



NAMASTE MONTESSORI SCHOOL

2023-2024 School Handbook

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Mission Statement

To guide children to reach their fullest potential as members of our community through the construction of self and to instill the desire and pursuit of lifelong learning.

Vision Statement

To respect and view each child as a unique personality, the leader of their education, and an important person in our community, in partnership with parents and guardians. Respect the individual child's needs while nurturing imagination, honesty, creativity, peace, loyalty, grace, and resilience. Focus on the social and emotional experiences of each child in tandem with supporting social, racial, religious, and cultural diversity in the student body.

Campus and Student Body

The Namasté Montessori School is located at 535 Mast Road, Goffstown New Hampshire. The school layout aims to embody Montessori principles of order, simplicity, exploration, and wonder. Our classroom space enables the children to explore each curriculum area. In 2015, the school expanded by adding lower elementary classroom space for children ages six to nine. In 2019, we expanded once again to offer an upper elementary program for children ages nine to twelve.

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 their 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 each child within the learning environment. The teacher adapts the environment through modifying the selection of educational materials available, the physical

layout and equipment within the classroom, and shifting the tone of the class to fit the ever-changing needs of each child. 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 usually 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. Repetition of selected unit studies is key, as each year, children master new elements of the study. 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. The multi-age classroom in the primary level consists of children from ages 2.5 to six years, lower elementary level ages six to nine years, and upper elementary ages nine to twelve. This creates a “family” like group where older children role 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. Making a commitment to each of the three year programs is a vital part of community success both for your child and the entire school community.

Non- Discrimination

Namasté Montessori School believes that social, racial, religious, and cultural diversity in our staff and student body contributes greatly to the value of the school experience.

A. Prohibition Against Discrimination

Namasté Montessori School is committed to maintaining an environment that is free of any type of discrimination and where students, staff and everyone associated with the school is treated with dignity and respect.

The school’s strict prohibition against discrimination includes, but is not limited to discrimination based upon a person’s race, creed, color, religion, national

origin, ancestry, sex, pregnancy, gender identity or expression, age, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, marital status, civil union status, domestic partnership status, affectional or sexual preference or orientation, genetic information or based upon any other characteristic or status protected by State or Federal Law.

This anti-discrimination policy applies to, but is not limited to all educational opportunities, classroom practices, employment practices, compensation, training, hiring, advancement, promotion, discipline, discharge and the selection vendors, contractors and consultants who do business with the school.

Cooperation and Collaboration

Montessori children learn "at their own pace". When the child demonstrates readiness to explore increasingly challenging activities, the teacher in the classroom guides the child gently. 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 child who has mastered an activity will assist a child still working on mastery with an activity or lesson. We encourage all of the children to be role models in our classroom. Group discussion and problem solving are strongly encouraged. We 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 & Curriculum

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 allowing the child to gain critical thinking skills.

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. Children learn because they are interested in learning 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, a lesson from a teacher, etc.

2. **Practicing 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.

Benefits of the Montessori Method

Maria Montessori saw much need for reform in the educational system of her day, just as we see the same need for reform in our educational system today. Her goal was to develop the whole personality of the child and her system is based on a strong belief in the spontaneous working of the human intellect. Her three primary principles are **observation, individual liberty** and **preparation of the environment**. These principles and their various practical expressions with children are gradually becoming part of our educational system. Modern kindergarten classrooms use the child-sized furniture and didactic materials first introduced by Montessori. Such current concepts as individualized learning and readiness programs; manipulative learning, ungraded classes, combined age groups, team teaching and open classrooms reflect many of her early insights.

Parents of young children want to feel safe and secure in leaving their children in an environment that provides for all of their academic, social and emotional needs. A Montessori environment does meet all of the above needs, but it also teaches children an "I can do it" attitude that will ensure their future success in all aspects of their life. Below are some characteristics and benefits of the Montessori method:

- Three-year age span of children within the classroom - Older children teaching younger children, sense of community and builds self esteem.

- Self-correcting materials within the environment - Children learn through their own errors to make the correct decision versus having the teacher point it out to them.
- Individual learning takes place within the environment - Montessori recognizes that each child develops at a different pace and allows that growth to take place.
- Children are quiet by choice and out of respect for others within the environment - The Montessori classroom allows children to return to the "inner peace" that is a natural part of their personalities.
- There is an emphasis on concrete learning rather than on abstract learning - Children need to experience concepts in concrete "hands-on" ways.
- It is a child-centered environment - All the materials are easily within the child's reach and placed on shelves at their levels. The tables and chairs are small enough for the children to sit comfortably while the pictures and decorations are placed at the children's eye level.
- The children work for the joy of working and the sense of discovery - Children are natural leaders or "sponges" and delight in learning new tasks. Their interests lie in the work itself rather than in the end product.
- The environment provides a natural sense of discipline - The "ground rules" or expectations of the child are clearly stated and are enforced by the children and the teachers.
- The environment is "prepared" for the children - Everything in the room has a specific place on the shelf. Children are orderly by nature and having the room set this way allows them to grow in a very positive way.
- The teacher plays a very unobtrusive role in the classroom - The children are not motivated by the teacher, but by the need for self-development.
- The items found on the shelves in the classroom are "materials" rather than "toys." The children "work with the materials" rather than "play with the toys." This allows the children to gain the most benefit from the environment by giving them a sense of worth - the same sense of worth adults experience as they go to their jobs and do their "work." (Montessoriconnections.com)

Recommended Reading for Parents

Below is a short list of suggested reading materials for parents, as it pertains to Maria Montessori, her philosophy and the method of teaching.

1. Montessori, Maria (1949). *The Absorbent Mind*. Madras, India: Theosophical Publication House.
2. American Montessori Society Website & Family Section: <https://amshq.org/Families/Reading-Material>
3. Lillard, Angeline Stoll. (2016). *Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
4. Tomorrow's Child Magazine: <http://www.montessori.org/> .

There is a tremendous amount of books and resources available on the subject. Please ask teachers for other suggested recommendations.

Family Commitment

Your investment and involvement in your child's early childhood education is crucial. A fundamental aspect of the investment is the participation of family and care givers. We value direct communication between each family and the teachers. Since we are a small school it is imperative to have your participation and support as we guide each child's love of learning. We understand life is very busy but we ask that all families make every effort to attend school functions, volunteer your time, and share your interests. Your child's school experience is a large part of their daily life and they love sharing it with you.

School Hours

- Primary Morning Session runs from 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
- Primary Afternoon Session runs from 12:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.
- Kindergarten Session runs from 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
- Primary Full Day Session runs from 8:30a.m. -3:30 p.m.
- Lower Elementary Session runs from 8:30 a.m. - 3:30p.m.

General School and Classroom Guidelines

Namasté 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- use "walking feet".*

- *Use quiet, calm, and gentle voices, no calling or yelling across the classroom---use "indoor voices".*
- *Be kind and gentle to others; we have a **zero** tolerance policy for aggressive behaviors.*
- *Respect privacy and concentration; do not disturb others who are working.*
- *Respect other's personal belongings; do not touch without permission.*
- *Take responsibility for the care of our classroom; return work in good order to shelves.*

Attendance and Tardiness

Children are expected to arrive on time so that we may preserve and protect the classroom work cycle. Tardiness and irregular attendance are a disruption and limit the children's opportunities for growth in all areas of development.

All students are expected to attend school on a daily basis. Consistency and routine are important to every child's development, but they are especially important for the preschool aged child. Late arrival is disruptive and inconsiderate to our learning environment based on respect. We depend on your family's full support in this area.

We understand that every once in a while we all enjoy taking a little vacation from school, perhaps to go out of town, or simply for a day of fun. While we remain supportive, it is still important that you keep your child's absence from class for anything but sickness to a minimum. Although our program is individualized, it depends upon consistency and continuous progress. We ask that you schedule your family vacations during school vacation periods so that we may protect the integrity of our classroom work cycle. **Please contact the school by 8:30 a.m. if your child will not be attending school that day.**

Arrival and Dismissal

Arrival Health Safety Protocol: When you arrive in the morning, a teacher or volunteer will come to the car to take the temperature of your child and ask a few health screening questions. If your child has a fever of 99.5 degrees or higher we will ask that you take your child home. See additional stay at home guidelines under student health.

Schedules:

Our Primary **Morning Program** begins promptly at 8:30a.m. Drop off begins between 8:20 a.m - 8: 30 a.m. A teacher or volunteer will greet you and your child outside your vehicle to conduct a temperature check and health screen. If you arrive after 8:30a.m. please bring your child to the door of the school. A teacher will meet you at the door to conduct a health screen.

Dismissal is between 11:20a.m.- 11:30a.m. It is essential that children be picked up by this time. The teacher will walk your child to the car and place your child in your care outside of the vehicle. You will be responsible for buckling your child securely into their car seat.

Our Primary **Afternoon Program** begins promptly at 12:30p.m. Drop off begins between 12:20 p.m. - 12:30p.m. A teacher or volunteer will greet you and your child outside your vehicle to conduct a temperature check and health screen. If you arrive after 12: 30p.m. please bring your child to the door of the school. A teacher will meet you at the door to conduct a health screen.

Dismissal is promptly between 3:20p.m.- 3:30p.m. It is essential that children be picked up by this time. The teacher will walk your child to the car and place your child in your care outside of the vehicle. You will be responsible for buckling your child securely into their car seat.

Our Primary **Kindergarten Program** promptly begins at 8:30a.m. Drop off begins between 8:20a.m-8:30a.m. Kindergarteners will be dismissed between 12:50p.m.- 1:00p.m. A teacher or volunteer will greet you and your child outside your vehicle to conduct a temperature check and health screen. If you arrive after 8:30a.m. please bring your child to the door of the school. A teacher will meet you at the door to conduct a health screen.

Dismissal is promptly between 12:50p.m. -1:00p.m. It is essential that children be picked up by this time. The teacher will walk your child to the car and place your child in your care outside of the vehicle. You will be responsible for buckling your child securely into their car seat.

Our **Full Day Program** promptly begins at 8:30a.m. Drop off begins between 8:20a.m-8: 30a.m. A teacher or volunteer will greet you and your child outside your vehicle to conduct a temperature check and health screen. If you arrive

after 8:30a.m. please bring your child to the door of the school. A teacher will meet you at the door to conduct a health screen.

Pick up is promptly between 3:20p.m- 3:30p.m. It is essential that children be picked up by this time. The teacher will walk your child to the car and place your child in your care outside of the vehicle. You will be responsible for buckling your child securely in their car seat.

Our **Lower & Upper Elementary Program** promptly begins at 8:30a.m. Drop off begins between 8:20a.m-8:30a.m.. A teacher or volunteer will greet you and your child outside your vehicle conduct a temperature check and health screen. If you arrive after 8:30a.m. please bring your child to the elementary entrance. A teacher will meet you at the door to conduct a health screen.

Pick up is between at 3:20p.m- 3:30p.m. It is essential that children be picked up by this time. The teacher will dismiss your child and they will walk to the car. You will be responsible for buckling your child in the car.

Staffing is planned for the number of children pre-enrolled for a given program so children who are picked up late may considerably disrupt the program during transition time.

Car seats are required during arrival and dismissal. Children will not be released without a car seat.

A written note is required before teachers will release a child to any person who is not listed on forms provided by the school. Please give the written note to the teacher upon arrival.

Vehicle Movement:

It is very important for the safety of everyone at the school to have cars during arrival and dismissal times pull into the driveway and make a u-turn so your car is facing the road. Please pull your car up as close to the teachers parking spaces as possible. ***Please do not park on the road; if the parking lot is full you may wait in the parking lot across the street.*** This will help us all with a smooth and safe arrival and dismissal. **We ask children to remain buckled in their car seat until a teacher greets them at the car to ensure maximum safety in the parking lot.** Children must never leave the building without an adult. Children may not play in the backyard or run in the parking lot unless an adult is with them. This is particularly important during events held at NMS.

Emergency/Late Pick Up Fee:

If you must be late due to an emergency, please call /text to let us know as soon as possible so that arrangements can be made. Children picked up later than 11:30 a.m., 1:00 p.m, or 3:30p.m., based on their program will incur a late charge of \$20.00 for the first 10 minutes late and \$1 per minute thereafter. Cash payment is expected at time of pick up eliminating the need for excess billing.

Early Pick Up:

Please make arrangements with the teacher for early pick up if needed. If you are picking your child up early we ask that you arrive at least 10 minutes before a scheduled dismissal time. Please text the school when you arrive and wait outside the school door, a teacher will dismiss your child outside of the school.

Communication

It is very important for teachers and parents to establish and maintain close communication. Please feel free to ask questions or discuss anything related to your child's progress. We ask, however, that you understand that the teacher's responsibility during school is to the students. During school hours we are likely to route most calls to voicemail to avoid interfering with lessons and classroom dynamics. Text messages work best during school hours.

Morning arrival in particular is a very sensitive period when the teachers are greeting each student and setting a calm, pleasant tone for the day. Interruptions need to be kept to a minimum. If you must speak with a teacher in the morning, please make arrangements to speak before school begins. Otherwise, you can correspond via email and the teacher will get back to you by email, phone or will work with you to set up a conference as needed. **Email is the best method of communication should any questions or concerns arise.** We do our best to answer all communications within 24-48 hours. Our full contact information is located in the administration section of this handbook and will also be included in the family directory.

If for some reason the policies or decisions of the school concern you or your family, we would greatly appreciate and welcome you to communicate your concerns by setting up a conference. Oftentimes, we will be able to resolve the issue to the benefit of the entire community.

Please communicate any significant changes in your child's life to your child's teacher. These changes may include remarriage, divorce, traveling, a death in the family, future birth of a sibling, or any situation similar thereof as these situations may cause a change in the child's behavior. The teacher will be better able to respond to your child if the said significant changes are communicated. Any information provided will remain confidential.

The school policy in the event of divorce proceedings is not to engage for either party including submitting a letter to the court or mediator on behalf for either parent. We strive to be a neutral, safe and loving place to help support your child through a difficult period. If at anytime a teacher feels a child's safety or well being is at risk they will report via their obligation as a mandatory reporter.

Newsletter/Website

NMS sends out an electronic monthly newsletter. **The newsletter is our primary means of communication.** Our newsletter includes important information including classroom updates, important messages from teachers, and photos from our time together. We count on parents to read the newsletter to stay up to date on school happenings. If for some reason, you are not receiving the newsletter by email please inform one of the teachers.

Conferences

Two parent conferences will be scheduled throughout the year; one will take place in October and one will take place in January. We are also happy to schedule an end of the year conference with you and your family by request. Conferences create the opportunity to meet with your child's teacher to discuss their progress and to determine future goals. Please let teachers know prior to the conference if there are particular topics or areas you would like to discuss. Conferences are scheduled in twenty minute blocks per child. *Please arrange for childcare, as the school will be closed on these days.*

Early Intervention and Supplemental Services

The development and progress of your child in relation to the Montessori curriculum will be discussed at parent teacher conferences. Teachers may recommend additional evaluations be sought to help support your child's learning. In the event of a recommendation, we ask evaluations be conducted

within one month of conference and the results of the evaluation be shared with the school. At that point in time, we will determine if the school is able to meet the needs of the child.

If it is determined we are able to work in partnership, we will create an educational plan with clear goals, guidelines, expectations and a timeline for the student, teacher and parents. After the implementation of the plan a follow up conference will be scheduled to ensure adequate progress is being made for all parties. We ask reports and evaluations be shared with the school for any outside services that support the child. We ask for this information in order to compliment our curriculum with services where appropriate.

Please try to schedule any additional outside support services outside of the regularly scheduled school day. If scheduling outside of the normal school day is unavoidable please provide the school with a regular schedule of dismissals for the duration of services to provide consistency for the child and our classroom routine.

School Cancellations and Closures

In the case of inclement weather, school cancellations can be found online on the WMUR TV channel 9 website or scrolling on the bottom of the Channel 9 news. A two hour delay may be in order if the roads are not safe to drive. If the school has a two hour delay the morning preschool session from 8:30-11:30 a.m. will not have school. The decision to close the school is made based on the safety of travel for students and teachers. Keeping everyone safe is our top priority.

In the event of a non-weather related emergency causing the school closing the information will be sent out by text message.

During the COVID 19 pandemic or any national health crisis, the school will make a decision regarding the health and safety of our school community based on the guidelines provided by experts, the State of New Hampshire, as well as, consideration of the health and safety of our staff and the children. If we must close the school due to a pandemic; we will move to a remote learning structure.

The last day of school will be June 9, 2021. Snow days will not be made up at the end of the year.

Remote Learning

In the event the school must close to ensure the health and safety of its community we will move to a remote structure. The structure is designed to be developmentally appropriate for each plane of development. Our model will evolve over time, as the partnership we create with you as parents help to strengthen learning and problem solve challenging areas. Full tuition will be expected in a remote learning environment.

Primary

- Online daily circle limited to 20-30 minutes. This time will be used to share a short lesson, read a story and connect socially. Meeting every day will help to create a routine of learning for friends.
- A weekly packet of hands-on activities. Packets will be available for pick-up at the school. They will be located in a plastic bin and may be picked up on Friday mornings starting at 8:30am - Sunday evening. The packet will include materials needed for the learning week beginning on Monday.

Elementary

- Online daily meeting. Meeting time will be utilized to make a daily plan of work with each student, share lessons, and connect socially.
- Online learning platform that will structure the lessons and work plan for the week. Lessons will be recorded so work may be completed at the convenience of each family. If materials or lessons are not accessed or submitted a parent teacher conference will be requested.
- A schedule for individual student check-ins with teacher for support with academics.
- We will hold a weekly teacher office hour. This will be a time for parents to check-in and ask any questions you may have. Parents may participate in the office hour as needed.
- Literature circle meetings for lower elementary and upper elementary. These will be held once a week.

This structure is an evolving process. If we must enter into remote learning, please share with us how it is working or not working for your family and the

student. We aim to provide enough structure and accountability for students to continue their learning at the same pace as if we are physically in school.

If a student does not participate in the online learning activities, we will request a parent teacher conference to discuss the situation. Unfortunately, if certain curriculum elements are not met within the elementary programs we will have to discuss the need for an additional year of study to cover the necessary material.

Professional Development

Continuing education is fundamental and necessary for our teachers. It creates new ideas and knowledge to offer the strongest environment for your child. The school will be closed on teacher workshop days.

Personal Possessions

Your child will have their own cubby at the school. Their cubby will be a place to keep their extra clothes, coat, and shoes. Elementary friends will utilize a closet to store their backpacks, coats and shoes. We ask that children not run or jump on the stairs within the cubby area. We ask the children to put their shoes on while sitting on the bottom step to ensure safety. We ask when parents are at the school they help to support these rules to create consistency for the children in the environment.

What to Bring?

On your child's first day of school, please send in a change of clothes including two pairs of underwear and two pairs of socks in a zip lock bag. This bag will stay at school. We will use this change of clothes in case of a spill or accident. If you know that your child will need more than one change of clothes in a day, please pack accordingly. We will send home any soiled items and ask you replenish them the following day. Your child will be working hard, so be prepared for spills, soil, paint and/or glue on clothes. **PLEASE LABEL EVERYTHING.** Parents have had great success with Me Decals which are customized, machine washable and removable: https://www.etsy.com/shop/MeYDecals?section_id=11825487.

Backpacks: Elementary students may utilize a back pack for their belongings. Please keep toys at home and/or toy keychains to a minimum as they become very distracting throughout the course of the day.

Masks: We ask parents to include a labeled mask for your child to be kept in the spare clothing bag.

Dress for Success. Keep in mind that your child should be able to easily put on and take off clothing or footwear. Any item that inhibits your child's ability to be independent during times, such as using the bathroom or preparing to go outside, should be reconsidered.

Children will also need a pair of comfortable slippers to wear inside the classrooms. Please purchase a pair of slippers that velcro, have a back and do not include any characters. We have found slippers with a rubber bottom the best in case of an emergency or when children need to be outside. We have found Kamik, Toms, Lands End and L.L. Bean make a durable slipper that work well in the classroom:

- Kamik CozyLodge Slipper
- Lands End Kids Sherpa Fleece Bootie House Slippers or Kids Suede Leather Moccasin Slippers with no tie
- Toms brand shoe or slipper
- L. L. Bean Kids' Sweater Fleece Slippers

Children play outdoors almost every day and should be dressed accordingly. A light jacket and rain boots (on damp days) in the fall and spring; winter jacket, waterproof mittens, hat, snow pants and snow boots in winter. We encourage parents to send in snow pants, waterproof gloves, and hat to be kept at school over the winter months. If a child does not have their gear, they may be asked to stay indoors.

Diaper Free By Three

We encourage parents to be supporting bathroom independence no later than three years old. Children enter a sensitive period for bathroom use, they are naturally curious beginning around the age of one. If your child is not using the toilet on their own, please use the summer months prior to school to begin to support them achieve this important milestone. We recommend checking in with them every fifteen minutes and have them sit and try to use the bathroom. We discourage use of diapers or pull-ups because it inhibits the child's ability to feel the consequence of an accident. If you make the commitment to the process it can happen very rapidly. For more information this is a great link on process and verbiage: <https://www.themontessorinotebook.com/montessori-approach-toilet-training/>. And don't worry - it will happen!

Snack

All children will enjoy an individual snack each day. We ask that parents pack a nutritious and sugar free snack for your child each day. Many families have found the Yumbox to work well for packing snack/lunch. The children are asked not to share their snack with others. Your child will be asked to wash their hands prior to any meal or snack time at the school. They will also practice the important skill of tidying up upon completion of their snack by sponging the table, sweeping under their space, and tucking their chair in to leave it beautiful for the next friend.

Lunch

Our goal is a waste free and nutritious lunch for each child. Please provide a lunch box labeled with your child's name. Allowing children to participate in the preparation and packing of lunch helps the children to truly enjoy its process and product. We observe a no-sugar policy at school. We ask that you do not include dessert or treat items in the lunch as many prepackaged foods contain high amounts of sugar and sodium with little nutritional value. Please send only nutritious food choices for your child's lunch. We ask that you pack the necessary utensils for your child. As it is not possible for us to warm up food in the primary classroom, please send those food items that need to be warm, in a thermos.

Elementary friends may use the microwave in the school kitchen. We ask you pack all the necessary items such as utensils, plate and/or bowl to do so. We encourage lunchtime to be a peaceful and social event for the children, during which they will have an opportunity to practice social graces and table manners.

Note:

If your child is attending the **kindergarten program**, please pack a nutritious snack for the morning along with their lunch. If your child is attending the primary **full day program, lower or upper elementary program**, please pack a nutritious snack for the morning and afternoon along with their lunch. On days the weather permits, we will enjoy eating a picnic lunch outdoors.

Lunch Bunch:

For friends that do not attend our kindergarten or full day program, we offer a lunch bunch program. Your child may occasionally join friends for lunch. Lunch bunch runs from 11:30a.m.-1:00p.m. for \$15.00. Cash payment is expected at

time of pick up eliminating the need for billing. Please call one day in advance to schedule. ***Lunch is not a part of all programs, please check with your child's teacher.***

Pandemic Protocol

The COVID -19 pandemic helped us all practice many skills such as patience, resiliency, and respect for one another. We were grateful to stay open the entire 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school year with the exception of one week of remote learning. Due to the success of the policies we put in place we have chosen to keep the protocol in the handbook should we be faced with implementing them in the future. Upon arrival students will be screened and given a health check prior to being removed from the car. If they have a fever of 99.5 degrees or higher we will ask you to take them home and be fever free without medication for 48 hours prior to their return.

Your child may return to school when they are symptom free and have a negative COVID 19 test. At home tests are acceptable, please date and include child's name when you email the picture.

Once your child has conducted the health screen they will enter the cubby room, put slippers on and take snack/lunch box into the classroom. They will be asked to wash their hands with soap for at least 20 seconds. Children will be asked to wash their hands prior to every snack/meal, returning from outdoor play and prior to dismissal.

The classroom will continue to be cleaned and disinfected at the end of each school day.

A blanket and pillow will be provided by the school if your child needs to rest. These materials will be washed immediately after use with hot water and bleach.

If we are experiencing a national health crisis, we ask you to take the responsibility of monitoring your child's health very seriously and consider your actions and their effect on the entire school community. If a teacher becomes ill, the school will close and remote learning will be suspended until they recover. The school will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

Student Health

Whenever your child is ill, please email or text the school between 8:00a.m. and 8:30a.m. to let us know that they will be absent.

Students with infectious diseases, such as but not limited to **COVID 19, cough, nasal discharge, chicken pox, strep throat, fever, conjunctivitis, diarrhea, vomiting, or any type of undiagnosed rash**, must stay out of school until the contagious stage has passed and a doctor's note is provided stating the child may attend school. For the protection of all children, and of the staff as well, your child should be kept home if they show any of the following symptoms:

Fever, diarrhea or vomiting, a rash, nasal discharge or discharging eyes/ears, persistent cough.

The student will be sent home if any of the symptoms appear while he or she is at school. We will also ask for a Licensed Health Care Practitioner note that provides clearance for the child to attend school. The following are clear indicators that your child should be sent home: Fever, green, yellow, or brown mucous discharge, ear pain, head lice, redness, bumps on skin, face, arms, legs or body, continuous cough, fever the night before, diarrhea or throwing up the night before or that morning. If we send your child home with a fever, rash, vomiting, diarrhea or conjunctivitis, they may not return the next day. They must be fever and/or illness free for at least 48 hours without the aid of medication.

Parents should exercise caution and keep their child home should other unusual symptoms occur. If you as a parent or anyone the child has had direct contact with is experiencing COVID 19 symptoms we ask that you keep your child home and monitor them.

In the event your child becomes sick at school or complains that they are not feeling well teachers will have the child lay down. A teacher will take their temperature. In the absence of a fever we will have the child continue to rest and check on them repeatedly unless other persistent symptoms are occurring. **If the child has a fever we will call parents immediately to come pick up the child. We ask that the child be picked up within fifteen minutes of notification by the school.** We recommend families create a backup plan with other family members or friends for pickup/care of your child in the event of an illness and you are unavailable for pick-up. Please be sure to share release forms with the school for these individuals.

If your child has an allergy, please share with the school an action care plan from their physician. All care plans must be on file prior to the start of the school year.

Symptoms that Should Keep Kids Home

1. **Colds:** The biggest reasons to keep your child home with a cold is they are often lethargic and have trouble engaging with others. When a child comes to school with a cold, oftentimes the teacher is tending to their illness while also trying to manage the entire class. Tired children not feeling themselves often have challenges participating at school, managing their friendships in a kind way, and engaging in lessons or activities. We have found friends who stay home and rest early in an illness often recover faster and are back at school sooner. When they are at school they need to be able to fully participate. It is also likely at the early stage of an illness- they are contagious.
2. **Fever:** Children need to be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school. If your child is sent home we home, we ask they stay home the following school day.
3. **Coughs:** If a cough keeps your child up at night or worsens when he or she wakes and is more active, they should stay home. Just like a cold, if they are tired it is much harder for them to manage a successful day in the classroom. We ask children to cough in their elbow at school and it is a great extension to practice at home too!
4. **Sore Throat:** If your child wakes up with a sore throat, try giving them something to drink and see if it improves. If the pain persists, they need to see a doctor and be checked for COVID 19 and/or Strep Throat.
5. **Ear Infections:** They can return once they have started medication for the infection.
6. **Vomiting and/or Diarrhea:** If they vomit, keep them home. If they have diarrhea, keep them home. Your student may return to school after 24 hours with neither vomiting nor fever.
7. **Pinkeye:** Conjunctivitis is highly contagious! Children can return once they have been on antibiotic drops for 48 hours.
8. **Head Lice:** Lice is the parasite, nits are the eggs. All the parasites and nits must be picked out of the children's hair and a suitable treatment program underway before they return.
9. **Rashes:** While rashes are often common with children they should be checked by a doctor. Unfortunately, as teachers we can not diagnose a rash

from food or clothes detergent to that of highly contagious rashes from Chicken Pox, Impetigo, and Hand, Foot and Mouth disease.

Medication:

We do not dispense medications to children at the school. If your child needs regular doses of medication due to sickness please keep them home.

We must have on file prior to the start of the year:

- Your child's current immunization record. You may find a listing of the required vaccinations by the state of NH for your child here: <http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/DPHS/immunization/index.htm>
- Physical Record dated within the last year
- Emergency Contact/ Medical Release Form
- EOP Form
- Photo Release, Necklace, Sunscreen, Water Activity Release Forms
- Action Care Plan if your child has an allergy
- COVID 19 Release
- School Application
- Tuition Contract
- Tuition Policies and Handbook Agreement

If we do not have all the paperwork listed above, your child may not begin school.

Emergency Care:

All teachers at NMS are first aid and CPR certified. In the event of an emergency a teacher will attempt to call the parents first and then proceed to contact the next emergency contact. If necessary your child will be transported by ambulance to the Catholic Medical Center in Manchester. The emergency medical release form will accompany your child in order for treatment to be administered immediately. If your child has an allergy, a written care plan provided by their doctor must be included in their file prior to the start of school.

Mandated Reporters

As faculty of Namaste Montessori by law we are mandated reporters of any child abuse or neglect. Mandated reporters are allowed to report anonymously, confidentially and with full disclosure. Reports are made directly to the NH Division for Children, Youth, and Families at 1-800-894-5533.

Positive Discipline

Learning social skills, sharing and negotiation skills are some of the fundamental topics we will explore throughout the year with the children. The Montessori Method due to its organization of the environment alleviates many issues regarding discipline. In addition, being in a multi-age classroom, the older children serve as role models for the younger child who wish to emulate their behavior.

In our classroom we encourage the children to discuss their problems with the friend they are having an issue. Below is a typical conversation you will hear in the classroom.

Child places hand on friends shoulder to send a message.

"John, you spilled my snack over when you were walking by."

"I'm sorry I spilled your snack."

"I accept your apology, please don't do it again."

This simple three step process often handles most issues between children. Sometimes, teachers will intervene to help find an appropriate compromise and model kind behavior. Problem solving and conflict resolution skills are two of the most important skills we hope to partner with you and your child.

On occasion, inappropriate behavior may cause disruption within the classroom. In the event behavior continues to be a challenge the following steps are implemented by the teachers:

- Discussion with the friends involved including the teacher to find an appropriate compromise and resolution.
- Teachers model calm behavior.
- Teachers may ask the child to work next to them for the course of the session.
- The child may be redirected to another activity.
- The child helps to repair any damage done to materials.
- The child may be asked to take a moment to think about their choices. and may rejoin the environment after a conversation with a teacher.
- The behavior will be discussed with the parents by phone or in person to determine the best solution moving forward.

We have a zero tolerance policy regarding violence, bullying or aggression at the school. In the case of continued misbehavior the director will request a parent/teacher conference. This conference is requested in order to work

together to find the best possible solution for all involved. If no improvement is shown after the course of remediation, further professional help may be sought and the child may be suspended or the family may need to find another placement for the child. There are no circumstances under which restraint and seclusion would be used at the school.

Birthdays

Children love to celebrate their birthdays with their friends. We have a special birthday ceremony called a "birthday walk" in which we share with each other the story of your child's life.

In the primary classroom, the ceremony involves you sharing a few milestones about your child in each year of their life. Please send in your milestone sheet with one photo of your child at each year. Parents are welcome to join us for the celebration as well. Please set up the day in advance with the teacher.

On the day of the ceremony we will begin by having you share a few important milestones in the first year of their life. After you finish sharing the first year, your child will take our special earth and walk around the "sun" at circle one time to represent the first year of their life on earth. We will then move onto the second, third, fourth, etc. years. Parents in the past have simply shared these milestones verbally, while some bring in pictures or special memorabilia, and others have created video presentations. We ask that any presentation brought in be kept to no more than 15 minutes.

In the lower elementary classroom, the birthday walk tradition provides a wonderful opportunity for your child to practice presentation skills. Your child will be asked to make a timeline, similar to the timelines used in the classroom, to share a fun fact for each year. Please work with your child prior to their presentation day to choose items important to them to share with their friends. Friends may bring in fruit to share with friends on the day of their birthday walk.

If you have any questions regarding the course of events, please do not hesitate to contact the school directly.

Summer birthdays will be celebrated in September/ May. Please coordinate with your teacher directly to arrange the ideal time.

Please refrain from distributing birthday invitations at the school. These invitations should be sent through the mail. We discourage discussions

regarding birthday celebrations or play dates to avoid hurt feelings in the event all friends are not invited.

Flowers

One of the unique aspects of the Montessori classroom is the emphasis on the beauty of the environment. One of the most popular works in our classroom is flower arranging. We ask that each family supply a bouquet of fresh cut flowers as a contribution to our environment. Purchasing flowers is not necessary if you have flowers from your own gardens. Each family will not be asked to provide flowers more than three times throughout the year.

School Pictures

School pictures will be taken in September with Cara Sanford Studios. All questions regarding photos and packages may be sent directly to the photographer.

Celebrations

Spring Tea- Children will invite a guest to join them for a tea party. The tea is a beloved tradition and an important event that culminates the practical life skills the children have worked on throughout the year. Dress up in your tea party best and enjoy.

Completion Ceremony - Each year we hold a completion ceremony in June to end our school year. It is an opportunity to share a special performance and share time together as a community. All family members are welcome to join us for the ceremony.

Observations

Observations are strongly encouraged and will be scheduled one week prior to parent teacher conferences. A link to sign-up for an observation time will be shared through our newsletter. They are typically thirty minutes in length. Share your plans to observe with your child so that they know what to expect from the day.

When you come to observe, you will be guided to an observation chair and given a welcome letter and set of questions to help guide your observation. Keep in mind that you probably won't see a typical day for your child. Do not expect your child to show you their amazing academic achievements. Your child will most likely show you the materials they are most comfortable with

and confident in using. Your presence is the most important part of this day for your child.

What to look for during your observation:

- Children working independently, concentrating and focusing on their work.
- Children helping each other and problem solving together.
- Children caring for themselves and for their environment.
- Teachers guiding and helping children.
- Tone of the environment.

Parent Night

We will host parent/teacher meetings over the course of the year. These meetings will be held as evening meetings. A variety of goals will be met through these meetings including: upcoming events, planning, and child development education. It will also be an opportunity to answer any general questions you may have regarding the handbook over the course of the year and to plan together for our many special events.

School Fundraisers

The school participates in a variety of annual fundraisers. Below is a listing of some of the fundraisers we participate in each year. Additional fundraisers may be added as organized by volunteers or due to need in the community. Additions or changes will be communicated through our newsletter.

Montessori Services: The Montessori Services company hosts a fundraiser for schools allowing up to 15% of a group order to be donated back to the school. We traditionally send out catalogs to families in September/October for the order to be placed and items to be shipped in time for holidays. Details and instructions will be sent to families through the newsletter. The school utilizes the gift certificate to purchase new materials for the classroom.

Scholastic Book Orders: The school has been able to expand its library selections since starting our participation with Scholastic. Book order forms will be sent home with friends. Parents may place book orders online or send in your order form along with a check. Cash will not be accepted for book orders. Our school code for online ordering is MNVZJ.

Thanksgiving & Holiday Donations: We collect personal care items and toiletries such as: soap, toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, toothbrushes, etc. to donate to local charities.

Safety/Fire Drills/Emergency Plans

The school has an emergency response plan in place that will be implemented in the case of an emergency. In your enrollment packet you will receive a *Parent Emergency Evacuation Form* that describes reunification plans should an emergency occur.

Over the course of the year we are required to conduct one fire drill per month. We are required to conduct two drills with the use of the entire alarm system during the school year. We understand that these drills can cause anxiety and great excitement. Our protocol for a fire drill is for the children to line up quietly and peacefully. We walk outside using the front door and meet at our meeting spot on the left side of the parking lot. Our meeting spot is near the corner of the driveway. The children will line up along the fence and the teachers will call out each child's name and ask for them to respond "here". In the event of an emergency, parents will be notified after the children are safe and secure. For your child's safety the school door will be kept locked throughout the day.

Administration

Telephone: You may reach the school directly at 603-627-3503 or Ms. Jess at 603-722-9474. If you call during the normal school day it is unlikely we will be available to answer the phone. Please leave a message and we will return the call at our first opportunity. You may also text the above numbers with any important messages.

Email: Email is the best communication method for general questions and concerns. You may email:

Primary Classroom at namaste_childrenshouse@yahoo.com

Elementary Classroom at namastelowerelementary@gmail.com

Website: The school's website may be accessed at www.namastemontessori.net

Social Media: The school has a Facebook page where we post pictures of materials, and new works. We encourage you to help grow our community by liking our page.

Family Directory: A family directory will be distributed to all families. Please inform the school if there are any changes with the information listed. We will update the directory and share with all the families electronically along with our newsletter.

Handbook & Tuition Policies

The Namasté Montessori School is completely dependent on tuition as its principal source of income. Student accounts must be kept up to date. The school will be forced to withhold any and all services to children whose accounts have fallen behind unless written arrangements have been made for deferred payment. Your cooperation is essential and very much appreciated.

As stated in the tuition contract tuition is due on the 1st day of each month. If payment is paid after the time of your dismissal on the 1st of the month a late fee of \$30.00 will be added to the account. If for any reason you decide to withdraw from the Namasté Montessori School LLC, full tuition payment is due for the remainder of the school year.

Thank you for taking the time to study this handbook! Your cooperation and concerns for the various operations and programs of our school are necessary for the success of our children and their school.

Please sign and date below and return to the director of the school.

I have read the Namaste Montessori School LLC Parent Handbook. I/we agree to abide by and support the policies of our child's / children's school.

_____ Date_____

_____ Date_____

This handbook has been revised as of July 2023. The policies and procedures contained in this handbook supersede and are controlling over all other past correspondence, written, or oral, and issued in handbooks.