



# Family Handbook

2019-2020

329 Dayton Avenue  
Saint Paul, MN 55102  
651.222.1555  
[www.CHMSchool.org](http://www.CHMSchool.org)



## A Message from the Head of School

*Dear Families,*

*Welcome to Cathedral Hill Montessori School! This handbook has been prepared to provide you with information about our school so that you and your child can have a successful year. Please read it carefully and keep it handy. This handbook is also available on our school website.*

*Our staff are committed to serving your child's best interests and providing the highest quality education. We ask each family to pledge a commitment of collaboration with us in support of your child. To facilitate this partnership, it is necessary for all families to become familiar with our school's programs and policies as outlined in this handbook. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the content of this handbook, or any aspect of your child's experience here at CHMS.*

*We look forward to a year filled with exciting educational opportunities and growth for your child. A Montessori education leads to a lifetime as a true learner. It is the foundation for all of one's future works. We are pleased your family chose to be part of the CHMS community and hope you are excited to observe and raise a Montessori child!*

*Sincerely,*

*–Maya Verjovsky*

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## General Information

### Faculty and Staff

#### Administration

Head of School	Maya Verjovsky	<a href="mailto:maya@chmschool.org">maya@chmschool.org</a>
Administrative Assistant	Sam Mickle	<a href="mailto:sam@chmschool.org">sam@chmschool.org</a>

#### Children's House 1

Lead Guide	Amanda Wooden	<a href="mailto:amandaw@chmschool.org">amandaw@chmschool.org</a>
Assistant	Clara Iwaszek	<a href="mailto:clara@chmschool.org">clara@chmschool.org</a>

#### All Day Children's House (2)

Lead Guide	Ellen Stewart	<a href="mailto:ellen@chmschool.org">ellen@chmschool.org</a>
All Day Children's House Assistant	Kellie Asher	
All Day Children's House Morning Assistant	Molly Hoyt	<a href="mailto:molly@chmschool.org">molly@chmschool.org</a>
All Day Children's House Afternoon Assistant	Dana Telander	
Afternoon Floating Assistant	Manya Jacobson	

#### Toddler Community

Toddler Community Guide	Maegan Schock	<a href="mailto:maegan@chmschool.org">maegan@chmschool.org</a>
Toddler Community Assistant	Laura Tracy	<a href="mailto:laura@chmschool.org">laura@chmschool.org</a>
Toddler Community Assistant	Lindsey Mazzitello	

## Board of Directors

### Executive Board Members

President	Lara Bergman	member since August 2016
Vice President	Lora Horgen	member since August 2017
Treasurer	Alex Jude	member since August 2016
Secretary	Oriana Leishman	member since August 2018
Executive Director (Ex-Officio)	Maya Verjovsky	member since August 2018
	Jeremy Prose	member since August 2015
	Mandy Perna	member since August 2018
	Crystal Cunningham	member since August 2018

### Board Committees

Development/  
Fundraising

Events & Marketing /  
Facilities

Head of School Support  
& Evaluation Committee

Finance

Strategic Planning

## Overview

### **Mission Statement**

Our mission is to provide a safe, beautiful and authentic Montessori learning environment; to serve an inclusive community of multicultural and economically diverse families; and to support children in becoming confident, independent, and compassionate members of society.

This mission is best accomplished by:

- Fostering a love of learning;
- Providing programs carefully adhering to the Montessori standards set forth by the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) and informed by current thinking and research on child development and learning;
- Embracing a diverse student community in which children experience and learn to respect and celebrate ethnic, cultural, economic and other differences and to seek and identify our commonalities;
- Recognizing that personal growth involves responsibility to others, the earth, and our environment; and
- Facilitating the involvement of parents, teachers, children and the larger community.

### **Statement of Philosophy and Objectives**

At Cathedral Hill Montessori, we begin with a deep respect for children as unique individuals. There is a concern for the development of the whole child – social, emotional, intellectual, physical and spiritual. An underlying purpose of a Cathedral Hill Montessori School education is to aid the child in independence and self-formation by creating an environment that can unlock the inherent potential and intelligence within each child. We embrace the Montessori pedagogy – which is based on universal principles of child development – as sound theory and practice for teaching and learning. We look to accepted current research to inform our evolving understanding of human development. Acknowledging the many differences in learning rates and styles, we believe in individualizing each child's school experience for the fullest development of his or her potential. We embrace the concept of a mixed-age, 3-year age span classroom community as optimal for academic, social and emotional learning in early childhood. We believe that the dynamic classroom requires a sufficient gathering of children to operate effectively. We value cooperation over competition and believe that each child's work and behavior should be evaluated on his or her inherent capacity rather than by comparison.

Cathedral Hill Montessori School is committed to providing safe, stimulating and carefully prepared indoor and outdoor environments. These areas help children to develop within themselves the fundamental habits, attitudes, skills and ideas which are essential to independent growth, creative thinking, self-discipline and learning. The Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) trained teachers, along with the assistant staff, lovingly guide the children and foster in them the enthusiasm for learning, helping them build a foundation for life. Cathedral Hill Montessori School is dedicated to an educational program in accordance with the Montessori philosophy and curriculum for children ages 16 months to six years of age.

### **Goals and Objectives:**

- To develop each child's potential through independent choices and self-expression

- To develop a sense of high self-esteem
- To build habits of concentration
- To foster inner discipline and a sense of order
- To develop positive social behavior skills
- To develop a positive attitude toward school and learning

## **The Montessori Approach**

Montessori is a philosophy and method of education which emphasizes the potential of the young child. It develops this potential by utilizing specially trained teachers and special teaching materials. The Montessori materials help the child to understand what he/she learns by associating an abstract concept with a concrete sensorial experience. The Montessori Method stresses that children learn and progress at their own pace.

The Montessori classrooms are “prepared environments,” meaning that the structure and materials within the environment are developmentally appropriate, structured from within and sequentially presented on the shelf and to the child. The classrooms are beautiful, appealing and logically structured. The natural materials, the neatness, and the lack of plastic, as well as the freedom with which the children move, are often striking to the observer. Children are allowed to choose materials that have been presented and are encouraged to repeat working with them. Children are free to interact with one another, work together, or to be by themselves. Visitors are impressed with the love and contentedness with which the children choose their work and enjoy their life in the classroom.

A child most easily learns the rules of human behavior between two and one-half years and six years of age. During these years, the child is the constructor of himself/herself, acquiring the appropriate habits and skills that will help him/her adapt and develop a sense of belonging to our culture. The child who has the benefit of a Montessori environment is better prepared at a later age to devote himself/herself to the development of his/her intellectual potential.

The Montessori approach is designed to help the child build within oneself the foundation of a lifetime of creative learning. In a rapidly changing society, this objective becomes increasingly important. The Guide prepares the environment, directs the activities, functions as a leader, and offers the child intellectual stimulation, but it is the child who learns, motivated through the work itself to persist in his/her given task.

Free, yet structured, indoor and outdoor activities are provided at Cathedral Hill Montessori School. The educational objectives emphasize physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth and development.

## **The History of Cathedral Hill Montessori School**

The founders, Whitney and Andy Blessing, wife and husband, discovered the vacant property at 329 Dayton Avenue in December 2010. Touring this unique mansion home in the historic Cathedral Hill neighborhood of St. Paul, previously used as a nursing home, women’s shelter and boarding school, led them to an ambitious idea to restore it back to life as a Montessori school, Bed & Breakfast and personal residence. The stars aligned and the dream of opening a new Montessori school was quickly underway. Whitney, while in training to earn her AMI-Montessori Primary Diploma at the Montessori Training Center of Minnesota, set to work right away, garnering the support of the local AMI-Montessori community and building a strong Board of Directors of five founding members. With the generous support and dedicated work of friends, family, and the community, the vision for the Montessori school took shape and quickly

became a reality. Cathedral Hill Montessori School opened its doors for the first time in November 2011 with eight children.

The Blessings are passionate about Montessori philosophy and education, particularly for the youngest aged children. Their oldest child began Montessori school as a 15-month old toddler and the experience came with countless positive results. A love of children and a desire to share Montessori with other families is the driving force behind the birth of this school. Cathedral Hill Montessori School continues to grow and develop its history.

## **Accreditation and Memberships**

### **AMI Recognition**

Cathedral Hill Montessori School is fully recognized by the Association of Montessori Internationale (AMI). Dr. Maria Montessori established this organization in 1929 to uphold and preserve the integrity of the Montessori method, as well as the quality of the prepared environments and the training of Montessori Guides. Recognition as an AMI school is a commitment to the original precepts of Dr. Montessori's principles of education. Each lead Guide at CHMS has earned a diploma from AMI, in addition to earning a Master's degree in Education. CHMS also serves as a training school for student observers and trainees from the Montessori Center of Minnesota, an AMI training center in St. Paul.

### **NAMTA**

The North American Montessori Teachers Association (NAMTA) provides a medium of study, interpretation, and improvement of Montessori education. NAMTA creates real services designed for Montessori Guides and schools. Traditionally, CHMS Guides are members of NAMTA.

## **Licensing**

Cathedral Hill Montessori School is licensed under the Minnesota Department of Human Services, License No. 1060544. You may contact the Department of Licensing at (651) 296-3971 if you have any questions. Our state licenser contact is Kaysie Furlong (651) 431-5755.

## Educational Programs

The hours of operation for CHMS are 7:30am - 5:30pm, Monday through Friday. We offer two year-round educational programs: Children's House (preschool and kindergarten), and Toddler Community (16-33 months).

### **Children's House**

**3 years - 6 years**

The preschool classroom is also referred to as the Children's House. It is a specially prepared environment for children between three and six years. The Children's Houses at CHMS will have up to 20-25 children at full capacity depending on the classroom, with one Lead Guide (teacher), trained specifically for this age group, and one assistant, who is also either AMI assistant-trained or fully trained as a Lead.

We offer a Half Day (8:30am-12:30pm), and Full Day (8:30am-3:30pm) program for Montessori education, as well as an All Day Children's House (8:30am-5:30pm) and an Extended Morning option (7:30-8:30am). Daily snacks are available in the morning and afternoon. Lunch is a delightful collective activity, with lunches prepared with love from home. Milk, water, dishes, and utensils are provided by CHMS.

### **Philosophy**

For much of the children's day in the Children's House environment, they are free to choose their own "work." Working with a variety of materials helps the children develop coordination, concentration, independence and a sense of order. It also assists in their self-discipline and self-esteem. The children develop a sense of ownership in the Children's House because the environment is designed to promote self-reliance and self-expression.

The Children's House helps to unify the social, physical and intellectual functioning of each child. Our aim is to provide children with an early foundation that includes a positive attitude toward school life, inner security, a sense of order, pride, appreciation of the environment, curiosity, concentration, self-discipline, and responsibility for oneself and others. Through interaction with the Montessori environment, the child learns to construct him/herself in a positive manner, thereby benefiting the child in school and in life.

In the Children's House, instruction occurs one-on-one or in small groups. The Guide carefully observes your child to accurately gauge his/her interest and readiness for certain activities and concepts. The Montessori materials within the room are organized in a logical, sequential manner, providing a structure that guides a child's curiosity and discovery. A series of "presentations," or lessons, and developmentally-appropriate materials are designed to enable the child to refine and master specific skills. Each series of presentations and materials is grouped by broader content that complement and relate to one another.

**The Children's House is divided into four distinct learning areas: Practical Life, Sensorial, Language and Math.**

- **Practical Life:** Among many other life skills, children learn how to wash, cook, sweep, plant and sew. Practical Life activities help children to develop and refine their skills of independence, concentration, control of movement, and maturation of the will through repetition and the freedom to make choices. The areas of Practical Life are divided into self-care, care of the environment, control of movement, visual art, and lessons in grace and courtesy.

- **Sensorial:** Children learn through sight, touch, sound, taste, and smell using concrete materials such as binomial cubes, geometric shapes, constructive triangles, tasting bottles, and other materials that enable the child to comprehend, classify, and clarify his/her impressions of the world.
- **Language:** Children are introduced to nomenclature and vocabulary through spoken language activities and games. They are also introduced to the 26 letters of the English alphabet and their associated sounds. With the help of a movable alphabet, children are able to write words, sentences, and stories. Reading quickly follows with materials that help explore grammar and the structure of language. Cursive handwriting is emphasized.
- **Math:** Children are taken from the concrete to the abstract through manipulation of and experimentation with math materials. Children develop a deep understanding of quantity, the decimal system, counting, and the four operations.

## Daily Schedule

7:30-8:20am	Arrival (Extended Morning)
8:20-8:30am	Arrival
8:30-11:30am	Morning Work Cycle
11:30-12:00pm	Lunch
12:00-1:00pm	Outdoors / Gross Motor
12:30pm	Half Day Dismissal
1:00-2:45pm	Nap / Quiet Time / Afternoon Work Cycle
3:30pm	Full Day Dismissal
4:30pm	Extended Day 4:30 Dismissal
3:30-5:30pm	Extended Work Cycle (All Day Children's House) / Outdoors / Gross Motor
4:30pm	Extended Day 4:30 Dismissal
5:30	Extended Day Final Pick-up Time

## Independence in Toileting

Children in the Children's House must be able to use the toilet independently. Our environments are not equipped to manage children in diapers or pull-ups. Each classroom is equipped with two toilets, to which children have access throughout the day. If a child is having challenges or experiencing regression, parents and Guides are encouraged to develop a management plan to best assist the child.

## Toddler Community 16 months - 33 months

When young children are stable walkers, they are ready to join the Toddler Community. The Toddler Community is a specially prepared environment for children between the ages of 16 and 33 months. The Toddler Community at CHMS will have up to 12 children at full capacity with one Lead Guide, trained specifically for this age group, and two assistants.

We offer Montessori toddlers a Half day (8:30am-11:30am) or Full day (8:30am-3:30pm) program, as well as an extended care option (8:00am-5:30pm), with the expectation that your child attends school five days per week. Daily snacks are provided in the morning and afternoon. Lunch is a delightful collective activity, with lunches prepared with love from home, with a communal meal prepared on Fridays, in which families contribute one ingredient each week. Milk, water, dishes, and utensils are provided here at CHMS.

## Philosophy

Toddlers are curious, active learners who use their senses to gain information about the world around them. A beautiful, safe and orderly environment has been specially prepared to meet the young child's need to move freely, to explore, to make discoveries, to develop language skills and to grow in independence. The children are drawn to the attractive materials equipped with small tools that provide successful experiences. They often exclaim, "I did it myself!" which expresses their joy and sense of accomplishment.

The Toddler Community is divided into several areas for the children to move freely throughout the day. Practical Life activities include sweeping the floor, dusting, caring for plants, shoveling, etc. The child is familiar with these activities from home and they enjoy taking care of the environment. Performing these activities develops a strong sense of order, self-confidence, concentration, coordinated movement, and helps to promote the acquisition of functional and emotional independence.

The children also have opportunities to care for themselves as they learn to dress and undress themselves. In the beginning, loose fitting, easy on-and-off clothes that are free of zippers, snaps, and buttons help the children develop their ability to do it themselves. Each child has a cubby in the entry to store extra clothes, and there is additional storage in the bathroom. Children are often observed helping one another put on a sock or slipper as they work together to get dressed.

Learning to use the toilet by oneself is another important part of the child's independence. Many children develop an interest through observing other children. When children are showing signs of readiness, we work closely with the child and family to support the child with a stress-free approach. By respecting each child's individual pace of development, toilet learning happens in a very natural way.

Developing spoken language and learning how to communicate with others is a very important part of the toddler's development. At this age, the child has a natural burst in language. We support this through many different language materials and activities that encourage learning vocabulary and participating in conversations. Every day the children enjoy poems, books, songs and finger plays together.

There are many ways that the child is provided opportunities to develop his or her fine motor and large motor skills. Indoors, there are many fine motor activities which include assembling puzzles, stringing beads, using scissors, playing musical instruments, etc. Children also develop their fine motor skills through many art activities such as painting at the easel or with watercolors, working with clay, gluing, etc.

The child will also have opportunities each day to spend time outdoors to enjoy a variety of large motor activities such as climbing our play structure, playing with balls, walking on a balance beam, enjoying time in the sandbox, gardening (outdoor tasks), and more.

It is a goal of the staff at CHMS to develop partnerships with the families and caregivers as we develop a strong sense of community. Maria Montessori talked about the "secret of childhood" - that within each child is a unique and special plan for each child's potential and development. As we work together, we will support and respect each child's special path as they blossom and flourish during these important early years of development.

## Daily Schedule

8:00-8:20am	Early Arrival (Extended Morning)
8:20-8:30am	Arrival
8:30-10:45am	Morning Work Cycle / Snack / Collective
10:45-11:30am	Outdoors / Gross Motor Activity
11:30am	Half Day Dismissal
11:45-12:15pm	Lunch
12:30 - 3:00pm	Nap Time
3:30pm	Snack / Full Day Dismissal
4:30pm	Dismissal Option
3:30-5:30pm	Extended Day
5:30	Final Dismissal

## Independence in Toileting

Helping the children to use the toilet is one way that we assist them in gaining independence. When the time seems appropriate, your child will be encouraged to wear cotton underwear. These underwear are commonly referred to as "training pants," but it is a term that is misleading because we are in no way "training" your child to use the toilet. Just as children naturally learn to walk and talk, they also learn to use the toilet independently. It is also a misconception that the Montessori toddler environment pushes the children too early. There is no pressure whatsoever and each child's timetable is respected. The children are naturally curious and are often very interested in learning by watching one another use the toddler-sized toilet and the potty chairs.

We encourage the use of cotton underwear because this natural fiber gives children the opportunity to gain information about how their bodies work. Disposable diapers do exactly what their advertising says - they absorb the moisture so that the child does not feel wet. When children wear cotton underwear they can feel the sensations of elimination. After the child becomes aware of the sensation, it then becomes a matter of timing - feeling the sensation, getting to the toilet, pulling the pants down, etc. Wearing pants that are easy to pull down helps the child immensely. Patience is a virtue and it all comes together in a very natural way.

CHMS offers an underwear laundering service provided by Do Good Diapers. Children are issued cotton underwear through the school day when toilet learning has begun. Children are often more comfortable wearing cotton underwear at school if they are introduced to them at home. You can purchase thick, cotton underwear, often referred to as "training pants," in the Infant/Toddler departments at most stores. In the beginning, have your child try them on for short periods. Some families use nylon or vinyl pants over the cotton pants for extra protection. Be sure to purchase cotton underwear that fit well, but are able to be pulled up and down by the child independently or assisted.

## Policies & Procedures

### **Anti-Discrimination, Harassment & Bullying**

#### **Equal Opportunity**

Cathedral Hill Montessori School does not and will not discriminate against employees, prospective employees, parents, children, or vendors, and will make all employment and business decisions in accordance with all federal, state and local laws prohibiting discrimination.

It is the policy of Cathedral Hill Montessori School to provide equal opportunity regardless of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, familial status or any other characteristic.

This policy applies to all aspects of the application process, employment relationships, and contract relationships. Any person who believes s/he may have been a victim of discrimination should report the situation immediately to the Head of School or the Board President.

#### **Prohibition of Harassment or Violence**

Harassment or violence, in any form, will not be tolerated at Cathedral Hill Montessori School. This includes harassment or violence based on a person's race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, familial status or any other characteristic. This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, parents, and children.

For these purposes, harassment is defined as verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of his/her race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation or that of his/her relatives, friends or associates; and that has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment, has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance, or otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities.

For these purposes, sexual harassment is defined in accordance with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Guidelines, issued November 10, 1980 as follows: "Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when submission to such conduct is made explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

Persons who believe they have been victimized through harassment and/or have witnessed harassment should report those incidents so that the School may properly address the problem. You may make your concerns known by telling the person engaging in the harassing conduct or communication that the conduct or communication is offensive, against this policy and/or the law and must stop; or by telling the Head of School or Board President, or both verbally and/or in writing. This second option may be useful if you do not wish to communicate directly with the person whose conduct or communication is offensive, or if direct communication has been unsuccessful.

All complaints of harassment will be examined impartially without prejudice and without malice toward the reporting party regardless of the status of the person accused. Information provided will be released only on a need-to-know basis. After an investigation of the allegations by the Head of School, a determination will be made and resulting action will be recommended. The investigation may include interviews with the person making the charges, the accused person and the appropriate witnesses.

All determinations are made on an individual basis. Cathedral Hill Montessori School has the discretion to apply any sanctions or a combination of sanctions to eliminate any unlawful conduct and remedy the impact of any discrimination such as counseling the offender, placing the offender on probation with a warning of suspension or discharge for continuing or recurring offenses, placing the offender on suspension with or without pay, or termination.

## **Bullying**

The purpose of this policy is to communicate to all employees and families that Cathedral Hill Montessori School will not in any instance tolerate bullying behavior. Any person found in violation of this policy will be held accountable by a process defined in the section "Supportive School Community" on page 35.

Cathedral Hill Montessori School defines bullying as repeated, health-harming mistreatment of one or more people by one or more perpetrators. It is abusive conduct that includes:

- Threatening, humiliating or intimidating behaviors.
- Work interference/sabotage that prevents work from getting done.
- Verbal abuse.

Such behavior violates Cathedral Hill Montessori School's expectations that all people will be treated with dignity and respect.

Cathedral Hill Montessori School considers the following types of behavior examples of bullying:

- Verbal bullying. Slandering, ridiculing or maligning a person or his or her family; persistent name-calling that is hurtful, insulting or humiliating; using a person as the butt of jokes; abusive and offensive remarks.
- Physical bullying. Pushing, shoving, kicking, poking, tripping, assault or threat of physical assault, damage to a person's work area or property.
- Gesture bullying. Nonverbal gestures that can convey threatening messages.
- Exclusion. Socially or physically excluding or disregarding a person in work-related activities.

In addition, the following examples may constitute or contribute to evidence of bullying in the workplace:

- Persistent singling out of one person.
- Shouting or raising one's voice at an individual in public or in private.
- Using obscene or intimidating gestures.
- Not allowing the person to speak or express himself or herself (i.e., ignoring or interrupting).
- Personal insults and use of offensive nicknames.
- Public humiliation in any form.
- Constant criticism on matters unrelated or minimally related to the person's job performance or description.
- Public reprimands.
- Repeatedly accusing someone of errors that cannot be documented.
- Deliberately interfering with mail and other communications.
- Spreading rumors and gossip regarding individuals.
- Encouraging others to disregard a supervisor's instructions.

- Manipulating the ability of someone to do his or her work (e.g., overloading, underloading, withholding information, setting deadlines that cannot be met, giving deliberately ambiguous instructions).
- Assigning menial tasks not in keeping with the normal responsibilities of the job.
- Taking credit for another person's ideas.
- Refusing reasonable requests for leave in the absence of work-related reasons not to grant leave.
- Deliberately excluding an individual or isolating him or her from work-related activities, such as meetings.
- Unwanted physical contact, physical abuse or threats of abuse to an individual or an individual's property (defacing or marking up property).

Individuals who feel they have experienced bullying should report this to their supervisor or to the Head of School before the conduct becomes severe or pervasive. All persons are strongly encouraged to report any bullying conduct they experience or witness as soon as possible to allow Cathedral Hill Montessori School to take appropriate action.

For further information on how the School responds to instances of bullying, please see the section "Supportive School Community" on page 35 of this handbook.

## **Application and Admissions**

Prospective parents are encouraged to schedule a tour before applications are accepted. Parents are invited to observe the classroom environment here at CHMS and engage in a discussion held between the parents and the Head of School. There is a \$50 non-refundable fee for each child's application. Once an application has been received and accepted, we ask that the child come for a brief visit to so that he/she may meet the Guide and get a peek into the room as part of our enrollment process. This is also a time for parents to ask the Guide or the Head of School any additional questions or concerns they may have about the program.

When you enroll your child at Cathedral Hill Montessori School, it is our expectation that a commitment is made for several years. It is to the child's benefit that he/she remains in the Children's House through their kindergarten year (through six years of age). The developmental cycle for a child cannot be completed if he/she leaves a Children's House before age six. There is a one-time commitment fee of \$450.00 for Children's House students, and \$600.00 for Toddler Community students, for each child. The fee must be submitted with an enrollment contract before your child may be enrolled into our program to secure and reserve his/her placement. Upon completion of the child's kindergarten year in the Children's House, the commitment fee is credited toward the child's last tuition payment.

Once your child has been accepted into our program, our enrollment packet will be sent to you. Your child may not begin the program until all forms have been completed and turned in:

- Application
- Enrollment Contract
- Commitment Agreement
- Child Care Immunization Record
- Health Care Summary
- Emergency Contact Information

- Parent Authorizations Form
- Personal Profile
- Family Handbook Acknowledgment
- Other Enrollment Forms

We will also require your child to participate in our 3-5 day phase-in process, depending upon the selected program schedule. Prior to your child's entrance, there will be communication between the parents and the Guide regarding the transition of your child to his/her new environment.

Cathedral Hill Montessori School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, and national origin with respect to the admission of students and the employment of faculty and administrative staff.

## **Arrival & Dismissal**

Arrival for the regular school day takes place between 8:20 and 8:30am. Parents may use the 15-minute loading zone along Dayton or Farrington Avenues for pick-up and drop-off. This is a very busy time and your efficiency is appreciated. It is both the parents' and staff's responsibility to ensure a safe and timely arrival and dismissal procedure. A short but loving drop-off is easiest on your child, his/her Guide, and yourself. Please speak with your child's Guide if you would like ideas on how to work through separation anxiety issues. Also, never leave your child unsupervised in the school during drop-off. A staff member must acknowledge your child's arrival so we can ensure that each child is safely accounted for in his/her classroom environment.

When children are dismissed from the the half day and full day programs, please follow these guidelines: Parents are expected to wait outside the room or hallway. This is so we can reduce the amount of traffic during transition times, as well as to enable your child's independence and responsibility for themselves and his/her belongings. Your child will be escorted by the Guide or assistant, dressed, packed and ready to go home and enjoy the remainder of the day with you.

It is essential that all children are picked up through the main school doors, or outside through the gate. A staff member must be acknowledged when you are leaving with your child, whether they are inside or outside. This must happen to maintain the control and safety of the environments and children.

## **Attendance Policy**

Regular attendance and punctual arrival at school are two habits that dramatically impact achievement. We are committed to providing each child with a superior educational environment and ask each family to commit to ensuring their child attends school on time and in a consistent manner. Frequent absences and tardiness are disturbing to children, disrupt their schedules, require readjustment to the daily routine, and slow down learning. Children who arrive late can often feel left out or self-conscious of their arrival. They also struggle sometimes to transition into their day as they were not able to do so with their peers.

If your child will be late or absent, please notify the school by 8:00 a.m. Parents are urged to make every effort to schedule doctor, dentist, and other appointments for their child at times outside of the normal School Day, before 8:30am or after 3:30pm. This will reinforce the importance of school and prevent the children from feeling "left out."

Late dismissals also often affect children's sense of comfort. At this stage in development, children are sensitive to order. Therefore, schedules are extremely important for them to feel safe and secure. Further,

dismissal times are times of transition for the staff and we are not structured to regularly provide care for children outside of their scheduled school day.

School starts promptly at 8:30am. Half Day and Full Day children may arrive as early as 8:20am so that they may have time to change their shoes and enter the room by 8:30am, making the most of the full three-hour morning work cycle. Children who arrive after 8:45am are considered late. After 8:40am, the classroom doors are closed and children will need to be supervised by a parent until they are ready to enter the classroom. Children must be supervised at all times. General dismissal times are 11:30am, 12:30pm and 3:30pm, or 4:30pm or afterward for extended care hours. The school closes at 5:30pm. All children enrolled for the All Day/Extended Day program are expected to be picked up by this time. Parents and children must be out of the building no later than 5:40pm. Parents are considered late if they arrive 5 minutes past their child's scheduled pick-up time. If a parent has not called the school or picked up their child within one half hour after the building closes (6:00 pm) Cathedral Hill Montessori School reserves the right to contact Child Protection Services. Under no circumstance will the school release your child to an unauthorized person.

There is a charge of \$5.00 for the first 5 minutes late and \$1 per minute per child after the designated program time ends. This is calculated by the school clock. If you have a special need for child care beyond your child's scheduled hours, you may make a written request by email to the Head of School or administrator at least twenty-four hours in advance. Your request will be considered based on enrollment numbers and staffing during the additional hours.

We are understanding of occasional late arrivals and pick-ups due to unusual circumstances, family emergencies and severe weather conditions and understand that at times, a child may need to arrive late due to a doctor's appointment or unusual circumstance. On each occasion of late arrival or dismissal, administrative staff members will check in with families to discuss the situation. If late arrivals, pick-ups, or absences persist, parents may be required to meet with the Head of School to discuss the situation so that patterns of lateness can be avoided. If the pattern continues or a meeting is not held, this may result in termination from the school.

## **Behavior Guidance & Self-Discipline**

At Cathedral Hill Montessori School, our approach is to lead the child towards self-discipline. We try to avoid unnecessary time responding and reacting to behavior problems. The Montessori method addresses the need to affect change towards positive behavior through lesson-planning or teaching. As Montessori Guides, our interventions are expected to be based on 1) respect for the child; 2) knowledge and understanding of the developmental needs and characteristics of the child, as well as the needs of the group; and 3) the understanding that appropriate behavior must be carefully taught and modeled. The goal of each intervention is to assist the child in developing self-control and self-discipline. The manner in which each intervention is made is expected to reflect a patient attitude and to only consist of verbal – and when appropriate with a younger child – gentle physical assistance (e.g. holding hands). Through nurturing and sensitivity we hope to prepare children to function as social assets rather than social liabilities.

A famous quote by Dr. Maria Montessori: "The undisciplined child enters into discipline by working in the company of others; not by being told he is naughty." Discipline is, therefore, primarily a learning experience, rather than a series of punitive actions of the part of the adult.

Inner-discipline is not something automatically present within the child, but rather evolves under the right care and in the proper environment. As adults in the child's life, we need to be a model and guide, while supporting the child through the process of developing self-discipline. We offer limited freedoms based

on the child's abilities to make appropriate choices at that particular time. As the child's ability to make choices and follow rules improves, more freedom is offered.

The following rules of respect are an expectation of behavior by all children, staff, and parents/guardians during their life at school:

1. **Respect for self**
2. **Respect for others**
3. **Respect for the environment** (including materials, tools and equipment)

We hope that you will honor these rules of respect at home as we do for the children while in school.

### **Unacceptable Behavior**

If a child has difficulty following the rules of the community, the response will be age-appropriate. Personal attention, redirection, distraction, substitution, and/or removal from the situation are typical approaches used by the Guides. Most instances resolve themselves as the child experiences the logical or natural consequences of his/her actions (i.e. wiping up spilled paint that has been thrown on the floor).

If the child disregards the rules of the community, the Guide seeks the underlying causes of the child's behavior. In doing so, the Guide tries to help the child understand the inappropriateness of her choices and to find an appropriate alternative. If a disruptive or inappropriate behavior occurs repeatedly, the Guide may request that the Head of School, and/or another Guide observe the behavior and offer consultation and alternative solutions. If the behavior continues, the parents may be contacted for their support and cooperation.

Unacceptable Behavior includes but is not limited to:

- Inappropriate talk (swearing or sexual talk)
- Demeaning name-calling
- Teasing or purposefully hurting feelings
- Consistent noise-making
- Disrespectful talk to any person
- Hitting, spitting or kicking
- Aggressive play, or any form of guns or weapons "play"
- Inappropriate sexual touching
- Purposeful destruction of class materials or equipment
- Biting
- Disrupting another child's work
- Interfering with the health and/or safety of another
- Running away

Cathedral Hill Montessori School will practice behavior guidance by providing the children with challenging and absorbing activities and by treating them with dignity and respect. We establish clear and realistic limits that are developmentally appropriate and are enforced firmly and consistently. The school will take immediate steps to work with a child, along with the child's parents, whose behavior is harmful to him or her or to the other children in the environment.

If there is a child who is repeatedly aggressive and does not respond to the various redirection and discipline methods used, the staff may have a need to provide consequences for documented unacceptable, violent or unmanageable behavior. When staff notes that a child requires increased amount of staff guidance and time, it will be documented and, if necessary, the parents will be contacted. The staff is committed to trying positive techniques, observing the behavior and recording it, and meeting with the family to gain more information on how to encourage positive behavior.

If the consequences and redirection do not have any effect on persistent unacceptable behavior, the staff will recommend that the family seek help and have the child evaluated. After an outside evaluation, a plan will be made with the family and a specialist for addressing the difficult behaviors. This plan will be put into effect and tried for the next month. The parents and staff will meet again to assess the plan and evaluate the progress.

The staff reserves the right to counsel children who have been documented as having persistent unacceptable behavior out of the school if, after utilizing outside assistance and working to try a variety of techniques with the child, the unmanageable behavior persists. This might only occur on occasions when the school feels it cannot effectively meet the needs of the child or when parents do not follow up on recommendations of the specialists or staff. This may include children who are highly aggressive or have more involved special needs that require they seek more effective treatment in another program.

### **Separation from the Group**

A child will be separated from the group only after CHMS staff has tried less intrusive methods of guiding the child's behavior which have been ineffective and the child's behavior threatens the well-being of the child or other children in the school. A child who requires separation from the group will remain within an unenclosed part of the school where the child can be continuously seen and heard by a staff person. When separation from the group is used as a behavior guidance technique, the child's return to the group will be contingent on the child's stopping or bringing under control the behavior that precipitated the separation, and the child will be returned to the group as soon as the behavior that precipitated the separation abates or stops. A child under the age of 16 months will not be separated from the group as a means of behavior guidance.

### **Separation Report**

All separations from the group will be noted on a log. CHMS must ensure that notation in the log includes the child's name, staff person's name, time, date, and information indicating which less intrusive methods were used to guide the child's behavior, and how the child's behavior continued to threaten the well-being of the child or other children in care. If a child is separated from the group three times or more in one day, the child's parent shall be notified and notation of the parent notification shall be indicated on the separation log. If a child is separated five times or more in one week, or eight times or more in two weeks, the procedures for persistent unacceptable behavior will be followed.

## **Birthdays**

Birthday celebrations are an important part in each child's life, and are a special celebration in the Montessori environment as well. Near your child's birthday, your child's Guide will contact you to confirm the plan for the celebration.

Treats, party favors, or individual gifts for the children are not permitted during our school birthday celebrations. Also, to maintain an environment of inclusiveness within the school, we ask that you mail personal invitations to your birthday celebrations for your child.

## **Calendar**

Cathedral Hill Montessori School will publish a school calendar of the 12-month academic year from September-August. If changes are made to the calendar, parents will be given advance notice. Reminders and additions to the calendar will be posted in the "Wednesday Weekly" e-newsletter. Please also note that the CHMS calendar is very closely aligned with the Saint Paul Public School calendar, except during the summer months. Familiarize yourself with our school calendar and plan ahead.

## **Celebrations and Their Importance**

At Cathedral Hill Montessori School, we believe that learning about different cultures is an important aspect in developing appreciation for oneself and others. Throughout the year, we present lessons and activities that give the children opportunities to personally experience other cultures. The children are exposed to the celebrations as stories and personal experiences. When at all possible, we invite representatives of a particular culture to share their experiences with the children. The opportunities to hear stories about different cultures lead to lifelong appreciations for different cultural experiences.

## **Cell Phone Use**

We ask parents to not use cell phones in any way, including texting or gaming, when dropping off or picking up their child. Arrival and dismissal are important transition times for children. Many children are overjoyed to see their parents after a busy day and often have something to share with you. As a demonstration of respect for the child, please give your child your undivided attention during these transitions. The staff also pledge to use cell phones only when on breaks and away from the children.

## **Child Abuse Reporting**

Under Minnesota law, members of Cathedral Hill Montessori School staff are required to report suspected physical and sexual abuse and certain forms of neglect. Reports must be made to the Ramsey County Child Protection Program or to the police. A person who is required to report and does not can be charged with a misdemeanor. As mandated reporters of the maltreatment of minors, all suspected cases of abuse or neglect at Cathedral Hill Montessori School are immediately reported.

## **Child Dismissal**

We ask that parents wait in the upper or lower lobby for your child, while he/she is getting ready to go home in the coatroom or hallway. Your child's Guide or Assistant will assist in getting your child ready to go, and then escort your child out in the waiting area (please no parents in the hallways/coat room - doors will remain shut until the children are ready to be dismissed). Your child's Guide or Assistant may be available for a brief check-in at this time, but please refrain from lengthy, confidential, or personalized conversations about your child. If you are late in picking up your child, please call ahead. Your child will be

brought to the office or allowed to remain with the other children where he/she can wait until you arrive. Please ask your child's Guide directly if your child will be waiting for you in the office or with his/her community.

To respect each child's sense of privacy and dignity, we ask parents and Guides to avoid speaking about children in front of them. When children hear adults talking about them in the third person, it can make them feel self-conscious. If you have a question about your child, please pull a Guide aside to ask it out of the presence of your child or email your Guide so that she can contact you confidentially.

## **Clothing**

One of the primary goals of a Montessori environment is to help children become independent in caring for themselves. Children, as Dr. Montessori noted, will often say, "Help me do it myself." As part of this goal, it is essential that children are provided with clothing that they can get in and out of independently. Please dress your child in clothing that he/she can successfully adjust without adult help. Also, children should be dressed in casual and comfortable clothing that allows for freedom of movement and the freedom to explore their environment. Clothing should not be cumbersome or too fancy as to inhibit the child's ability to explore with water, food work, art supplies, the outdoors, and provide opportunities for movement. For more information on specifics of dressing for a Montessori environment, read your Guide's Welcome Letter or ask your child's Guide for advice.

Each child needs a pair of indoor shoes to leave at school. These shoes will only be worn inside the school environment, and should be such that the child can independently put them on and remove them. Occasionally, accidents happen—water spills or an item breaks—and thus the "indoor shoes" or slippers need to have a hard sole and closed toes so as to best protect your child's feet from injury.

Each child should also bring one to two extra sets of seasonally-appropriate clothing to school so that he/she has something to change into if clothing becomes soiled. Label all extra clothing with the child's name. A complete set of clothing includes underwear, socks, top, and bottom. Parents will receive a notice when their child is in need of a new supply of clothing, or a change of items to fit the season (i.e. adding a sweater in winter).

Outdoor clothing should also be appropriate for the season, always keeping unpredictable Minnesota weather in mind, especially during spring and fall. In summer months, a sun hat should be provided to protect your child from harmful UV rays. We will also apply sunscreen (which you provide from home, or use the school's for a nominal fee) on children, once parents have authorized us to do so using the Parent Authorizations form. If brought from home, please label sunscreen with your child's name.

## **Cold Weather**

For toddlers, if the standing temperature or windchill temperature is above 0 degrees Fahrenheit, the children will be brought outside to play (the length of time to be determined by your child's Guide). If the standing temperature or windchill temperature is below 0 degrees Fahrenheit, whether the children will be brought outside to play is up to each Guide's discretion. No child will be brought outside without proper winter attire.

## **Conferences**

Conferences will be held as many as three times a year: fall, spring, and summer (optional). Each conference will be twenty minutes in length, and will allow time to discuss the progress of each child. As

part of the spring and fall conferences, a written report regarding each child's development will be completed and given to parents.

We recognize that there may be times throughout the school year where parents may need to contact their child's Guide with questions or concerns. All Guides are available via email and are checked daily. Please try to connect with your Guide either before or after the school day: [\[first name\]@chmschool.org](mailto:[first name]@chmschool.org). We are invested in your child's success, and will contact you as soon as possible to respond to your needs or questions. Guides may also wish to contact parents with success stories, questions, and concerns.

## Communication

The success of each child can only be achieved through the synergy created when all the adults in the child's life, parents and Guides, work together. Consistent and strong communication between parents and Guides is essential in order to provide the most consistent and supportive environment for each child. The more accurately informed we are about your child, the better we can care for him/her. Please inform your child's Guide of any changes at home in the child's life that may have an effect at school.

To help ensure that the staff and parent communities are operating with the most up-to-date information, we ask that you:

- Please read all signage and notes posted at school.
- Read the Wednesday Weekly school newsletter each week.
- Check your email and Family Folder regularly.
- Email your communications so that we may be accurately informed of any messages from you. Please do not rely on verbal messages. Verbal messages are too easily forgotten in the activity of caring for the community of children.
- Feel free to call the school to speak to the Guides or Head of School about any concerns you may have. The appropriate person will return your call at their earliest convenience.

If you are uncertain as to whom to address your question, please refer to the chart on the following page:

Matters related to:	First Contact
absences	Guide
arrival/dismissal information	
child's progress	
classroom activities	
classroom observations	
daily schedule	
grocery sign-up	
academic/curriculum/pedagogical policies	Head of School
admissions/enrollment	
board affairs	
development/fundraising	
health & safety procedures	
legal matters	
parent education	
parent-teacher support	
program/schedule changes	
public relations	
school finances	
children's records	Administrative Assistant
communications (Wednesday Weekly)	
extended care	
tuition/billing	

When a problem arises, parents should complete the following steps to try to resolve the conflict:

- If you have a question regarding your child:
  - o Contact his/her Guide. Guides are your first resource to answer your questions and resolve your conflicts. It is not appropriate to contact or discuss your concern/conflict with an assistant or aide in your child's environment.
  - o If the Guide is unable to resolve the problem to your satisfaction, please address your question to the Head of School, who will work with you and your child's Guide to bring resolution to the issue.
- For all other concerns:
  - o The chart on the previous page is your best resource on whom to contact regarding your question.
  - o If you are still unsure whom to contact, the Head of School or Administrative Assistant is always willing to hear your concerns and, if necessary, put you in contact with the appropriate party to address them.

We desire to do the very best for children and families of CHMS. When we handle areas of concern quickly and with care, we all can achieve our goals for your child without disruption.

## **Dismissal, Suspension & Expulsion (Termination)**

Dismissal could be a result of tuition default, failure to provide required records, and/or poor attendance. When it is clear that a multi-age, self-directed environment is not the most suitable educational environment for a child, she or he may be referred to a specialist for evaluation. Separation or suspension can be the result if a child repeatedly threatens the physical or emotional safety of other children or harms property. If a child is considered a continued threat, the child may be asked to take a short leave of absence.

Expulsion of a child is a last resort and is only done in extreme circumstances when a child's or parent's/guardian's behavior has continued to be threatening and disruptive to the community. Prior to expulsion, the Guides are responsible for trying several forms of behavior redirection. The parents and Guides must communicate and create a plan to try and help the child adapt his/her behavior to the environment. If the disruptive or harmful behavior persists, the child may be required to leave the school. Review our Behavior Guidance Policy for more information about what can lead to a child's termination from our school for behavioral concerns.

## **Drug & Alcohol Policy**

The use of controlled substances and alcohol is prohibited at Cathedral Hill Montessori School. All staff and volunteers are given orientation on the drug and alcohol policy upon hire or during staff and volunteer orientation. Children will not be released to an individual who is considered impaired by alcohol or controlled substances. CHMS is also a smoke-free environment. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on the premises.

## **Field Trips**

Parents or guardians must sign the Parent Authorizations form when a child is admitted in order for children to take walks from the school to the park, or to nearby locations. If the children are to take a field

trip, information and permission slips will go out to families a week before the trip. In general, these field trips will be walking trips within the neighborhood. In some special instances, classes may visit other locations. Field trips must always fit into the curriculum, and be appropriate for the age of the child. Transportation for a field trip will always be in accordance with State regulations regarding transportation.

## **First Aid Administration & Emergency Procedures**

All members of the Cathedral Hill Montessori School staff are trained in First Aid, CPR and Blood-Borne Pathogens. In case of an incident requiring minor attention, First Aid will be administered and parents will be notified. In cases requiring immediate medical attention, First Aid will be administered and 911 will be called. The child would be transported to the nearest hospital as determined by 911. After calling 911, the parents and the physician will be contacted immediately. A staff member will inform the parent of the child's injury (parents may be asked sign a parent permission form for immediate medical care).

We will administer first aid for any emergency, but if the injury requires immediate medical attention, our first consideration must be the safety of the child. We will take whatever action is deemed necessary. Please remember to update your child's emergency contact information if it changes during the year. This is the only way that the school is able to get in touch with parents or guardians during an emergency situation.

## **Food Policy: Lunch & Snacks**

Healthy and nutritious food is a priority at Cathedral Hill Montessori School. The school has a "no sugar" policy. Water will be available in the environment for children to drink throughout the day. A log of children's allergies, including health issues or other food sensitivities and restrictions, will be posted in places that staff can see while preparing snacks or during mealtimes. All known allergies must be disclosed at time of enrollment.

Breakfast is not provided by Cathedral Hill Montessori School, and parents are asked to provide breakfast for their children at home prior to arriving at school each day. Lunch provides one-third of your child's daily nutritional needs. Low-fat 1% milk and water is always offered during lunch. At mealtime, staff is seated with children, while encouraging children to eat in a timely manner. If a packed lunch lacks the required nutritional value as defined by the Department of Health, CHMS may supplement and charge parents accordingly.

Morning and afternoon snacks are provided in each classroom as well. In addition to the snacks provided, children are able to do light food preparation as part of their Practical Life activities. Food preparation that children might do (with adult supervision) includes banana slicing, baking bread, egg slicing, making orange juice, pickle cutting, and cracker spreading. The foods that children prepare are available for immediate eating gratification, or it may be saved for the child's snack that same day.

All children are encouraged to wash their hands before and after eating all meals, snacks, and food preparation work. Food preparation tools, flatware, glassware, and dishes are provided by the school, washed and sanitized between each use to ensure the health and safety of all children.

## **Health & Wellness Policy**

Cathedral Hill Montessori School serves a community of children. If a child comes to school ill, or on the verge of being sick, the chances of a large number of children contracting the illness are greatly increased. The children move freely throughout the environment and share many materials, thus germs have the

potential to spread quickly. With your cooperation, we can establish a healthier classroom environment for all the children if your child is cared for at home when he/she is sick.

At Cathedral Hill Montessori School we do our best to avoid illness by making hand-washing an essential part of each day. Children wash hands after they use the bathroom (or are changed), before and after meals, before they set the table or prepare food, when their hands look or smell dirty, and after they touch pets. When we know of a contagious illness in our community, we will notify families of any contagious illness that occurs in your child's environment or in the school by posting it on our school bulletin boards.

Parents must follow these guidelines regarding child illnesses:

- If you notice a change in your child's behavior, such as feeling tired or out-of-sorts, consider this a sign of the onset of illness, which is the most contagious time. Please keep your child home for some extra rest if he/she is overly tired or irritable.
- If your child has a contagious disease, you are required by Minnesota Law to inform the school of any infectious communicable disease within twenty-four hours, exclusive of holidays or weekends.
- If your child has had a throat culture, please keep him or her at home until the results have been reported to you—even if your doctor says it is all right to send the child to school.
- If your child has been prescribed an antibiotic, he/she must be on medication for 24 hours before returning to school.
- If your child has been given a dose of non-prescription medicine, such as Tylenol or ibuprofen prior to the school day, please inform your child's Guide, and describe the circumstances so that we may monitor your child's condition more closely.

Children with the following conditions must be excluded from school:

- Chicken pox, until they have crusted over.
- More than three loose stools in one day, or since arrival in the morning.
- Diarrhea that is uncontrolled or infectious.
- Vomiting since arrival or within the last 24 hours.
- Contagious conjunctivitis (pink eye) or pus draining from the eye.
- Bacterial infections such as streptococcal pharyngitis (strep) or impetigo until the child has been on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- Lice, ringworm, or scabies that is untreated or contagious to others.
- Significant respiratory distress.
- A temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher until the child has been fever free for 24 hours without the aid of medication.
- An undiagnosed rash that seems to be related to contagious illness.
- Unexplained lethargy or failure to be able to participate, or uncontrollable emotions.

## **Health Care Summary & Immunization Record Requirements**

Minnesota's school immunization law requires that all children must be fully immunized by the first day of school, or he/she will not be allowed to enroll or remain in school. Immunization requirements can be waived for medical reasons, or for those who are conscientiously opposed to immunizations. If seeking a waiver, please use the Immunization form available in the school office, and have it notarized before returning it to school. Immunization forms should be updated whenever new immunizations are given. When children transition from the Toddler Community to the Children's House, a new immunization record and health care summary must be completed and returned to the school.

Upon admission, a Health Care Summary must be filled out that includes the date of the child's most recent physical exam (within 12 months), and must be signed by the child's health care provider. This form is due before the first day of school. The Health Care Summary must be updated whenever a child moves to a new level (Children's House or kindergarten). These forms are for the safety of your child, and will be kept confidential in the main office.

Please inform us upon admission of any special health needs your child has, such as allergies or asthma. We want to be able to provide appropriate care and support.

### **Immunizations**

Because we are committed to maintaining the health and safety of our students and staff, we require our students to be current on their vaccinations, unless a medical condition prevents it. CHMS will not enroll any child who has not been immunized on the basis of personal belief, or any other non-medical reason.

### **Items From Home**

Children are encouraged to leave personal items at home. Items such as food/candy, toys, and stuffed animals should be left at home and never brought to school. Children may occasionally bring collectables or creations that allow them to reflect on a subject matter with others. If your child would like to bring an item that has cultural or artistic significance to school to share, please arrange to do so with his/her Guide first. Doing so allows us to ensure that the child gets an appropriate amount of time dedicated to the discussion of their object, and ensures that there aren't too many items shared on any one occasion.

### **Medications**

The Cathedral Hill Montessori School policy on medications, legislated by the State, states that school personnel may not administer medication during the School Day without the written order of a licensed physician and a written authorization of a parent or guardian that can be placed on file in the office. All medications (prescription or non-prescription), sunscreens, insect repellents, and diaper ointments must be administered according to manufacturer's instructions, unless there are written instructions provided by a licensed doctor or dentist.

If a child requires medication, parents are encouraged to give the child medication at home. If a child must have medication administered during school hours, parents must complete and sign the Prescription Medication or Non-Prescription Medication Authorization form as well as provide written physician approval. Medications must be in the original containers, with the original label stating the child's name, expiration date, dosage, prescription number, and instructions for use.

Children requiring long term medication use while at Cathedral Hill Montessori School must have an Individual Child Care Plan (ICCP) signed by the parent and the child's licensed health care provider. This

includes as-needed over-the-counter medication such as Tylenol (acetaminophen) and ibuprofen used for a child with a history of febrile seizures. These plans are to be updated every year.

## **Mysterious Objects**

The Montessori environments are composed of many beautiful objects that are designed to attract the young child. Being that they are also often sized to fit within the child's hand, many of the objects are small enough to fit into pockets. If you find any "mysterious objects" in your child's possession, please return them to school.

## **Naps, Rest, and Sleep**

Nap is offered to all children who stay at school beyond 12:30. Children four years of age and under are encouraged and helped to nap. Toddlers nap on cots arranged in the Toddler Community, and Children's House children nap on cots in the Common Room located on the garden level. Guides and assistants will help children relax by darkening the room, playing soft music, rubbing backs, etc. Please send your child to school with a nap blanket. Pillows, toys, pacifiers, or stuffed animals are not allowed. We work to help your child learn to self-soothe and fall asleep independently. If a child does not nap regularly at home, or has a difficult time falling asleep, please inform our staff upon enrollment and throughout the course of the school year. After a minimum of 30 minutes of rest on a cot, he/she may re-enter the Children's House for an afternoon work cycle. Older children attending the afternoon work cycle in Children's House may also be offered rest time after recess.

Parents are expected to make sure children have adequate sleep. Studies continue to show that children do their best when they have at least the minimum required amount of sleep according to their stage of development. Children who are in the Toddler Community should have 11-12 hours of sleep each night, while children in the Children's House should have at least 10-11 hours of sleep. Getting the adequate amount of sleep will assure that children will retain what they have learned and are able to be at their best each day.

## **Navigating Staff/Family Relationships**

Cathedral Hill Montessori School is committed to employing exceptional staff and fostering professional relationships between families and employees of the school. It is important to the health of the community to maintain professionalism in relationships and that communications occur through the proper channels.

Staff of the school are held to high standards of qualification, training, and ongoing professional development. School employees may not accept private employment in babysitting, nannying, cleaning, or services of any kind to families of current students. It is a matter of employee policy that assistants and aides not discuss student progress or developmental concerns with parents/guardians. Instead, they will instruct the parent/guardian to speak directly with the child's Guide.

Relationships between families and staff of the School should be focused on the partnership forged between parents/guardians, Guides, and the Head of School in support of children's education and development. Email and telephone communications are appropriate between parents/guardians and Guides and/or the Head of School when the content pertains directly to the children or the School. Text messages, phone calls to personal staff phones, online communications, requests for child care, and invitations to socialize privately with staff are not appropriate. This policy does not apply to community events such as Great Gatherings, children's birthday parties, or other off-campus family social occasions, but is meant to prevent unwanted, unprofessional, or inappropriate relationships between individual staff

and family members of children. Social media relationships (“friendships,” “following”) are inappropriate between current parents/guardians and current staff of the School, unless a relationship existed prior to a family’s enrollment at the School or a staff member’s employment. Existing social media relationships need not be deleted or modified.

## Observations

Observation is an essential part of the Montessori environment. Guides observe the children to gain a greater understanding of the developmental needs of each child and the community as a whole. Children are encouraged to observe each other, allowing them to learn from one another. Parents of Montessori children are also encouraged to observe the classroom environment. Observing in the environment allows parents the opportunity to see how the children function in the room, and to see the progress and success of their child.

In order to allow the children time to adjust socially to the new environment, observations will not be scheduled until six weeks after school has started (mid-October) or six weeks after a child has started if he/she starts mid-year. After this time, parents may contact the Guides directly about scheduling an observation of your child’s classroom environment. We ask that you thoroughly read and follow the Guidelines for Observation that will be handed out to you prior to your scheduled observation. If you have questions following your observation, please communicate directly with your Guide outside of the Montessori work time. Parents are strongly encouraged to observe their child’s classroom prior to the Spring Parent-Teacher conference each year.

## Office Hours

You can call or visit the administrative office of Cathedral Hill Montessori School from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Outside of office hours, you may either email your child’s Guide directly, or the Head of School at [maya@chmschool.org](mailto:maya@chmschool.org), or leave a message on our voicemail.

## Outdoor Environment Rules

It is important that all children understand and adhere to our rules for the outdoor environment. These rules ensure that the outdoor environment will be safe and enjoyable for all children.

All children are encouraged to be outside for an opportunity for large motor movement and exposure to nature. If your child cannot participate in this opportunity for any reason, please call the child’s Guide and discuss the limitation.

- **Play safely:** We do not allow pushing, pulling, hitting, tackling games, wrestling, kicking, fighting, blocking other children’s activities, or throwing snow, ice, sand, sticks, wood chips, or equipment in the play area or playground.
- We encourage children to include other children in games and activities.
- No toys, games, bats, balls, dolls, action figures, or other materials are to be brought from home for use during recess. The school supplies buckets, shovels, brooms, rakes, appropriate garden tools, and balls for work and play. If you have items to donate, contact the administrator.
- **Conflict resolution:** Children should come to an adult if they have a problem they cannot resolve themselves. “Bullying” is deemed unacceptable.
- Children are expected to respect all materials, tools, and equipment, and to use all playground materials for their intended use.

- **Slides:** Children are not allowed to climb on the inside or outside of any slide. There is one person permitted at a time on the slide, and no head-first sliding is allowed.
- **Fence:** If a ball goes outside the fence, children should tell an adult so he/she can retrieve it. There is no climbing on the fences.
- **Bushes, trees, plants, grass:** Unless children are gardening, they should avoid digging in, pulling on, picking at, breaking off, or hanging on vegetation. We have a gravel area for digging, and sand toys for the children's enjoyment.

If a child does not adhere to these rules, the adult supervising the play yards will discuss the matter with the child, and reiterate the rules. If the child continues to break the rules, he/she will be asked to take a five-minute break. If, after the child returns to play, he/she continues to break the rules, he/she will be removed from the play yard and brought into the school in the company of an adult for the remainder of the outside time.

## Parent Education Opportunities

At Cathedral Hill Montessori School, we believe that supporting our parents understanding of our school philosophy and Montessori methodology is a priority for the success of your child. To assist in this process, we offer parents many opportunities to learn about child development and Montessori education. Attendance is strongly encouraged!

Events in our Parent Education Program include:

- **Family/Community Education Nights:** On these occasions, topics that are relevant to all children and parents in our community are discussed. Focus is placed on child development, parenting techniques, and Montessori-related topics, so that our parent community can become more familiar with the Montessori philosophy and how it relates to their roles as parents. If you have any particular interests or topics you'd like to hear more about, please notify your Guide or the Head of School.
- **Celebration of Learning:** At least once a year, we have special parent-child visitation days that will allow your child to show you what he/she is working on or enjoying at that particular moment. It is a time for your child to share his/her classroom environment with you. Each family may sign up for a time as arranged by your child's Guide.
- **Parent Observations:** Parents are encouraged to observe in the environments in order to see what the environments are like. Please refer to the section regarding Observations in the Family Handbook for further information.
- **Coffee with the Head of School:** Each month, on the last Wednesday, after your child's drop-off, the Head of School hosts an informal parent gathering for coffee to read up and discuss a current parenting or educational topic.
- **Resource Library:** We encourage parents to borrow our books and DVDs about and by Maria Montessori and her educational methodology, as well as other books about child development and parenting topics.

As part of our collaborations with the Montessori Center of Minnesota (MCM) and other area AMI schools, Cathedral Hill Montessori School will also notify parents of additional Montessori and parenting-related workshops that are offered throughout the year.

## Pets

The classroom environments at Cathedral Hill Montessori School may include pets or animals. All pets will be treated as humanely as possible and kept in good health with updated shots, if required. Children are instructed how to handle each pet, if it is a pet that can be handled. We will only keep pets that children do not typically have allergies to; parents should inform Guides if their child is allergic to particular types of animals.

## **Phase-in and Transitions**

At Cathedral Hill Montessori School, we agree the best approach to introducing a new child into the Montessori environment is through a process which we call Phase-in. Phase-in is carefully designed and implemented to create a peaceful and welcoming experience for your child, and takes place over 3-5 days. This period may be shortened if we feel your child is adapting well to the new transition. Parents are asked to leave the school during phase-in.

The brief time during phase-in allows the child to become familiar with the environment and how it operates, without concern of becoming overwhelmed or frustrated with long time periods to which he/she may not yet be accustomed. Typically, separation anxiety is minimal due to the gradual lengthening of time experienced in a new environment. This is comforting and reassuring to the child. Our goal is for children to develop a sense of ownership and pride as they define the Toddler Community or the Children's House as their personal space.

Phase-in is also an opportunity for your child to establish a rapport with his or her new Guide (teacher). This is crucial so that each child develops a sense of trust in the adults with whom he/she will be working, assisting the child in feeling safe and secure. Phase-in sets the stage for a successful year of learning.

A brief orientation for the parents by the Head of School will take place on or near your child's first day of school. For this reason, both parents are encouraged to attend. Parents of incoming toddlers will undergo a slightly different process, allowing you and your child to familiarize yourselves with the Toddler Community together before your child's first day.

Transitions from the Toddler Community to the Children's House are conducted in a similar manner. Your child's Guide will inform you in advance of the week your child will make this transition, and how it will take place. Again, the goal is make a smooth and comfortable transition to his/her new learning environment. Good communication, parent-Guide partnership, and support are necessary for this to occur without difficulty. An expression of caring and sharing unfolds as the other children welcome new friends to their community. The learning environment will be stimulating and exciting; it is a place where independence, freedom, and choice rule. The children will gradually learn how to handle this choice and freedom while respecting and caring for each other, the materials in the environment, and the classroom.

## **Photographs & Video**

We often utilize photographs and videos to convey what happens in the Montessori environments. Photographs of the children are often used by Cathedral Hill Montessori School as part of our publications, public relations and education workshops. It is essential that we have photographs to document what happens in the environment, and use them to promote an understanding of child development and the Montessori approach to a variety of audiences. Parents are asked to complete a permission form during enrollment to indicate whether or not they permit us to utilize footage or photographs of their child(ren) in this manner. Photographs and video may also be used in social media or promotional purposes, with parent permission. Children's names are never used.

## **Professional Development**

In order to provide each child with the highest standard of education, our staff has to meet professional and in-service training requirements throughout the school year. Occasionally, we may close the school to provide staff with opportunities to attend trainings and national conferences. Attendance at such events allows us to continue our development as a professional teaching staff, and assists in ongoing staff commitment and enthusiasm. These meetings allow the staff to support one another while also creating cohesive curriculum plans, and ensuring proper communication about school policies and procedures. Professional development days are designated on the school calendar each year.

## **Referral**

As a childcare provider, we continually monitor the development of all children in our care through ongoing observation and recording. We want the best outcomes for all children. Childcare providers are considered a primary referral source for early intervention under federal IDEA special education law. We are required to refer a child in our program who has been identified as having developmental concerns or a risk factor that warrants a referral as soon as possible, but in no case more than seven days after the identification. While this is a mandate, we want to keep open communication with families about their children and any concerns we have before a referral is made. We can assist the parent with the referral or partner with this in the referral process.

## **Release of a Child**

Children may be picked up by relatives and family friends only if indicated by verbal and written consent. Emergency Contact forms provide space for parents to list those allowed to pick up their children. Please let staff (and your child) know if a different person will be picking up your child from school, and let that friend or relative know that he/she will be asked to provide a photo ID to a staff member. In the case of illness or emergency, and a child needs to be picked up from school, parents will be contacted first. If neither parent can be reached, staff will go through the other names listed on the Emergency Contact form. Please be sure those listed live within driving distance to the school.

## **Safety & Security**

Children are not to leave the building without the supervision of an adult. All doors to the school are securely locked throughout the day and the staff takes every precaution to monitor who enters and leaves the building. The code for entering the building is changed regularly. Parents are given the new code as it changes throughout the year.

We discuss personal safety in the environments, and encourage you to talk with your child about personal safety at school and within their neighborhoods.

## **School Closings**

In unusual circumstances, the school may have to close due to weather conditions or facility issues. Cathedral Hill Montessori School will generally follow the St. Paul Public School (SPPS) District for weather closures. However, the Head of School will make decisions independently about closings that fit the community and situation of Cathedral Hill (e.g., the school will not likely close for cold weather purposes, except in extreme conditions, but will likely close if inclement weather makes travel dangerous or difficult). SPPS closures will be announced on WCCO radio (830), TV Channel 4, KSTP TV Channel 5, KARE TV Channel 11, and WCCO online. Cathedral Hill closures will be announced by email to parents, school voicemail, and on the school website.

## School News and Weekly Newsletter

We acknowledge the importance of keeping parents informed of happenings in our school. For this reason, we distribute a "Wednesday Weekly" by email to all families, which includes reminders of upcoming dates and important notices, as well as a monthly newsletter from each learning environment. Parents who have articles, information, or stories and photos from home they would like to share in the newsletter are encouraged discuss it with the Head of School.

Parents of children in the Toddler Community (16-33 mo.) will also receive "Daily Notes," a written notification of their child's eating, sleeping, and elimination patterns, in accordance with Minnesota Law.

### Snack

Snack is provided in all environments during the morning work cycle and after nap. In the Children's House snack is available throughout the morning in a self-serve fashion, along with various Practical Life food preparation activities. In the Toddler Community, children eat a group snack before going outside.

The School purchases snack and practical life groceries each week and a monthly fee of \$10.00/per month is added to tuition for each child enrolled. All food is vegetarian and peanut-free. If your child has particular dietary needs such as gluten-free, dairy-free, or a vegan diet, we ask that you provide the school with specific foods we can exclusively offer to your child in order to supplement their snacks. Food items brought in only for your child must be clearly labeled with your child's full name.

### Social Events

Cathedral Hill Montessori School collaborates with families to sponsor social events. The following is a list of some of our annual community events.

- Fall Festival (September/October)  
To celebrate the change of season, new school year, and commemorate the opening of Cathedral Hill Montessori School, we host a community-wide celebration. Food, children's activities, live music, and a silent auction fundraiser are some of the elements that sometimes make up this event.
- Family Holiday Party (December)  
Before our Winter Break, we will bring light and warmth to the darkness by spending time with the community, sharing dinner, and celebrating another year together in the spirit of the holidays.
- Parent Appreciation Picnic (May)  
Children are picked up early (11:30 for all) on this day, and families are invited to join us for a picnic lunch in Boyd Park. This event falls on the Friday before Memorial Day Weekend.
- Garden Party (May)  
Once the snow is (hopefully) gone, we spend a few hours together cleaning up our outdoor environment, planting some early crops in our gardening boxes, and potting different starters to be cared for by the children. This is typically a parent-sponsored event.
- Summer Gathering and Annual Board Meeting (June)  
Each summer, we celebrate the rise in temperature and long daylight hours with a wine and cheese potluck gathering, followed by the final board meeting of the fiscal year, which is open to all. This is a great opportunity to meet school board members, join a committee, or gain new insights about the school as a nonprofit organization.
- Parent Committee - Happy Hours & Other Gatherings (monthly)

Members of our parent community often organize regular Happy Hour events at different locations for parents to meet up and enjoy social time together.

- Great Gatherings (on-going)

Great Gatherings are events that are hosted by a member of our community. A Great Gathering may be family-friendly or adults-only—an art-inspired playdate for children, a clothing swap, or a cooking class for adults are a few examples. The host describes the event and sets a date, time, and admission price for the event. The funds raised are donated to CHMS. It is fundraising for our school blended with community building.

## Supplies & Belongings

Before your child transitions into our Montessori environment, we will provide parents with a Welcome Letter from your child's Guide, including a list of items that should be brought to school for your child. Please ensure that your child has what he/she needs, and that these items are labeled with your child's name or initials. We will work with families to enable all children to have the appropriate school supplies.

## Supportive School Community

At the core of our Cathedral Hill Montessori School community is a spirit of mutual respect and support, and we honor the value and inherent goodness of every individual. Each member of the community – children, staff, parents/guardians, and board members – is expected to act in ways that show consideration and respect for others and enhance an open atmosphere of trust. Additionally, we make it a matter of conscious practice to *assume best intentions* in our interactions with one another. Every action that affirms respect, integrity, and inclusion builds the kind of community we seek at Cathedral Hill Montessori School. We expect the following:

- We expect that all members of our community feel physically, intellectually and psychologically safe when on school premises or attending school functions.
- We expect that all members of our community are respectful at all times to each other, to visitors and to school property.
- We expect that all members of our community have a responsibility to follow communication guidelines (see chart on page 22) and to report instances of bullying or harassment to the appropriate person(s), i.e. Guides and the Head of School. (See definitions of harassment and bullying on pages 15-16). All communications, including electronic, should be respectful, open, direct, and constructive.

CHMS takes all claims of bullying and/or harassment seriously. Issues of bullying and/or harassment involving children will be handled by the Guide, the parent/guardian, and the Head of School (See "Behavior Guidance & Self Discipline" on page 17). Though every case is handled individually, issues of bullying and/or harassment involving adults will be addressed as follows:

Step 1: Verbal and/or written notification of the inappropriate behavior will be given to the offending person, with the expectation that the behavior cease immediately. Should the bullying and/or harassment continue;

Step 2: A meeting between the Head of School and the offending person will be scheduled to find a resolution. If a resolution cannot be found, the offending person declines to meet, or the bullying and/or harassment continues;

Step 3: The School may consider declining re-enrollment or termination of the current Enrollment Contract(s).

A positive and constructive working relationship between the School and parents/guardians is essential to the fulfillment of the School's mission, and the School may terminate enrollment, or decline to re-enroll a student, if the School in its sole discretion and through the process described above concludes that the actions or inactions of a parent/guardian make a positive and constructive working relationship impossible or interfere with the School's accomplishment of its mission.

## **Vacations**

Please inform your child's Guide of any scheduled vacations. We consider each child's day in the environment a vital part of his or her ongoing development. Please respect the learning and growing that goes on each day, and limit the number of days off from school to as few as possible. Families are encouraged to consult the school calendar and take vacations during regularly scheduled school breaks.

## **Volunteering and Parent Involvement**

Cathedral Hill Montessori School is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. Volunteer opportunities allow parents to contribute to Cathedral Hill Montessori School in substantial and important ways. We depend on the support and talents of our parent community to accomplish our many tasks. Each family is asked to volunteer approximately four hours each academic year. Each parent will receive a Parent Involvement questionnaire, and description of volunteer opportunities as part of the enrollment packet. Please indicate as to which areas you are most interested in contributing.

As a charitable organization, all gifts (whether financial or goods of value) donated to Cathedral Hill Montessori School are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. Parents will be asked to contribute to the Annual Fund each year. The Annual Fund is designed to help supplement the school's budget and financial aid funds in order to maintain and improve the quality of each child's education here. Parents are encouraged to participate in the silent auction and other volunteer opportunities as they arise during the school year.

## **Withdrawal**

If you choose to withdraw or transfer your child to another school, please notify the Head of School as soon as possible. Families are required to give a minimum of 60 days written notice to withdraw your child from our school, in order to be released from the enrollment contract and any financial obligations to the school. Your child's records will be provided upon your request, and we will gladly help facilitate all the necessary paperwork.