



**NAMASTE MONTESSORI SCHOOL
SCHOOL POLICY AND PARENT HANDBOOK**

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2009-2010 Policy Manual and Parent Handbook

Introduction

This policy manual and handbook has been developed as a resource for families, staff, and community members. Please read and familiarize yourselves with the policies and procedures enclosed. Further questions should be directed to the Head of School.

“Let us give the child a vision of the whole universe...for all things are part of the universe, and are connected with each other to form one whole unity”

-Maria Montessori



Namaste Montessori School

...nurturing the mind, body, and spirit of each child

Our Mission

To guide each student on their path of development by providing a carefully prepared environment which nurtures the mind, body, and spirit of each individual.

Goals

- ☉ To awaken a love a learning, passion for knowledge, and joy of creativity in each student
- ☉ To support the development of independent, self confident learners
- ☉ To foster a strong sense of self, respect for others and an ability to work as part of a group
- ☉ To develop a repertoire of life skills and a strong academic foundation
- ☉ To provide developmentally appropriate physical activity and healthy nutritional snacks
- ☉ To encourage regular practice of self-reflection and nurturing the peace within
- ☉ To provide a reliable source of care and information for families

Core Values

Respect	Responsibility
Compassion	Honesty
Kindness	Awareness

A Brief School History

Bridgid Beames, an early childhood educator and day care center director with over twenty years of experience in the field, and her husband Stanley Beames identified a critical need for a quality preschool program and affordable full time childcare in their hometown of Trumansburg, New York and the surrounding areas when searching for child care for their two children. It has been Bridgid's lifelong dream to open a Montessori school and day care center, this dream combined with the need for day care in the area and overwhelming community support inspired Bridgid and Stan open Namaste Montessori School.

Namaste Montessori School was founded in August of 2004 by Bridgid and Stanley Beames. It was initially licensed as a NYS Family Daycare and located in the Beames' family home, 3011 Halseyville Road, Trumansburg, NY. Due to an overwhelming response to the program and an extensive waiting list, Bridgid and Stan expanded the program to become a NYS Licensed Group Family Daycare in the spring of 2005.

Soon after the expansion Bridgid and Stan created a long-range plan and blue print for the growth of school. The organization of the school was restructured and legal papers were filed to create an educational corporation and to be chartered by the New York State Department of Education. The next phase in the growth of the school required moving the program out of their home into to a larger site. In December of 2006 the building and property at 1608 Trumansburg Road was purchased. Renovations were completed in the spring of 2007.

In the June of 2007, Namaste Montessori School became a NYS licensed day care center and moved into their new facility. The program expanded from one classroom with a capacity of twelve students on any given day to two classrooms (a preschool program and a toddler program) with a total capacity of thirty-one students on any given day.

Namaste Montessori School is licensed by the New York State Department of Family and Children Services and affiliated with the International Montessori Council, a member of the American Montessori Society, and a member of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Namaste Montessori School is in the process of becoming chartered by the New York State Board of Regents, and dually accredited by the American Montessori Society and the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

The school is operated on a daily basis by an administrative and teaching staff overseen by the Head of School and Executive Director. The Head of School and Executive Director are hired, guided and evaluated by a Board of Directors.

Elements of the Montessori Approach to Teaching

Montessori is both a philosophy of child development and a method of applying the philosophy in an educational setting to guide a child's growth. The Montessori classroom is a dynamic community of learners and guides. Some basic premises of Montessori include:

A Responsive, Prepared, Child-Centered Environment

Children are to be respected as unique individuals, different from adults, but not less important or valued as members of the community. The child possesses an unusual sensitivity and intellectual ability to learn from her environment. The focus of activity in our Montessori classroom setting is on the child's experience within the environment, and not on the teacher's teaching. Our environment is designed to meet the needs, interests, and abilities of the children within the class. Teachers adapt the environment through modifying the selection of educational materials available, the physical layout and equipment in the classroom, and shifting the tone of the class to fit the ever-changing needs of the children. Generally students work individually or in small self-selected groups. Community meetings or "circle times" are scheduled so as not to interrupt the child's work and are usual held at transitional points during the day. There is a conscious effort to design our classroom as a "children's house", making it as comfortable and inviting as a home.

A Focus On The Human Tendencies

Maria Montessori based her philosophy of education on the human tendency within the child to explore, to move, to share with a group, to be independent and make decisions, to create order, to develop self control, to abstract ideas from experience, to use creative imagination, to work hard, to repeat, concentrate, and perfect one's efforts and creations. Each of these tendencies is considered carefully when designing our environments, preparing materials, and planning activities for the students.

A Multiage Community of Learners

Our Montessori classroom is a community of children and adults. The classroom consists of children from a multiage span of three to four years. This creates a "family" like group where older children model and help care for younger children, and younger children look up to and learn from the older children. Varying levels of ability blend easily in a multiage setting, no child feels left behind and everyone learns at their own pace.

Cooperation and Collaboration

Montessori children learn "at their own pace". When the child demonstrates readiness, she is guided gently by the teachers in the classroom to explore increasingly challenging activities. In a Montessori setting, teacher's refrain from comparing students to one another and base evaluations on the progress of the individual. Children are encouraged to work together as well as independently. Often a more experienced child will be asked to assist a less experienced child with an activity or lesson. Group discussion and problem solving are strongly encouraged. Teachers work to create a sense of community within the classroom. Children feel a sense of belonging and responsibility toward their classroom and toward each other.

The Process of Learning

Montessori materials teach through hands on learning, spontaneous engagement, active involvement, and self-directed activity. Montessori materials have a control of error inherent in their design. This allows children to work independently, unafraid to make mistakes and to become comfortable with the fact errors are essential to the process of learning. While making independent choices and exploring concepts largely on their own, Montessori students construct their own sense of individual identity. They become independent and confident individuals.

The child is intrinsically motivated to learn. In a Montessori classroom children don't work for grades or external rewards, nor do they complete assignments given to them by their teachers. Children learn because they are interested in things and in gaining an understanding of the world around them.

In the classroom there are three stages of learning a new concept or lesson:

1. **Introduction to a concept.** This usually occurs by means of exploration within the classroom, observing another child at work, a conversation, reading something in a book, etc.
2. **Processing the concept.** The child develops an understanding of the concept through working with materials that illustrate the ideas, provide opportunity for exploration and experimentation, and provide opportunity for repetition of an activity.
3. **Mastering the concept.** The child is confidently able to explain the concept and teach the concept to another person.

Evaluation of Student Progress

The Montessori curriculum is carefully structured and sequenced based on the developmental needs of each individual child. Teachers maintain careful records of each student's individual progress. Portfolios of work are kept for older children. Children are not compared against arbitrary standards or the performance of their classmates. Parent teacher conferences are held twice a year to discuss student progress. Additional conferences can be held at a parent or teacher's request. If requested, written summaries of conferences can be provided.

Overview of Curriculum

The child has a deep love and need for purposeful work. He works, however, not as an adult, for completion of a job, but for the sake of an activity itself. It is this activity, which enables him to accomplish his most important goal: the development of himself –mental, physical, and psychological powers.

In addition to the goals of our program listed at the beginning of this handbook our curriculum includes the following areas:

Practical Life: Young children have a natural urge to partake in the activities of daily living and be a participating member of family life. Simple chores adults may take for granted fascinate the child, engaging them in the meaningful learning of life skills. Practical life activities help children develop and coordinate movement, awareness of the environment, orderly thought patterns, independent work habits, and responsibility. The lessons in Practical Life include:

Preliminary Exercises- preparing the fine motor skills for more challenging activities (spooning, pouring, stringing, etc.)

Care of the Environment- learning to respect and care for the tools in the space where the child lives and learns (food preparation, sweeping, dusting, washing, polishing, etc)

Care of the Person- learning the basics of self care skills (hand washing, nose blowing, dressing, nutrition, etc.)

Grace and Courtesy- learning social skills (walking carefully, communication, manners, table setting, hosting a guest, etc.)

Sensorial: The materials and activities in this area allow children to pursue their natural tendency to classify sensorial impressions and sort by size, shape, color, touch, sound, and weight. The sensorial materials isolate specific qualities, have a built in control of error, allow for repetition, and make abstract qualities concrete. Sensorial activities lay a foundation for math, geometry, geography, botany, art, and music.

Math: These activities make the abstract concepts of mathematics concrete for hands on learning. Each activity isolates a particular concept and integrates with other activities to form a strong foundation for further exploration. Beginning preschool math activities include 1 to 10 (sequences, quantity, numeral names, combinations of ten, basic arithmetic), teens, tens, introduction to the decimal system, and the operations of addition, multiplication, subtraction, and division.

Language: Children are immersed in language the moment they enter the classroom. Spoken language is encouraged as children communicate with each other individually, in small groups, and in large groups. A library of books is available for enjoyment and information. Stories are read and told individually, in small and large groups. Phonemic awareness is taught through hands on activities and games, the alphabet is learned with fun and interesting sorting and matching works, handwriting is practiced through tracing shapes, sandpaper letters, and using chalkboards, moveable alphabet letters are used for writing words, and labels are used all over for word recognition.

Science: Sensorial exploration and experimentation is key as children learn about the natural world. For example, sand and water tables allow for open-ended work while other activities isolate individual concepts such as sink and float, magnets, botany, etc. Care for plants and animals overlap with practical life activities and teach science as well as responsibility.

Geography: These materials help the child learn about the facts of the material world. Hands on activities introduce children to the names and types of landmasses, bodies of water, continents, countries, etc.

Cultural Studies: The diversity of our world is celebrated through language, music, art, traditions, food, stories, and history. A variety of cultural themes are integrated into all curriculum areas. Peace education is an integral part of the Montessori classroom and begins with respect for, understanding, and acceptance of differences as well as the celebration of the unifying aspects that connect us all.

Music and Art: Informal and formal music education occurs through singing, listening to music, introduction of instruments, introduction of musical notation, and exploration of sound.

Physical Development: Care of the body is equally as important as challenging the mind. Movement is built into all Montessori activities allowing the child to develop gross motor as well as fine motor skills. Yoga and other types of more formal exercise are built into daily group times. There are at least two periods of gross motor activity time each day with activities that include running, skipping, swinging, navigating an obstacle course, ball play, group games, sledding in the winter, and activities using other props such as parachutes and ribbons.

Universal Values and Global Perspective: Montessori deliberately teaches children not only appropriate patterns of polite behavior, but seeks to instill basic universal values within the core of the child's personality. These values include self respect, acceptance of the uniqueness and dignity of each person we meet, kindness, peacefulness, compassion, empathy, honor, individual responsibility, and the courage to speak from our hearts. The Montessori philosophy is international in its heritage and consciously seeks to promote a global perspective.

Daily Routine

This routine is a general guideline followed by each of our classrooms. The daily routine is always based on the needs of the children and is adjusted accordingly.

7:30am – 8:30am	Early Morning Care	Breakfast, stories, all curriculum area activities
8:30am – 10:30am	Regular Arrival Independent Work Small Group Work	All curriculum area activities Snack
10:00am-11:00am	<i>Toddler AM Nap</i>	<i>If needed</i>
10:30am – 11:00am	Circle Time	Group lessons, music, stories, celebrations
11:00am – 12:00pm	Outside Play Indoor Gross Motor Play	
12:00pm-12:30 pm	Lunch	Lunch, story time
12:30pm-12:45pm	Half Day Dismissal	
1:00pm – 2:00pm	Rest Time/Nap Time	A one hour quiet time is suggested for children who do not sleep, or sleep briefly; Children who sleep longer are allowed to rest as long as they need to and are not woken up
2:00pm-3:00pm	Independent Work Time	All curriculum area activities Snack
3:00pm-3:30pm	Outside Play Indoor Gross Motor Play	
3:15pm-3:45pm	Full Day Dismissal	
3:30pm-5:30 pm	After School Care	Indoor and outdoor activities
5:15pm-5:30pm	Dismissal	All children must be picked up no later than 5:30

Discipline Policies

“Freedom within limits” is the core of the philosophy regarding discipline in a Montessori environment. Montessori children enjoy considerable freedom of movement and choice; however, their freedom always exists within carefully defined limits on the range of their behavior. They are free to do anything appropriate within the ground rules of the school community, but they are redirected promptly and firmly if they cross over the line.

Preparation of the environment and carefully defined ground rules are key to successful discipline. When a child oversteps these boundaries and redirection does not work, a serious discussion of the situation occurs between the teacher and the student. At this time age appropriate consequences directly relating to the situation are laid out. Should the child continue to disobey the consequences will be enforced. For example if a four year old is painting on the wall instead of the easel and refuses to stop when asked, she would use the privilege of using paints for the remainder of the day.

If a child is endangering his or her safety or the safety of another person, an adult will intervene immediately and remove the child from the situation. Once the child/children are safe, the teacher can assess the situation and choose appropriate discipline measures.

If the child’s body is out of control and he or she is unable to respond to redirection, discussion, or consequences the teacher may choose to have the child sit quietly in a calm part of the classroom to regain self-control. When the child is able to return to work calmly he or she may do so, with permission from the teacher. This “time out” should never last more than a few minutes for a preschool child.

Our approach to discipline is based on empowerment, mutual respect, and trust. Corporal punishment is prohibited. Withholding or using food, rest, or sleep as a punishment is prohibited. Methods of discipline or interactions that frighten, demean, or humiliate a child are prohibited. A teacher or staff member only, may administer discipline in the school setting.

When any student at NMS finds it difficult to meet the school’s expectation of positive conduct, every effort will be made to bring the student, family, and staff together to achieve a solution.

General School and Classroom Guidelines

Namaste Montessori School supports a philosophy based on mutual respect to all members of community. It is our intention to create a safe, supportive, nurturing environment for students, parents, and staff.

There are some basic expectations we have for all members of our community. Please review, discuss, and model these guidelines with your child.

- Walk safely and calmly in the classrooms and hallways. ---“walking feet”
- Use quiet, calm, and gentle voices, no calling or yelling across the classroom.---“indoor voices”
- Be kind and gentle to others; no aggressive behaviors will be tolerated.
- Respect privacy and concentration; do not disturb others who are working.
- Respect other’s personal belongings; do not touch without permission.
- Take responsibility for care of our classroom; return work in good order to shelves.

Adult Guidelines and Rules

The entire school community, including administrators, teachers, students, parents, and friends are responsible for modeling appropriate behavior, helping to maintain the order and neatness of the school environment, and reporting any violations of guidelines or safety concerns to the Head of School.

Namaste Montessori School is a smoke free environment. No one may smoke anywhere on school grounds.

Namaste Montessori School cannot and will not tolerate any irresponsible and dangerous behavior, acts of violence, threats of violence, emotional or sexual harassment or verbal abuse directed toward anyone. It is illegal and forbidden to bring or carry a weapon to the school or on the grounds of the Namaste Montessori School.

Health and Safety

Drop off and Pick up

Communication between the parents and teacher is essential to the safety and the best care of the child. Often the morning arrival time and afternoon dismissal time are quite busy for the teacher. Her primary focus is on the safety of the children so she may not be able to hold a lengthy conversation at these times. A folder for each child will be kept near the sign in sheet. Parents are asked to check this folder on arrival and pick up for important notes and information from the teacher. Parents can leave notes for the teachers, forms, and tuition payments in the box near the sign in sheet. A bulletin board of general information will be posted nearby. Phone conversations or teacher conferences are encouraged and best arranged outside of regular school hours. Emergency phone calls should be made at any time and emergency calls will always be returned as soon as they are received.

Parents are asked to fill out a form authorizing who is able to pick up their child from school and/or act on their behalf in case of an emergency. Children will only be released to people on this list. Parents should check and update this form regularly.

The parent or person dropping off must sign in on arrival, indicating date and time of arrival, and noting any significant information the caregiver may need to know for the day. On departure the parent or person picking the child up must sign out and record the time of departure.

Children are expected to arrive at school on time. Late arrivals are disruptive to the classroom and make it difficult for the child arriving late to transition into the school day. Parents should call in the morning whenever their child will be out for the day, coming in late, and/or leaving school early. Let the classroom teacher know as soon as possible for longer-term absences.

Visitation Policy

All visitors are required to sign in at the main office, recording the date and time of arrival, purpose for visit, and sign out with a time of departure.

The Montessori classroom is a very special place. The environment has been carefully designed to meet the developmental needs of children. A very delicate balance occurs between the child, teacher, and the environment as they work together to support growth and learning. The presence of visitors moving freely through the room can be distracting and at times confusing for the children. It can interfere with the atmosphere of independence and concentration in the classroom.

We ask that all visitors respect the children and the classroom. The teacher will guide visitors into appropriate areas to sit and observe. Visitors should remain seated and restrain from engaging in conversation or activity with the children.

In the case of parents, student teachers, and volunteers, the teachers will direct visitors to appropriate activities within the classroom where they can become involved such as sharing a special skill or cultural information during circle time, listening to children read, or directing a special project.

Supervision of Children

Namaste Montessori School follows the required NYS Office of Children and Family Services and recommended guidelines of the National Association of Young Children (NAEYC) student-teacher ratios.

For the toddler program this is one teacher to every five children between the ages of 18 months and 3 years. For the Preschool program this is one teacher to every seven children between the ages of 3 years and 5 years. Each classroom consists of a Head Teacher and an Assistant Teacher(s).

A child will never be left unsupervised. Efforts will be made to familiarize children and parents with potential substitute teachers, volunteers, and student teachers. Should an emergency arise where the teacher may need to leave the classroom an approved substitute will be called in to supervise the children. In the event of a planned, short-term, non-recurring absence of the teacher (i.e. doctor's appointment, teacher training, personal day) parents will be notified in advance and an approved substitute will be arranged.

In Case of Emergency

Smoke detectors are located in each area of the school. These detectors are checked regularly and inspected annually. The detectors and emergency fire alarm pulls are directly wired to the Ithaca Fire Department. When an alarm is set off the fire department responds immediately. Fire drills are held monthly.

Fire extinguishers are located on the wall near each exit, near the stove, and near the furnaces. These extinguishers are checked regularly and inspected by a professional annually.

Emergency phone numbers are located on the wall near each phone, in each classroom first aid kit, and on the wall hanging near each fire extinguisher.

In case of emergency:

- The teacher will ring the bell and ask children to stop what they are doing and quietly walk to either the primary or secondary exit. In case of a fire emergency, the smoke detector alarm will go off and the teacher will instruct children to line up at the nearest exit immediately.
- As the children are lining up the teacher or her assistant will check all areas of the classroom for children (bathroom, closets, etc.), get the emergency bag, and in inclement weather collect children's coats and gear from their cubbies. A large laundry basket is kept next to the cubbies for holding coats and belongings. In the case of a fire emergency, the teacher will guide the children out of the building as quickly as possible, checking that all children are present and taking the emergency bag. Since a quick evacuation is essential in a fire, this may mean leaving coats and gear behind.
- The teacher will walk with the children to the designated meeting place. At 3011 Halseyville Road this meeting place is in the large fenced in area near the utility pole. In very inclement weather the milk house attached to the barn may be used for assembly.
- Once assembled in a safe place the teacher will take attendance using the class list located in the emergency bag.
- Authorities can be notified using the cell phone and emergency numbers located in the emergency bag.
- Parents will be notified using the emergency contact list in the emergency bag. This list is checked and updated monthly.

In the case of a serious medical emergency, a senior teacher or staff member trained by the Red Cross in first aid/cpr will evaluate the situation, direct someone to call 911, and follow instructions from emergency personnel. If a first aid/cpr trained staff member is not immediately available the supervising adult will call 911 and follow the instructions from emergency personnel. Should the child need to be transported to Cayuga Medical Center or another medical facility, a familiar teacher or staff member will ride with the child to the hospital and remain with the child until a parent or guardian arrives. The floating teacher on duty or a member of the administrative staff will step into the classroom to ensure remain children are being supervised according to required ratios. It is important to keep all of your emergency contact information up to date; the school, using this information, will contact parents.

Fire Drills

Random fire drills will be conducted on a monthly basis and a special alarm bell will ring. The emergency procedures described above will be practiced.

School Closings, Delayed Openings

If severe weather conditions make travel hazardous, school may be postponed, closed early, or canceled. Namaste Montessori School follows the school closing policy of the Trumansburg Central School District. Please listen to your local radio and television stations for school closing and delay information. There is no credit or make up days given for weather and emergency related school closings.

Local and National Emergencies

In the event that children and staff need to evacuate the building due to a national or local emergency, they will proceed to the closest safe building as directed by emergency personnel. The school will only be evacuated in the event the building is deemed not safe for occupancy by the police/fire department. Please tune into your local TV and Radio stations for more emergency information. Please ensure that all information, telephone numbers and emergency contacts are updated and checked throughout the year.

The school highly recommends that each family have an emergency plan for picking up your child at school.

General Student Health and Safety Policies

All children enrolled in the program must submit a written statement signed by a health care provider verifying the child is able to participate in child day care, currently appears to be free from contagious or communicable disease, and is receiving health care, including appropriate health examinations in accordance with the American Academy of Pediatrics schedule of such care and examinations. Such documentation must state that the child has received age appropriate immunizations in accordance with the New York State Public Health Law. Any child who is not immunized because of the parent's genuine and sincere religious beliefs may be admitted if the parent furnishes the provider with a written statement to this effect. All children must remain current with their immunizations and update the documentation at the school annually.

In addition to the health care statement, the following documents will be submitted at the time of admission and kept on file while the child is enrolled:

- A written consent signed by the parent authorizing the provider or other caregivers employed by the program to obtain emergency health care for the child (blue card).
- A written consent signed by the parent allowing for the provider to arrange for transportation of the child in need of emergency care, or in the case of emergency evacuation from the site, permission to transport the child to one of the designated relocation sites.
- Lead screening certificate for each child under the age of six
- A written consent of permission to apply topical sun block, diaper creams, and/or lotions to the child. The parent must provide product for the child in original packaging and clearly label the bottle with the child's name.
- A written consent to allow the child to be photographed at school and permission for the school to use these photographs for school albums, newsletters, on our web site, and for other school related purposes (special craft projects, press releases, etc.).
- A written consent that the parent is familiar with our napping policies and procedures.

Illness Policy

The Namaste Montessori School adheres strictly to the State of New York guidelines for dealing with illness in the school. The standards are designed to protect your healthy child. Please do not send your child to school if they are sick or unable to participate in daily activities. Your child will recover more quickly at home and the other children and adults at the school will be protected from continued exposure to the illness. The school is neither licensed nor equipped to care for ill children.

If a child becomes ill while at school, he or she will be isolated from the other children and parents will be called to arrange for the child to be picked up. If a child is considered to be too ill to attend school at drop off, he or she will not be admitted to class. Please remember that when illness is accompanied by fever, your child may not return to school until their temperature has been normal for twenty four hours (without medication).

Medication Policy

Namaste Montessori School teachers and staff will not administer any medication, prescription, remedy, or treatment, except as stated earlier in the use of topical ointments such as sun block and diaper cream and except to the extent that such administration is required under the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Illness Exclusion Policy

EXCLUDE IF:	READMIT IF:
1. Temp of 100.4° F oral, 101°F rectal, or 99° F auxiliary	1. Free of fever for 24 hours
2. Temp of 100.4° F oral, 101°F rectal, or 99° F auxiliary plus one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe cold with yellow-green nasal discharge • Cough • Sore throat • Sneezing • Swollen glands • Skin rash 	2. Free of fever for 24 hours <u>and</u> note from clinic or physician stating child is not communicable
3. Conjunctivitis (pink eye) bacterial and/or viral	3. All discharge has ceased <u>and</u> note from clinic or physician stating child is not communicable
4. Head and body lice	4. After treatment and free of lice and nits
5. Ringworm of body	5. After treatment and lesions are covered
6. Ringworm of head	6. After treatment, lesions are covered, <u>and</u> note from clinic or physician stating child is not communicable
7. Skin lesions, impetigo, and scabies	7. Skin sores are healed <u>or</u> note from clinic or physician stating child is not communicable
8. Vomiting	8. free of upset stomach and vomiting for 24 hours
9. Diarrhea (two or more loose watery stools per day)	9. Diarrhea free for 24 hours
10. Fainting or seizures or general signs of a communicable disease to which the child has been exposed	10. Free of symptoms <u>or</u> note from clinic or physician stating child is not communicable

Staff and Facility Health and Safety Policies

All employees of the Namaste Montessori School will submit a statement from a healthcare provider as required by the NYS Daycare Licensing regulations. This information will be kept on file and updated regularly.

In accordance with the provisions in sections 412, 413, and 415 of the social services law, all teachers and staff at the Namaste Montessori School are required to report any suspected incidents of child abuse or maltreatment concerning a child to the statewide center of child abuse and maltreatment.

Caregivers must wash their hands, and ensure children wash their hands with soap and running water at the beginning of each day, when they are dirty, after toileting or assisting children with toileting, after changing a diaper, before and after food handling or eating, after handling of pets and other animals, after contact with bodily secretion or fluid, and after coming in from the outdoors.

Safety precautions relating to blood must be observed as follows:

- Disposable gloves must be worn whenever there is a possibility for contact with blood, including but not limited to touching blood or blood contaminated fluids, treating cuts that bleed, and wiping surfaces with stained blood.
- In an emergency, a child's well being must take priority. A bleeding child must not be denied care because gloves are unavailable.
- Disposable gloves must be discarded after each use
- If blood is touched accidentally, the exposed skin must be thoroughly washed with soap and running water
- Clothing contaminated with blood must be placed in a securely tied plastic bag and returned to the parent at the end of the day
- Surfaces that have been contaminated with blood must be cleaned and disinfected with a germicidal solution

Sufficient and suitable clothing must be available so that children who are dirty or soil their clothing may be changed. Parents will be asked to keep at least one seasonally appropriate change of clothes for their child at school.

Toileting facilities will be kept clean at all times and stocked with toilet paper, soap, and towels accessible to staff and children.

Toileting equipment will be provided appropriate to the toilet training level of the children in the group. Potty chairs will be emptied and sanitized with a germicidal solution after each use.

If a child is not yet potty trained parents must supply an adequate supply of disposable diapers and wipes. Diapers will be disposed of in a tightly covered trashcan and kept out of reach of children. Soiled cloth diapers will be placed and sealed in a plastic bag and sent home with the child at the end of the day. The changing pad will be wiped with a disinfecting solution after each use.

All rooms, equipment, supplies, and furnishing accessible to children will be cleaned and disinfected as needed to protect the health of the children and staff, and in a manner consistent with the health care plan guidelines issued by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services, Day Care Regulations.

Any application of pesticides shall be completed in accordance with the requirements of section 390-c of the Social Services Law and sections 33-1004 and 33-1005 of the Environmental Conservation Law.

Nutrition

Breakfast Snack	7:30-8:30	provided by school for all children enrolled in the before school program
Morning Snack	8:30-11:30	provided by school for all children, free choice through out the day
Lunch	11:30-12:30	milk provided by school, meal provided by parents
Early PM Snack	2:00-3:30	provided by school for all children, free choice through out the day
Late PM Snack	3:30-5:30	provided by school for all children, free choice through out the day

The school provides breakfasts and snacks. The Department of Social Services regulates that each breakfast include milk, a grain, and a fruit and that each snack include two of the following: milk or juice, fruit, vegetable, grain, and/or proteins from an approved list of foods. Low sugar, low sodium, organically grown and locally grown foods are used whenever possible. All snacks and meals are prepared fresh, on site. Children are included in meal and snack preparation often as possible.

Serving sizes are appropriate to the age of the child. Food is never forced on a child, rather offered frequently throughout the day.

Every effort will be made to accommodate food preferences for personal, religious, or medical reasons. If resultant meal patterns or serving sizes will not meet the child's nutritional needs, a medical statement must be obtained documenting the appropriateness of the variation.

Some examples of foods served include:

- Dairy: cow's milk (whole or 1%), yogurt, cottage cheese, mild hard cheese, etc.
- Fruit: apples, avocado, bananas, berries, melons, peaches, pears, pineapple, oranges, apricots, kiwi, papaya, figs, olives, raisins, dried fruits, fruit purees (like applesauce), 100% fruit juice, etc.
- Vegetables: asparagus, broccoli, green beans, peas, spinach, peppers, tomatoes, potatoes, yams, squashes, beets, cauliflower, turnips, beans, corn, carrots, etc.
- Grains: whole grain cereals hot and cold, whole grain pasta, brown rice, whole grain bread, other whole grains such as quinoa, crackers, pretzels, bread sticks, pancakes, waffles, french toast, muffins
- Protein: eggs, chicken, turkey, fish, nuts, nut butters, seeds, beans and rice, cheeses

Lunches

Parents are required to provide a balanced, nutritious lunch for their children. Parents should remember to include a protein, grains, vegetables and fruits for lunch. Candy and other highly sugared foods are not appropriate and prohibited. If parents are having trouble discovering meals their child is willing to eat, they are encouraged to speak with staff members who will be happy to give them ideas. The school can refrigerate and/or reheat lunches if required. At lunch the school also provides milk for each child.

General School Information

Clothing

All clothing and other belongings, which are brought to school, should be clearly labeled with your child's name. A supply of clothes for changes should be sent at the beginning of the year and checked regularly to insure an adequate supply. The children work with materials in the classroom that may result in their clothing becoming soiled or wet (water, paint, etc), sometimes more than once a day. They appreciate the option of changing into clean dry clothes on their own.

Since self-sufficiency is encouraged, parents are asked to consider the ease with which their child is able to dress him or herself. For example, overalls make look cute but may be challenging for your child to unhook when they need to use the bathroom.

Each child should keep a pair of indoor shoes or slippers to wear while at school. This helps keep our environment clean and healthy. Every child must wear some type of shoe at all times in case there is an emergency or fire drill and we must exit the classroom quickly.

Outdoors Play

Time outdoors is an important part of a child's day. It provides the fresh air needed to insure good health and aids in the development of social and gross motor skills.

Weather permitting the children go outside every day. In the case of a light sprinkle or drizzle or flurry the children may still go outside for a short time. Ithaca's weather is known to change frequently; therefore it is important to dress appropriately. Our hill is very windy and temperatures may be cooler at the school than temperatures at your home. Layering clothing is very helpful. Sometimes mittens and socks get wet after a play period. For children who attend all day, sending spare mittens, socks and hats is also helpful.

If your child is recovering from an illness and still is not able to go outside, you are asked to keep him or her home. The school does not have adequate staff to provide for the care of one or two children while the other children are outdoors.

Lost and Found

With so many children, it is sometimes difficult to keep track of clothing and other belongings. Having each article of clothing clearly labeled helps prevent losing items. A "lost and found" box is kept in each classroom. Clothing that is not claimed after a reasonable amount of time may be kept as extra items for children who may need it on any given day or donated to a good cause.

Classroom Materials

The materials in the classroom are there to be used by all the children and the staff attempts to make them as inviting as possible. Sometimes they are too successful and pieces of the apparatus get invited home. It is often the most important/favorite pieces that find their way home. Should this occur, we ask that parents not worry about this and return items as soon as possible.

Birthdays

Birthdays are special days and we enjoy celebrating them at school. Please remind your child's teacher a few days before the birthday so the teacher is able to plan for the celebration.

We practice the favorite Montessori tradition of creating a picture timeline of your child's life. Please send in pictures of your child at birth, and each year there after, so the entire class can see how he or she has grown or changed. Every birthday child will be honored by participating in the birthday walk where the child (carrying a model of the earth) carries the earth around the sun (a candle in the center of our circle) for each year of his or her life. We follow up by singing Happy Birthday and the child can blow the candle out.

If you and your child would like you can bring a healthy birthday snack to share with the class. The celebration of your child's birthday can also include donating a book to the classroom library in your child's name.

Holidays and Celebrations

“All mankind shares a common history, a common world of cultures, and struggles toward a common future. The child should be given a sense of our heritage, our culture, and our potential destiny from the earliest moments of sensitivity. The needs of mankind are universal. Our means of meeting them create the richness and diversity of the planet. The child should come to relish the texture of that diversity.” -Maria Montessori

We acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of our school community and the diversity of the much larger world community. At Namaste Montessori School we are concerned about the tendency in America to see the United States as the center of the world. We feel it is important to broaden our children's horizons to encompass the entire planet. Our goal is not just to transmit information about other cultures but also to celebrate them. Celebrations help inspire a sense of joy, wonder and enthusiasm. We teach with great respect for the child, his or her family, and his or her background. We encourage each family to share their heritage through stories, food, and celebrations.

Namaste Montessori School does not teach religion, although we do present many universal spiritual themes such as love, kindness, joy, and confidence in the fundamental goodness of life. Many of the holidays we celebrate may be religious in origin. We approach them instead from a cultural perspective, sharing food, music, dance and traditions related to the day. This helps us build a sense of community by celebrating our similarities as well as our differences. If we want to achieve peace, we must begin by teaching children how to accept each person for who they are.

Field Trips

During the course of the school year, field trips may be taken to local areas of interest in coordination with an area being studied in class or to take advantage of special community events. Parents will be notified in advance of an upcoming trip as well as any associated fees, and maybe asked to help with transportation.

Volunteer field trip drivers must have a valid drivers license, registration, and automobile insurance. The school's insurance does not cover field trip volunteers and vehicles. When a parent volunteers to drive, he or she is also agreeing to act as a chaperone for the children they are transporting for the duration of the field trip.

Communication and Events

Mail Folders

Each family has a mail folder near the sign in and sign out sheet. Please check your folder daily for notes and information.

Website and Internet Information

Our website is www.NamasteMontessoriSchool.com

We maintain three blogs:

Namaste Classroom Life is a private blog for families in the school only. It contains a picture diary of children and their work in the classroom. Contact Bridgid with your email address to given permission to view this blog at www.NamasteMontessoriSchool.blogspot.com

On The Shelf is a picture diary and brief explanation of activities in our classroom.
www.montessori-work.blogspot.com

Namaste Friends Garden and Farm is our latest blog chronicling our community children's garden and farm project. Check out how to get involved and a schedule of upcoming events hereat www.NamasteFriends.blogspot.com

Our Yahoo Group is Namaste Montessori School and is a way for the Namaste community to communicate, post information, and share ideas.

There are many useful links, articles, and information about our school on these sites.

Classroom News

Classroom newsletters are published six times a year and are distributed to families currently enrolled in the school and posted to our web site. The focus on this newsletter is specific classroom news and communication.

Namaste Newsletters

Namaste Montessori School community newsletters are published four times a year and are distributed to the school community including current parents, families on our waiting list, friends of the school, and posted on our website. The focus is on Montessori philosophy, child development, and community topics of interest.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent teacher conferences are regularly scheduled twice a year, in the fall and in the spring. A parent can request a conference with a teacher at any time throughout the year and your teacher may schedule additional conferences if necessary.

Evaluation of Student Progress

Namaste Montessori School maintains careful notes and documentation on each child in accordance with the traditional Montessori curriculum. Children are never compared to each other or "graded" in a traditional or arbitrary manner. Written narratives are kept for younger children and portfolio samples are kept for older children. Evaluation of progress is based on the individual growth of each child.

Meetings with the Head of School

Meetings with the Head of School can be arranged by appointment.

Support Services

All Namaste Montessori School families of preschool age children or older are eligible for the screening services available through the public school home districts. Screenings are available for speech, hearing, social/emotional, fine/gross motor, etc. Younger children are eligible for screening through early intervention services. Your teacher can assist you in requesting a screening from your home district if there are concerns about your child development in one of these areas.

Special Family Events

During the year our school we have special school events like dish to pass parties, our fall party at Cayuga Nature Center, and family days at local parks. We will announce these events in our newsletters and post them on classroom bulletin boards.

Montessori Education Nights

Four to six time a year we will host Montessori education nights open to the school and larger community. We will discuss different areas of the Montessori philosophy and child development. This is a great opportunity to meet and talk with other parents, ask questions, and learn about what your child does each day in the classroom. These meetings will be announced through our newsletters, website, yahoo group, and local media.

Community and Committee Meetings

Through out the year we will hold regular community and committee meeting to discuss the state and future of the school. These are open to all friends and families interested in our school community.

Admission Policy

General Policy

Namaste Montessori School considers itself more than just a preschool or daycare program, we consider ourselves a true community of families that share a vision, values, and goals for our children. Beginning the admissions process and learning about our school is a process of learning about each other, similar to dating. Our primary goal in the admissions process is to help each family find the perfect match. Not all great people would make us happy as our spouse or business partner. We recognize that we may not be the perfect school for every family. The admissions process is a chance for us to get to know each other.

Honesty in any relationship is key to its success. We are not here to convince prospective families that our school is right for them. We actively encourage families to observe and explore the many school options available. Our goal is to present our program as truthfully as possible, help families to grasp the nature of our school and what we have to offer, and allow them to weigh all the factors out as they consider whether our school is indeed the right match for them.

School tours, classroom observations, open houses, Montessori education meetings, and meetings with the Head of School are important ways to get to know our community. We have a lending library of videos, DVDs, and books that describe the Montessori philosophy of education and are a great resource for current as well as prospective parents.

When we admit a new student, we are not simply bringing him or her into the school community. We are bringing the child, his parents, siblings, and extended family into the mix. In making admissions decisions we normally give strong preference to families who share common values and goals with the school, and who, after careful consideration and exploration, have concluded that our school is something that they want very much for their children, for the right reasons.

We consider applications for admissions on a case-by-case open admission basis. When no openings are available children will be placed in the applicant group waiting list. In the event of an opening, children in this group will be considered based on the date an application was received and age and needs of the child (in accordance with the Montessori principle of a multi-age classroom). Siblings of currently enrolled students, children of staff members, and transfers from other Montessori schools may be granted priority in the admissions process.

The Namaste Montessori School admits students of any race, color, nationality, and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. Namaste Montessori School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national, and ethnic origin in administration of educational policies and admission policies. Following the traditional multi-age Montessori classroom model, Namaste Montessori School is committed to creating a balanced learning environment for all students. We are committed to integrating and accommodating children with special needs into our program, in accordance with the Montessori philosophy and appropriate early childhood practices. In some circumstance's Namaste Montessori School is not the "right fit" for a child and family. Namaste Montessori School reserves the right not to accept a child into the program or to ask a child to leave the program based on the school's inability to meet the needs of the child. We will support the family in finding a program better suited to the child's specific needs.

Admissions Process

Observation and School Tour

Prospective families are required to have a school tour and are encouraged to observe in a classroom before enrolling their child. Appointment for tours or observations can be made through the main office.

Application

If at all possible, parents are encouraged to speak with the Head of School and tour the classroom before submitting an application. All applications will be processed upon receipt of a completed application form.

The application is valid for three years from the application date or until the child is no longer eligible for enrollment. If an offer for enrollment is declined for any reason, the application will be withdrawn. Please remember to notify the school if you change your address or phone number.

Waiting List

If there are no openings available in the program selected, your application will be placed on a waiting list. You will be contacted as soon as space becomes available and will then have two weeks in which to enroll your child by signing a contract and paying the one-month, refundable, security deposit.

Provisional Acceptance

All children enrolled are accepted into the program with the understanding that if the teacher feels the program cannot meet the child's needs, the staff and parents will explore alternatives together.

Enrollment Agreement

A child is officially enrolled in the program when the school has received the signed enrollment agreement and tuition deposit. Enrollment in all programs is binding. Parents are responsible for tuition each month regardless of the amount of time the child attends the school.

Withdrawal

Should a family initiate withdrawal of a child, a minimum of 30 days advance written notice must be given to the school in order to receive a full refund of tuition deposit.

It is possible to change programs within the school if it seems advisable to both the parents and the staff, and if space is available. The Head of School has the final decision making authority.

If both the parents and the school administration decide that the Namaste Montessori School program is not appropriate for an enrolled child, the child may be withdrawn and the parents relieved of any further financial responsibility.

If the school decides that the Namaste Montessori School program is not appropriate for an enrolled child, the family is relieved of any further financial obligation.

Enrollment Forms

The State of New York and the school's Board of Directors require that the following information be kept on file for each child enrolled in the program:

1. Application
2. Enrollment contract
3. Day care registration form
4. Medical report/immunization documentation/lead screening test
5. Emergency medical treatment consent form
6. Emergency transportation release form
7. List of authorized people able to pick child up from school
8. Topical ointment permission form
9. Photography permission and release form
10. Napping policy form

It is your responsibility to notify the school when there is any change in the information provided on these forms.

Tuition Policy

Tuition may be paid annually, semi-annually or monthly in accordance with the following payment schedule:

Annual	Due January 15 th
Semi-annual	Due January 15 th and July 15 th
Monthly	Due the 15 th of each month, beginning on the first month of attendance

There will be a \$35.00 late tuition payment charged for payments received after the 15th of each month.

Collection Policy

Parents are expected to make payment by the due date or make payment arrangements in writing. If no payment agreements are made with the school children will be asked to leave as of the first day for which tuition has not been paid. When payment is made children may return to class. With sixty days written notice at the discretion of the head of School, Namaste Montessori School may cancel the contract and spaces of children with unpaid tuition be filled. The school understands that families may experience some financial difficulties and are committed to working with any family to make acceptable arrangements for payment.

Returned Checks

A \$25.00 fee will be charged for all returned checks.

Tuition Credit

There is no credit given for absences (such as but not limited to illness, death in the family, vacations). There are no tuition credits for school closings.

Privacy Policy

Child Privacy

The staff of the Namaste Montessori School values the privacy of each family that is enrolled in our program and will keep personal and private information secure. A form will be sent home asking for permission to add your name to the school directory. Only families that give the school permission will be added to the directory. The school will not give out phone numbers, birthdays, or addresses of families that have elected to remain out of the directory. Class lists will be sent home to each family that has consented.

Staff Privacy

The school also respects the privacy of the entire staff. The office will not give out home phone number or addresses. Teachers may elect to give out e-mail and phone numbers; however they are not required to do so. During the school day the staff will be given messages when you call. If it is an emergency please notify the person answering the phone and the teacher will be called to the office.