



CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI SCHOOL
&
CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Parent Handbook

1611 Ames Avenue

St. Paul, MN 55106

651-774-5000

www.mtcm.org or www.cornerstone-elementary.org

STAFF DIRECTORY

CALL 651.774.500 TO CONTACT CMS OR CMES OR A STAFF MEMBER

Administration

Head of School, CMS & CMES	Liza Davis
Administrative Coordinator, CMES	Chris Bewell
Administrative Assistant, CMS & CMES	Xong Her

Guides/Teachers

Toddler Community (16 - 33 months), CMS

AMI Trained Guide	Mary Santelman
AMI Trained Guide	Laurie Pittman
Spanish Speaking Aide	Miriam Vite Melchor

Children's House 1 (3-6 years; Kindergarten), CMS & CMES

AMI Trained Guide	Sara Papacek
AMI Trained Assistant	Tiffany Heaver
Spanish Speaking Aide	Patricia Scoffield

Children's House 2 (3-6 years; Kindergarten), CMS & CMES

AMI Trained Guide	Kristen Campbell
Spanish Speaking AMI Trained Assistant Aide	Solanye Samaneigo

Lower Elementary 1 (1-3 grades), CMES

AMI Trained Teacher	Liesl Taylor
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Lower Elementary 2(1-3 grades), CMES

AMI Trained Teacher	Sylvie Griffiths
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Support Staff

Assistant	Clare Kue
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Introduction

Dear Families,

Welcome to Cornerstone Montessori School and Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School. The following parent handbook is intended to provide you with some basic information about the schools.

The staff of Cornerstone is committed to serving your child and providing the highest quality educational environment for each child. In return we ask each family to commit to partnering with Cornerstone to best support your child. To support this process, it is necessary for all families to become familiar with Cornerstone policies, as outlined in the handbook, 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.

Regards,

Liza Davis, Head of School

OVERVIEW

Cornerstone Montessori School (private preschool) and Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School (public charter school) are individual schools, which partner together with a united mission to provide a quality, authentic Montessori education to an ethnically and economically diverse population. Even though the private school and the elementary school maintain separate governance and financial systems, both organizations work to provide a seamless educational experience to the children and families at Cornerstone. The schools partner with families to achieve this goal.

MISSIONS

Cornerstone Montessori School (private preschool)

Mission: Cornerstone Montessori School seeks to create a broad community of multicultural and economically diverse families who share the mission to nurture the child's natural desire to learn and grow through quality Montessori environments leading to a harmonious and peaceful world.

Cornerstone Montessori School is an authentic, urban Montessori school. Connected to the Montessori Training Center of Minnesota, Cornerstone Montessori School benefits by continuous offerings of parent education and outreach programs, access to the International Montessori Museum, and participation in an outcome studies program.

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School (public charter)

Vision: The vision of Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School is to create a world-class, cross-cultural learning community that employs a rigorous Montessori methodology to prepare children to achieve at their highest levels academically. Cornerstone will accomplish this by providing a quality education for all children regardless of their socioeconomic or cultural background, and through partnering with a diverse community of parents, non-profits and social service agencies to cultivate healthy lifestyles and nurture empathy, character, and community engagement.

Mission: Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School supports children from culturally and economically diverse backgrounds living in or near St. Paul's East Side through a rigorous and high-impact Montessori program that empowers them to make positive decisions, develop self-discipline, and create a true sense of responsibility for themselves and others in their community.

SCHOOL HISTORY

Cornerstone Montessori School opened in September 2008, offering Montessori environments for children ages 15 months through 5 years. As an affiliate of the Montessori Training Center of Minnesota, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, Cornerstone was founded largely due to generous donations from the following:

- ~ Bremer, Otto Foundation
- ~ Bush Foundation
- ~ City of St. Paul (STAR)
- ~ Ecolab Foundation
- ~ Hiawatha Education Foundation
- ~ Minneapolis Foundation
- ~ O'Shaughnessy, I.A. Foundation
- ~ St. Paul Foundation
- ~ F.R. Bigelow Foundation

In November of 2010, Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School was recognized as a Minnesota Charter School authorized by Volunteers of America. Cornerstone will open in the fall of 2011 serving children in grades K-2 and will add a grade each successive year until serving children in grades K-6. Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School was founded due to a recognized need for an authentic, AMI Montessori elementary program on St. Paul's East Side. The charter application and start-up of the school was largely driven by work from members of the founding board and founding team which included the following:

- ~ Melissa Santrach
- ~ Elizabeth Coenen
- ~ Ben Moudry
- ~ Tatiana Leiva
- ~ Patricia Bachmeier
- ~ Margo Roberts
- ~ Kevin Ward
- ~ Barbara Williams
- ~ Alison Awes
- ~ Juanita Fernandez
- ~ Carol Gronfor
- ~ Molly O'Shaughnessy
- ~ Pat Schaeffer
- ~ Liesl Taylor
- ~ Nicole Olson

THE MONTESSORI APPROACH

Founded in 1907, by Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952), Montessori pedagogy educates children for life. Children have the freedom to explore and to develop their potential as they work with didactic materials, either independently or in groups, in a prepared environment. The Montessori Method is based in the concept of respect—for self, others and the environment. The Montessori rooms are prepared to meet the developmental needs of the age-span served within the environment.

The materials and furniture are designed for the child's physical needs (size and proportion) and psychological needs (areas of interest or skill development). Each prepared environment includes a full-range of Montessori materials, a trained Montessori Guide and a trained Assistant. The materials are designed to assist growth in practical life, sensorial, mathematics, language arts, music, art, science and geography. The work the child performs with the materials is intended to develop mental and manual dexterity. While working with the materials, the child develops concentration, self-confidence, respect, an understanding of order, and a joy of learning.

We believe that the child and his or her needs are the central and commanding focus of the learning process. It is the role of the Guides to observe, to know and to defend the child as he or she proceeds through the stages of development.

We see in each child the future of our society, of our nation and of our planet. The child in the process of fundamental development has unlimited possibilities and the future rests on our ability to cultivate and nurture these potentials.

We believe that the learning process is governed by certain basic human tendencies or needs:

- The need to communicate, to use language

- The tendency for order: the need to organize, classify, and interpret reality

- The need for independence and activity, the drive to work constructively and purposefully

- The need for social relationships

In a Montessori school, the outdoor environment is considered an extension of the indoor environment. While there is a scheduled time for large motor activities that encourage collaborative group play and allow children to gain an understanding of the rules and movements associated with a variety of sports, the space is not only used during recess. The outdoor environment is also a “work space” that can be used during the Montessori work-cycle. Throughout the day and with the accompaniment of an adult, children may work on materials, garden, or simply explore the natural landscape of our outdoor space. We also offer the children a multi-purpose room to refine their large motor skills when weather prohibits us from going outside.

The Montessori Guide facilitates activities within the environment while modeling respectful behavior. The Guide is not the center of the learning process, but rather helps Guide each child while also respecting his/her choices. The Guides help the children reach their full potential by guiding them towards materials that meet their developmental needs and current interests. Individual and group lessons are varied and designed to meet each child’s learning style and pace. The Guide observes the children often and plans lessons based on his/her observations of the needs and interests of an individual or group.

Within the multiage community, older children often serve as teachers and mentors for the younger children. These children share their experiences by helping others. This process not only helps create a sense of community and interdependence, but also reinforces previous learning for the older children. Self-direction encourages trust, acceptance, and non-competitiveness. The materials, Guide and children’s community come together to assist the child in developing a strong self-image and sense of self-esteem, which is critical when building an attitude of learning and exploration to last a lifetime.

CORNERSTONE COMMITMENTS

At Cornerstone we make the following commitments to best support the development of each child:

Cornerstone is committed to providing a seamless educational experience to children from the age of 16 months through 12 years. The staff, boards, children, and families that make up our community at Cornerstone Montessori School (private preschool) and Cornerstone Montessori Elementary, are committed to a shared mission to support the success of each child and to provide an authentic and quality Montessori education to a diverse community of families.

Cornerstone is committed to joyful learning at each stage of development. Education begins at birth and every educational environment at Cornerstone—Toddler Community, Children’s House, and Elementary—are intentionally designed to meet the unique needs of the children in those environments and their particular stage of development. These components work together to create learners who are internally motivated, who love to learn, and who are able to be active members of a community.

Cornerstone is committed to an authentic implementation of the Montessori methodology and environment. All of Cornerstone’s lead teachers have completed or are in the process of completing Montessori training accredited by the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), the organization founded by Dr. Maria Montessori in 1929. We adhere to the Montessori principles of the prepared environment, multi-age classroom environments, beauty, the balance of freedom and discipline, and morning and afternoon work periods including a morning three-hour work period for primary and elementary children and a two-hour work period for toddlers.

Cornerstone is committed to being a respectful environment. Cornerstone staff, families, and children will model and cultivate respect (for self, others, materials, and for the environment). Actions and language used on the premises should be respectful at all times. Conflicts will be resolved peacefully and through mediation when necessary.

Cornerstone is committed to partner with parents to support each child’s success and growth. Parents are a child’s first and most powerful teachers. We know that education takes place both at home and at school. Children will receive the best possible education when their parents and their school work together.

Cornerstone is committed to operating on St. Paul’s East Side. Cornerstone preschool is the only Montessori program with AMI accreditation for families living on St. Paul’s East Side. Cornerstone Elementary plans to pursue AMI accreditation and will also have only AMI trained teachers. We have been a member of the community since 2008 and want to continue to be a positive force in the growth and development of the East Side.

Cornerstone is committed to diversity. A Montessori education prepares children for life. In today’s global community, children must learn to live and work with people and ideas drawn from multiple sources, backgrounds, and cultures. Cornerstone actively recruits families from diverse

racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. We welcome families with non-traditional structures as well.

Cornerstone is committed to offering a high-quality program that is financially affordable to families from all income levels. Cornerstone Elementary is a free public charter school.

Cornerstone preschool is a tuition program where tuition is kept lower than most programs of similar quality. High-quality early education leads to many individual and community benefits such as less gang and drug activity, fewer teen pregnancies, and higher rates of graduation from both high school and college. To keep its program affordable, Cornerstone preschool maintains a scholarship fund that is open to all enrolled families. Cornerstone preschool's commitment to affordability carries with it a significant requirement for fundraising. Only 65% of Cornerstone preschool's budget is supported with direct tuition payments. The remaining 35% requires the implementation of a detailed fundraising plan that depends on the shared efforts and contributions of MTCM board members, staff contributions, parents, and other community members.

To best support the growth of their child in our program, we expect families to make the following commitments to Cornerstone:

Parents are expected to be involved. Families are expected to work with the Cornerstone staff to assure that each child is well cared for and is able to reach their full potential within the school. We will ask families to share relevant information that will help us in working with their child. We want to support the work of the parents or guardians, and we ask to be supported as educators. **Twice a year conferences are mandatory for each family.** We invite parents to visit and observe in the classroom environments. We will also meet with a parent whenever they wish or respond by phone if needed. Please always call with questions or issues.

Parents are expected to have children here on time in order to start the day with the rest of the class. School begins at 8:45 a.m. Families who arrive after 8:45 should report to the office so their children can be escorted to class. Children who are late often have a harder time starting work and disrupt other children who have already begun their day. In addition, children who are late are missing out on work time and may fall behind. For example, a child who is late by 10 minutes once a week misses out on six hours of time working toward goals.

Parents are expected to have children attend school regularly. Children who miss a lot of school will miss many lessons and are often behind their peers academically and out of touch with the social environment. Regular attendance is required. If a child misses more than 7 days at Cornerstone Elementary due to unexcused absences, we must report the child as being truant. Excused absences are those due to illness, medical appointments, extreme family emergencies, medical appointments, and travel that is preapproved by the Head of School. This information is reported to the MN Department of Education.

Parents are expected to make sure children have adequate sleep. Studies continue to show that children and adults do their best when they have an adequate amount of sleep. Children who are in the Toddler Community should have 11-12 hours of sleep each night, children in the

Children's House should have at least 10-11 hours of sleep, and elementary children should have at least 9 hours of sleep. Sleep will assure that children retain what they have learned and are able to be their best each day.

Parents are expected to follow the rules of respect (for self, others, materials, and the environment). All staff members and children are expected to follow these rules as well. Parents should be respectful and generous with other members of the community. Actions and language used on the premises should be respectful at all times. Disagreements should be resolved peacefully or be brought to the attention of the Head of School.

Parents are expected to read and comply with the policies in the Parent Handbook. The Parent Handbook will help you best understand your child's education and daily routine and the policies that the staff, families, and children must follow.

Parents are expected to try to read to their child daily (in the family's home language). Children develop a love of books when they are read to. This is also the best way to develop vocabulary, deepen comprehension, and become critical thinkers. Even if your child is reading fluently, please take the time to read to them each night. It is a wonderful bonding experience.

SPANISH EDUCATION

At Cornerstone Montessori School (preschool) we provide an introduction to conversational Spanish by having a native Spanish speaker in each environment. Young children, between the ages of birth and six, have a sensitivity and unique ability to learn language, including foreign languages. The Montessori guide communicates with the children solely in English while the Spanish-speaking assistant or aide speaks to the children only in Spanish. As a result, the children absorb the language and vocabulary of both languages simultaneously. Unlike adults, children have an ability to understand and replicate language—accents and grammar included—without difficulty. The Montessori Toddler Community and Children's House environments are bilingual with English and Spanish being spoken parallel to one another.

At this time, the elementary environments of Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School will not have a native-Spanish speaker in the environment. In the start up stage of the elementary school, focus is being placed on getting the Montessori program and other academic programs fully operational. Then the School will begin to look at including Spanish at the elementary level.

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

Children thrive in a safe environment that affirms a variety of cultures and languages. In this community, the value of each human being is affirmed and celebrated. It is with great pride that we recognize our children's community and staff as being diverse: racially, socio-economically, linguistically, culturally and geographically. The Montessori curriculum allows children to make discoveries about our differences and similarities as human beings. We seek and welcome cultural diversity to our school community as an expression of the intricate web of life. Through celebrations, discussions, and research and study about the world community, children learn to

embrace concepts of cultural diversity and become champions of tolerance in a multicultural, multiracial, bilingual environment.

ADMINISTRATION

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Cornerstone Montessori School (Private Preschool)

The Board of Trustees for the Montessori Training Center of Minnesota serves as an umbrella board for the Montessori Training Center of Minnesota, Cornerstone Montessori School, Community Outreach, and the International Montessori Museum. This board was incorporated in 1973 and is comprised of eleven members who meet six times a year and serve three year terms.

Montessori Training Center of Minnesota Board members:

Board Chair—Teresa Sterns	Trustee—Margaret Lovejoy
Vice Chair—Wendy Warren	Trustee—Jeff Nelson
Secretary—Cecile Penna	Trustee—Pat Schaefer
Treasurer—Michael Monahan	Trustee—Carleen Rhodes
	Trustee—Molly O’Shaughnessy

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School (Public Charter)

The Board for Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School is the governing entity for our state and federally funded public school program. All the meetings must be open to the public. We will set the dates of our meetings and assure that they are on our website and in our lobby. A book containing board meeting minutes is available in the office. Board members include a teacher, parents, and experts in a variety of fields. The Head of School is a non-voting member of the board. Board terms are 3 years.

The Cornerstone Montessori School Founding Board members:

Board Chair—Melissa Santrach	Trustee—Kevin Ward
Vice Chair—Ben Moudry	Trustee—Tatiana Leiva
Treasurer—Liz Coenen	Trustee—Patty Bachmeier
	Trustee (non-voting)—Liza Davis, Head of School
	Trustee—Liesl Taylor

STAFF

Cornerstone Montessori School staff seeks to be a model community for the children. Staff members are encouraged to work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect and appreciation. Staff members value each other’s opinions and depend on one another for inspiration and support.

Regular communication facilitates the effective operation of the school and on-going education of the children. The staff meets weekly (guides/teachers and Head of School) and monthly (all staff) to discuss pedagogy, routine business, and to plan for upcoming events.

Guides and assistants at Cornerstone preschool are Montessori trained under the auspices of the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) and have earned a Bachelor's or Master's degree. All teachers and guides at Cornerstone Elementary are trained under the auspices of AMI and have a MN State Teaching License or a waiver approved by the Minnesota Department of Education while working towards a teaching license.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Cornerstone depends on the support and talents of the parent community to accomplish its many tasks. When you donate your time and energy, you make a valuable contribution to the children. You also get the opportunity to connect with other parents and staff.

There are a variety of ways you can contribute your time and talent during the year. A few suggestions are listed below.

- Assist staff and children with special events and open houses.
- Contribute articles, photos or other assistance to the school newsletter.
- Participate in projects such as cleaning, sewing, painting, or landscaping.
- Assist in material making.
- Assist in the planning, setting up and clean up for social events.

Parents at Cornerstone are encouraged to volunteer at least 10 hours each school year.

Families at Cornerstone preschool are required to complete these volunteer hours. Each parent is asked to respond to request for volunteers on sign-up sheets posted in the reception area. Volunteers are also recruited during the year through "School News," and the monthly newsletter. You may also contact administration or your child's teacher/guide to volunteer.

PROGRAMS

HALF-DAY & SCHOOL DAY PROGRAMS

Cornerstone Montessori School (private preschool)

CMS offers Half-Day (8:30-12:30) and School day (8:30-3:30) options at both the Toddler and Children's House levels. Children in either program are expected to attend Monday through Friday 12 months of the year.

*****Please Note:** A child may be registered for the Before (7:30-8:30 a.m.) and After Care (3:30-4:30 p.m. or 3:30-5:30 p.m.) programs. However, parents are encouraged to leave their toddlers for no longer than 8 hours and their preschool children for no longer than 9 hours a day. Cornerstone Montessori School guides are honored to spend the day with your child, but we hold the philosophy that children must also have the opportunity to spend adequate time with their family each day.

The Half-Day program includes a Montessori work-cycle, lunch, and large motor activity when possible. The School day program allows for a second Montessori work-cycle in the afternoon and an extended time for large motor activities.

Extra Hours Requests

For care beyond your contract, there is a fee of \$10 per hour and this is billed monthly. It is important that the school maintains the ratio of adults to children required by the State of Minnesota Department of Human Services; so extra hours may not always be available.

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School

CMES offers a school day program for all children. The school day program will officially start at 8:50 a.m. and end each day at 4:00 p.m. Children are expected to attend Monday through Friday, September through early June. Children in the Kindergarten program may register with CMS during the summer months and for After Care (4:00-4:30 or 4:30-5:30 p.m.). Children in other grades may register with Cornerstone private preschool for the Before-Care program (7:30-8:30 a.m.) Tuition for these programs is arranged with Cornerstone private preschool and due on 1st of each month.

LUNCH

A catered nutritious lunch is provided for all children of Cornerstone. Seasonal and nutritious, the menu includes a grain, protein, fruit and vegetable. Monthly menus are posted for parents to view. There are, however, occasional unforeseen changes to the menu as decided by the caterer. Guides/teachers encourage children to try all food as a way of building an understanding of nutrition and open-mindedness. Dairy and non-dairy varieties of milk are provided for during lunch.

Children in Cornerstone preschool receive lunch as part of their tuition. Children in Cornerstone Elementary receive lunch for free if they qualify for free and reduced lunch. Children who do not qualify, may pay for lunch \$3.

Families with children at Cornerstone Elementary who do not qualify for free or reduced lunch, may choose to bring lunch from home. However, the School strongly encourages all families to participate in this program as it helps promote the idea of community living and ensures that all children are meeting nutritional requirements. If a family brings a lunch from home, it must include milk and all other nutritional requirements recognized by the USDA (available upon request from the office) and follow the School's no sugar policy.

As part of the lunch process, the children help prepare the environment and set the tables. The children eat around a communal table. Table manners, such as learning how to properly use utensils, to wipe one's mouth, and how to sit at the table, are also encouraged during this experience. After lunch, the children clean the environment.

*****Please Note:** If your child has specific food allergies or dietary needs, please let the staff know so that we can arrange for a safe and edible meal.

TODDLER COMMUNITY (AGES 16 TO 32 MONTHS)

PHILOSOPHY

When young children are stable walkers, they are ready to join the Toddler Community which consists of 12 toddlers, two AMI Montessori trained guides and one aide. The program is an all-day

Montessori program with the option for children to attend partial days. Breakfast/morning snack, lunch, and an afternoon snack are served. For children who attend the School Day program, there will be the opportunity to nap.

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, and helps to promote the child's need for 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 locker in the mudroom 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 independently 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, it happens in a very natural way.

Developing spoken language and learning how to communicate with others is another 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. The Toddler Community Assistant will speak to the children in her native language of Spanish providing the children with a bilingual learning environment.

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 puzzles, stringing beads, using a 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 riding tricycles, playing with balls, walking on a balance beam, enjoying time in the sandbox, etc. Cornerstone also has a multi-purpose room for additional opportunities to enjoy large motor movements.

It is a goal of the staff at Cornerstone 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

Cornerstone Montessori School

Toddler Community Daily Schedule

Time	Activity	Description
7:30-8:30 a.m.	Arrival for Children in Before School Program	Children registered in Before School program are greeted as they arrive, hang their coats in mudroom, put on indoor shoes or slippers, use the bathroom, eat breakfast, clean their dishes, and help in the environment preparation (folding napkins, wetting sponges, etc.).
8:20-8:40 a.m.	Arrival	Children continue to arrive and are welcomed to join in the morning’s activities.
8:30-10:30 a.m.	Montessori Work-Cycle	This is time for the children’s work cycle in which the children do primarily individual, independent work and some small, collaborative group work. This involves working with Montessori materials, practical life activities (care of self and care of the environment), preparing food, eating family-style breakfast, working with the art, music, eye-hand coordination, and language materials. The children will be offered the opportunity to use the bathroom throughout the a.m.
10:30-10:45 a.m.	Transition	The children get ready to go outdoors or to the multi-purpose room for large motor movement activities

10:45- 11:15 a.m.	Time Outside or in the Multipurpose Room	Time together outside or in the multi-purpose room. Outdoor activities will include gardening, practical life activities (sweeping, weeding, shoveling, etc.), large motor activities (riding tricycles, walking on the balance beam, jumping, etc.), playing in the sandbox, playing ball, enjoying nature, etc. Multi-purpose room activities will include large motor games, obstacle courses, ball games, etc.
11:15-11:30 a.m.	Transition	Return to the Toddler Community, wash hands in mudroom, remove outerwear, change into indoor shoes. Some children will help set the table for lunch, and others will select independent work.
11:30 a.m.- 11:40 p.m.	Collective	Children are invited to sing songs and do finger plays before having lunch.
11:40-12:10 p.m.	Lunch	Catered nutritious family-style lunch
12:10-12:30 p.m.	Transition	Children get ready for nap or Half-Day dismissal.
12:30 p.m.	Dismissal	Dismissal of children in Half-Day program
12:30- 2:45p.m.	Nap/Rest Time	Children sleep with blankets brought from home on individual cots. Sheets are washed regularly and blankets are washed at Cornerstone every Friday.
2:45-3p.m.	Transition	Children begin to awaken, go to the bathroom, and help to set the table for the afternoon snack. Some children sleep longer and join the group as they awaken.
3-3:20 p.m.	Afternoon Snack	Family-style afternoon snack is served. Children clean up following snack
3:20-3:30 p.m.	Transition	Children are invited to sing songs and do finger plays while some are getting ready to go home.
3:30 p.m.	School Day Dismissal	Dismissal of children in School Day program

3:30-5:30 p.m.	After-Care	Children registered for After-Care may help with practical life activities such as laundry, washing dishes and cleaning the environment. Some will chose to begin another work cycle of individual work. Time will also be spent outdoors. Children are dismissed as parents arrive.
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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 pants that we will provide at school. These pants are commonly referred to as “training” pants, but it’s 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 we are pushing 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 watching one another use the toddler-sized toilet and the potty chairs.

We encourage the use of cotton pants 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 pants 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 easy to pull down pants helps the child immensely. Patience is a virtue and it all comes together in a very natural way.

Children are often more comfortable wearing cotton pants at school if they are introduced to them at home. You can pick up these thick, cotton pants in the Infant/Toddler departments at Target, Wal-Mart, etc. 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. Purchase cotton pants that fit well, but are able to be pulled up and down by the child.

PRIMARY/CHILDREN’S HOUSE (AGES 33 MONTHS TO 6 YEARS)

PHILOSOPHY

The Primary environment is also referred to as the Children's House. It is a specially prepared environment for children from the ages of 33 months to six years. Cornerstone's Children’s House environments will have up to 30 children when at full capacity. Each environment has an AMI trained guide (teacher) along with an AMI trained assistant and an aide. Either the trained assistant or the aide is a native Spanish-speaker.

This program is an all day program with the option of children staying for a partial day. Breakfast is served to early arrivals and offered to all children when they arrive in the morning. We offer a nutritious catered lunch, which the children enjoy as a community. Snack is available daily in the afternoon. For much of the children's day they may choose work within the environment. There is also group time for music, stories, movement, and games. Children have time to play outside at least once a day. There is also the opportunity to use an indoor large motor space.

Children are free to choose work from the beautiful and well-defined areas of the environment. The adults in the environment serve as Guides who show the children how to use the concrete materials. Working with the materials not only helps develop coordination, concentration, independence, and a sense of order; it also helps the child become more disciplined and accomplished. Children in a Montessori environment usually have healthy self-esteem because they are helped to do things themselves. The children have ownership of the environment and take good care of it, returning materials with care.

The Children's House environment unifies the social, physical, and intellectual functioning of the child. We provide children with an early and general foundation that includes a positive attitude toward school, inner security, a sense of order, pride in the environment, curiosity, concentration, self-discipline, and a sense of responsibility for the self and for the group. Thus, through interacting with the Montessori environment, the child constructs him or herself in a positive manner. This benefits the child in school and in life.

Instruction occurs one-on-one and in small groups conducted at the child's pace. Montessori materials are organized in a logical, sequential nature, providing a structure that Guides a child's discovery. A series of presentations, activities, and developmentally appropriate materials are designed to enable the child to master specific skills. Each series of presentations and materials is grouped by broader content areas that complement and interrelate with one another.

The Children's House environment is divided into four distinct areas:

Practical life: among other life skills, children learn how to wash, cook, sweep, plant, and sew.

Sensorial: children learn through sight, touch, sound, taste, and smell using binomial cubes, geometric shapes, constructive triangles, tasting bottles, and other materials that enable the child to classify, clarify, and comprehend the world.

Language: children are introduced to nomenclature and vocabulary through spoken language 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.

Math: children are taken from the concrete to the abstract through manipulation, experimentation, and invention by using math materials.

CHILDREN'S HOUSE DAILY SCHEDULE

Time	Activity	Description
7:30-8:20 a.m.	Arrival & Set Up	Children registered in the Before School program are greeted as they arrive in their Children's House, put on indoor shoes or slippers, use the bathroom, and eat breakfast. After eating breakfast they might help in the environment preparation (folding napkins, wetting sponges, etc.).
8:25-8:45 a.m.	Arrival	Children continue to arrive and are welcomed to join in the morning's activities.
8:45-11:45 a.m.	Montessori Work-Cycle	This is core time for the children's work cycle in which the children do primarily individual, independent work and some small, collaborative group work. This involves working with Montessori materials, practical life activities (care of self and care of the environment), preparing food, eating snack with a friend, working with the art, music, eye-hand coordination, and language materials.
11:45 a.m.- 12:15 p.m.	Lunch & Lunch Clean Up	Catered nutritious family-style lunch. Children are responsible for cleaning up after themselves.
12:30	Half-Day Dismissal	Dismissal for children in Half-Day Program.
12:15-1:15 p.m.	Transition	Time together outside or in the room if required due to weather. Outdoor activities will include gardening, practical life activities (sweeping, weeding, shoveling), large motor activities (riding scooters, hopping, jumping), playing in the sandbox, shooting basketball hoops, feeding the birds, enjoying nature, etc. Multi-purpose room activities will include large motor games, obstacle courses, ball and board games, etc.
1:15-3:30 p.m.	Nap/Rest Time or 2 nd Work-Cycle	Nap/rest time as needed by the individual child afternoon work time for early risers; snack is available when the children wake. Children who remain in environment experience second Montessori work-cycle.

3:30-4:00 p.m.	Transition Time CMES Kindergartners	Children prepare room for the next day, and get ready to go home. There is also time to listen to a chapter book.
3:30-5:30 p.m.	After Care Program	Children registered for After Care may help with practical life activities such as laundry, washing dishes and cleaning the environment. Some will chose to begin another work cycle of individual work. Time will also be spent outdoors. Children are dismissed as parents arrive.

TOILETING POLICY

Children in the Children’s House must be able to use the toilet independently or be working towards this goal, as these environments are not equipped to regularly manage children in diapers or pull-ups. Each environment is equipped with a toilet and urinal which children have access to throughout the day. If a child is having challenges or experiencing regression, the child’s parents and Guides are encouraged to speak directly to develop a management plan to best assist the child.

ELEMENTARY (AGES 6-12)

PHILOSOPHY

From age six through age 12—the elementary school years—the child is driven by a natural curiosity and tendency to explore the expansive interconnectedness within and across disciplines such as the arts, math, and social studies. Dr. Montessori used the term “cosmic education” to refer to this stage of education best fitting this period of child development. The Great Lessons are at the center of Montessori elementary education. These Lessons are stories that explore the beginnings of the universe, the formation of the stars and planets, the progress of plant and animal life, the arrival of humans and language, and the origins of mathematics, geometry, and the sciences. From these stories the child develops sensitivity to the way things live, to the interdependence of life, and to the fundamental needs of human beings. Timelines, charts, and research cards of human needs help the child in independent study and inspire more research in geology, sciences, biology, geography, and history. Montessori elementary children use their imagination and reasoning minds to explore all the parts of the universe. They may be engaged in a variety of learning activities at the same time.

At the center of the Montessori elementary classroom is the well-trained Montessori teacher. This professional is an “enlightened generalist” with knowledge deep enough to know details that add to the Great Lessons and connect the details into a big picture across the disciplines. The teacher’s role is to be the storyteller of our history and our world, as we understand it, to inspire the children and then to guide them in acquiring the skills to pursue their interests and to explore the relationships among the different subject matters. This teacher is also trained in areas of child development. Because the Montessori child spends three years in the same classroom environment, the

elementary teacher can be keenly tuned in to the unique personality of each child. This sensitivity permits the teacher to guide each child into areas of natural interest. The teacher or guide is in communication with the child and the family to help the child maximize his or her educational opportunities.

Much of the work of the elementary child is collaborative. The child learns in partnership with others through small group lessons and projects. At different times, each child is both a teacher and a learner. Because each child spends three years in the same classroom environment, the children have the freedom to explore subject areas as they become interested in them. The teachers, through the use of daily observation notes, lesson planning, and assessments, track each child's use of materials and progress within a subject matter. The teacher uses the child's interest to guide him or her to an exploration of all subject areas. The subjects that are covered in the Montessori classroom include mathematics, geometry, language, geography, science, art, and music.

Because the classroom cannot always answer all of the child's questions, the elementary child is involved in "going out" to explore beyond the classroom environment. The going out of the Montessori classroom is based on individual or small group interest in extensions of study. The Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School children will extend the classroom into the city by arranging a visit to a museum, library, factory, nature reserve, or other site that can provide them with information that will enhance their studies. Going out usually involves a small group of children with a parent or staff person. Whole classes may also take field trips to learn more about the environment and city in which they live.

Living in the world for the elementary child also involves working actively to make it a better place. Care of one's environment is built into the Montessori curriculum. In the environment children are responsible for keeping the environment clean, caring for the animals, and providing for the needs of guests. Cornerstone Elementary children will take responsibility for recycling programs in their classroom environments, will help maintain the grounds and the garden, as well as help the school be more energy efficient.

The Montessori curriculum is developed and reviewed by an international committee and not set according to US academic standards. As a consequence, there are elements in the Montessori curriculum, such as finding the cube root of a 9-digit number, that are not part of our state or national standards; also there are elements of our Minnesota state standards, such as the study of simple machines, that are not covered by the basic Montessori curriculum. However, there are specific provisions made in the training of Montessori teachers to ensure that the state standards are met in the Montessori classroom. Cornerstone Elementary staff will continually evaluate state standards and Montessori curriculum to ensure that children who graduate from a level (at Kindergarten, third and sixth grades) have met the state required standards.

One of the guiding principles of Montessori education is the development of the whole person, with particular emphasis on the development of reason and the will, along with a lifelong love of

learning. For this reason, children in a Montessori environment are expected to work at their own pace and have a major role in setting their own work schedule rather than just doing specific assignments given by the teacher. This vast amount of freedom given to the children is tempered by three very important limits: the public school curriculum, the daily work journal used by each child to track his/her progress, and frequent individual meetings between the child and the teacher. The trained Montessori teacher is expected to help each child progress through the state public school curriculum and this is available in the classroom for the children to refer to in planning their studies. As part of each child's assessment (including standardized assessments, Montessori records, the child's work journal, and Montessori teacher's observation notes) the Montessori teacher reviews with the child where the child is at in terms of development within the Montessori curriculum and state standards and sets goals with the child for further development. There is also a consideration given to the developmental level of the child; that is, more of the responsibility for covering the state curriculum falls on the teacher's shoulders in the early grades with the child taking more direct responsibility as she/he matures.

ELEMENTARY DAILY SCHEDULE

Time	Activity	Description
7:30-8:30 a.m.	Arrival & Set Up	Children registered in the Before School program are greeted as they arrive in an assigned Children's House environment, put on indoor shoes or slippers, use the bathroom, and eat breakfast. After eating breakfast they will might help in the environment preparation (folding napkins, wetting sponges, etc.).
8:25-8:45 a.m.	Arrival	Children continue to arrive and are welcomed to join in the morning's activities.
8:45 a.m.-12:00 p.m.	Montessori Work-Cycle	This is core time for the children's work cycle in which the children do primarily individual, independent work and some small, collaborative group work. This involves working with Montessori materials, working with the art, music, eye-hand coordination, geometry, history, and language materials.
12:00 -12:30 p.m.	Lunch & Lunch Clean Up	Catered nutritious family-style lunch. Children are responsible for cleaning up after themselves.
12:30-1:30 p.m.	Outdoor/Large Motor Time	Time together outside or in the gym at the Boys and Girls Club of America. Activities will include gardening, practical life activities (sweeping, weeding, shoveling), large motor activities (throwing and kicking balls, hopping, jumping),

		shooting basketball hoops, feeding the birds, enjoying nature large motor games, obstacle courses, ball and board games, etc.
1:30-3:45 p.m.	2 nd Work-Cycle	Children remain in environment experience second Montessori work-cycle.
3:45-4:00 p.m.	Transition Time	Children prepare room for the next day, and get ready to go home.
4:00	Dismissal	Children are taken to buses or are dismissed to a parent/guardian. Children may also transition to the after school program at the Boys and Girls Club of America.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

ACCREDITATION

Cornerstone Montessori School is a quality school and in 2008 became accredited at the Toddler and Children’s House levels by the Association Montessori Internationale.

APPLICATION & ADMISSION PROCEDURES

Cornerstone Montessori School (Private Preschool)

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’s overall enrollment requirements are 1/3 full paying families, 1/3 partial paying, and 1/3 of families on full scholarship or county assistance. Enrollment decisions are made in consideration of these enrollment requirements. The school offers an all year Montessori program and children are expected to attend full time, five days a week.

Applications are available through the office. A family meeting will be held with each family who applies to the school. The family meeting is an opportunity for the school to share the mission and expectations for this program. This is also a time for parents to inquire about Montessori education, share information about their child, and ask questions. This discussion will help identify the families who best fit the school’s mission and philosophy.

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School (Public Charter)

The open enrollment period for Cornerstone Elementary is from November 1 through December 1 each year. If there are more students who apply for a grade level than we have spots, the school will hold a lottery for admissions. **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 on December 15.

ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL

Each day, a parent/guardian may escort for drop off and pick up your child, may participate in the curbside drop-off program, or may ensure your child attends Cornerstone Elementary by bus. Either way, please follow the appropriate procedures as discussed below.

Arrival

School starts at 8:45 in the morning. Children are still considered on time until 8:45. Children who arrive after 8:45 are considered late. After 8:45, children will need to be walked to the office and wait for a staff person to be able to walk the child into his or her environment.

Walking In To Cornerstone

From 8:25-8:45, there will be a guide/teacher or assistant in the reception area greeting arriving families. If you walk into the building, your child's guide/teacher or assistant will be available to greet your child with a handshake and invite him or her to begin the day. We ask that parents say "Farewell" to their child in the front reception area prior to the hallway leading to the environments. The children can then transition into the environment independently.

Busing

Children who attend Cornerstone Elementary and are electing to ride the bus must follow the rules (see BUSING). A Cornerstone Elementary staff person will meet the bus walk children into school along the sidewalk. The children will either be dropped off at the entryway or on Ames Avenue. Children will then be greeted by their guide/teacher.

Before Care

If you arrive between 7:30 and 8:25 in the morning, we ask that you walk your child to the Toddler Community or to the assigned Children's House. Your child will be supported in changing in to his or her slippers and will be invited to join the adult for a nutritious breakfast.

Dismissal

Dismissal times are 12:30 p.m., 3:30 p.m., 4:00 p.m., and 3:30-5:30 p.m. for After Care. The school closes at 5:30 p.m. All children enrolled in After Care MUST be picked up by 5:30 p.m. Parents are considered late if they arrive 10 minutes past their child's scheduled pick up time.

At the end of the day—12:30 p.m. (Half Day children) or 3:30 (School Day children in preschool) or 4:00 (children in Cornerstone Elementary)—your child will be prepared to go home. Guides/teachers or assistants will dismiss children with a formal handshake. A Cornerstone staff person will walk children who take the bus to the bus. Children may need to be picked up early for a doctor's appointment and this can be arranged with the office in advance. However, to limit disruptions to the environment we ask that parents do this as infrequently as possible.

Late dismissals also often disturb children's sense of comfort. Children of this age are sensitive to order and schedules are extremely important to them feeling safe and secure. Further, dismissal times are times of transition for the staff and we are not structured to regularly provide consistent care for children outside of their scheduled hours. If a child is not picked up 10 minutes after dismissal time, the child will be placed into Extra Hours Care and the family will be charged. For care beyond your contract, there is a fee of \$10 per hour and this is billed monthly. It is important that the school maintain the ratio of adults to children required by the State of Minnesota Department of Human Services, so extra hours may not always be available.

After Care

If your child is in After Care (3:30-4:30 p.m. 4:30-5:30 p.m., or 4-5:30 p.m.), you may walk to the door of your child's environment to let the staff person in charge know you are at Cornerstone. Once you have connected with a staff member we ask that you wait for your child in the reception area while the Cornerstone staff member helps your child prepare to go home. Occasionally, you may need to walk to the outdoor environment to retrieve your child. People who are picking up toddlers may need to help change the child into his or her own diaper or underpants before going home.

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:

- Either complete a Communication Form notifying the staff in writing regarding who will be picking up your child or call the school.
- Deliver the Communication Form to a staff member.
- Prepare your child, if at all possible, ahead of time by letting them know who will be picking them up.
- Have the authorized person be prepared to show a picture I.D.

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 often 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. decisions to advance or retain a child 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.

Children enrolled in Cornerstone Montessori preschool 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. Again, decisions to advance or retain a child will be made by the Head of School in conjunction with the child’s parents will be based on staff experience and assessment of the needs of the child.

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 consistently. 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 to transition in to their day, as they were not able to do so with their peers.

It is important that your child arrive on time to have the full benefit of the Montessori environment. It is essential that each child be on time and prepared to start by 8:45 in the morning. This allows for all children to partake in the activities of the day and also provides for the easiest transition for the entire group. If your child will be late or absent, please notify the school by 9 a.m. 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.”

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.

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.

****Parents with children enrolled at Cornerstone Montessori School preschool must pay normal monthly tuition even if a child is absent.**

Late Arrivals: We will be understanding of occasional late arrivals and pickups 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. After three infractions, parents will be required to meet with the Head of School within one week of the last infraction to discuss the situation so that patterns of lateness can be avoided.

BIRTHDAYS

Birthday celebrations are an important part in each child's life and are a special celebration in the Montessori environment as well. In the Toddler Community, the children will have a simple celebration as a community. In the Children's House, the celebration is more formal. Near your child's birthday, your child's Guide will contact you to confirm the plan for the celebration. Food and/or individual gifts for the children are not permitted. We ask you to mail personal invitations to birthday celebrations so that an environment of inclusiveness is promoted within the school.

BREAKFAST

All children at Cornerstone are invited to have a school provided breakfast. Snack will be provided in the afternoon as well.

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 on www.cornerstone-elementary.org website or in the administrative office.

BUS POLICY

Riding the bus to and from school is a privilege for Cornerstone Elementary children. 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.

Cornerstone bus service is a service for children enrolled in Cornerstone Elementary only. Monarch Bus Company provides our busing service and will not provide doorstop service. Monarch 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 Monarch Bus Company.

Buses will wait at a stop for two minutes. 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.

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 their child to take the bus on a given day, the parent must either send his/her child to school with a signed note indicating that the child should not ride the bus or be at school by 3:45 to prevent the child from boarding the bus as usual. 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.

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 the bus, will not be tolerated and will be handled as follows:

- First Incident: Child is warned by Cornerstone staff to behave appropriately.
- Second Incident: Child's parents are notified.
- 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 for the rest of that period. 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.

Parents must agree to these policies and give their signature in agreement 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 each publish a school calendar each fall. If changes are made to either calendar, parents will be given advance notice. Reminders and additions to the calendar will be posted in the weekly "School News."

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. We ask parents to not use cell phones in anyway, including texting or gaming, when at Cornerstone. Arrival and dismissal are important transition times for children. Many children are overjoyed to see their families 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 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 can be charged with 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 which 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: child care 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

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 be provided with clothing that they can get in and out of independently. Please dress your child in clothing that he or 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 water, art, the outdoors, and movement.

Each child at Cornerstone needs a pair of slippers or 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/slippers need to have a hard sole so as to best protect the child’s feet from injury.

Each child should 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).**

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 sun hat should be provided to protect your child from harmful UV rays. We will also put sunscreen on children once parents have completed a medication form permitting us to do so. If you are need support in completing 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. Both conferences will be twenty minutes in length and will allow times 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.

We recognize that there may be other times parents may need to contact their child's guide/teacher with questions. Please contact your guide/teacher either before or after the school day or by filling out a Communication Form located in the foyer. 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/teacher 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 and supports independence and goal setting.

COMMITMENT

When you enroll your child in Cornerstone, we expect a commitment through the elementary years. We believe that 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 GREIVANCE PROCEDURES

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/teachers, work together. 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 accurately informed we are about your child, the better we can care for him/her. Please inform your child's guide/teacher of any changes at home in the child's life that may have an effect at school.

Parents are welcome to come and visit the school at any time and particularly encouraged to schedule an observation time in the classroom environment.

Parents can expect a weekly newsletter every Friday—*School News*. This will have administrative information and news about what is happening in our school and community. Parents can also expect a monthly school newsletter. To try to limit the amount of paper waste, parents are encouraged to inform the school of email addresses where these notes/newsletters can be sent. Newsletters will also be posted on Cornerstone Montessori School's website (www.mtcm.org) and Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School's 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, a note will be posted and an email 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.
- Check your family’s mailbox or child’s backpack daily.
- Complete a Communication Form, 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 talk to the Head of School, Administrative Assistant, or guides/teachers 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.

Matter Related to:	First Contact
Child’s progress	Guide/Teacher
Environment activities	Guide/Teacher
Day to day procedures	Guide/Teacher
Arrival and dismissal information	Guide/Teacher
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

Admissions	Head of School/Administrative Coordinator
Billing/accounts	Head of School/Administrative Coordinator
School finances	Head of School/Administrative Coordinator
Child's records	Head of School/Administrative Coordinator

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/teachers. Guides/teachers are your first resource to answer your questions and resolve your conflicts.
- If the guide/teacher 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, please set 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 her choices and to find an appropriate alternative. If a disruptive or inappropriate behavior occurs repeatedly, the guide/teacher may request that the Head of School, Director of Training at the Montessori Training 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) | - 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 |

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.

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 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 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 in occasions when the School feels we 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 may be treated more effectively in another program.

DISMISSAL, REFERRAL, SUSPENSION & EXPULSION

Dismissal usually is a result of tuition default, failure to provide required records, and/or poor attendance. When it is clear that a multi-age, open-ended environment is not the most suitable educational environment for a child, she or he may be referred to a different school or specialist. Suspension can be the result if a child repeatedly harms property or threatens the physical safety of other children. 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 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. See Appendix C for more information regarding Cornerstone Elementary's Behavior and Dismissal Policy.

Pupil Fair Dismissal Act

Public elementary schools in Minnesota are governed by the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act which 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 orientation. Children will not be released to an individual whose ability is considered impaired by alcohol or controlled substances.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Cornerstone conducts fire drills at least once a month so that children learn how to exit the building in a safe and quick manner. There are maps and exit plans in each room of the school to facilitate the rapid exiting of the building. 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.

Tornado drills are also held monthly from April through September. Children are instructed in what to do during a tornado.

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 constantly update your phone numbers and emergency contact phone numbers.**

FAMILY ISSUES

Children's home and school environments are inevitably linked. As people, we are 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/teacher. The guide/teacher 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 a week before the trip. In general, staying within a routine and not going out best serve young 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. 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 go 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, which is raised by the development department of the Montessori Training Center of Minnesota. We expect families to keep their financial commitment to the school and pay tuition 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 would be administered and 911 would be called. The child would be transported to the nearest hospital as determined by 911. After calling 911, the parents and the physician would be 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. Our "no sugar policy" means that children are not offered products at school which contain refined sugar.

Children will be offered a simple breakfast, hot lunch, and snacks (preschool only) 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 can see while serving food.

Both lunch and breakfast provide one-third of the child's daily nutritional needs. At lunch, staff are seated with children. Breakfast is provided by Cornerstone and usually consists of cereal or a muffin, milk and fruit. We currently work with our caterer, Done Right Foods, to provide healthy lunches for the children each day. Menus will be planned on a monthly basis and distributed to parents. All meals will comply with USDA requirements and parents who choose to provide food for their children must meet these requirements as well (including milk).

An afternoon snack is provided as well. In addition to the snacks provided, children are able to do minor food preparation as part of their Practical Life activities. Food preparation that children might do (with adult supervision) includes banana slicing, bread baking, egg slicing, orange juice making, tortilla making, pickle cutting, and cracker spreading. The foods that are prepared are available for children to eat or they may be saved to serve for snack or lunch that same 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 preschool 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 law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 or (202) 720-6382 (TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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 Harassment and Violence Prohibition Policy is available in the administrative offices.

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. With your cooperation, we can establish a healthier environment for all the children if, when your child is sick, s/he is cared for at home.

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, or 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.

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 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, 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 admission or within the last 24 hours.
- Contagious conjunctivitis 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.
- An undiagnosed rash that seems to be related to contagious illness.
- Unexplained lethargy or failure to be able to participate.

Health Consultation services are provided to Cornerstone Montessori School (private preschool) by Health Consultants for Childcare, 1210 Morningview Drive, Mound, MN 55364. Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School consults with Minnesota Visiting Nurses Association, 3433 Broadway St NE#300, Minneapolis, MN 55413.

HEALTH CARE SUMMARY, IMMUNIZATION RECORD REQUIREMENTS & SPECIAL 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 only 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, 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 ask them to arrange to do so with their Guides. Doing so allows us to ensure that the child gets an appropriate amount of time dedicated to the discussion of their object and makes sure that there aren't too many items on any one occasion.

LICENSURE

Cornerstone Montessori School (private preschool) is a licensed childcare center, licensed by the state of Minnesota. We are licensed for preschool education and afterschool programs as well as for a limited number of school-age children. 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 Volunteers of America. Our elementary program is monitored by our authorizer and the state and federal governments. We are also under the jurisdiction of No Child Left Behind.

MEDICATIONS

The Cornerstone policy on medications, legislated by the state, states 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 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.

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, marital status, parental status, status with regard to public assistance, disability, sexual orientation, or age in its programs and activities. Liza Davis, Head of School, is the human rights officer who handles inquiries regarding nondiscrimination. Liza can be reached at 651.774.5000.

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 (mid-October) or six weeks after a child has started if he or she starts mid-year. After this time, parents may sign-up with the Head of School or Administrative Assistant. Observations are typically scheduled for Thursday mornings. If you need an alternative time, we can make arrangements. 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/teacher outside of the Montessori work time.

OFFICE HOURS

You can call or visit the administrative offices of Cornerstone from 8 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Outside of office hours, you may either fill out a Communication Form or leave a message.

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, please call the child's guide/teacher 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 balls 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. We will discuss this with the parent, should it occur.

PARENT EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

At Cornerstone, we believe that supporting our parents understanding of our school philosophy and methodology is a priority. To assist in this process, we offer parents many opportunities to learn about child development and Montessori education.

Events in our Parent Education Program include:

- **Parent Partnership 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.
- **Montessori Materials for Home:** Once a month, parents are invited to participate in material making workshops which allow you to make materials to support your child's development at home as well. Parents will be given the opportunity to make spoken language cards, schedules, games, instruments, etc.
- **Parent-Child Days:** Several times a year, we have special visitation days that will allow your child to show you what they are working on or enjoying at that particular moment. It is a time for your child to share his/her work environment with you. Each family will receive an invite to one of these days as arranged by your child's Guide.
- **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 Parent Handbook for further information.
- **Lending Library:** We encourage parents to borrow books (which are in a variety of languages) about and by Maria Montessori and her educational methodology from the school, as well as other books about child development and parenting topics.

PARENT RIGHT TO KNOW

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

- Whether the guide/teacher has met state qualification and licensing criteria for the grade/age level for which the guide/teacher is responsible;
- Whether the guide/teacher 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/teacher;
- 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 Training 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.

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

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 may 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.
- Separation 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.

SAFETY & SECURITY

Children are not to leave the building without the permission and supervision of a guide/teacher. All outside doors to the school are locked throughout the day except when in use and the staff takes every precaution to monitor who enters and leaves the building. The code for entering the building is changed annually. Parents are given the new code with the orientation packet at the beginning of 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 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 will 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 voicemail, WCCO radio (830), TV Channel 4, and WCCO online.

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. As part of this process, we have an orientation period where children are slowly introduced to the environment over a period of about a week. These opportunities allow the children to get used to the school process without becoming overwhelmed and also offer an opportunity for the children to form a community while working together. If a child starts mid-year, special arrangements will be made to provide the child with a similar orientation period. At some point during the child's first weeks of school, a Guide will contact a child's parents to discuss the child's transition into the environment.

We ask that parents drop their children off in the reception area near the main entrance starting on the first day. Our experience shows that children transition more quickly when parents show confidence and trust in the school while quickly 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 from the Toddler Community becomes ready to transition into the Children's House environment, the child may be invited for short visits to his or her new environment. This gives children the opportunity to slowly acclimatize themselves. Parents and Guides will discuss when and how this process will be implemented for each child.

SMOKING

Cornerstone is a smoke-free environment. Smoking 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.

In addition, state licensing regulations require us to develop an Individualized Child Care Plan (ICCP) with parents that will assist us to meet your child's needs.

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, Head of School or community outreach coordinator. The following is a list of some of our annual community events.

Fall Family Dinner

Within the first few weeks of school, we invite all families to join us for a family dinner. Parents are to bring the whole family and a dish to share while meeting and greeting new and returning families.

Winter Solstice

Before our Winter Break, we will celebrate the changing of the seasons so that families may spend time together enjoying the atmosphere and warm holiday cheer.

Parent Coffees

On the first Friday of each month, parents host a coffee after arrival—between 8:30 and 9:30 a.m.

Summer Picnic

Each summer, we celebrate the rise in temperature with a picnic.

SUPPLIES & BELONGINGS

Before your child transitions in to 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.

SCHOOL NEWS & MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

We acknowledge the importance of keeping parents informed of happenings in the environment. For this reason, we distribute both a weekly "School News" and a monthly newsletter. School News will be distributed weekly and include reminders of upcoming dates and important notices. A more formal school newsletter is published monthly. Guides in each environment will write monthly updates included in the newsletter. Pedagogical articles and important information from the staff, administrators and Board are also included. Parents who have articles or information they would like included in the newsletter should discuss it with the Head of School.

*****Please Note:** Parents of children in the Toddler Community will also receive notification of their child's eating and elimination patterns in accordance with Minnesota Law.

RECORDS

Records of children enrolled at Cornerstone Montessori preschool 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.

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 do all the necessary paperwork.

TUITION FOR CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Cornerstone Montessori School is open to children from 7:30 in the morning until 5:30 in the evening, Monday through Friday, for a school day Montessori program. Children may be enrolled for a Half-Day with lunch (8:30-12:30 pm) or School Day (8:30-3:30 pm) program. Before school care (7:30-8:30 a.m.) and two After Care options (3:30-4:30 p.m. or 3:30-5:30 p.m.) are also available. Children are expected to attend school each day of the week, Monday – Friday according to a prearranged, contract basis only. We do not offer drop-off 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 misses school due to sickness, vacation or if the school is closed, payment is still expected. Cornerstone Montessori School accepts Child Care Assistance and will arrange to work with the county 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 limits 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 the child has been on vacation.**

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteer opportunities allow parents to contribute to Cornerstone M in substantial and important ways. We depend on the support and talents of our parent community to accomplish our many tasks. **Each family is expected to volunteer for 10 hours each academic year.**

Each parent will receive a description of volunteer opportunities as part of his or her orientation packet. Please let the schools know to which area you are most interested in contributing.

A Volunteer Log will be kept in the office. Families are responsible for recording and completing their hours. Failure to complete hours could affect a child's reenrollment.