



*Namaste*

M O N T E S S O R I

*Honoring the light in every child*

Toddler • Primary • Elementary 18 months through 12 years

## **SCHOOL POLICY AND PARENT HANDBOOK**



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# **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



### **Our Mission...to honor the light in every child**

At Namaste Montessori we 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  
Compassion  
Kindness

Responsibility  
Honesty  
Awareness

## **A Brief School History**

Bridgid Beames, an early childhood through middle school educator and school director with over thirty 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 when searching for child care for their two children. It had been Bridgid's lifelong dream to open a Montessori school; 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. 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 the school. 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. In June of 2007, Namaste Montessori School became a NYS licensed day care center and moved into its new facility.

In 2010, the school took a close look at the needs of its families and the community. After careful reflection, a decision was made to continue to expand the school. A ten year long range plan was established to grow the school through the middle school level and to create additional primary and toddler level classrooms.

In 2011, the property located at 1872 Trumansburg Rd was purchased and renovated to become Namaste Montessori School's Elementary Campus. The organization of the school was restructured to be chartered by the New York State Department of Education. The Elementary Campus opened its doors to the founding elementary cohort in September of 2011.

Namaste Montessori School is licensed by the New York State Office of Family and Children Services and is a member of the International Montessori Council (IMC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Namaste Montessori School is chartered by the New York State Board of Regents.

The school is operated daily by the Head of School and Assistant Head of School.

## **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 classrooms at all levels are dynamic communities of learners and guides. Some basic premises of Montessori for all age levels include:

### **A Responsive, Prepared, Student-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 through shifting the tone of the class to fit the ever-changing needs of the children. Students work individually or in small groups. A daily uninterrupted work period of at least  $2\frac{1}{2}$  – 3 hours is essential to allow children to deeply engage in their work. Community meetings or "circle times" are scheduled so as not to interrupt the children's work and are held at transitional points during the day. There is a conscious effort to design our classrooms as a "children's houses", making them 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, to concentrate, and to 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 classrooms are communities of children and adults. Each classroom consists of children from a multiage span: one and a half to two years at the toddler level, and three to four years at the primary and elementary levels. 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, he is guided gently by the teachers in the classroom to explore increasingly challenging activities. In a Montessori setting, teachers 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 is 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 that 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 simply 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, or reading something in a book. This is followed by a lesson from the adult guide to support the child in this exploration of concept.
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. A written progress report is provided twice a year to families. Parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year to discuss student progress. Additional conferences can be held at a parent's or teacher's request.

## **Overview of Curriculum**

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

In our **Toddler** level under the guidance of a lead guide and two assistant, children participate joyfully in purposeful tasks, such as slicing bananas or tending the garden. They develop the skills needed to foster independence and care for themselves and each other. The environment is rich in opportunities to

move with balance and control as well as lessons in self-care and music. The child's development of self-confidence and understanding that he is part of a community are fostered. The children work together at tasks such as setting the table for snack or dressing for the outdoors. They gather as a community to play musical instruments, sing nursery rhymes or listen to stories. Once the child has shown the readiness, usually around age 3, he moves into the Primary Program.

The **Primary** classroom is an atmosphere of calm, order and joy, as children ages 3 through 6 learn together. The younger children are guided by the teacher and by observing and working with older students. Primary students absorb information from experiences and life around them. The older children learn leadership and compassion in this mixed-aged setting. Children learn to work at a task from beginning to end and develop their self-discipline and the capacity for deep concentration. Respect for others and good manners develop naturally as the children grow within the Montessori environment.

Our **Elementary Level** program is a six year plan of studies for children between the ages of 6 and 12. It follows a traditional Montessori curriculum and philosophy. Elementary students, in what Maria Montessori referred to as “the second plane of development,” typically can be characterized by their reasoning minds; their ability to abstract and imagine; and their passion for research and hands-on exploration. The Namaste Elementary school day and the learning environment are organized and structured carefully to allow for sufficient work time and to provide access to the materials needed for in-depth study and investigation. Students tend to work in small groups on a variety of projects, building skills and achieving the mastery and confidence they will one day need as productive and contributing citizens.

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, **Toddler and Primary Students**, have a natural urge to partake in the activities of daily living and be participating members of family life. Simple chores that 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 and 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 (careful movement, communication, manners, table setting, hosting a guest, etc.)

**Elementary Students** continue to pursue practical life skills at more challenging levels. Activities at the elementary level include gardening, cooking and food preservation, meal planning, sewing, woodworking, electricity, and plumbing. Handwork crafts are also a focus at this level including knitting, beading, leatherwork, weaving, metalwork, and other traditional crafts practiced worldwide.

Grace and courtesy lessons include public speaking, party planning and setting up for a formal meal, learning to work as a team, developing leadership skills, learning how to conduct a formal meeting,

learning how to write formal letters, budgeting and financial planning, and basic entrepreneurial business skills.

## Sensorial

The materials and activities at the **Toddler and Primary** level are iconic Montessori. They 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.

**Elementary Level** students may refer back to these familiar materials to build on more advanced concepts but typically students are learning to become more abstract at this higher plane of development. Development of the senses in the elementary student continues not as its own task but rather as a part of specific curriculum areas such as classifying minerals in Earth Science or baking with spices in Practical life.

## Mathematics

An introduction to mathematics at the **Toddler** level is given through simple counting exercises such as counting the plates when setting the table, counting the children as they line up, and through counting songs and rhymes.

At the **Primary** level, children's mathematical sense is built on the strong foundation of the sensorial materials where many fundamental concepts, such as length, volume, gradation, sequencing, grouping and so on, have already been experienced via the senses. 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 **Primary** math activities include exploring 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. Children explore fractional equivalences and the fractional names with manipulative materials. They use a wide variety of two and three-dimensional geometry materials and learn the basics of geometric nomenclature. They see and explore binomial and trinomial patterns in certain materials and gain a visual and tactile impression for later work when they will use such patterns to explore the concepts of squaring, square root, cubing, and cube root during the elementary years. The emphasis is always on examining patterns and sequences and the connections between arithmetic and geometry in order to help children develop their mathematical minds from an early age.

The **Elementary** level mathematics curriculum revolves around the "Great Lesson" of humankind's invention of numeration and measurement systems. This story and timeline is a key that opens the door of the imagination to the world of mathematics and geometry. In the early elementary years, students often investigate the number systems of civilizations as diverse as that of the Egyptians, the Romans, and the Mayans.

Specific skills, concepts, and lessons during these six years include the decimal system and mastery of the four operations of arithmetic, study of multiples and factors, geometry, fractions, decimals, percent, money, time, statistics, graphs, pre-algebra, and beginning algebra. These concepts are taught concretely with materials at first and then the children move slowly toward abstraction as they practice.

Children master the language of mathematics through Socratic exploration of word problems and real-life math applications throughout the classroom. Fluency is developed through practice games.

## **Language**

**Toddler and Primary** 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, and in small and large groups.

At the **Primary** level 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. Reading for 4 or 5 year olds in a Montessori program usually follows an immersion in writing activities, mostly done using the moveable alphabet. The children spontaneously synthesize all of the phonemes they have learned and the sight words they have been given and often discover that one day they can now read. In addition to a wide range of suitable fiction and non-fiction books in each classroom, there are vocabulary cards in relation to every subject area (nomenclature of everyday objects, geometry, science, world cultures, etc.). Enrichment of vocabulary across the curriculum is a constant focus in the Primary classroom. Teachers spend time reading aloud to the children as a group. Introductory activities in areas of grammar, syntax and word study form a part of the early language work. Dr. Maria Montessori described the 5 to 7 year olds as “word lovers,” such is their great interest in language at this age. The concepts of noun, verb, preposition, subject, direct object, etc. are introduced in playful activities using a miniature environment and a variety of movement games. The Montessori grammar symbols used throughout the Elementary Program are first introduced at this age.

Just as with the Mathematics curriculum, the **Elementary** level Language curriculum begins at age six with a “Great Lesson” called *The Story of Communication in Signs*. The lesson takes students through the development of written language from pre-alphabetic signs right up to the printing press. The history of spoken language is presented and the story of our Roman alphabet is told. Different ancient alphabets (e.g. hieroglyphs) are studied. There are both instructional and self-teaching materials so students can explore, memorize, and practice writing in different alphabetic forms.

Specific elementary level lesson areas include word study, grammar and syntax, composition, reading, reference and study skills, & listening and speaking skills.

The study of the nine principal parts of speech spans the early elementary years. Parsing of prepared sentences, one’s own writing, and the writing of given authors is done using card material and colored grammar symbols. Classification of nouns and adjectives and the basic verb tenses are also presented. Students work on the classification of simple sentences and familiarity with the parts of a sentence, such

as predicate, subject, direct and indirect objects and adverbial phrases. Sequential Montessori materials are used for these studies.

The study of the structure of a paragraph begins in the Elementary years. Students have opportunities for a wide variety of creative writing, which includes various forms of poetry, short story, fairy tale, and nature writing. They also write reports in areas such as zoology, geography, and history. The mechanics of writing, including punctuation and capitalization, and basic spelling rules, are a major focus in the first few years. The development of beautiful handwriting is emphasized beginning with cursive writing (already begun during the Primary years) and then later with print. Keyboarding skills are introduced in the fourth year of the Elementary program.

Students read from selected fiction in school on a daily basis. Nightly reading at home is also encouraged. Students may borrow books from the school library. Teachers read aloud to the class daily and guided reading groups meet several times a week. The work students do in the various subject areas involves the reading of words, phrases and sentences using the specific scientific nomenclature of the subject. There are many reading exercises connected to the grammar and syntax activities. Students are introduced to interpretive reading exercises. These exercises involve dramatic interpretation of a piece of literature.

## **Science**

**Toddler and Primary** level 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 overlaps with practical life activities and teaches science as well as responsibility.

At the **Primary** level basic skills of science, such as measuring, comparing, classifying, and keen observing, are carefully prepared and practiced. This work is accompanied by extensive classified nomenclature. For example, Primary age children learn the scientific nomenclature of the parts of a flower, such as the calyx and corolla. Classification systems such as living/non-living, and vertebrate/invertebrate are also taught. Children study the basic characteristics and nomenclature of plants and animals. They learn to name common domestic and wild plants and animals, and they work with materials to learn fundamental classifications such as mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish. Children are also introduced to some basic concepts of physical science, such as floating/sinking, magnetic/non-magnetic. Non-fiction books related to science are read aloud to the children, and they have classroom responsibilities for the care of indoor plants, as well as feeding the birds outside. The children also plant, tend to, and harvest their own classroom gardens.

During the **Elementary** years, every aspect of science is introduced through stories of discovery and with reference to the etymology of the scientific. Various scientific disciplines emerge from and relate back to the Great Lessons of the origin of the universe and the earth, the story of life on earth, and the ingenuity of humans throughout history. The adventure of scientific discoveries is seen as part of a Great Story reaching back to the beginning of time and the student is empowered through activity and research to see himself as an actor in this story.

Students learn how the galaxies are formed and about types of galaxies, as well as how our solar system and planet were formed. They study the relationship of the sun and earth and moon, using various Montessori charts and materials. They learn about the movements of the earth, the seasons, solstices, and equinoxes.

Students learn about the layers of the earth and the formation of land masses and conduct experiments in order to understand the processes of weathering, erosion, and mountain formation. They are introduced to the science of geology, the classification of rocks, and the formation of fossils. Their Earth Science work is interrelated with their studies in history, geography, and biology. Students make basic weather observations and learn to identify cloud types.

Students enter the Montessori Elementary program from our Primary program with knowledge of significant Life Science classified nomenclature, particularly in the areas of botany and zoology. We build on the great developing interest in living things by opening the students' minds to the whole span of the Timeline of Life on the Earth. From this historical perspective, we introduce them right away to the Five Kingdoms of Life. This grand scheme of biological classification is explored in a systematic and rigorous fashion over the six years of our Elementary program.

This is an important age for the study of the life functions of plants. We use impressionistic charts and plant experiments in order to help students gain an understanding of how plants meet their needs for water, nutrition, and sunlight. Care of indoor and outdoor plants, with attention to specific needs, is a daily responsibility. Students study the uses of plants for food and shelter by different cultures throughout history and throughout the world today. Looking at the Time Line of Life, students learn when the evergreens, grasses, and flowering plants appeared on the Earth. They begin to learn to use field guides to identify local flora, and continue to build their vocabulary by learning more details of botanical nomenclature.

Students study the anatomy of the human skeletal, circulatory, and digestive systems. Basic practices for good health, such as hand washing, how to safely sneeze or cough, and the importance of daily exercise, are both taught and encouraged on a regular basis. Students are introduced to the fundamentals of good nutrition. We help them to understand the nutritional reasoning behind our school's guidelines for healthy snacks and lunches.

Over the course of the six Elementary years of Montessori education, students learn how to observe from nature and from experiment, gather data, and record their observations. They learn how to use various measuring tools, such as scales and thermometers. They are taught how to use a hand lens and microscope, including how to prepare a microscope slide. Older students are introduced to the basics of writing a lab report and such skills as recording data on a table and using scientific notation. Books are always available in both the classroom and school libraries, as well as ready Internet access in the classroom and library.

## **Geography**

These materials help the child learn about the facts of the material world. Working with the sensorial, language and cultural materials related to geography is an important part of the work in a Montessori

**Primary** classroom. The very young children are introduced early to a sandpaper globe where they can have a visual and tactile experience of the Earth. Other sensorial materials and puzzle maps are used by the children to explore the continents of our world, the countries of each continent, and the states of our own country. They also create key land and water forms such as lake, island, and peninsula. Geography vocabulary is given both orally and with prepared nomenclature cards that are used by the children as an integrated part of their language work. The children are introduced to the diversity of international cultures by means of stories, songs, celebrations, pictures, and artifacts.

**Elementary** students are given key lessons on the lithosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere, and biosphere. These lessons are followed by experiments, classification exercises, and nomenclature work related to each of these areas of study. Students work with Montessori pin maps to explore further the countries, flags, and capitals of the world. They draw outline maps that isolate various physical features and economic resources. They also study time zones. The study of the interdependencies of human beings in society is begun. For example, students learn to trace an item of food from its original source through various stages of production, the flow of goods to the market, and the many people who participate in the process.

## **History and Cultural Studies**

The **Toddler and Primary** students celebrate the diversity of our world 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.

History is the central organizing discipline during the Montessori **Elementary** years. Every subject is encountered in relation to its historical origins and evolution. Through a sequence of inspiring tales, we strive to help students see where they fit into the great chain of history from the beginning of time. Our interdisciplinary approach to the history of the universe, planet earth, and the contributions of the great civilizations gives our students a deep awareness of the grandeur of the human endeavor. Humans are adaptive, inventive, and resourceful. A sense of gratitude for the contributions of all our ancestors is fostered.

We appeal to the emerging reasoning mind and powerful imagination of this developmental plane by telling great stories framed in the form of fables, but with rich scientific and historical content. Students use concrete organizational frameworks as an aid to understanding relationships and sequences over time. These include timelines of the development of life on Earth and the progress of the early humans and their civilizations, as well as charts illustrating key scientific or historical principles. We also use core classification materials that guide the research of any culture or civilization in any time or place. These materials focus on how different people throughout history fulfilled their fundamental needs. These would include their types of food, shelter, clothing, artistic expression, religion, government, and education.

Elementary students are introduced to five Great Lessons: the Great Story of the Origin of the Universe and the Earth; the Story of the Coming of Life on Earth; the Story of Early Humans; the Story of Communication and Signs (the History of Language); and the Story of Mathematics. These Great

Lessons open their minds to all areas of study and are followed by key presentations that inspire them to research, to conduct scientific experiments, and to create artistic representations of various aspects of our historical past. Parallel to this work, six, seven and eight-year olds begin to use materials to develop the understanding of the concept of time along with the initial introduction to the historical underpinnings and etymology of the words for the days of the week, months of the year, and seasons

## **Music**

At the **Toddler and Primary** levels, informal and formal music education occurs through singing, listening to music, introduction of instruments, introduction of musical notation, and exploration of sound.

**Elementary** students build on their primary foundation and engage in a rich and creative music program that is integrated into the daily happenings of classroom life. They sing, read music, and compose using instruments available in the classroom environment. Using teaching methods from various cultures as well as music from around the world, students are part of a holistic musical experience. The synthesis of known best practices all center around experiencing and exploring musical concepts and expression by creating, performing and responding to music – the essential artistic processes.

The structure of the Elementary music program involves twice weekly lessons with a music specialist, opportunities for daily classroom practice, integration of music into all curriculum areas, formal performances as musical ensembles, and visiting “guest artist” performances for inspiration and connection to our rich local music resources.

## **Art**

A range of art materials and activities are available to students in the classroom. Art activities in the **Toddler and Primary** classroom are chosen by the child from the art shelf according to interest. There is a progression in the artwork as the child’s skills develop. Cutting exercises move from very simple to quite complex exercises. Pasting work is followed later by collage. Coloring with various media (crayons, pastels, charcoal) is available. Painting on an easel, watercolor, and clay work are presented. Handwork, including sewing and embroidery, is taught. Seasonal inspirations using different media are a prominent feature in our primary classrooms.

All **Elementary** classrooms have a range of materials available to the students. Many art projects take place in the classrooms. The students may also illustrate and create clay or other artistic expressions as part of their research projects. The art process is a rewarding experience that allows each student the freedom to explore and experiment with various media and techniques. It is through this process of self-exploration that students begin to make connections between the artistic world and their natural environment. Students begin with the basic elements of art (line, shape, color, texture, space, value, and form) and progress to the more complex throughout the elementary program. These basic elements are the building blocks of art and are incorporated into every lesson. Over time, students begin to make connections between them and begin to develop their own visual vocabulary. Each lesson is given a name, and demonstrations are used to ensure the use of materials in a safe and responsible manner. Once the art lesson has been demonstrated, students are allowed the freedom to create and express themselves in an individual way.



## **Physical Development**

At all levels, as much emphasis is placed on care of the body as on challenging the mind. At the **Toddler and Primary** levels, 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.

At the **Elementary** level, individual and group daily movement, gross motor and skill building activities, health and fitness education, and team building opportunities occur throughout the day. In addition, a physical education specialist leads weekly group classes.

## **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 Routines

These routines are a general guideline followed by each of our classroom levels. The daily routine is always based on the needs of the children and is adjusted accordingly.

### TODDLER CLASSROOM ROUTINE

7:30am – 8:30am	Early Morning Care	Breakfast, stories, all curriculum area activities. Children who arrive early help in the preparation of the classroom for the day
8:30am – 10:00am	Regular Arrival Independent Work Small Group Work	All curriculum area activities Snack available
10:00am – 11:00am	Toddler Outside Play Indoor Gross Motor Play	Circle time during transition to lunch
11:00am – 11:30am	Lunch Time	
11:20am – 11:30am	Half Day Dismissal	Children who attend for morning only go home
11:30pm – 1:30pm	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.
1:30pm – 2:30pm	Independent Work Time	All curriculum area activities Snack available
2:30pm – 3:30pm	Outside Play Indoor Gross Motor Play	
3:15pm – 3:30pm	Full Day Dismissal	All Full Day Children must be picked up no later than 3:30
3:30pm – 5:30 pm	After School Care	Indoor and outdoor activities, snack available
5:15pm – 5:30pm	Dismissal	All children must be picked up no later than 5:30

## PRIMARY CLASSROOM ROUTINE

7:30am – 8:30am	Early Morning Care	Breakfast, stories, all curriculum area activities. Children who arrive early help in the preparation of the classroom for the day
8:30am – 8:45am	Regular Arrival	
8:30am – 11:15am	Work Period Independent Work Small Group Work	All curriculum area activities Snack available
11:15am – 11:30am	Circle Time	Songs, games, group lessons, discussions
11:30am – 12:00pm	Lunch Time Group Story Time	
12:00pm – 12:45pm	Outside Play Indoor Gross Motor Play	
12:30pm	Half Day Dismissal	Children who attend for half day go home
12:45pm – 2:00pm	Rest / Nap Time	20-30 minute 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.
2:00pm – 2:45pm	Independent Work Time Kindergarten Lessons	All curriculum area activities Snack available
2:45pm – 3:30pm	Outside Play Indoor Gross Motor Play	
3:15pm – 3:30pm	Full Day Dismissal	All Full Day Children must be picked up no later than 3:30
3:30pm – 5:30pm	After School Care	Indoor and outdoor activities, snack available
5:15pm – 5:30pm	Dismissal	All children must be picked up no later than 5:30

## ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM ROUTINE

7:30am – 8:30am	Early Morning Care	Breakfast, all curriculum area activities. Children who arrive early help in the preparation of the classroom for the day
8:15am – 8:30am	Regular Arrival	
8:30am – 11:30am	Work Period Independent Work Small Group Work	All curriculum area activities Snack available
11:30am – 12:15pm	Lunch Time	
12:15pm – 1:30pm	Outside Play Indoor Gross Motor Play	
1:30pm – 3:00pm	Studio Work	Rotations of small group studio lessons for music, physical education, and art
	Work Period	All curriculum areas for students not at Studio Groups
3:00pm – 3:10pm	Classroom Chores	Students clean up classroom and complete their chores
3:10pm – 3:15pm	Regular Day Dismissal	All Regular Day Students must be picked up no later than 3:15
3:15pm – 5:30pm	After School Care	Indoor and outdoor activities, snack available
5:15pm – 5:30pm	Dismissal	All children must be picked up no later than 5:30

## Annual Calendar

All levels of our school operate on a year-round calendar with a school year that begins in July and ends the following June. An authentic Montessori program is practiced through the entire year. The school closes for regular breaks; we do our best to align the breaks with the area public school breaks.

When a lead guide is not in the classroom the most senior assistant teacher leads the classroom and a substitute teacher from our screened and approved list will step in to support.

## **Discipline, Health, and Safety Policies**

### **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 act outside of defined limits, 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 lose 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.

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. Only a teacher or staff member 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 the 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 others and their 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.

## **Drop Off and Pick Up**

Communication between the parents and teacher is essential to the safety and the best care of the child. The morning arrival time and afternoon dismissal times are quite busy for the teacher. Her primary focus is on the safety of the children so she likely is unable to hold a lengthy conversation at these times. A folder for each child is 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 is posted nearby. Email communication, phone conversations, or teacher conferences are encouraged and best arranged outside of regular school hours. Emergency phone calls can 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, noting time of arrival for the appropriate date, 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.

Children are expected to be picked up from school on time. Late pick ups are disruptive to our afternoon programs, often create anxiety in the child who is picked up late and create unsafe student/teacher ratios.

## **Visitation Policy**

Parents are invited to observe in the classroom with prior notice. 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.

All visitors are required to sign in in the classroom visitor log book, recording the date and time of arrival, purpose for visit, and sign out with a time of departure.

### **Supervision of Children**

Namaste Montessori School follows the required NYS Office of Children and Family Services regulations 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. For the Elementary program this is one teacher for every twelve students.

Each classroom consists of a Head Teacher or Co-Head Teachers and 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. Parents will be notified in advance in the event of a planned, non-recurring absence of the teacher lasting more than one week, 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 monthly 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 sound 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 1608 Trumansburg Rd, this is at the far south-east fence of the large playground. At 1872 Trumansburg Rd, this is at the back of the property by the entrance to Jacksonville Community Park.
- 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 a 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 regularly.

In the case of a serious medical emergency, a senior teacher or staff member trained 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 remaining children are being supervised according to required ratios. It is important to keep 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 does not follow the school closing policy of a particular school district. The decision to close school due to inclement weather is made by the Head of School. All efforts will be made to announce delayed opening and cancellation by 6 AM.

In the event of delayed opening or school closing/cancellation, Head of School or school administrator will:

- Send text notification through the *Remind* app
- Post on the NMS Facebook Page
- Post on the NMS Google Calendar on the school website ([www.NamasteMontessoriSchool.com](http://www.NamasteMontessoriSchool.com))
- Notify local media sources

There is no credit or make up days given for weather and emergency related school closings.

## **Local and National Emergencies**

If 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.

## **School Closing for Faculty Meetings and Professional Development**

In order to ensure the highest quality program and to meet licensing requirements for professional development required by the State of New York, Namaste Montessori School closes school to hold regular faculty meetings, professional development days (such as Red Cross CPR Training) and attend educational conferences. These dates are marked on the regular school calendar.

## **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 day care or school, 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 school with a notarized 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 written consent signed by the parent will be submitted at the time of admission and kept on file while the child is enrolled:

- Consent authorizing the provider or other caregivers employed by the program to obtain emergency medical care for the child.
- Consent 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.
- Consent 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.
- 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.).
- Statement that the parent is familiar with our napping policies and procedures.

### **Illness Policy**

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 axillary	1. Free of fever for 24 hours
2. Temp of 100.4° F oral, 101°F rectal, or 99° F axillary plus one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Severe cold with yellow-green nasal discharge</li> <li>• Cough</li> <li>• Sore throat</li> <li>• Sneezing</li> <li>• Swollen glands</li> <li>• Skin rash</li> </ul>	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 section 418 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 wellbeing 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 always be kept clean and stocked with toilet paper, soap, and towels accessible to staff and children.

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

If a child does not yet use the toilet independently, 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**

Morning Snack	8:30-11:30	provided by school for all children, free choice throughout the morning
Lunch	11:30-12:30	meal provided by parents
Early PM Snack	2:00-3:30	provided by school for all children, free choice
Late PM Snack	3:30-5:30	provided by school for all children, free choice

The school provides morning and afternoon snacks. The Department of Social Services regulates 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 as 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: 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), 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, 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 water 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 ensure 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 himself 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 children must exit the classroom quickly.

### **Outdoor 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 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 can 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 thereafter, 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 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 door. Please check your folder daily for notes and information.

#### **Website and Internet Information**

Our website is [www.NamasteMontessoriSchool.com](http://www.NamasteMontessoriSchool.com)

We maintain a public school Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/NamasteMontessoriSchool](http://www.facebook.com/NamasteMontessoriSchool)

The blog *On The Shelf* is a picture diary and brief explanation of activities in our classroom. [www.montessori-work.blogspot.com](http://www.montessori-work.blogspot.com)

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

#### **Classroom News**

Classroom updates, reminders, and news are emailed twice a month to families.

## **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. Teachers use an online record keeping system (*Transparent Classroom*) to record student progress. Written progress reports are provided to families twice a year.

## **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 children age 3 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, we have special all-school events like dish to pass parties, our Fall Picnic at Taughannock Park, the Winter Concert, and the Spring Square Dance. Each classroom or program level may also host events such as Portfolio Nights, Curriculum Nights, “Bring a Parent to Work” days, as well as parent volunteer days. We will announce these events in our classroom updates and post them on classroom bulletin boards.

## **Montessori Education Nights**

Four to six times 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 classroom updates, website, and local media.



## **Admission Policy**

Namaste Montessori School considers itself more than just a school 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, like dating. Our primary goal in the admissions process is to help each family find the perfect match. Just as not all great people would make us happy as our spouse or business partner, we recognize that we may not be the perfect match as a 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 do not try to convince prospective families that our school is right for you and 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 you to weigh all the factors 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.

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 the 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.

Namaste Montessori School admits students of any race, color, nationality, ethnic origin, and gender identity 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, sexual orientation, or gender identity 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 possible, parents are encouraged to speak with the Head of School or Assistant 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 three weeks in which to enroll your child by signing a contract and paying the non-refundable security deposit equivalent to one-month tuition.

### **Provisional Acceptance**

All children 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 the non-refundable security deposit equivalent to one-month tuition. 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**

In the Toddler and Primary levels should a family initiate withdrawal of a child, a minimum of 60 days advance written notice must be given to the school in order to receive a full refund of tuition deposit.

At the Kindergarten and Elementary Level families are financially obligated and expected to pay tuition for the full 12 month school year. If extenuating circumstances occur that require a family to break the tuition contract with the school the administration will do its best to fill the space and relieve further tuition obligation, but we cannot guarantee this. It is very difficult for the school, the new student and the classroom to fill an elementary space "mid-year".

If both the parents and the school administration decide that Namaste Montessori School 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 Namaste Montessori School is not appropriate for an enrolled child, the family is relieved of any further financial obligation

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.

## **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 (online)
2. Enrollment contract
3. School Registration Form (online)
4. Medical report/immunization documentation/lead screening test
5. Permissions Form
6. List of authorized people able to pick child up from school and emergency contacts (online)

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

## **Tuition Policy**

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

Annual	Due April 1 <sup>st</sup>
Bi-annual	Due April 1 <sup>st</sup> and October 1 <sup>st</sup>
Monthly	Due the 1 <sup>st</sup> of each month, beginning on the first month of attendance

There will be a \$40.00 late tuition payment charged for payments received after the 5th 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 \$40.00 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 Namaste Montessori School values the privacy of each family that is enrolled in our program and will keep personal and private information secure. Only the information approved on the School Registration Form will be included in the school 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 numbers 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.