



**CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI SCHOOL
&
CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

**2020-2021
Policies and Procedures Handbook**

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Please see the Cornerstone Program Guide for information about the Montessori program and background on your child’s experience. Policies in this handbook are superseded by the Safe Learning Plan during the 2020-21 school year.

INTRODUCTION

Dear Families,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2020-21 school year at Cornerstone Montessori School (CMS) and Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School (CMES)! With the changes that a safe response to Covid-19 require, this policy handbook is significantly different from years past. Our goal is to keep every child and adult in our community healthy during this time, as well as to continue to provide the developmentally appropriate education your child deserves. Our plans for the three modes of operation that Cornerstone may be in this year can be found in the separate *Safe Learning Plan*; please note that any procedures required for these different models take precedence over the policies listed here.

The staff of Cornerstone is committed to serving your child and providing the highest quality educational environment for every child. In return we ask each family to commit to partnering with Cornerstone to best support your child. All families should be familiar with Cornerstone programs and policies, as outlined in the handbooks, and commit to following them.

Please do not hesitate to call if you have any questions about the content of this book or any aspect of your child's experience at Cornerstone.

Respectfully,



Alyssa Schwartz
Head of School

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

ACCREDITATION

Cornerstone Montessori School and Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School are fully accredited AMI Montessori programs for children ages 16 months to 12 years. Cornerstone Montessori School has a 4-star rating with Parent Aware.

APPLICATION & ADMISSION PROCEDURES

Cornerstone Montessori School (Private Early Childhood Program)

Cornerstone Montessori School enrolls an economically and ethnically diverse population in its Toddler Community (16 to 33 months) and Children's House (33 months to 6 years) programs. The school strives to enroll 1/3 families paying full tuition, 1/3 families receiving partial scholarship, and 1/3 families receiving full scholarship or state/county assistance. The school offers an all year Montessori program and children are expected to attend full time, five days a week.

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School (Public Charter)

The open enrollment period for Cornerstone Elementary is from November 1 through December 1 each year. The number of open spots available is set by the CMES Board prior to the start of the open enrollment period. If there are more students who apply for a grade level than we have spots, the school will hold a lottery for admissions. **Due to state law, there is no preference given to children in the preschool program who wish to enroll in the elementary charter school. All children who are five by September 1 must apply for admissions to the elementary school.** The admissions lottery, if necessary, will be held the first Monday of December each year.

ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL

Arrival

School begins at 8:30 a.m. and it is important for you to arrive on time so your child can be part of the arrival routine. **We begin greeting children at 8:30 and ask that you plan your morning so you arrive between 8:30 and 8:45.** You may drop off using the car line, in which case a Cornerstone staff member will walk your child in. To use the car line, drive slowly into the parking area staying to the right all along the parked cars and around to the back where there are cones marking a safe turn-around. Pull up in line and when you get to the space between the cones please allow your child to exit the car and walk in. ***Please exercise courtesy, patience, and caution at all times in the parking lot.***

If you choose to park and walk your child to the curb, **please do not park immediately in front of the building or in front of the handicapped parking spaces.** Parking is available in the upper lot or along Ames Ave. To aid in your child's independence, please do not carry them into the building. Hold your child's hand and walk with them up the sidewalk. You may say goodbye after your child has been cleared for entrance using Covid-19 protocol.

Children arriving by bus will be met by a staff member at the bus drop-off points along Ames Ave. Please see page 8 for busing policies.

Dismissal

Dismissal for the Children's Houses and Toddler Community takes place at 12:30, 4:00, or between 4:00 and 4:30, depending on the program you have enrolled in. At the 12:30 dismissal, children will wait for you in the reception area; please park and wait for your child to be brought outside. At 4:00 you may use the car line (your child will be brought out to you) or you may park on the street or in the parking lot and walk to the curb to receive your child. Between 4:00 and 4:30, children will be in the classroom. Please call the front desk and your child will be brought outside to you.

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School ends at 4:00pm. Your child will take the bus, be escorted to the Boys and Girls Club for elementary after school programs, or be picked up in the car line. If you are picking your child up, you may use the car line (your child will be brought out to you) or you may park on the street or in the parking lot and walk to the curb to receive your child.

Early pick-ups/late arrivals: Please help limit disruptions to the environment and confusion by making every effort to arrive by 8:30 and pick up your child at their designated dismissal time. We understand that on rare occasion you may need to pick your child up early for an appointment; we ask that parents do this as infrequently as possible.

After Care

If your child is in CMS After Care (pick up until 4:30pm), please park and call the front desk. A staff member will help your child prepare for departure.

Alternative Person to Pick Up

Occasionally, you may need someone other than yourself to pick up your child from school. To ensure your child's safety while also insuring a smooth dismissal of your child, please:

- Notify the staff in writing regarding who will be picking up your child or call the school.
- Prepare your child, if at all possible, ahead of time by letting him or her know who will be picking up.
- Have the authorized person be prepared to show a picture I.D.
- As a matter of school policy, only persons of at least 16 years of age will be granted permission to pick up children from Cornerstone. Permission must be given in writing, from parents, for all alternative individuals to pick up.

ACCELERATION AND RETENTION POLICY

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School accepts children into grade levels based on their age on or before September 1 of the school year with 5 years being the age for acceptance into Kindergarten. Cornerstone will provide each child with an educational environment that provides optimal challenge and meets the child's developmental needs.

Due to the nature of the Montessori environment and the multi-age classrooms, lessons can be remediated or accelerated to meet the needs of each child.

Cornerstone staff members—teachers and administrators—will continually and consistently assess the needs and development of each child to determine the best environment for each child.

Children enrolled in Cornerstone Montessori School will be placed in the appropriate environment based on licensing rules defined by the Department of Human Services and evaluation of the Montessori trained guides as to the needs of that child.

Decisions to advance or retain a child in either the Early Childhood program or Elementary will be made by the Head of School in conjunction with the child's parents and will be based on staff experience and assessment of the needs of the child.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Parents are urged to make every effort to schedule doctor, dentist, and other appointments for their child at times outside of the school day. This will reinforce the importance of school and prevent the children from missing out. **If your child will be late or absent, please notify the school by 9 a.m. at the latest.**

The following constitute excused reasons for student absences:

- Illness
- Serious illness in the child's immediate family
- A death in the child's immediate family or of a close friend or relative
- Medical, dental, or orthodontic treatment or counseling appointment
- Court appearances occasioned by family or personal action
- Physical emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm, etc.
- Official school outing
- Removal of a child pursuant to suspension. Suspensions are to be handled as excused absences
- Family emergencies

The following are examples that will not be excused:

- Truancy
- Work at home
- Work at business
- Babysitting or home care of other family members

Absences resulting from official suspension will be handled in accordance with the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, Minnesota Statute 121A.40-121A.56.

In cases of excessive unexcused absences for children enrolled at Cornerstone Elementary, the Head of School may request the county attorney to file a petition with the juvenile court, pursuant to Minnesota statutes.

If children are enrolled at Cornerstone Montessori School (private preschool) and receiving CCAP funding, the school is required to report to the county programs when a child is absent seven or more days in a row.

A habitual truant is a child under the age of 16 years who is absent from attendance at school (beginning in Kindergarten) without lawful excuse for seven school days if the child is in elementary school or for one or more class periods on seven school days if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school, or a child who is 16 or 17 years of age who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for one or more class periods on seven school days and who has not lawfully withdrawn from school. A school district attendance officer shall refer a habitual truant child and the child's parent or legal guardian to appropriate services and procedures, under Minnesota Statute Chapter 260A.

Children should miss no more than 10% of school days, for excused or unexcused absences (approximately 17 days per year). Families will be notified when excused absences approach 10% of school days elapsed thus far.

Children participating in distance learning must make daily contact with their teacher in order to be considered present.

***Tuition for children at CMS will not be prorated in the event of absences or required closures.*

BULLYING PROHIBITION

Cornerstone is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment for all students. Acts of bullying, in any form, by either an individual child or a group of children, are prohibited on school property and at school functions. For detailed information regarding the Cornerstone Elementary Bullying Prohibition Policy, please visit www.cornerstone-elementary.org or speak to school administration.

BUS POLICY

Cornerstone bus service is a service for children enrolled in Cornerstone Elementary only. Centerline Charter provides our busing service and will not provide doorstop service. Centerline will determine a corner bus stop based on the address provided by the parents. Any concerns about the designated bus stop should be directed to Centerline Charter.

Buses will wait at a stop for one minute. If no student is present then the bus will leave and the driver will call the dispatcher to record the time. Buses will not return to pick up students who have missed the bus. If a child doesn't ride the bus for 10 days, the bus stop will be dropped according to policy established by Centerline Charter. Centerline Charter can be contacted directly at 651-482-1794.

Children will be dropped off at their bus stop whether or not an adult is present. It is the parent or guardian's responsibility to be at the stop to greet children or to make

alternate arrangements. Cornerstone recommends that you plan with your child what to do if no adult is home when the child is dropped off.

Parents requesting changes in riding status must submit that request in writing to the Cornerstone office. If a parent does not want his or her child to take the bus on a given day, the parent must **either send the child to school with a signed note requesting staff not to put the child on the bus or call the school by 3 p.m. to confirm the change in plans.** To ensure every child's safety, the staff is required to carry out the plan that has been previously arranged unless they receive written notice or a phone call stating otherwise. Please know that because staff is busy with children during the day; if you do not speak with someone directly or receive an email response, please do not assume your message has been received. Other changes in riding status that are due to family relocation must be submitted to the office in writing a week before the change should occur.

Riding the bus to and from school is a privilege for Cornerstone Elementary children who live in St. Paul. Children need to be well behaved and respectful of the bus driver and supervising staff when riding the bus and while waiting for the bus in order to enjoy this privilege.

While waiting for the bus or after being dropped off at a school bus stop, all children must comply with the following rules:

- Get to the bus stop five minutes before your scheduled pick up time. The school bus driver will not wait for late children.
- Respect the property of others while waiting at the bus stop.
- Keep your arms, legs, and belongings to yourself.
- Use appropriate language.
- Stay away from street, road, or highway when waiting for the bus.
- Wait until the bus stops before approaching the bus.
- After getting off the bus, move away from the bus.
- If you must cross the street, always cross in front of the bus where the driver can see you. Wait for the driver to signal to you before crossing the street.
- No fighting, harassment, intimidation, or horseplay.
- Follow all other school rules on the bus.

While riding a school bus, all riders must comply with the following rules:

- Follow the driver's directions at all times.
- Remain seated facing forward while the bus is in motion.
- Talk quietly and use appropriate language.
- Keep all parts of your body inside the bus.
- Keep arms, legs, and belongings to yourself and out of the aisle.
- No fighting, harassment, intimidation, or horseplay.
- Do not throw any object.
- No eating or drinking.
- Do not bring any weapons or dangerous objects on the school bus.

- Do not damage the school bus.

Inappropriate behavior on the bus, or while loading or unloading the bus, will not be tolerated and will be handled as follows:

- First Incident: child is warned by Cornerstone staff to behave appropriately and parents are notified.
- Second Incident: child's parents are notified and a plan is made to have both school and parent address issue with child.
- Third Incident: child will be suspended from riding the bus for a whole day (morning and afternoon services).
- Fourth Incident: Cornerstone administration will evaluate the situation and decide on an appropriate consequence, which may include a longer suspension or termination of bus privileges. Cornerstone reserves the right to suspend a child from riding the bus if it is determined that it is not in the best interest of the school and the other children.

During the 2020-21 school year, all children will have assigned seats and must remain in those seats for the duration of the bus ride. Children must wear masks while on the bus. Parents are expected to monitor their child's health prior to sending them to school; children will not be permitted to ride the bus home if they are found to have a fever or Covid-19 symptoms while at school.

Parents must agree to these policies and give their signature in agreement on the Bus Ride Application before bus service may begin. If a parent does not sign and agree to the Cornerstone Elementary Bus Policy, the student is ineligible to ride the bus.

CALENDAR

Cornerstone Montessori School and Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School will publish a joint school calendar each fall. If changes are made, parents will be given advance notice. Reminders and additions to the calendar will be posted on the website and distributed via NotifyMe.

CELEBRATIONS & THEIR IMPORTANCE

At Cornerstone 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 experiences. When at all possible, we invite representatives of a particular culture to share their experiences with the children. The opportunities to taste, dance, and sing about different cultures lead to lifelong appreciations for cultural experiences.

CELL PHONE USE

Children may not bring cell phones to school unless absolutely necessary. If it is necessary, the phone will be stored in administrative offices until the end of the day when it is returned to the child.

We ask parents to not use cell phones when at Cornerstone. Arrival and dismissal are important transition times for children. 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 Cornerstone 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 report is guilty of a misdemeanor.** All suspected cases of abuse or neglect at Cornerstone are immediately reported.

Reporting of Maltreatment of Minors

This law strives to protect children by defining what constitutes abuse and neglect, who is mandated to report, and the responsibilities of local social service agencies, state agencies, and law enforcement in conducting investigations once a report of maltreatment is made.

Any person who provides services to children must know the definitions of abuse and neglect, and must know the steps to take to make a maltreatment report. The law requires mandated reporters to make a report if they know or have reason to believe a child is being abused or neglected, or has been abused or neglected in the past three years. If a child is in immediate danger, mandated reporters should call the police.

Persons who work in licensed facilities must be aware that they are mandated to report any person whom they have reason to believe is abusing or neglecting a child, including employers or fellow employees. See Minnesota Statutes, Section 626.556, subdivision 3.

Definitions

“Physical abuse” means any physical injury, mental injury or threatened injury, inflicted by a person responsible for the child’s care on a child other than by accidental means, or any physical or mental injury that cannot reasonably be explained by the child’s history of injuries, or any aversive and deprivation procedures that have not been authorized under Minnesota Statutes, section 245.825. Abuse does not include reasonable and moderate physical discipline of a child administered by a parent or legal guardian which does not result in an injury. Actions which are not reasonable and moderate include, but are not limited to, any of the following that are done in anger or without regard to the safety of the child:

- Throwing, kicking, burning, biting, or cutting a child;
- Striking a child with a closed fist;
- Shaking a child under age three (3);
- Striking or other actions which result in any non-accidental injury to a child under 18 months of age;
- Unreasonable interference with a child’s breathing;

- Threatening a child with a weapon, as defined in section 609.02, subdivision 6;
- Striking a child under age one (1) on the face or head;
- Purposely giving a child poison, alcohol, or dangerous, harmful, or controlled substances which were not prescribed for the child by a practitioner, in order to control or punish the child; or other substances that substantially affect the child's behavior, motor coordination, or judgment or that results in sickness or internal injury, or subjects the child to medical procedures that would be unnecessary if the child were not exposed to the substances; or
- Unreasonable physical confinement or restraint not permitted under section 609.379, including but not limited to tying, caging or chaining.

"Mental Injury" means an injury to the psychological capacity or emotional stability of a child as evidenced by an observable or substantial impairment in the child's ability to function within a normal range of performance and behavior with due regard to the child's culture.

"Threatened Injury" means a statement, overt act, condition, or status that represents a substantial risk of physical or sexual abuse or mental injury.

"Sexual Abuse" means the subjection of a child by a person responsible for the child's care, by a person who has a significant relationship to the child, as defined in section 609.341, or by a person in a position of authority, as defined in section 609.341, subdivision 10, to any act which constitutes a violation of section 609.342 (criminal sexual conduct in the first degree), 609.343 (criminal sexual conduct in the second degree), 609.344 (criminal sexual conduct in the third degree), 609.345 (criminal sexual conduct in the fourth degree), or 609.3451 (criminal sexual conduct in the fifth degree). Sexual abuse also includes any act that involves a minor which constitutes a violation of prostitution offenses under sections 609.321 to 609.324 or 617.246. Sexual abuse includes threatened sexual abuse. See Minnesota Statutes, section 626.556, subdivision 2.

"Neglect" means failure by a person responsible for a child's care to supply a child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, health, medical, or other care required for the child's physical or mental health when reasonably able to do so; failure to protect the child from conditions or actions which imminently and seriously endanger the child's physical or mental health when reasonably able to do so; failure to provide for necessary supervision of child care arrangements appropriate for a child after considering factors as the child's age, mental ability, physical condition, length of absence, or environment, when the child is unable to care for the child's own basic needs or safety, or the basic needs or safety of another child in their care; failure to ensure that the child is educated as defined in sections 120A.22 and 260C.163, subdivision 11; nothing in this section shall be construed to mean that child is neglected solely because the child's parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's care in good faith selects and depends upon spiritual means or prayer for treatment or care of disease or remedial care of the child in lieu of medical care; except that a parent, guardian, or caretaker, or a person mandated to report pursuant to

subdivision 3, has a duty to report if a lack of medical care may cause serious danger to the child's health. This section does not impose upon persons, not otherwise legally responsible for providing a child with necessary food, clothing, shelter, education, or medical care, a duty to provide that care.

Mandated Reporters

Mandated reporters include, but are not limited to, individuals in the following areas:

Health Care:	doctors, nurses, dentists, psychiatrists
Child Care:	childcare center staff, all providers of family child care
Education:	guides/teachers, assistants, support staff
Social Services:	social workers, all group home staff & administrators, foster parents, psychologists

Facility procedures for making a report must comply with the Maltreatment of Minors Act. For example, the law does not require more than one person from a childcare center to make a report. However, providers such as those listed above cannot prevent or prohibit an employee from making a report. See Minnesota Statutes, section 626.556, subdivision 3.

CLOTHING

Each child at Cornerstone needs a pair of extra 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 or remove them. **Occasionally, accidents happen—water spills or an item breaks—and thus the inside shoes MUST have a hard sole so as to best protect the child's feet from injury. In addition, high heels and/or open-toed shoes are NOT permitted for children at Cornerstone as they do not allow for safety or ease of movement.**

Each child, regardless of age, must also bring an extra set of clothing to school so that he or she has something to change into if clothing becomes soiled. **Please label all extra clothing with the child's initials. A complete set of clothing includes underwear, socks, top and bottom. Parents will receive a notice when their child needs a new supply of clothing or a change of items to fit the season (i.e. adding a sweater in winter).** Children should wear clothing that they can put on and remove independently, and that allows for freedom of movement.

Outdoor clothing should also be appropriate for the season. Since our outdoor environments become particularly muddy, we ask that each child bring rain boots. In colder weather, the rain boots should be exchanged for a snowsuit and winter boots. In summer months, a sunhat should be provided to protect your child from harmful UV rays. We will provide sunscreen for children in the Elementary and will apply it for children with signed permission in the Early Childhood program.

If you need support in attaining your child's school clothing needs, please let us know and we will work with your family.

CONFERENCES

Conferences will be held twice a year. Conferences will allow time to discuss the progress of each child. At the end of the year, a written report regarding each child's development will be completed and delivered to parents.

If you have questions for your child's guide, please contact your guide either before or after the school day or by calling the school or sending an email. We are invested in your child's success and will contact you as soon as possible to respond to your needs. Guides/teachers may also contact parents with success stories, questions, and concerns.

To respect each child's sense of privacy and dignity, we ask parents and guides/teachers 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 the guide aside to ask it out of the presence of your child or fill out a communication form so that the guide can contact you confidentially.

At the elementary level, children may be asked to be part of conferences. This helps children in taking ownership for their development and learning while supporting independence and goal setting.

Conferences during 2020-21 may be conducted by Zoom or phone.

COMMITMENT

When you enroll your child in Cornerstone, we expect a commitment through the elementary years. Children benefit most when they are in a program for at least three years. The developmental cycle for a child cannot be completed if they leave a Montessori program early.

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS/PARENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Consistent and strong communication between parents and guides/teachers is essential in order to provide the most consistent and supportive environment for each child. The more 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.

During the 2020-21 school year, parents may be required to remain outside the school building. Parents/legal guardians may have access to their child at any time while the child is at school. Please notify the front desk that you would like to see your child and they will be brought to you.

Parents can expect news from the school each week which will include administrative information and news about what is happening in our school and classroom communities, including updates, important reminders, volunteer opportunities, and an updated calendar. **Reading these letters thoroughly is an excellent way to feel connected to your child's life at school, as well as grow as a Montessori parent!** Parents and families are expected to sign up for NotifyMe to stay connected and up to date with all the information provided

for you on the Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School website (www.cornerstone-elementary.org).

Daily written reports to parents of toddlers will also go home about food intake, elimination, sleeping, and general behavior. This is a Department of Human Services requirement. **If there is a communicable illness or disease in Cornerstone, an email will be sent to families.**

To help ensure that the staff and parent community are operating with the same knowledge, we ask that you:

- Please read all signs and notes posted.
- Sign up for NotifyMe and check the website often.
- Send important information via email or written note. 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 talk to school staff 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 following chart.

<u>Matter Related to:</u>	<u>First Contact</u>
Child's progress	Guide
Environment activities	Guide
Day to day procedures	Guide
Arrival and dismissal information	Administrative Assistant
Absences/tardiness	Administrative Assistant
Observations	Administrative Assistant
Pedagogical issues	Head of School
Academic/curriculum policies	Head of School
Parent education	Head of School
Changes in tuition	Head of School
Legal matters	Head of School
Public relations	Head of School
Facilities (including playground)	Head of School/MCM Director of Operations
Admissions	Head of School/Dir. Of Business Operations
Billing/accounts	Head of School/ Dir. Of Business Operations
School finances	Head of School/ Dir. Of Business Operations
Child's records	Head of School/ Dir. Of Business
Operations	

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

- If you have a question regarding your child, ask his/her guide. Guides are your first resource to answer your questions and resolve your conflicts.

- If the guide is unable to resolve the problem to your satisfaction, please address your question to the Head of School.
- If a resolution cannot be reached in the above two steps, administration will support you in setting up an appointment with all concerned groups.

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

DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-DISCIPLINE & BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE

Discipline in a Montessori environment is not imposed on the child but, rather, is created in the child when there is a beautiful blend and perfect balance of freedom and structure. Maintaining this delicate balance is one of the foundations of the Montessori environment. It is on this foundation of freedom and structure that the child builds discipline.

Freedom is not often associated with discipline. Usually, people assume that since the child is offered freedom—to move, to choose, to repeat—there is no structure to the environment. Freedom, however, does not mean one can do whatever one wants. Responsibility to oneself and one's community are essential components of freedom. We offer freedoms, but with limitations that facilitate the development of responsibility and an internal center of control. The development of self-discipline in this manner allows the individual to choose the right behavior because it is right for him or herself and for the community.

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 children, staff and parents/guardians/caregivers in their life at the school:

1. Respect for self
2. Respect for others
3. Respect for materials, tools and equipment
4. Respect for the environment

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 Cornerstone staff. 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 supervising staff person seeks the underlying causes of the child's behavior. In doing so, the adult tries to help the child

understand the inappropriateness of his or 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, Director of Training at the Montessori Center of Minnesota, and/or another staff member 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)
- Teasing or purposefully hurting feelings
- Disrespectful talk to any person
- Aggressive play, or any form of guns or weapons "play"
- Purposeful destruction of class materials or equipment-
- Disrupting another child's work
- Demeaning name-calling
- Consistent noise-making
- Hitting, spitting or kicking
- Inappropriate sexual touching
- Biting
- Interfering with the health and/or safety of another

Cornerstone 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 parent(s), whose behavior is harmful to him or her or to the other children in the environment.

When staff notes that a child requires increased amount of staff guidance and time this 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 information in how to encourage positive behavior. 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. This will be formalized in a Behavior Plan for the child that will be formulated in collaboration with the child's parents/guardians.

If the consequences and redirection do not have any effect on persistent unacceptable behavior, best next steps will be discussed and decided upon in a team meeting with parents. Cornerstone seeks to support every child's success.

DISMISSAL, REFERRAL, SUSPENSION & EXPULSION

Dismissal usually is a result of tuition default, failure to provide required records, and/or poor attendance in the private preschool. Referrals result when general education staff members are unable to support continued challenging behavior without the expertise of other specialists. Suspension can result if a child repeatedly harms property or threatens the physical safety of self or of other children.

Expulsion of a child is a last resort and is only done in extreme circumstances when a child's behavior has continued to be threatening and disruptive to the community. Prior to expulsion, the guides are responsible for trying several forms of redirection of behavior.

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 asked to leave the school.

Pupil Fair Dismissal Act

Public elementary schools in Minnesota are governed by the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act that assures that students will not be unfairly asked to leave a school or be suspended without cause. Information on this law is available on the Minnesota Department of Education website.

DRUGS & ALCOHOL

The use of controlled substances and alcohol is prohibited at Cornerstone. Alcohol is never served at Cornerstone functions. All staff and volunteers are given orientation on the drug and alcohol policy during staff and volunteer training. Individuals who arrive at Cornerstone to drop off or pick up children may be reported to the appropriate authorities.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Cornerstone conducts required safety drills once a month so that children and staff are practiced in safety protocol in the event of an emergency. During fire drills children and staff practice exiting the building in the safest and quickest manner. There are maps and exit plans in each room of the school. Tornado drills are held monthly from April through September. In the same manner, children and staff practice where to go and what to do during a severe weather emergency. Lock Down Shelter in Place drills prepare children and staff to be safe in the event of an unexpected person or situation inside or outside the school; Cornerstone does not participate in Lock Down Duck and Cover or Active Shooter drills. While taking care to explain the process to the children so they are not alarmed, we treat these emergency drills as if they were real emergencies. A copy of the emergency procedure manual is available on the CMES website.

FACILITIES

The Montessori Center of Minnesota oversees facilities for both CMS and CMES. Questions regarding the physical plant, both interior and exterior, may be directed to Jessari Sutton, Director of Operations.

FAMILY EMERGENCIES

If you have an emergency at home or at work and you need to call the school, we will try and respond as soon as possible. If you reach voicemail, please leave your number and we will call back to resolve the issue as soon as we are able. If there will be a different person picking up your child, you must inform the school in writing if that person is not already on your child's "Permission to Pick Up Form." **Please remember to continuously update your phone numbers and emergency contact phone numbers.**

FAMILY ISSUES

Children's home and school environments are inevitably linked. We are all occasionally faced with events/issues—such as birth, adoption, death, divorce, depression, remarriage,

chronic illness, chemical abuse, and domestic violence—that can affect our ability to function well. If you or members of your family are experiencing any of these situations, you might want to share that information with your child’s guide. The guide can provide vital support and understanding that might help your child cope during a difficult time. In addition, we work with respected, local professionals who are available to lend their expertise to a situation.

FIELD TRIPS/GOING OUT

Parents or guardians must sign a permission form when a child is admitted 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 before the trip. In general, staying within a routine and not going out best serve our youngest children. They may benefit from walking trips within the neighborhood. In some special instances, Children’s House classes may visit other locations. Elementary students will have “going out” trips that are focused on research or an area of interest, or are related to the care of their environment or pets. 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. Children will only travel on a city bus or an appropriately equipped vehicle.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

The mission of Cornerstone is to serve a socio-economically diverse community of families. As part of our commitment to do so, we offer free public education to children in kindergarten through grade six. We accept preschool children who receive childcare assistance funding from county services and also offer tuition assistance to families in need. Financial aid/tuition assistance is supported by a scholarship fund, funded through the Montessori Center of Minnesota. We expect families to keep their financial commitment to the school and pay tuition and co-pays on time.

FIRST AID ADMINISTRATION & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

All members of the Cornerstone 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 are notified. In cases requiring immediate medical attention, First Aid is administered and 911 is called. The child is transported to the nearest hospital as determined by 911. After calling 911, the parents and the physician are contacted immediately. A staff member will inform the parent of the child’s injury. Parents will sign a parent permission form for immediate medical care.

We will administer First Aid for any emergency, but if the injury requires medical attention, our first consideration must be the safety of the child. We will take whatever action is deemed necessary. **Please remember to update the 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.

Staff will not transport children.

FOOD POLICY: BREAKFAST, LUNCH, & SNACKS

Healthy and nutritious food is a priority at Cornerstone School. The school has a “no sugar” policy and a “no nut” policy. Our “no sugar” policy means that children are not offered products at school that contain refined sugar. Our “no nut” policy means that the school will not serve items with nuts nor have any nuts at school. Parents/guardians may not pack lunches that contain either refined sugar or nuts so that they remain in compliance of the policies.

Children will be offered a simple breakfast, wholesome lunch, and snacks each day. Water will be available in the environment for children to drink throughout the day. An information sheet on children's allergies as well as health issues or allergies will be posted in places that guides/teachers can see while serving food.

Both lunch and breakfast provide one-third of the child's daily nutritional needs. At lunch, staff members sit and dine with children. Breakfast usually consists of cereal or a bagel, milk and fruit. We work with our caterer, Lancer Hospitality, to provide healthy lunches and breakfasts for the children each day. Menus will be planned on a monthly basis and distributed to parents in advance. Breakfast and lunch will comply with USDA requirements and parents who choose to provide food for their children must meet these requirements as well (including milk).

Children in the early childhood program (CMS) receive lunch and breakfast as part of their tuition. Children in Cornerstone Elementary receive lunch and breakfast for free if they qualify for free lunch or a reduced cost if they qualify for reduced lunch. Families of children who do not qualify may purchase lunch for \$3.50 and breakfast for \$1.75 a day.

All children wash their hands before eating meals or snacks. Food preparation tools, flatware, glassware, and dishes are washed and sanitized between each use to ensure the health and safety of all children.

FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH

Cornerstone Montessori School participates in the Children and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) through the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Minnesota Department of Education. Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School participates in the School Nutrition Program (SNP) through the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Minnesota Department of Education.

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
2. fax: (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE PROHIBITION

Cornerstone strives to maintain a learning and working environment that is free from religious, racial, or sexual harassment and violence. Cornerstone prohibits any form of religious, racial, or sexual harassment and violence.

Detailed information on Cornerstone Elementary's Harassment and Violence Prohibition Policy is available in the administrative offices. Alyssa Schwartz, Head of School, is the Title IX coordinator who handles inquiries regarding sexual harassment. Alyssa can be reached at 651.774.5000.

HEALTH & WELLNESS POLICIES

Cornerstone 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. When your child is sick, he or she must be cared for at home. Cornerstone administration and staff understand the added stress and inconvenience of these times but ask for your cooperation so that we can establish a healthier environment for all the children.

At Cornerstone 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, after they touch pets, and when they arrive in the morning. 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.

Parents must follow these guidelines regarding illness in their child(ren):

- 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 she/he 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 24 hours, exclusive of holidays or weekends.
- If your child has been prescribed an antibiotic, she/he **must** be on medication for 24 hours before returning to school.

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 admission in the morning
- Diarrhea that is uncontrolled or infectious
- Vomiting since arrival or within the last 24 hours
- Bacterial infections such as streptococcal pharyngitis (strep throat) or impetigo until the child has been on antibiotics for 24 hours
- 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 (if there are additional symptoms present, the child may be required to stay home for 10 days after initial symptoms)
- An undiagnosed rash that seems to be related to contagious illness
- Unexplained lethargy or failure to be able to participate

During the 2020-21 school year, the following policies supersede those listed above:

Upon arrival, all children and staff will have temperatures checked with an infrared thermometer. In addition, parents will be asked to confirm that their child has not experienced cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat since the previous day.

If a fever of 100 degrees or higher is identified, it will be verified with a second thermometer and the individual will be sent home.

Tylenol and medication to reduce fever may not be used to determine the length of time a child is well.

Children will be isolated and sent home immediately if they demonstrate fever, dry cough, shortness of breath, or sore throat. Decisions to send children home ultimately rest with the administration.

A staff member or student who had symptoms of suspected or confirmed Covid-19 can return to the program when:

- At least three days (72 hours) have passed since recovery – defined as no fever without the use of medications and improvement in respiratory signs like cough and shortness of breath;

AND

- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

OR

- It has been at least three days (72 hours) since recovery **AND** the individual has a confirmed medical diagnosis for the symptoms.

If an ill child has a sibling on-site, the sibling will also be sent home and must remain home until all children in the family meet the criteria to return to school.

If Cornerstone requests a child be picked up due to illness, parents are expected to arrive within 30 minutes.

Health Consultation services are provided to Cornerstone Montessori School by Health Consultants for Childcare, 1210 Morningview Drive, Mound, MN 55364.

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School consults with Navigate Care Consulting, 1560 Oakdale Ave, West St. Paul, MN 55118.

HEALTH CARE SUMMARY, IMMUNIZATION RECORD REQUIREMENTS & SPECIAL HEALTH NEEDS

Minnesota's school immunization law requires that all children must be fully immunized by the first day of school or 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. Please obtain the necessary waiver from the school or use the immunization form. 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 six months) and must be signed by the child's health care provider. This form is due within 30 days of admission to the school. The Health Care Summary must be updated whenever a child moves to a new level (preschool or kindergarten age). All these forms are for the safety of your child, and will be kept confidential.

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.

HIV/AIDS POLICY

Cornerstone has a non-discrimination policy regarding HIV/AIDS. We will not dismiss or refuse to enroll a child, dismiss or refuse to hire a staff member who is HIV positive or has AIDS.

ITEMS FROM HOME

Children are encouraged to leave personal items at home. **Items such as food, candy, toys, and stuffed animals, purses, personal school supplies, binders, locker decorations, etc., may not be brought to school.** These items disrupt the sense of community we strive so hard to foster. **Any item that is brought to school that resembles a weapon will be disposed of by the 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, or educational value, to school to share, please ask him or her to arrange to do so with the guide/teacher. Planning ahead allows us to ensure that the child gets an appropriate amount of time dedicated to the discussion of their object.

LICENSURE

Cornerstone Montessori School (private early childhood program) is a licensed childcare center by the state of Minnesota. We are licensed to operate 7:30am-5:30pm, Monday through Friday. We are licensed to enroll 12 children 16-33 months, 40 children 3-5 years, and up to 25 children aged 6 years. If a parent has a question about licensure, they may call the Department of Human Services Licensing Division at 651.296.3971.

Cornerstone Elementary is licensed through the state and our authorizer is the University of St. Thomas. UST can be reached via Molly McGraw Healy, 1000 LaSalle Ave, Opus Hall 217, Minneapolis, MN 55403. Our elementary program is monitored by our authorizer and the state and federal governments.

MEDICATIONS

Minnesota legislation 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.

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 Parent Permission to Administer Medication form, as well as provide written physician approval.** Medications also 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 Cornerstone must have an Individual Child Care Plan 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 or more often if needed.

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. Cough drops may be brought to the front desk and will be administered by an adult.

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.

NONDISCRIMINATION

Cornerstone is committed to inclusive education and providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. Cornerstone does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, immigration status, sex, gender identity, marital status, parental status, status with regard to public assistance, disability, sexual orientation, or age in its programs and activities. Alyssa Schwartz, Head of School, is the human rights officer who handles inquiries regarding nondiscrimination. Alyssa can be reached at 651.774.5000.

See pages 18-19 for policies related to USDA food and nutrition programs.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

OBSERVATION

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. 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 to the new environment, observations will not be scheduled until six weeks after school has started (typically after fall conferences) or six weeks after a child has started if he or she starts mid-year. After this time, parents may sign-up with the school administration. Observations are typically scheduled for Wednesday mornings. Alternative times can be arranged upon request. We ask that you thoroughly read and follow the Guidelines for Observation that will be handed out to you on the day prior to your scheduled observation. If you have questions following your observation, please communicate directly with your child's guide or Head of School following your visit.

Observations will be available in 2020-21 pending guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health.

OFFICE HOURS

Cornerstone is open Monday through Friday, 8:00am-4:30pm. Outside of office hours, you may either send an email or leave a voicemail. Staff are not expected to respond to emails outside of business hours.

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. Children are expected to go outside every day, weather permitting. Every child should come to school with the items necessary to keep the child comfortable in all varieties of Minnesota weather. Excluding extenuating circumstances, if children are well enough to be at school, it is assumed that they are well enough to participate in outdoor activities with the rest of the community. Please let the school know if you need assistance in attaining necessary items such as rain boots and/or suitable snow clothes. If your child cannot participate in this outdoor opportunity, please call the child's guide and discuss the issue.

- **Play safely:** We do not allow pushing, pulling, hitting, tackling games, wrestling, kicking, fighting, blocking other children's activities, or throwing snow, ice, sand, wood chips or equipment in the play area.
- 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 recess use. The school supplies buckets, shovels, brooms, rakes, appropriate garden tools, and sports equipment for work and play.
- **Conflict resolution:** Children should come to an adult if they have a problem they cannot resolve themselves. Adults step in to mediate observed conflicts as well.
- 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 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, and grass:** Unless children are gardening, they should avoid digging in, pulling on, picking at, breaking off, or hanging on vegetation. We have a large sand area for digging, and lots of sand toys for the children's enjoyment.

If a child does not adhere to these rules, the adult supervising the playground 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 rest. If, after the child returns to play, he/she continues to break the rules, he/she will be removed from the playground and brought into the school in the company of an adult for the remainder of the outside time. Repeated unsafe play outdoors may result in the child losing his/her privilege to work/play outside for one or more days. Cornerstone staff will discuss this with the parent, should it occur.

PARENT PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

At Cornerstone, we believe that supporting our parents' understanding of our school philosophy and methodology, as well as learning from our parents about their children, families, and culture and traditions, are priorities. To assist in this process, we offer parents many opportunities to learn about child development and Montessori education and welcome parents to share what is important to them in the education of their children.

Events in our Parent Engagement Program include:

- **Parent Partnership/Education Events:** 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. Parents with different areas of expertise or topics of interest are invited to share with other parents on these evenings as well.
- **Observations:** Parents are encouraged to observe in the environments. Please refer to the section regarding Observations on page 23 for further information.
- **Lending Library:** We encourage parents to borrow books about and by Maria Montessori and her educational methodology from the school, as well as other books about child development and parenting topics. Parents can also contribute books they have found helpful to the lending library.

If a parent requests, Cornerstone will provide information regarding the professional qualifications of his/her child's guide including, at minimum, the following:

- Whether the guide has met state qualification and licensing criteria for the grade/age level for which the guide is responsible;
- Whether the guide is teaching under emergency or other provisional licensing status through which the state qualification or licensing criteria have been waived;
- The degree or certification held by the guide;
- Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their level of qualifications.

In addition, Cornerstone will provide parents with information as to the level of achievement of their child in state academic assessments and school assessments. Cornerstone Elementary will also provide notice to parents if, for four or more consecutive weeks, their child has been assigned to or taught by a teacher who is not highly qualified.

PETS

Cornerstone has pets in the environments. All pets are living as humanely as possible and are 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 try to keep pets that most children do not have allergies to, but parents should inform guides/teachers if their child happens to be allergic to various types of animals.

PHOTOGRAPHS & VIDEO

We often utilize photographs and videos to convey what happens in the Montessori environments. Photographs of the children are often used by Cornerstone or the Montessori Center of Minnesota as part of our publications 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 of their child(ren) in this manner. Children are never identified by name in publications or on social media, which may include the Cornerstone website and newsletters.

PLACEMENT

Children are placed in environments under the considerations of trying to keep an age, gender and ethnic balance within each multi-age group. In the interest of developmental growth for each child, we usually place siblings in separate environments. Parents may not request placement in a particular environment.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS

In order to provide each child with the highest standard of education, our staff meets for professional/in-service training on occasion and staff meetings. Occasionally, we close the school to provide staff with opportunities to attend workshops and national conferences. Attendance at such events allows us to continue our development as a professional teaching staff and assists in developing staff commitment and enthusiasm. These meetings allow the staff to support one another while also developing cohesive curriculum plans and ensuring communication about school policies and procedures. Development days are marked on the school calendar.

PROHIBITED ACTIONS BY ADULTS

At Cornerstone, the students are treated with the great respect that all children deserve. The actions and language of adults must be respectful. We are aware that to change difficult behavior, children must be around adult models who treat children and other adults with integrity. Therefore, we avoid punishment and try to redirect behavior.

Under no circumstance will a staff person ever:

- Resort to corporal punishment, which includes, but is not limited to rough handling, shoving, hair or ear pulling, shaking, slapping, kicking, biting, pinching, hitting or spanking.
- Subject a child to emotional abuse which includes, but is not limited to name calling, ostracism, shaming, making derogatory remarks about the child, using language which threatens, humiliates, or frightens the child.
- Yell at a child.
- Punish a child for lapses in toilet training.
- Withhold food, light, warmth, clothing, or care as a punishment for unacceptable behavior.

- Physically restrain or mechanically restrain a child other than to hold a child to protect that child or others from harm.
- Separate a child from the group except within the rule guidelines.

Any staff person found to be engaging in any of the above-mentioned behaviors will be subject to disciplinary action or termination. Other adults are expected to treat children with respect when they are at Cornerstone.

RECESS AND LUNCH PHILOSOPHY

At Cornerstone Elementary, all parts of the day are considered educational or developmental opportunities including lunch and recess. Lunch is set up and cleaned up primarily by the children and enjoyed family style with an adult at each table modeling appropriate serving portions from a balance of nutritional components, conversation, and manners. During the Covid-19 health emergency, lunch will take place within the classrooms and adults will plate each child's meal.

For recess, children plan and lead many activities, some of which are free play, but many of which are planned activities and games. Adults and children stop often to assess how things are going; what in the game is going well? What could go better? Who heard people being good sports? What did that sound like?

In addition, Cornerstone places great importance on children being connected to the natural world. This connection fosters children's curiosity and inspires children's work as well as gives children much-needed physical activity and exercise. For these reasons, we are adamant that children participate in recess every day. **Great effort is given in order that all children have appropriate outdoor gear for Minnesota weather. It is our policy that we go outdoors unless it is raining heavily or unless: for Elementary, it is below 10 below zero; for Children's House it is below zero degrees; for Toddlers it is below 10 degrees, all with the wind chill factor.**

RECORDS

Records of children enrolled at Cornerstone Montessori are classified as private and confidential.

Records of children enrolled at Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School are classified as public, private, or confidential. State and federal laws protect student records from unauthorized inspection or use and provide parents/guardians and eligible children with certain rights. For the purposes of record access, an "eligible" child is one who is 18 or older who is enrolled in an institution of post-secondary education. A complete copy of Cornerstone Elementary "Protection and Privacy of Public Records" may be obtained from the administrative office.

SAFETY & SECURITY

Children are not to leave the building without the permission and supervision of a guide. All outside doors to the school are locked throughout the day and the staff monitors all who enter and leave the building.

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 CLOSING

In unusual circumstances, the school may have to close due to weather conditions or facility issues. **Cornerstone will generally follow the St. Paul Public School (SPPS) District for weather closures.** However, the Head of School will make decisions about closing that fits the community and situation of Cornerstone (i.e. the preschool may not close if SPPS closes for busing reasons). Cornerstone Elementary may be affected by closures due to busing that may not affect the preschool. Closures will be announced on the school website, WCCO radio (830), TV Channel 4, and WCCO online.

SCHOOL NEWS

We acknowledge the importance of keeping parents informed of happenings in the environment. The weekly “Stepping Stones” is distributed via NotifyMe and posted on the school website. This update includes details of your child’s classroom environments, as well. Parents who have articles or information they would like to share with others should discuss it with the Head of School. A monthly newsletter is also distributed, as well as a handout of monthly calendar events.

Parents of children in the Toddler Community will also receive daily notification of their child’s eating and elimination patterns in accordance with Minnesota Law.

SEPARATION & TRANSITIONS

Separation is a process we go through all of our lives. Though often challenging and exciting, this growth toward independence can be painful and scary, especially for young children. Parents and guides/teachers working together, showing children that they trust and believe in one another, offers a foundation of support when the world suddenly seems a new and different place.

Independence is one of our primary goals, but we also understand that transitioning into a new environment is a process.

Our experience shows that children transition more quickly when parents show confidence and trust in the school by positively, concisely, and confidently saying good-bye. Never leave without letting your child know that you are doing so. If your child is having a challenging time separating, please say good-bye and then phone the school to check on your child.

Please note, as a child transitions from one environment to another, the child will be invited for one or more short visits to his or her new environment. This gives children the opportunity to slowly acclimatize themselves.

SMOKING

Cornerstone is a smoke-free environment. Smoking or vaping is not permitted anywhere on the premises.

SPECIAL NEEDS

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. Families will be asked to share with us if your child has a special need and is (one or more of the following):

- Eligible for case management through the state and has an Individual Service Plan (ISP)
- Receiving services through the local school district and has an Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- Determined by a licensed physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, or consulting psychologist to have a condition related to physical, social, or emotional development.

SOCIAL EVENTS

Cornerstone Montessori School collaborates with families to sponsor the following social events. We encourage families to collaborate on other events as well. If you have an idea for an event, please discuss it with your child's guide or the Head of School. The following is a list of some of our annual community events. These events will take place online as is possible this year.

Back to School Fair

Each August we invite all families to join us for a Back to School Fair to reconnect with each other over the excitement of the new school year and take care of required paperwork and other business related to the beginning of each new academic year.

Cornerstone Stone Soup Event

Just after our Winter Break, we will spend time together enjoying the warm, tasty soup, conversation, a community project, and all school sing-along.

Cornerstone Cafés

Parents are invited to enjoy coffee together in the MCM coffee bar on the first Friday of each month. Guides and administration will rotate visits with you. Frequently children will present their work.

Summer Picnic

Each summer, we celebrate the rise in temperature and end of the school year with a picnic.

Parent Partnership Events

Periodic parent partnership events provide opportunities for learning and community among parents/guardians. Childcare is offered during those events where children are not actively involved. Suggestions of parent partnership topics can be shared with the Head of School.

SUPPLIES & BELONGINGS

Before your child transitions into an environment, we will distribute a list of items that should be brought to school. Please ensure that your child has what he or she needs. We will work with families to enable all children to have the appropriate school supplies.

TRANSFERRING TO ANOTHER SCHOOL

If you are moving or choose to transfer your child to another school, please let the office know and we will complete all the necessary paperwork.

TUITION FOR CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Cornerstone Montessori School is open to children from 8:00 in the morning until 4:30 in the evening, Monday through Friday. Children are expected to attend school each day of the week, Monday – Friday, for the hours they are contracted. We do not offer drop-in child care service. Tuition rates are constructed based on a regular attendance. If you need to adjust your child's hours, please contact the Head of School.

Tuition payment is required on a monthly basis (on the 1st of the month) for each child. If a child is absent due to sickness, vacation, or school closure, payment is still expected. Cornerstone Montessori School accepts Child Care Assistance and ThinkSmall scholarships and will work with the county/state for those families who qualify. If you choose to terminate your contract with the school, we require 30-days' notice.

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School is a public charter school. Children enrolled in kindergarten through 6th grade at Cornerstone Elementary attend for free.

VACATIONS

Please inform the staff of any scheduled vacations. We consider each child's day in the environment a vital part of his or her on-going development. Please respect the learning and growing that goes on each day and limit the number of days off from school as much as possible.

*****Families with children enrolled at Cornerstone Montessori School preschool are responsible for payment even when the child is on vacation or summer camps.**

VACCINATIONS

Medical Exemption

A child with medical reasons (contraindications) or laboratory confirmation that the child is already immune, is not required to receive vaccinations indicated by a healthcare professional. The health care professional must sign to confirm this.

Non-Medical Exemption

A child is not required to have an immunization that is against their parent or guardian's beliefs. Choosing not to vaccinate may put the health or life of the child or others they come into contact with at risk. Unvaccinated children who are exposed to a vaccine-preventable illness may be required to stay home from school in order to protect them and others. Cornerstone will contact the local or state health department to make this determination of exclusion. Non-medical exemptions must be signed by the parent or guardian and a notary public. For legal information regarding this, our program will contact our legal counsel.

WATER CUPS

As there is no water fountain/water source outdoors, the two Children's House environments will use reusable cups and a portable water source.

The water source is a stainless steel canteen with a spigot that is refilled and sanitized daily. The cups are stainless steel mugs that are sanitized daily.

The mugs are organized on a wheeled cart. The canteen is on top, while the mugs are organized by lunch table, so the children know which shelf their mug will be on. The cart for water is outside only when children are outside, and brought in at the end of each class' time in the play yard.

The mugs are identified by a tag attached by a ring, which has their name and a photo. The children who can read can know their correct tag by reading, and the children who cannot read can recognize their picture, which is also on their locker, clothing drawer, work drawer and name card at lunch.

Parent/Guardian Guide and Refusal for Student Participation in Statewide Testing

This information will help parents/guardians make informed decisions that benefit their children, schools, and communities.

Why statewide testing?

Minnesota values its educational system and the professionalism of its educators. Minnesota educators created the academic standards which are rigorous and prepare our students for career and college.

The statewide assessments are how we as a state measure that curriculum and daily instruction in our schools are being aligned to the academics standards, ensuring all students are being provided an equitable education. Statewide assessment results are just one tool to monitor that we are providing our children with the education that will ensure a strong workforce and knowledgeable citizens.

Why does participation matter?

A statewide assessment is just one measure of your student’s achievement, but your student’s participation is important to understand how effectively the education at your student’s school is aligned to the academic standards.

- In Minnesota’s implementation of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, a student not participating in the statewide assessments will not receive an individual score and will be counted as “not proficient” for the purpose of school and district accountability, including opportunities for support and recognition.
- Students who receive a college-ready score on the high school MCA are not required to take a remedial, noncredit course at a Minnesota State college or university in the corresponding subject area, potentially saving the student time and money.
- Educators and policy makers use information from assessments to make decisions about resources and support provided.
- Parents and the general public use assessment information to compare schools and make decisions about where to purchase a home or to enroll their children.
- School performance results that are publicly released and used by families and communities, are negatively impacted if students do not participate in assessments.

Academic Standards and Assessments

What are academic standards?

The [Minnesota K–12 Academic Standards](#) are the statewide expectations for student academic achievement. They identify the knowledge and skills that all students must achieve in a content area and are organized by grade level. School districts determine how students will meet the standards by developing courses and curriculum aligned to the academic standards.

What is the relationship between academic statewide assessments and the academic standards?

The statewide assessments in mathematics, reading, and science are used to measure whether students, and their school and district, are meeting the academic standards. Statewide assessments are one measure of how well students are doing on the content that is part of their daily instruction. It is also a measure of how well schools and districts are doing in aligning their curriculum and teaching the standards.

<p style="text-align: center;">Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) and Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the Minnesota Academic Standards; given annually in grades 3–8 and high school in reading and mathematics; given annually in grades 5, 8 and high school for science. • Majority of students take the MCA. • MTAS is an option for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. 	<p style="text-align: center;">ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS for English Learners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the WIDA English Language Development Standards. • Given annually to English learners in grades K–12 in reading, writing, listening and speaking. • Majority of English learners take ACCESS for ELLs. • Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is an option for English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities.
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Why are these assessments effective?

Minnesota believes that in order to effectively measure what students are learning, testing needs to be more than answering multiple choice questions.

- To answer questions, students may need to type in answers, drag and drop images and words, or manipulate a graph or information.
- The Reading and Mathematics MCAs are adaptive, which means the answers a student provides determine the next questions the student will answer.
- The Science MCA incorporates simulations, which require students to perform experiments in order to answer questions.

All of these provide students the opportunity to apply critical thinking needed for success in college and careers and show what they know and can do.

Are there limits on local testing?

As stated in Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.301, for students in grades 1–6, the cumulative total amount of time spent taking locally adopted districtwide or schoolwide assessments must not exceed 10 hours per school year. For students in grades 7–12, the cumulative total amount of time spent taking locally adopted districtwide or schoolwide assessments must not exceed 11 hours per school year. These limits do not include statewide testing.

In an effort to encourage transparency, the statute also requires a district or charter school, before the first day of each school year, to publish on its website a comprehensive calendar of standardized tests to be administered in the district or charter school during that school year. The calendar must provide the rationale for administering each assessment and indicate whether the assessment is a local option or required by state or federal law.

What if I choose not to have my student participate?

Parents/guardians have a right to not have their student participate in state-required standardized assessments. Minnesota Statutes require the department to provide information about statewide assessments to parents/guardians and include a form to complete if they refuse to have their student participate. This form follows on the next page and includes an area to note the reason for the refusal to participate. Your student's district may require additional information.

A school or district may have additional consequences beyond those mentioned in this document for a student not participating in the state-required standardized assessments. There may also be consequences for not participating in assessments selected and administered at the local level. Please contact your school for more information regarding local decisions.

When do students take the assessments?

Each school sets their testing schedule within the state testing window. Contact your student's school for information on specific testing days.

- The MCA and MTAS testing window begins in March and ends in May.
- The ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs testing window begins at the end of January and ends in March.

When do I receive my student's results?

Each summer, individual student reports are sent to school districts and are provided to families no later than fall conferences. The reports can be used to see your child's progress and help guide future instruction.

How much time is spent on testing?

Statewide assessments are taken one time each year; the majority of students test online. On average, the amount of time spent taking statewide assessments is **less than 1 percent of instructional time** in a school year. The assessments are not timed and students can continue working as long as they need.

Why does it seem like my student is taking more tests?

The statewide required tests are limited to those outlined in this document. Many districts make local decisions to administer additional tests that the state does not require. Contact your district for more information.

Where do I get more information?

Students and families can find out more on our [Statewide Testing page](http://education.state.mn.us) (education.state.mn.us > Students and Families > Programs and Initiatives > Statewide Testing).

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Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.31, subdivision 4a, requires the commissioner to create and publish a form for parents and guardians to complete if they refuse to have their student participate in state-required standardized assessments. Your student's district may require additional information. School districts must post this three page form on the district website and include it in district student handbooks.

Parent/Guardian Refusal for Student Participation in Statewide Assessments

To opt out of statewide assessments, the parent/guardian must complete this form and return it to the student's school.

To best support school district planning, please submit this form to the student's school no later than January 15 of the academic school year. For students who enroll after a statewide testing window begins, please submit the form within two weeks of enrollment. A new refusal form is required each year parents/guardians wish to opt the student out of statewide assessments.

Date _____ (This form is **only** applicable for the 20____ to 20____ school year.)
Student's Legal First Name _____ Student's Legal Middle Initial _____
Student's Legal Last Name _____ Student's Date of Birth _____
Student's District/School _____ Grade _____

Please initial to indicate you have received and reviewed information about statewide testing.

____ I received information on statewide assessments and choose to opt my student out. MDE provides the Parent/Guardian Guide and Refusal for Student Participation in Statewide Testing on the [MDE website](#) (Students and Families > Programs and Initiatives > Statewide Testing).

Reason for refusal:

Please indicate the statewide assessment(s) you are opting the student out of this school year:

_____ MCA/MTAS Reading _____ MCA/MTAS Science
_____ MCA/MTAS Mathematics _____ ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS for ELLs

Contact your school or district for the form to opt out of local assessments.

I understand that by signing this form, my student will lose one opportunity to receive a qualifying score that could potentially save him/her time and money by not having to take remedial, non-credit courses at a Minnesota State college or university. My student will not receive an individual score and will be counted as "not proficient" for the purpose of school and district accountability. My school and I may lose valuable information about how well my student is progressing academically. In addition, refusing to participate in statewide assessments may impact the school, district, and state's efforts to equitably distribute resources and support student learning.

Parent/Guardian Name (print) _____
Parent/Guardian Signature _____

To be completed by school or district staff only. Student ID or MARSS Number _____

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