do, Cornerstone will comply with all state requirements for reporting to parents, and if called for, appropriate authorities.

ACADEMIC TESTING & LEARNING ASSISTANCE

Did you say a test? That's not Montessori! Well, it is. In a Montessori environment it is important for a student's director to observe and measure your child's work and growth. We generally have students demonstrate their skill for us as individuals during the third part of each lesson the child is given: Part one: Lesson Introduction, Part Two: Lesson Practice, Part Three: Demonstration of Mastery. These demonstrations come in many ways, and form a basis for a teacher's decision to review or to move a child on within a range of curriculum choices. If a teacher or teaching team feels it would be helpful to obtain specific information in order to facilitate curriculum planning for that child, a student's teachers may do individual informal assessments.

Cornerstone has a clear procedure for supporting a student's learning needs. When more complete information would be helpful in determining a child's learning style, teachers will make that known to parents. Parents and teachers will then discuss the possibilities for further testing or observation either at school or by a specialist. Sometimes faculty specialists will observe and consult with class teachers. Parents will be asked to give permission for outside testing or observations. If parents do not pursue the recommended testing, a Denial of Service form will be signed, for inclusion in the student's record.

Annual standardized testing at The Cornerstone School is supported as a Practical Life exercise. We want the students to learn to take tests and be confident of their preparedness for the process. Testing will begin at the Elementary level. Tests for all students will be scored to obtain raw scores. At the Lower Elementary level tests will be scored, but scores will not be shared unless specifically requested. In Grade Six, teachers will prepare raw scores and percentile rankings in a reporting format which can not only be discussed with parents, but which will also be included as a part of the school transcript. In

addition, the Juniors will include some preparation for taking SSAT's in their work each fall.

HOMEWORK

Homework may occasionally be assigned at each level of the school following the Primary years. Homework is designed to reinforce the concepts of carrying work to and from school, following directions, setting up work space, planning time, and observing due dates. This is a learning process for your child and for you. Research supports the notion that the goal of homework through the elementary years is to reinforce patterns for future years. So, assignments might be fun, practice, and sometimes creative and multisensorial. Homework focused on acquisition of knowledge becomes more frequent in the later Junior High and High School years.

You can best support your student by providing a means for securely carrying work, and establishing time and space in the evening to plan and accomplish assignments. Modeling behavior by turning off the television and reading or working quietly in proximity to your child will be most helpful. While asking questions and helping your child to formulate questions can help build your student's confidence doing their work for them does not. At school the children describe that as stealing their learning. The process of learning to do work at home takes time and patience for all.

EMERGENCY CARE

In case of a life-threatening situation, the school will call 911 and request assistance. An ambulance will be dispatched. The ambulance will call their station for instructions as to where to take the injured child. In the meantime, the school will contact the parents to advise them of the situation and where the child has been taken so they may proceed there. In the case of non-life-threatening injury, first aid will be given and the parents will be called immediately. The parents will tell the school what procedure they wish the school to follow. If parents are unavailable, the procedure indicated on the Emergency Health Form will be followed. Parents are advised that while paramedics will give treatment to minors in a life-threatening situation, hospitals will not give care for a non-life-threatening situation without parental consent.

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT PARENTS KEEP THE SCHOOL UP TO DATE ON PHONE NUMBERS WHERE THEY CAN BE REACHED.

ILLNESS AND MEDICATION

For the sake of others as well as the child, parents must keep any child at home who has a fever or other symptoms of illness. Should a child become ill at school, he or she will be isolated and made comfortable. Parents will be notified and will make arrangements to take the child home. In order to maintain a state of wellness in the school community, the school may exercise the option to exempt any child from attendance due to illness.

Those parents whose children are exempted from immunizations due to medical or religious belief will be notified when communicable illness is present in the school. The children must be kept home until officially notified to return. In order to maintain a state of wellness in the school community, the school may exercise the option to exempt any child from attendance due to illness.

If it is necessary for a child to take any medication, the prescription must be currently dated with a doctor's note stating that the child is not contagious and requesting (with exact instructions) that the school administer the prescriptions. A form must be filled out by a parent and attached to the doctor's note. This form is available from the office. The medication must be in the original container and be labeled with the name of the medication, dosage, name of the child and, if a prescription, the name of the physician.

Not permitted at school are: vitamins and non-prescription drugs (e.g. aspirin, cold medicine or other over the counter medication).

NUTRITION (LUNCHESES, SNACKS, BIRTHDAYS, FESTIVALS)

Children bring their own lunch to school. A soft, reasonably sized lunch box should be used so that it will fit in your child's cubby unless there is a specific need to do otherwise.

Most children enjoy helping to prepare snack daily or group lunch weekly as an extension of their cooking and nutrition lessons at school. Elementary children may pack a healthy, nutritious snack to eat at their leisure during the morning. Primary and Children's House children will be provided with snacks by the school or by the family "snack basket". Teachers will provide details at orientation.

Please send a nutritious, balanced lunch for your child each day. Teachers will call parents if they notice a pattern of eating which they feel does not support the student's learning and physical activity through the course of the day. In order

to respect individual family food choices, children are asked not to share or trade food.

Most children prefer small quantities of a variety of foods rather than a large quantity of only one or two items. If your child cannot finish his or her lunch, the remaining food will be sent home in the lunch box. This will help you to better gauge the amount needed for your child's lunch.

Candy and gum are not allowed at school. These snacks will be sent home for your child to enjoy once school is over. No gum is allowed at school at any time. Please send your child's liquid refreshment in a thermos. We find juice boxes difficult for children of all ages to manage and they pose a trash disposal problem to us and to the environment.

No special snacks should be sent to school for children's birthdays. We also request that no balloons or party favors be sent. Instead, if you would like to send something special on your child's birthday to share with the school or class, please use this opportunity to be thoughtful and creative with an emphasis on lasting memories. We encourage families to make a donation of a book, flowers, magazine subscriptions, a shrub or a lasting memory for the children.

TOYS & EQUIPMENT

Please check with your child's teacher before sending in sporting equipment. All equipment brought to school will be available for community use. Children should not bring toys or valuables to school. Such items can easily be lost or broken. Items with educational merit can be brought in to share with prior consent of the director/directress. **Parents are asked to carefully monitor what their children bring to school. No weapons should be brought. Pocketknives and laser pointers are not allowed. Do not bring CD's, tapes or music paraphernalia to school for use or trading purposes unless specific notice is given by the faculty. There will be no skateboards at school.**

SOCIAL ARRANGEMENTS AND PARTY PROTOCOL

As a community we must be sensitive to each of the children's feelings, putting our own convenience aside. No party invitations or gifts may be sent to school for distribution. We do not have the facilities to hold and transfer sleepover party gear and paraphernalia. These items must not come into school with the students.

Party pick-ups may not take place at school. Arrangements for the rendezvous must be made so that pick-ups do not happen at school or during dismissal time. The driveway traffic and the faculty cannot absorb the additional confusion and still feel the physical and emotional safety of all students is respected.

TRANSFER OF BELONGINGS

Please be sensitive to your child and to the faculty. If your child is making a special visit away from home or is involved in a regular transitional schedule between homes please remember that how and when items are conveyed can make a big difference in a child's day. Items should be carefully packed and contained to minimize bulk and confusion. If at all possible, changes of clothing and toys should take place outside of school and the classrooms. This avoids loss and confusion of precious items. When absolutely necessary and on request, packs, sleeping bags and toys can be left in the office during the day. Children can retrieve them prior to dismissal. Parents should not expect teachers to handle the exchanges of toys and clothing that have been misplaced during social engagements.

BRINGING ANIMALS TO SCHOOL

Different types of animals are very interesting and often provide an extension to lessons taught in the classroom. Parents are welcome to bring in animals to share, provided they follow a few guidelines. Always check with the director/directress of the class. Do not bring animals to school without making prior arrangements. Only small animals in cages can be left at school for the day.

MARKING OF ALL BELONGINGS

Parents are advised to mark clearly all of their child's belongings including sweaters, jackets, extra clothing, educational items brought to share, books and personal supplies. Each child must keep track of his or her own possessions, as the school is not responsible for lost items. A Lost and Found is located in the office. An effort is made to empty the Lost and Found prior to major school holidays. At the end of the year, remaining items are donated to charity.

CHANGE OF CLOTHING

Each child five years and younger must bring a complete change of clothing in a clearly marked plastic bag. If the child uses the clothing, it will be sent home

and the change of clothing must be replaced the following school day. It is the parent's responsibility to replace the change of clothing as a child grows into a new size. Parents of children in diapers must maintain an ample supply of paper diapers in the classroom. Elementary children should have a change of socks and pants in the wintertime.

All children are required to bring a pair of sneakers (white soled), which will be left at the school and will be worn only inside the school building. "Inside shoes" helps us to cut down on the amount of dirt tracked through the building on a daily basis and maintains a clean and comfortable environment for the children. These sneakers are required for gym use. This applies to students at all levels.

DRESS CODE

Parents and students at Cornerstone are expected to demonstrate the willingness to belong to the community in many ways. One way is to acknowledge the dress code, as well as the spirit and intention that underlie it. All students are expected to maintain a 'clean and neat' standard and avoid putting others in the position of having to remind them of the school's expectations.

Clothing worn should allow for independence (i.e., overalls with easy fasteners, elastic waist bands for younger children and child-user-friendly shoes and boots), art projects and outdoor play. Stains cannot be avoided without limiting your child's participation.

Sneakers are required for indoor shoes. All students at all levels will wear indoor shoes in the building. The sneakers will double as gym shoes. Due to the nature of the gym floor, sneakers should have non-marking soles. Shoes in question can be tested in the office. Velcro closures on sneakers are a help to students of all ages. Preschoolers find them easy to manage. They also avoid lengths of untied shoelaces, which pose a safety hazard for all students. If sneakers do not have Velcro closures, please supply curly laces or trim laces to tie without dragging ends. Ends will be trimmed for safety reasons.

No clogs, crocs, thongs, jellies, or elevated heels are allowed for students at any level. Appropriate outdoor shoes for running, climbing and play must be worn. Shoes must include a heel strap for safety purposes.

Neither messiness nor provocativeness is an appropriate fashion statement for our learning environment. Students of all ages should dress comfortably and

practically. Faculty members will notify students and parents if clothing choices do not lend themselves to use in our school setting.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

The school will provide all supplies for the children. Each director/directress is aware of the needs of the students in his or her class and can provide for the necessary supplies to be available in a timely manner. Please do not send in special notebooks, pencils and pens. For some children, extra supplies create difficult organizational issues.

FIELD TRIPS

The educational program at Cornerstone may be expanded by participation in purposeful, informative field trips. Parents are often requested to accompany the class to provide additional supervision, depending on the type of field trip. If a parent volunteers to help, that parent must be prepared to assume the responsibility of supervising a number of children just as if he or she were another director/directress. Field trips will be scheduled as far in advance as possible and notices will be sent home.

PLAYGROUND SAFETY

These playground policies are written from the whole-school perspective. Each class also formulates their own rules. All rules are reviewed with the children annually. The supervising teachers enforce all rules rigorously. This is for safety and out of consideration for students and faculty. Teachers maintain awareness of all the children and activity by walking about and watching all areas of the playground. Teachers arrange cooperative stations for supervising student play. All teachers feel comfortable approaching children of any class about their behavior on the playground. In an emergency, one adult stays with the group while another teacher handles the situation. Older children are expected to use extra care due to their size, speed, and competitiveness. Each class teaches grace and courtesy before using the play area. When incidents happen teachers use this as an opportunity for peer problem-solving. Parents will be notified when the instance warrant.

Children should be dressed appropriately for play. Special notice should be made of long, dangling strings, shoelaces and shoes appropriate for play. See DRESS CODE in this Handbook.

Respect for Others

Play safe: Avoid pushing, tackling, wrestling, kicking, fighting, and throwing snow, ice, sand, wood chips, stones, equipment, etc. No sticks. No piggyback rides.

Be aware: Don't interrupt others' games; look before you leap, watch out for children who are smaller and younger than you are, watch where you are going, wait for others to finish their turn before you take yours.

Include other people and their ideas during a game.

Follow the rules: If you have a problem or a complaint that you cannot resolve for yourself or with the help of a friend, seek out an adult on duty for guidance. Listen to and follow the adult's recommendations.

OTHER EXPENSES

Several trips may be taken each year, a few of which may require special fees. These fees, if additional, will be clearly outlined in the related field trip notices. Payment is necessary prior to leaving for the trip.

ELECTIVE SUBJECTS

Elective classes taught by professionals from outside the school may be offered from time to time. Parents will be notified of the activity and the schedule. If you choose to participate in the special classes, applications and fees are submitted to the director/directress in charge of the class.

FIRE DRILLS

All schools are required to have regular fire drill practice and the Fire Chief may come to the school to monitor an unscheduled drill. In order to train the children in the fire drill procedure, it is necessary to sound a very loud fire alarm. Efforts are made to prepare the younger children for the sound of the alarm prior to using it in a drill; sometimes they still become frightened when the alarm is sounded. Please help us to be aware if your child is particularly sensitive to loud noises. An effort is made to arrange drills when weather is not inclement.

HOLIDAYS

While Cornerstone takes a non-sectarian, non-religious approach to holiday celebrations held at school, we do present the cultural aspect of holidays such as

Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, Solstices, etc. As we emphasize a whole world cultural approach, songs, games, dances and traditions from all over the earth are shared with the children.

SNOW DAYS

Cornerstone's policy concerning snow days considers the safety of families who must travel a distance through many snow zones to reach us. Do not make assumptions about the weather!

Check each morning for a Cornerstone announcement to avoid surprises. School will be cancelled when SAU #16 (Exeter/Stratham) announces a cancellation. In all cases, you should hear Cornerstone's name announced as a separate school listing on the radio or TV. Turn to WERZ (107 FM), WOKQ (97.5 FM), or WMUR-TV for these announcements after 6:00 a.m., or click on our website, cornerstoneschool.org.

In most cases, in the event of a delayed opening we will delay our start until 10:30. There will be no school for Primary children who attend 8:30-11:30. Primary students of all ages who attend Children's House should come to school at 10:30. Other students will come at 10:30.

It may be necessary to close school early. In this circumstance the school will notify you or the person designated by you on the early dismissal permission. Please call the school only if your regular plans are changed. The school will gather information from parents concerning arrangements for their child in the event an early closing is necessary.

Travel to school in any bad weather with poor road conditions is always up to parental discretion. Should you choose to stay at home due to bad conditions, please notify the office.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Cornerstone is a community established to promote the education and development of the children. We both expect and require that parents take part in the life of the school on several distinctly different levels.

Parents are expected to be available to communicate with the classroom director/directress to share in their child's progress and needs. Parents are welcome to observe class (see OBSERVATION OF CLASSROOMS) and at times are invited to give presentations and to participate in class activities. On

occasion supervision and transportation are needed for field trips. Please let your child's director/directress know if you can help in any of these ways. Parents are invited to train as class substitutes in a program given in the Fall. This assures continuity of care in case it is necessary for a director/directress to miss a day of school.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Support of Cornerstone's mission and long-range goals is essential to the life of the school. Although the school is a corporation and the administrator directs its daily operation and director-student relations, parents are our mission's advocates within our school community and the community at large. Each family is a member of the school community and has a vote at our Annual Meeting, held in the Fall of the year, to elect the Board of Directors. The Board, comprised of parents and community representatives, works to ensure the fiscal well-being of the school and to support its growth in concert with the mission statement. This is a volunteer position. There are several standing committees of the Board, all of which encourage parent participation (see **STANDING COMMITTEES** below). The by-laws of the school are available at the school office. A list of serving Board of Directors is included at the back of this handbook.

The Parent Committee is a dynamic group that is structured to provide parent and family community as well as to support the educational aspect of Cornerstone. Watch for parent and family events in which you can take part!

Parent education and study groups are an ongoing aspect of the school's life. The faculty plans parent evenings throughout the year to help parents understand more about Montessori education, approaches to parenting which support this educational philosophy, and inform on critical issues for families in these times. A calendar will be provided for parents in the Fall and updates will be included in the school newsletter. The opportunity to sign-up for each evening or seminar will determine whether there is requisite interest in the proposed activity.

STANDING COMMITTEES

The organization of standing committees is subject to the priorities of the Cornerstone School. The president of the Board of Directors will appoint a member of the Board to be chairperson of each standing committee (unless otherwise provided for in the school by-laws). Similarly, the President of the Board of Directors appoints members of the standing committees (except where

provided for in the school by-laws). Following is an explanation of all the standing committees.

PARENT COMMITTEE

The Parent Committee of the Cornerstone School is organized by the Board of Directors to carry out work that is supportive to the school and promotes the growth of the school community. A Board member will chair the Parent Committee and will report on the activities of the group at Board meetings. The administrator is a member of the Parent Committee and will work closely with the chairperson of the Parent Association. Prior to publication the Administrator approves all out going communications.

The Board charges the Parent Committee with its priorities. In order of significance, the Board defines those priorities as:

- a) Development of the parent social community at the school,
- b) Recruitment of new students,
- c) Public relations within the community at large and
- d) Suggestion of potential candidates to serve on the Board.

Additional tasks may be presented to the Committee, which is challenged to translate its goals into tasks that adhere to the school's mission and aim at solutions within planned time periods.

The organization of the Parent Committee is left to the discretion of the committee chairperson so that each item delegated to the committee by the Board is achieved.

TUITION ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE

The purpose of the Tuition Assistance Committee is to aid the Board of Directors in dispensing tuition assistance money, funded through our budget, to those in the Cornerstone community who request assistance and meet the criteria established by this Committee in order to maintain diversity in the student population.

The chairperson will be a member of the Board of Directors and shall report all Committee activities to the Board on a regular basis; the school's financial administrator will be a non-voting member. The Board may appoint up to three additional members to this Committee. All members of the Committee serve at the pleasure of the Board. The Committee shall strive to: a) develop fair and reasonable selection criteria for tuition assistance awards, b) respect the

confidentiality of applicants and the privacy of financial aid, c) work in conjunction with the Board and administration in awarding funds on a timetable agreeable to the Board, and d) continue the exclusion of race, creed, color and national or ethnic origin from the selection process.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Vice President shall be a permanent member and chairperson of the Nominating Committee. This Committee shall nominate members of the Corporation to stand for election to the Board of Directors at the annual meeting of the membership and shall nominate members to fill vacancies occurring on the Board if the Board so directs. In carrying out this duty, the Nominating Committee shall make every effort to determine which members of the corporation desire to stand for election. The list of candidates will be included in the notice of the annual meeting along with such personal information that the Committee deems relevant. Such information might include, but is not limited to:

- Familiarity with principles of Montessori,
- Familiarity with business and accounting practices,
- Prior service within the Cornerstone community.

Nothing herein shall be construed to prevent nominations from the floor at the annual meeting.

The Board of Directors extends an invitation to prospective members to attend Board meetings prior to nominations being put forward.

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Development committee shall be responsible for activities pursuing and organizing fund raising, publicity events, and coordination of workers for each fund raising event. The administrator shall serve on this committee.

LONG-RANGE PLANNING

As our school grows we continue to secure our current position educationally, physically and fiscally. Looking to the future, a five-year development plan helps us focus our efforts to augment our current services to the children and the community. The Board of Directors and the Development Committee strive to fulfill these needs through annual giving as well as periodic efforts supported by individual pledges, foundations, corporations, and guardian angels. Because we

are a diverse community, it must continually emphasized that everyone's participation is required, whether financial or by a contribution of time or expertise.

Everyone's financial contribution, no matter the size, is important to the annual campaign. The percentage of giving within our own community is persuasive data to provide when approaching independent donors, larger foundations and corporations. However, as we look to greater capital goals to complete the school, be assured that we rely on everyone's contribution of effort, whether in service, goods or financial backing, to make our campaign a community of success.

Details of the current five-year commitment are available through the office if you feel you can identify a source. Remember, Cornerstone is a non-profit entity and donations are tax deductible.

OUR DEVELOPMENT GOAL

Founded in 1986, The Cornerstone School, for children ages 18 months through 14, is located on an eleven-acre country setting. Our school has developed and grown to create an environment of intellectual challenge and close supportive relationships. Cornerstone is committed to providing a foundation on which each child can build his or her own future. Sound classrooms, relationships, and outdoor recreational space have been our focus.

To date, the hard work of parents, faculty, volunteers and donors has helped many of our development goals become a reality. We have added 22,000 square feet of learning and recreational space to our facility since its inception. Our design has united older buildings with new space revitalizing both classrooms and learning opportunities. In the future funding will provide improved handicapped access, administrative space, vital storage, a wood shop and photography studio. Current goals for our Annual Appeal propose further material enhancements for the arts, media, computer technology and playground.

We continue to evaluate our five-year plan, extending our vision beyond the dreams we have already attained. Presently we are approaching foundations, corporations and school friends in order to accelerate the payment of the school's indebtedness, to construct access throughout the building for the handicapped, to encourage endowment for financial assistance, fund window repair, sprinkler improvements, and complete our outdoor environment. Our challenge is to

continually anticipate and provide for students' educational needs. If you can help to identify funding sources, please contact the office.

TUITION AND COLLECTION POLICY

The school year is considered to be continuous from September through June. Parents enroll their children for that period of time. The September to June tuition is divided into equal payments according to a plan (annual, semi-annual, monthly) agreed upon and committed to through the tuition contract. Payments are due by the fifteenth of each month from July until April. Allowances will not be made for phasing-in, illness or vacations.

In the event that a newly admitted child is withdrawn from the program for any reason within the first six weeks of the academic year notice must be given in writing and tuition will be prorated for the number of weeks the child was enrolled prior to withdrawal. In the event the faculty or the administrator suggests or requires withdrawal of a child at any time during the school year, tuition will be prorated for the number of weeks the child was enrolled in the program. In all other instances, tuition will be payable in full as per the terms of the tuition payment elected and shall be non-refundable for any reason.

Obligation for the full annual tuition will not be reduced by the student's withdrawal or absence for any other cause. The school's budget and operations depend on fulfillment by all parents and guardians of their agreement to pay the tuition, and that if you have elected to pay monthly or semi-annually, this is for your convenience and does not limit the obligation to pay all installments timely. If the school is required to initiate legal proceedings to enforce this agreement, the parents or guardians will be held liable for the school's legal cost, including reasonable attorney fees as stated in the enrollment agreement.

In order for us to meet our financial obligations, tuition must be paid promptly. Collections will be handled by in the following way:

1. There will be a \$25 fee for handling returned checks and non-sufficient automatic debit withdrawals.
2. Payment by billing date requires no action.
3. At 15 days past due a 1.5 % per month late fee will be assessed by our automated billing system on any unpaid balance after the due date and the Financial Coordinator will call the account holder. Steps for collection will be reviewed. At this time accounts must be paid, or a written, signed payment plan that is acceptable to the Financial Coordinator must be executed. If the payment plan is not adhered to the

Financial Coordinator will move automatically to Step 4. If the Financial Coordinator can not contact the responsible party a letter will be sent. No response at that time requires the Financial Coordinator to move to Step 4.

4. At 30 days past due a Board of Directors representative becomes involved in the collection process. The Financial Coordinator will contact the party responsible for payment of the account to arrange payment plans. At that time the party will arrange for automatic withdrawal method of collection; the amount to include pro-rated past due charges over the balance of the payment schedule. Non compliance will prompt dismissal of the student from school. If a responsible party fails to respond to notice, a registered letter will be posted to inform of the student's last attendance date due to non-payment of the account. The final date of attendance will be seven days from the posting of the registered letter. This allows an opportunity for payment arrangements to be made.
5. No contracts can be vacated without permission of the Board of Directors.
6. Collection accounts will not be adjusted until payment is made.
7. Unpaid balances will be pursued with legal action for collection.

Financial Assistance is offered by the school. Inquire at the office for particulars. Extenuating circumstances will be considered and should be submitted in writing to the Board of Directors. The Credit Bureau will be advised of unresponsive, delinquent accounts

Cash or check may pay bills. Any families may arrange automatic payroll deductions to facilitate timely payments.

RELEASE AUTHORIZATION

A release will be requested from parents if photos of their child may be used in the newspaper or on video. Parent release is no longer required for the transmission of records from school to school. Cornerstone will inform parents of these requests and may ask for confirming parent permission.

You will be requested to sign a release for the State of New Hampshire that allows the licensing officer to interview your child at the time of our relicensing. These interviews are brief, casual and at random. However, you should be aware that the release also allows any interview by a state worker without further notification to the parents.

PROCEDURE FOR EMERGENCY EVACUATION

Parents must take note of a special release form provided by the school that deals with the procedure in case an emergency evacuation is required. Please understand in signing the release that no child will be left at the school once evacuation from the site has been deemed necessary and has begun. Also, please note that it is our intention that someone from the Cornerstone staff will be with your child until he or she is released to the assigned individual.

In the event that no authorization has been returned to school, a child will accompany the staff and students under our general permission notice.

The evacuation plan has been designed to accommodate many emergencies. Please be aware of the following guidelines:

Parents are urged not to telephone schools or change plans at the last minute.

Following an announcement that the children should be sheltered, parents are requested not to pick up children at any affected areas but to follow the instructions broadcast by the Emergency Broadcast System.

Following an announcement that evacuation has been recommended, parents are requested not to pick up children at any of the affected schools, but to meet their children at Memorial High School, Manchester (designated evacuation center at SAU #16 schools). From there, you will go to a mass care center or proceed to a personal destination.

Parents or other persons authorized to pick up students will be required to provide identification at the pick up point and sign a roster prior to release of a student to their custody. Further information is available on request.

TRAINING COURSES

Cornerstone is proud to provide the opportunity for directors/directresses to intern at our school. We supervise and support these directors/directresses completing their Montessori certification. Often parents become interested in knowing more about Montessori certification and are interested in participating in local training courses. Should you or someone you know be interested, please inquire at the school office.

TAX EXEMPT DONATIONS

Cornerstone is a non-profit corporation and any donations to the school are tax-deductible. Any financial support parents are able to give the school is very much appreciated. Your participation in the activities of the Development Committee and the Annual or Capital Campaigns are important commitments to your child's years at Cornerstone.

ADDRESSES

An address list for each class is included in this handbook for your convenience. Additions or changes will be circulated in the newsletter. Please make note of those changes in your handbook. Please respect our community by refraining from using the handbook information for solicitations of any kind, including political, advertising or notices.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The following resources may be helpful to you or your extended family as you learn more about Maria Montessori's work with children. Many of these books are available at the school or through individual staff members. Others can be ordered at local bookstores or from Nienhuis, a Montessori supplier (140 E. Dana Street, Mountain View, CA 94041, telephone: 1-800-942-8697).

MONTESSORI BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Montessori, A Modern Approach*, Paula Polk Lillard
- From Childhood to Adolescence*, Maria Montessori
- Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook*, Maria Montessori
- Parent's Guide to the Montessori Classroom*, AMS Publication
- Maria Montessori, Her Life and Work*, E.M. Standing
- The Secret of Childhood*, Maria Montessori
- Discovery of the Child*, Maria Montessori
- The Hidden Hinge*, Rosa Packard
- The Absorbent Mind*, Maria Montessori
- The Montessori Controversy*, John Chattin McNichols
- Children the Challenge*, Rudolf Dreikers
- To Educate the Human Potential*, Maria Montessori
- The Hurried Child*, David Elkind
- Education for Human Development*, Mario Montessori, Jr.
- Maria Montessori, a Biography*, Rita Kramer
- The Out of Synch Child*, Carol Karanowitz
- Learned Optimism*, Martin Seligman
- Raise Your Child's Social IQ*, Cathi Cohen
- Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv