



*Awaken, Nurture, Inspire...*  
**Amherst Montessori School** *since 1970*

**AMHERST MONTESSORI SCHOOL  
2024-25 PARENT HANDBOOK**

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# Our School

## Our Mission

*We provide a warm, safe, and supportive community that nurtures a lifelong love of learning. We honor each child's path as they become independent, confident, and compassionate individuals, while learning to care for themselves, others, and the world.*

Amherst Montessori School, guided by the educational philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori, nurtures the natural unfolding of the whole child in a supportive, culturally rich, and diverse learning community. We believe that through the deep realization of each individual's unique gifts and abilities, we become independent, self-motivated, and contributing members of the world's community.

## The Family & School Partnership Agreement

As staff, parents, guardians, and students, we believe we are all stewards of our school community. We believe we have an obligation to care for and treat each other with respect and compassion. We assume positive intent. We work together to lift each other and our school up to our greatest potential. When we see something that needs improvement, or just a little TLC, we act on it. Most importantly, we come together in partnership for our children to provide a warm, safe, and supportive community that nurtures a lifelong love of learning.

## Dr. Maria Montessori: Educator & Visionary

Dr. Maria Montessori was, in many ways, ahead of her time. Dr. Montessori was born in Italy in 1870 and became Italy's first female medical doctor. In 1906, she accepted the challenge to work with a group of 60 children of working parents in the San Lorenzo district of Rome. It was there that she founded the first Casa de Bambini, or "Children's House." What ultimately became the Montessori Method of education developed there, based upon Montessori's scientific observations of these children's almost effortless ability to absorb knowledge from their surroundings, as well as their tireless interest in manipulating materials.

"Follow the child." This simple but profound truth inspired Montessori's lifelong pursuit of educational reform, methodology, psychology, teaching, and guide training – all based on her dedication to furthering the self-creating process of the child. Montessori was nominated for The Nobel Peace Prize for her work in developing Peace Education curricula for children.

## The Montessori Philosophy

Dr. Maria Montessori believed, "A child's work is to create the person he will become." Children are born with great mental capacities, which aid in the work of their own construction. They accomplish the task of self-construction with purposeful movement, exploration, and discovery of their environment. A Montessori classroom provides this freedom within the limits of an environment, which develops a sense of order and self-discipline.

Essential to the Montessori Method is the prepared environment. Attention to quality, detail, and beauty is the cornerstone in drawing the child to activities in the classroom. By providing an attractive, enjoyable, organized, and child-centered classroom, our programs enable children to be free to explore and experience the learning-rich, prepared environment fully.

Also fundamental to Montessori's philosophy is her discovery of the Sensitive Periods in children's development. During these periods, children seek certain stimuli with immense intensity, to the exclusion of all others. It is during this time that a child can most easily master a particular skill. Dr. Montessori devised special materials to aid children in each specific Sensitive Period. Our guides are trained to recognize these periods in individual children and guide them to the appropriate materials in the classroom environment.

The focus of Montessori education continually changes to adapt to the child's natural stages of development. Montessori described these stages as Planes of Development, which occur in approximately six-year intervals, each of which is further subdivided into three-year segments. These Planes of Development are the basis for the three-year age groupings found in Montessori school classes, ages zero to three; three to six; six to nine; nine to twelve; twelve to fifteen; and fifteen to eighteen.

From this environment comes concentration, a clear and peaceful mind, a profound sense of security, and respect for others and one's self. The program constantly evolves based on the needs of the children while remaining firmly grounded in the Montessori education philosophy.

The following is from a 1913 letter from A. Graham Bell regarding his observations of children at work using the Montessori Method:

"When the children had completed an absorbing bit of work, they appeared rested and deeply pleased. It almost seemed as if a road had opened up within their souls that led to all their latent powers, revealing the better part of themselves. They exhibited a great affability to everyone, put themselves out to help others and seemed full of good will."

# **The Cornerstones of the Montessori Method**

## **Respect**

Children are respected as unique individuals.

## **Absorbent Mind**

Children possess an acute sensitivity for absorbing and learning from their environment.

## **Purposeful Activity**

Children have a deep love and need for real life activities. When they are “playing” with practical life materials, they are indeed “working” to learn about the world around them.

## **Self-Discipline**

Children gradually develop self-discipline through freedom of movement and freedom of choice. The Montessori materials give them a sense of satisfaction, which encourages them to concentrate and complete activities.

## **Independence**

Children are encouraged and guided toward independence as early as possible to become well-adjusted and able to function confidently by themselves and within a group.

## **Care of Self & the Environment**

Children gain an understanding of their importance and impact on their community and world through practicing the skills necessary for self-care and tending to the environment.

# **The Peace Curriculum**

At Amherst Montessori School, we are committed to helping children grow up as confident individuals who respect others and embrace the rich diversity of their community and world. Our peace and cultural curriculums develop an awareness of the similarities and differences among people in their own communities and around the world. The essential components of the Montessori peace curriculum are:

Self Awareness, Awareness of Others, Love and Respect of Nature,  
Imagination, Global Awareness, and Peaceful Conflict Resolution

Our peace curriculum also focuses on each individual’s development and sense of inner peace. By creating an environment that allows the child to explore at their own pace, our hope is that our children develop a deep appreciation for the peacefulness that can be achieved through

concentration on a particular task or work. As our children grow into adults and move out into the world, we hope that the foundation of peacefulness through concentration will stay with them as they engage in the responsibilities of adulthood.

Finally, each classroom has a peace table where children can go to discuss and work through misunderstandings and conflicts. Initially, children are guided through the language they need to express their feelings before becoming confident and comfortable in both sharing their feelings and listening to the feelings of a friend on their own. As they mature, children refine their communication skills and resolve conflicts to utilize the peace table independently without adult mediation. Our children carry this skill into the world to use with peers, siblings, parents, and others.

## **Our Learning Community**

### **A Brief History**

Amherst Montessori School was founded in 1970 by a group of local educators and parents whose goal was to provide a Montessori education for their children. The school was incorporated and duly certified as a nonprofit educational organization in Massachusetts in 1978 and is recognized as tax-exempt by the Internal Revenue Service and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. After being located in various church buildings for seventeen years, the school built its own facility on Pomeroy Lane in 1986. Specifically designed as a Montessori School, it had two spacious classrooms scaled to accommodate the needs of young children. The school expanded in September 1995, and the Elementary program was added in an off-site location. In the fall of 1998 the Toddler program was starting to bring Montessori principles to toddlers and their parents. It, too, was run off-site.

In July 2012, the original schoolhouse at 27 Pomeroy Lane was razed to make way for the construction of a new building that would house all AMS programs on one campus. During the construction phase, all classrooms operated out of a nearby satellite campus. Construction of the new facility was completed in February 2013, and the new school opened its doors to the AMS community on February 26, 2013.

In response to a community need, Amherst Montessori added an Infant program for children up to fifteen months in August 2015.

### **Our Campus**

Amherst Montessori School is located at 27 Pomeroy Lane in South Amherst, two miles from downtown Amherst.

## **Accreditation & Affiliations**

Amherst Montessori School is licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC).

The school is a member of the American Montessori Society, Montessori Schools of Massachusetts, and an associate member of the Association of Independent Schools of New England (AISNE). The school is proud to maintain high standards of Montessori principles and practices.

Parents may contact DEEC for information regarding Amherst Montessori School's compliance history. DEEC can be reached at 1441 Main Street, Suite 230 Springfield, MA 01103, or by phone at 413-788-8401.

## **Non-discrimination**

Amherst Montessori School has no religious affiliation. Amherst Montessori School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, class, gender, gender identity and/or expression, age, sexual orientation, religion, culture, nationality, or ethnic origin in the administration of its admissions policies, educational programs, hiring practices, financial aid or other school-administered programs.

## **Our Staff**

Amherst Montessori School strives to surround our students with consistent, well-educated, positive role models who love learning and are passionate educators. All programs are led by a certified Montessori guide who has earned (or is in the process of earning) a credential through the American Montessori Society or the Association for Montessori International. Many of our assistant guides have attended Montessori assistant training as well. Professional development is a priority for all staff. Teachers and administrators regularly attend conferences, workshops, and seminars to both inspire and educate themselves.

## **Our Funding**

Amherst Montessori School is an independent school. As such, it receives no state or federal education funds. Revenue for the school's operating budget is generated through tuition, fundraising, and supplemental programming such as our Discovery programs. Amherst Montessori School is a non-profit organization.

## **Tax ID Number**

The Amherst Montessori School tax-exempt identification number is 04-2660266.

## The Board of Trustees

Governance resides in a Board of Trustees, which appoints the administrator, sets and maintains financial policies and the school budget, raises funds, and makes fundamental policy decisions. The following board members donate their time and services:

**Jen Lefort Clapprood, Chair**  
lefort.jen@gmail.com

**Meg Kilroy**  
mkilroy5@gmail.com

**Peter Mackey**  
pfmackey@gmail.com

**Everald Henry**  
ehenry@eohlaw.com

**Tayla Nesbitt**  
talya\_vexler@hotmail.com

Staff liaison to the Board of Trustees: Kirsten Dudkiewicz and Marilyn Martinez  
Ex-officio: Kelly Edreich, Head of School

## Admissions & Administrative Details

### Admission Procedures

We have an open house each February to allow prospective parents and opportunity to tour the school and meet the Lead Montessori Guides.

After the Open House, parents join us for an initial virtual check-in. Upon completing this, parents receive an enrollment application, if they still need to complete one. Applications are returned with a \$50 application fee and \$10 for each additional application. If space is available in the desired program, families will be contacted to schedule a classroom visit for their child with a Montessori guide. If a family did not attend an open house, this would also be an opportunity to view the school.

An acceptance, non-acceptance, deferment letter, or request for a second classroom visit will be sent to the family following the interview. If space is not available, the registration will be placed on our waiting list and potentially forwarded to our next enrollment period.

Please note that toilet training status is not an eligibility requirement for enrollment.

## **Tuition Payments and Late Fees**

Amherst Montessori School uses Blackbaud Tuition Management (formally known as Smart Tuition) for its tuition billing service. Through Blackbaud Tuition Management, payments can be made through credit cards or bank transfers. Parents may opt to pay in full for the year, semi-annually with 50% due by June 1<sup>st</sup> and 50% by November 1<sup>st</sup>, and a monthly payment plan. Monthly payments are due the first day of each month, beginning in June and ending with the March payment. Payments received 10 days later than their due date will be assessed a \$45 late fee. Accounts with checks returned for insufficient funds will be assessed a \$45 service charge. There is a \$50 annual billing fee for monthly plans.

## **Delinquent Accounts**

Tuition and fees must be current by the child's start date, or the child cannot attend or return to the program. If the family's account becomes more than 30 days delinquent, the parents must make arrangements to bring the account current, or the child will not be permitted to attend school.

## **Contract Cancellation Policy**

If a student withdraws on or after May 1, 2024, the undersigned parties on the enrollment contract is/are responsible for 100% of tuition and deposit as liquidated damages. No portion of tuition and fees, paid or outstanding, will be refunded or canceled, even in the event of absence, early withdrawal, or early dismissal. Please see your enrollment contract.

## **Schedule Change Policy**

Schedules may be changed by the parent(s)/guardian(s) in writing with 90 days notice. The first schedule change is free of charge, after which a \$75 fee per schedule change will be charged. Schedule changes at the Infant/Toddler level cannot always be accommodated.

## **Financial Assistance**

It is our strong belief that all children, regardless of socio-economic background, can benefit from a Montessori education. We accept funds for children's tuition from the UMASS Graduate and Undergraduate Child Care Assistance Programs and the New England Farm Workers Council Voucher Program. AMS also has a tuition assistance program of its own. Requests for financial aid are submitted in February prior to the enrolling school year. Awards are made in the spring.

## **School Hours**

The school is generally open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily, with the exception of scheduled early release days. Please see the school year calendar for dates the school is closed or has early dismissal.

## **Extra Hours**

Before Care is available from 7:30 to 8:15 a.m. daily and requires advance notice for those not signed up for the full program. This is based on space availability.

After Care is available from 2:45/3:00–5:30 p.m. daily, and requires advance notice for those not signed up for an After Care option (you may choose to sign up for After Care time from 2:45/3:00-4:00 p.m. or 2:45/3:00-5:30 p.m.). This is based on space availability.

If your child is not signed up for Before or After Care, additional hours are \$12 per hour, billable in half hour increments. Availability is limited and may not always be available for students not regularly signed up for After Care.

## **Late Pick-up Policy**

Children who are not picked up at their dismissal time will remain in their classroom or After Care if space is available. If space is not available, the child will wait at the reception area. Extra hours fees will apply. Parents picking up after their scheduled pickup time will be charged \$20 for the first 10 minutes, and \$5.00 a minute every minute thereafter.

## **Kindergarten Program Requirements**

Children who are five years old on or before September 1<sup>st</sup> may join our Kindergarten program, which takes place in the afternoons. Children who have completed two years of Montessori school and are deemed emotionally, socially, and academically ready by the learning team may be invited to join aspects of the Kindergarten program before their official Kindergarten year.

## **Media Policy**

We take a lot of pictures and videos throughout the school year for our website, slideshows, our marketing, and social media. If you have concerns about your child's image appearing in Amherst Montessori School-related materials, and do not want your child photographed, please contact Kelly Edreich at [kedreich@amherstmontessori.org](mailto:kedreich@amherstmontessori.org) before Tuesday, August 27th.

\*Please note this must be renewed for each school year\*

We will only use their first name and occasionally a first name with first initial of the last name if we need to differentiate between two students in the same class with the same first name.

# **Parent Involvement**

## **Parent Observation & Participation**

Once the school year is underway and settled, parents are always welcome to observe their child's classroom. We ask the parent to schedule an observation or visit in advance, just to be sure the classroom does not have atypical programming taking place at the same time.

## **Community Hours**

AMS requests that each family contribute 10 hours to the school community each year. There are many opportunities to share your knowledge or hobbies with the classrooms, give time to maintain our school, join us for events, or contribute time and expertise to school activities. Examples include visiting your child's classroom to share a cultural tradition or something from your line of work; weeding the garden beds at the front of school; sharing a talent or special interest with the classroom; chaperoning field trips; attending an education event, helping on Grounds Days, volunteering with the Parent Association; etc.

We ask that track your hours on the ParentSquare app. Any uncompleted hours are billed at \$20 per hour. Please see your contract for more information.

## **Parent/Guide Communication**

Strong parent/guide communication is a key component of a vibrant and happy school community. Guides can be reached through ParentSquare, a phone call to the main office with a request for a return phone call, or by filling out a communication form and passing it to a guide or assistant. During Back to School night, each Montessori guide will also share the best way to get in touch when needed.

Please note our Guides are not required or expected to communicate or work outside of their school hours; this includes evenings, weekends, and school breaks.

## **Back to School Night**

Back to School Night is a time to get to know your child's guide, learn about special events, daily schedules, and classroom projects, build your community, and ask all your questions. We

strongly suggest that parents/guardians (or at least one parent/guardian from each family) attend. This is a parents-only event and childcare is not available.

## **Parent/Guide Conferences**

Conferences for all parents and guides are conducted in January for all students. Your child's guide will discuss your child's use of time and materials, cognitive development, how they respond to the environment, and how they are developing social relationships. This is also a wonderful time for both parent/guardian and guide to ask questions and share ideas. Children should not attend these conferences.

Infant progress reports will be sent home every three months. All other students will receive a progress report before the January conference and again in May to summarize the school year.

New families will have a short conference with the child's guide in October. This will not be accompanied by a written progress report and is meant to be a check-in on the child's first six weeks in school.

## **AMS Parent Association**

All parents are invited to join the school's Parent Association. The Parent Association facilitates educational enrichment activities, social functions, and outreach. This group coordinates many of the school's volunteer-driven social and fundraising activities.

## **Policy Regarding Parents Hiring AMS Staff**

Amherst Montessori prohibits our staff from working independently for current parents of Amherst Montessori School as babysitters, nannies, or otherwise.

## **Attendance: Transition, Arrivals & Dismissals**

### **Transition Plans**

There are several transitions during the school day, e.g. recess, lunch, visiting another classroom, etc. Our goal is make these as smooth as possible for the children. A guide lets children know what is going to happen next, and then accompanies them in their transition. You will learn about class transitions during back to school night and your child's guide will keep you informed of any changes or individual variations.

Children who transition between programs always have a classroom guide who accompanies them to the next program and children are given a verbal alert before the transition occurs. This provides strong communication between staff and each child.

Although rare, sometimes children move into the next stage of our program (for instance, a Toddler moves into Children's House) during the school year. In this case the child will hear about the transition for a week first. Then the child will visit the program for an hour to become comfortable with the new program. When the child is ready to start in the new program, a short phase-in schedule will be set up so the child receives ample time to gradually adjust to the new environment.

Parents of children who finish the school year will be asked to complete an exit survey if their child is not returning to AMS the following school year. Classroom discussions regarding the child's departure from a program are done at the parent's discretion per the parent's wishes.

## **Attendance/Absences**

If your child is going to be absent, please call the school at 413-253-3101 prior to the start of the day's class session. It is helpful to know why the child is absent, particularly in the case of certain contagious illness (chicken pox, strep throat, etc.), as we may need to notify other families of the situation.

## **Attendance Guidelines for Elementary Level Children**

While the Montessori elementary curriculum is designed to honor the developmental needs and interests of each child, consistent on-time arrival and daily attendance are critically important. Your child's guides carefully craft a yearly scope and sequence for each child based on curriculum standards and their unique attributes. When your child misses school, they miss lessons, and it is not always possible for all of the lessons to be made up. Also, your child's continued daily practice allows them to master the academic standards within the curriculum, and frequent absences can have an adverse effect on your child's academic proficiency.

Sometimes we start our day outside to allow for socialization and conversation. Elementary age children are inherently social, and arriving on-time allows your child time to converse with their friends and peers prior to the beginning of the work cycle. Our entire community benefits when we begin the work cycle together after this morning recess, as late arrivals can interrupt the focus of children who have already begun their day but desire to check in with peers who arrive late.

## Arrivals

Punctuality is important in our school environment. Students should arrive promptly between the arrival window (8:15-8:45 a.m.) daily to promote socialization and ensure a stress-free transition while allowing ample time for work activities. It is especially important for children who are experiencing separation anxiety to come to the classroom early as this can provide a smoother transition.

All arrivals will be done by carline only. Staff will be outside to greet you and your child. Please pull up to the sidewalk and help your child out of the car and a staff member will escort your child to class.

Late arrivals are incredibly disruptive to your child's learning, and it also interrupts the learning happening in the classroom. We ask for your commitment to on-time arrival out of respect for the community and to help ensure a smooth and successful work cycle. **Any arrivals after 8:45am will need a doctor's note unless previously arranged with the Head of School.**

## Dismissals

Please pick your child up promptly at his or her dismissal time. Our days are scheduled tightly, and staff often have an immediate obligation to other children following a dismissal time. If you must pick your child up before a regularly scheduled dismissal time, please notify the school in advance by calling ahead or sending in a written note for that day.

### **12:30/1:00 p.m. Dismissal**

Infant/Toddler parents are asked to arrive at 12:30 p.m. to pick up their children. Please park your car and a staff member will bring your child outside.

Children's House parents pick up at 1:00 p.m. Children's House parents please park your car and a staff member will bring your child outside.

### **2:45/3:00 p.m. Dismissal**

Infant/Toddler parents are asked to arrive at 2:45 p.m. to pick up their children. Infant families may meet a staff member at the front of the school to meet their children. Toddler families, please come to the side playground to pick up your child.

Children's House parents pick up at 3:00 p.m. Children's House parents please arrive for carline and a staff member will bring your child outside.

## Emergency Closings & Delays/Emergency Before and After Care Attendance

We know that our families are depending on us to care for their children. Many of us are also working parents and know the stress caused by school cancellations. It is because of this knowledge that we have a policy of **making independent decisions about closing**. To be clear, **we do not follow** the Amherst Regional Public Schools.

Here are factors that go into our decision-making process for closures, delays, and early releases:

1. **Safety of our staff and families:** We have multiple staff and families traveling from a far distance. We must be mindful of the safety and well-being of our community.
2. **Staffing and substitutes:** We have multiple teachers with children in the public school system. When their child's school closes, they cannot report to work, which forces us to try to find substitutes. Substitutes are difficult to find even when the weather is great. Our administrative team jumps in to cover classrooms whenever possible if we cannot find substitutes. That being said, if there are more teachers out than administrative staff available to cover classrooms and we can't find substitutes, it forces our classrooms out of state-mandated ratios. We cannot stay open under those circumstances.
3. **National Weather Service information:** We also consider official statements from the [National Weather Service](#) regarding weather conditions and snowfall amounts and timing, especially when they issue winter storm warnings.

**Emergency closing information will be available by 6:15 a.m. from the following sources:**

1. Via ParentSquare Urgent Alert. It is vitally important that you follow the steps to complete your ParentSquare account preferences to ensure receipt of a text/phone call in the event of a closure or emergency.
2. Posting on 22News, wwlp.com

# Everyday Living in the Classroom

## Snacks

Amherst Montessori School does not provide snack. Parents need to provide an individually packaged, nutritious snack labeled with the child's name. Students who attend aftercare will need two snacks, both individually wrapped and labeled with their name. Snacks for infants and toddlers should already be ready to eat, requiring no further preparation. If a snack needs to be cut up or broken into smaller pieces, this should be done at home, to minimize teacher contact with the child's food. For snacks that are not individually wrapped, please package them either in a reusable snack bag or a disposable baggie, such as a ziplock baggie or wax paper baggie. Please ensure your child can open any containers their food is packed in.

Please do not hesitate to send extra snacks for your child. They are busy and hungry during the day, and it is always better to have extra food available.

## Lunch

All children should bring a packed, trash-free lunch to school. Please provide an insulated lunch bag, cloth bag, or knapsack. We recommend reusable containers or thermos. The child must be able to open their lunch container to minimize assistance from the teacher. Prepackaged food in single-serving containers is often difficult for children to open, and since it can't be resealed, often results in wasted food. The school cannot refrigerate or heat lunch for Toddler and Children's House students. Elementary students may use the classroom microwave to heat their own lunch. Infant foods are heated as needed and as instructed by the parent.

Please provide the items listed below in your child's lunch:

A well-balanced nutritious meal

Thermos for foods meant to be eaten warm

Ice pack to keep meats and dairy products cold

A drink if desired (AMS provides water to accompany lunches and snacks)

A napkin

Utensils

### **Some ideas for a healthy lunch:**

Protein: Tuna fish, hard-boiled eggs, slices of meat, chicken, nuts (NO peanuts or peanut butter!), beans, tofu, yogurt, cottage cheese, other cheeses, etc

Fruits & Vegetables: Carrots, celery, lettuce, cucumbers, apples, bananas, oranges, grapes, green, orange, and red peppers

Grains: Whole wheat bread, rye crackers, whole wheat crackers

Dairy: Milk, cheeses, yogurt

**Please do not send the items listed below in your child's lunch:**

Juice boxes (they squirt all over the children and are high in sugar)

Gogurts (they squirt all over the children and their lunch area)

Candy and other sweet foods (they make it difficult for the children to rest or work afterward)

Items with caffeine (all chocolate contains caffeine)

We suggest that the children be included in the lunch-making process at home as they are more apt to eat the food they bring if they have helped to choose or make it.

All unfinished food and beverages will be repacked and sent home with your child. This allows you to gauge your child's appetite and adjust the size of portions according to his/her consumption.

## **Peanut Free School**

Amherst Montessori School is a PEANUT FREE SCHOOL.

We have a few children in our classrooms with a life-threatening allergy to peanuts. Please DO NOT SEND ANY PEANUTS, PEANUT BUTTER, or PEANUT INGREDIENTS into the classroom for lunch. Your cooperation in carefully reading all ingredient labels is greatly appreciated. Even trace amounts of peanuts may create an unsafe situation. Some parents replace peanut butter with almond butter, sunflower butter or cashew butter.

## **Meals for Infants**

Children under the age of 15 months are fed on demand, and therefore we provide food storage at school as specified by guidelines. Infants can bring food in a lunchbox with an icepack. In addition, breast milk or formula can be stored for our youngest students in the Infant or Toddler refrigerators. It is recommended that infants wean off of bottles at school around 12 months of age. Infants will be introduced to a drinking glass as part of their school day. Nursing mothers are welcome to nurse their children at school if their schedule permits. Please speak with the infant guide to let her know when you will be nursing so that feedings can be coordinated.

## **What to Wear**

One of the qualities fostered in a Montessori classroom is independence. Sending Toddler and Children's House students in easily manageable clothing such as elastic waist pants or shorts, and slip over shirts or dresses will help develop confidence in their own abilities. Please make sure all jackets and sweaters have easy, working, full zippers. For all students, clothing and footwear must be appropriate for active and creative play. Children will paint, play, and get dirty! Please make sure clothing can endure our busy days.

Footwear needs to have both a closed front and some type of back, allowing children the freedom to climb and play safely. We also recommend a closed toe to protect feet from the cement. Please do not send children in shoes with significantly high heels. Sneakers are always a good choice.

Each Infant/Toddler and Children's House family will need to provide their child(ren) with two complete changes of labeled clothing that are kept in or near their cubby in a separate container. Please include: two shirts, two pairs of underwear, two pairs of pants or shorts, socks, and a pair of indoor shoes with a rubber sole to remain at school such as slippers, with both a closed front and some type of back.

Please make sure all items that come to school are labeled with indelible marker. Even children who no longer have bathroom "accidents" may encounter water, paint spills, or puddles.

When a child has an accident, an adult will be available to help the child to clean their body with wipes and put on clean clothes.

## **Rest Time for Infants, Toddlers & Children's House Students**

If your child will be resting (this is all children who are not in Kindergarten or Elementary), please send a bottom sheet and a top sheet/blanket. Your child may also include a blanket and/or a stuffed animal for rest time, which will need to remain in the nap bag. A cloth, washable nap bag with your child's name clearly marked on the outside is necessary to bring and store for nap linens. Please mark each item clearly with your child's name. Plush comfort items or pacifiers can be sent in for naptime but will stay at school with the nap linens and will be sent home every weekend (or the last day of your child's weekly schedule) to be laundered.

The school provides individual sleeping mats for each child.

While we will provide the rest opportunities after lunch, please note that we will not force your child to sleep, nor will we force them to stay awake.

The Department of Early Education and Care mandates that each child under the age of five be provided with the opportunity to rest each day.

## **Sharing Treasures from Home**

We appreciate children's desire to share personal treasures and experiences with their classmates. We ask that parents help their children exercise tasteful choices in what they bring to AMS. Here are some guidelines:

Natural specimens (rocks, shells, flowers, nests, etc.)

Item which connects to an important story the child can relate from his personal life.  
Interesting books, especially those depicting a real-life situation. Just one at a time please.  
Items from other cultures  
Something the child has made  
A photo or a newspaper article which has particularly interested him

During our group times, children enjoy hearing about trips or other experiences of their classmates. You might discuss with your child any interesting experiences, which could be shared with the group.

When your children bring objects to share, it is also helpful if you can discuss the object with your child so that they will be able to share some information with their classmates about the object, such as where it is from, how they got it, what it's for, etc. It is important that your child is familiar with the object they bring in.

Sharing is not usually an everyday occurrence; be prepared for the object to spend a few days here. In some cases, the guide may ask your child to bring it again.

**Please Note:** *We ask that toys, cosmetics, stickers, jewelry, notebooks, pencils, and the like be used at home and not brought to school. We find these types of items can distract children from the special environment of the classroom and can cause stress if they are lost or damaged. These items also cause arguments and feelings of possessiveness.*

## **Homework Guidelines for Upper Elementary Students**

Providing opportunities for children to develop homework habits is one of the numerous ways we are preparing them for life after AMS. The 4th - 6th grade Upper Elementary students are given nightly homework Monday-Thursday. The homework follows a consistent weekly schedule that directly ties into the word study, literature circle, or math work happening in the classroom. Occasionally, your child may also be asked to work on or complete a classroom project at home. All of these requirements are communicated to families and posted on the Upper Elementary Google Classroom site. Homework should take about thirty minutes a night, and we encourage families to support their children in creating a consistent routine for homework.

## **Learning Support**

When families and/or guides have concerns regarding a student's academic performance, physical development, or social and emotional well-being, the Learning Support team consisting of the Head of School, the Director of Education and Learning Support Consultant, and the child's teachers, will meet to discuss issues and strategies with an open and proactive approach. Together, the Learning Support Team and the parents identify the student's strengths

and needs in detail, and put structures and strategies in place to help students reach their highest potential.

The following guidelines are followed, step by step, until results are achieved. The guide will inform the parents of each step of the process.

1. The Learning Support Team observes the student and meets with the teaching team to discuss issues and strategies.
  - a. The classroom Lead and Assistant guides put strategies in place to see if improvements can be made within the classroom over a two week period to assist the child. These can include problem solving with students, changes in room layout, more or less direction, and additional activities to meet student interests.
  - b. Observations are kept to track success and areas that may need adjustment.
  - c. The guide will meet with parents to discuss all of the above.
2. If more support is needed after a two week period, the Director of Learning will have a follow-up observation and meeting with the Learning Support Team to create and implement an Action Plan.
  - a. The action plan is shared with the parents and will include information about follow-up evaluations and additional services recommended, if necessary.
3. The Action Plan is followed continuously. If further diagnostic evaluations or services are recommended, the Learning Support Consultant and guide will meet with outside services and providers (REACH, the Collaborative, etc) as needed to ensure the child's needs are met. Regular parent communication regarding the Action Plan and the child's progress continue.

## **Conflict Resolution**

Guidance and expectations are clear and consistent in the Montessori classroom. Our guidance is based on an understanding of the developmental history and individual needs of each child. The goal is to maximize the growth and development of each child, protect individuals within the group, and maintain a calm classroom atmosphere that is conducive to learning.

In the event of conflict, our highest priority is to respect and nurture a child's self-esteem. Holding a child's sense of self in high regard at all times, we then set out safety and security standards. The guide is the peacemaker – always working to understand and validate the child's feelings and to restore order. The core social message of a Montessori classroom is based on being respectful: "Your body, feelings, and things are important, and need to be taken care of." "It is important to take care of your friends' body, feelings, and things."

## Ground Rules

The classroom's established ground rules are based on the Montessori concept of freedom within limits. This gives children the opportunity to make work choices that interest them. With this freedom of movement and choice comes the responsibility of taking care of the environment, themselves, and each other. Our three basic rules are:

Be kind  
Be gentle  
Be safe

## Disregarding Ground Rules

When a child disregards one of the classroom ground rules, positive language will be used, and one or more of the following steps will be taken:

The child will be gently reminded of the ground rules of the classroom and the reasons for following them.

The child will be re-directed to an appropriate activity ("come with me, I've got something special I want to show you..."). This distraction method works very well with our young children.

If the behavior continues after a message has been given, the child may be asked to "take a break" from his/her activity or move away from a particular child(ren).

The child may be given a logical consequence such as "you will lose the privilege of using the sandbox if you throw sand." The child remains in the classroom and may decide to sit and observe until his privilege is reinstated. This break is designed to change his/her focus and break the behavior cycle.

In the event of a tantrum, when a child is physically out of control and lashing out, he/she may need to be removed from the class to prevent potential injury to other children. The child will be accompanied by an adult at all times.

Sometimes we find what works best is to change the environment – a calming walk outside in nature (around the playground or on our woods trail) or sitting outside offers a soothing opportunity for a private discussion of the incident or action.

Humor often works wonders and is one of the most important ingredients in a guide's bag of tricks.

## High Scope Model of Conflict Resolution

Most disputes over space, materials, or social disagreements are resolved by guides helping children according to the High Scope model/methods that we provide training in. These steps are:

APPROACH CALMLY; stop any hurtful actions or language. (Place yourself between children, on their level. Use a calm voice and gentle touch.)

ACKNOWLEDGE FEELINGS. (“You look really upset.”)

GATHER INFORMATION. (“What’s the problem?”)

RESTATE the problem. (“So the problem is...”)

ASK FOR IDEAS FOR SOLUTIONS and choose one together. (“What can we do to solve the problem?”)

GIVE FOLLOW-UP SUPPORT as needed. (“You solved this problem”)

## **Mediation/Peace Meetings**

In case of a child repeatedly disregards the rules, one or more of the following may be implemented as deemed appropriate to the situation by the guide.

A PEACE MEETING between guide and child will be arranged. This mediation is designed to teach children how to work out their own problems. The child may be told “your next work or activity is to come and talk to me (the guide). This is important and we need to talk about this FIRST before you can choose another activity or join your friends again. Then when the child appears to be ready to listen and willing to talk the issue out, the guide will gather the other child(ren) involved. The problem will then be discussed and possible solutions will be agreed upon.

Some possible creative conflict resolution methods we use are:

Reflective listening

“Smoothing over” small rifts

Storytelling

Role-playing and role reversal

Our staff is also trained to use creative conflict resolutions. This method is based on building empathy by bringing the children eye to eye and teaching the child to recognize the needs of others. By “reading” their body language we can guide them in developing empathy for other children. The children are encouraged to come up with solutions that work for them both.

## **Accident/Incident Reports**

## **What warrants an Incident Report?**

Incident reports are used at Amherst Montessori School to document certain situations and behaviors. It is important to have clear lines of communication between staff and families about things that occur during the school day. In general, the following situations require a written report:

- A non-accidental act that damages or destroys materials
- A non-accidental act that results in harm of another, or in the need for first aid of any kind
- An act of excessive disrespect

When an incident occurs, families of all children involved in the incident must be notified with either an accident or incident form.

Each class level has its own guidelines based on the age and developmental capacity of the children in that program. This section describes those guidelines in further detail.

### **Toddler Level**

At the Toddler level, an incident Report form is used in the case of true injury (i.e. visible bruise, broken skin) caused by another child, or when a situation occurs multiple times between the same children. It can also be used for incidents that the lead guide feels are important to report regardless of injury or repetition, on a case-by-case basis. All completed Incident Report forms warrant a phone call to the parent/guardian as soon as possible, and on the same day the report is written. The report will be shared with the parent/guardian at dismissal.

Most behaviors that cause incidents at the Toddler level (e.g. biting, pushing), while not atypical, require action and support. It is not always necessary to use an Incident Report form; what is always warranted is the discussion of behaviors with the parent/guardian.

When it comes to behaviors and situations that occur repeatedly, all of the above apply. In addition, a parent/teacher conference will be scheduled.

### **Children's House Level**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Incident: an Incident Report is written and shared with parent/guardian at dismissal
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Incident: an Incident Report is written, a phone call home is made, and the report is shared with parent/guardian at dismissal
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident: an Incident Report is written, a phone call home is made, the report is shared with parent/guardian at dismissal, and a mandatory parent/teacher conference is scheduled

### **Elementary Level**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Incident: an Incident Report is written and shared with parent/guardian at dismissal
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Incident: an Incident Report is written, the report is shared with parent/guardian at dismissal, and a mandatory parent/teacher conference is scheduled

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident: an Incident Report is written, the report is shared with parent/guardian at dismissal, and a call home is made immediately to make sure that the family is involved in the problem-solving process

### **Parameters and Follow-Up**

For all levels, the following considerations will be discussed at all parent-teacher conferences:

Guiding Questions:

- What is happening at school or in the home, in regards to behaviors?
- What is currently being done at school to tend to the behaviors?
- What can be done to plan for follow-up and support for the student?

Parameters:

- Partnership established between guardians and school representatives.
- The AMS Learning Support consultant will be informed of Incident Reports.
- If an agreement to follow-up steps cannot be reached during the parent-teacher conference, the Head of School will become involved in the process.

Possible Follow-Up Steps:

- Head of School may become involved in the process.
- The child may be sent home as per the direction of AMS staff.
- Recommendation for follow-through for internal services and/or external evaluation.
- Formal observations and action planning to be guided by AMS Learning Support consultant.
- Schedule of regular parent-teacher communication is established

Once a parent-teacher conference has been conducted and an action plan put in place, the student will be observed for 30 days for behavioral improvements. If no improvement is seen, further meetings will be held regarding what future planning will best suit the student's needs.

## **Reinforcing at Home**

When a child's behavior disrupts the classroom community on an ongoing basis, classmates may begin to voice reluctance to come to school. If one child begins to adversely affect the actions of other children in this way, we will take steps to protect the collective good of the class. A PEACE MEETING will be arranged between the guide and the child. We talk a lot about how the school came to be and how Amherst Montessori is a fun and peaceful place for children to come and play. With the child's assistance, the guide will write down, in language easily understood by the child, that EVERYONE must follow our rules or it would NOT be a fun, safe place. Then all parties would talk about the behavior we all agreed was appropriate of him/her while at school. This process primarily focuses on one specific positive behavior we seek. It gets the child to focus on one positive action. This is how we inform the parents of the rule being broken and obtain the parents' support in reinforcing this rule at home. The parent should let the

child overhear them tell the guide that they all understand and agree that this is an important rule to practice.

## **Collaboration & Support**

Our commitment is to work collaboratively with parents when children have significant behavioral issues or needs we cannot meet. We will provide conferences between the parent and guide to discuss the needs of the child, and options to help avoid suspension or termination, including seeking outside guidance. The Head of School may also attend these conferences.

During these conferences, AMS will often offer an Individual Study Plan (ISP) to outline the modifications and structures the school can offer to support the child in the classroom and school setting. The ISP will also list support systems the parents need to utilize at home to support the child's continued growth and development. The ISP is a living document, and we ask for collaboration from parents on developing and utilizing it to support the child.

## **Seeking Outside Guidance**

When a particularly challenging or difficult situation presents itself to our professional staff, we may ask the parent(s) to seek outside assistance to aid us in best meeting the child's needs. We offer referrals to parents for the child's evaluation and for diagnostic and therapeutic services. AMS and its Learning Support Team also will bring in specialists to train staff and provide consultations when appropriate.

## **Dismissal Procedures**

If, after meeting with the child's parents and considering outside guidance when necessary, the needs of the child have exceeded what the staff at Amherst Montessori School is able to offer, we will then recommend that the family seek a different program for their child. If it is within our expertise to do so, Amherst Montessori School will try to assist the family by making a recommendation on the type of program that would best suit the child's needs. Amherst Montessori School reserves the right to terminate the enrollment contract if the Montessori Method is not the right fit for the student.

## **Contract Cancellation Policy**

Because Amherst Montessori School believes that a positive and constructive working relationship between the school and a student's parent/guardian is essential, the school reserves the right to terminate the enrollment contract if the school reasonably concludes that the actions of a parent or guardian make such a positive and constructive relationship impossible, or otherwise interfere with the school's ability to accomplish its mission.

If a student withdraws on or after May 1, 2023, the undersigned parties on the enrollment contract is/are responsible for 100% of tuition and deposit as liquidated damages. No portion of tuition and fees, paid or outstanding, will be refunded or canceled, even in the event of absence, early withdrawal, or early dismissal. Please see your enrollment contract.

## Health & Safety

### Illness & Health Policy: When to Keep a Child Home

For the protection of all our friends, your child should be kept AT HOME if they show ANY of the following symptoms:

- A temperature of 100 degrees or more
- Discharging eyes or ears
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- Nausea
- Fatigue that makes them unable to participate in the day
- Headache
- New loss of smell/taste
- A bad cold (w/ colored discharge)
- An unexpected rash
- Coughing
- Sore throat
- Any other signs of illness

**Children must be free of the symptoms listed above for a full day (without medication) in order to come back to school.** Children who are sent home from school with any of these symptoms must be kept home from school the following day. For example, if your child is sent home on a Tuesday at 1 p.m. with a fever, your child must stay home the following Wednesday for the entire day (you may not bring them back to school at 1 p.m.)

If your child becomes ill during school, we will contact you immediately. A child who may be contagious will be temporarily isolated until parents can be reached. **If you do not pick up your child within 30 minutes, we will begin to call the Emergency Contacts you have on file.** We will keep them as comfortable as possible until the parent arrives. It is important that we have on file the health history and emergency information form with a listing of persons to

contact in case of a health emergency and a phone number where a parent or guardian can be reached.

## **Dispensing of Medication**

The dispensing of medication by school personnel is prohibited except as provided below:

Staff may administer topical, non-prescription medications once a parent has submitted a signed medication authorization form. These do not require a medical signature.

If a student needs medication, which has been prescribed by a doctor, or over the counter pain medications, the following procedure will be used. Written instruction signed by the parent AND the physician should include:

The name of the medication  
The dosage and time of administration  
The doctor's name

*\*If the medication is an epipen or inhaler, the school requires an action plan and a medication consent form.*

Medicine must be sent in its original container *with* the prescription label by the parent and given to Kelly Edreich, Head of School, who will then provide it for the guide. The classroom guide and the school office have forms available for this purpose. Since it is so easy to forget a refrigerated medication at the day's end, we suggest having the pharmacist divide the medication into two appropriate portions so one may be left at school. If more than one day's dosage is to be given, please be specific on dates the medication is to be given. Medication will be kept in a supervised area, refrigerated if necessary, and always administered under the supervision of a guide. Any child who needs life saving medication should have an individual health plan on file at the school. With the written permission of the child's health care practitioner, parents will train staff in the implementation of the child's health care plan.

Only staff members who have been trained according to DEEC guidelines on medication administration may administer medication. Furthermore, staff will be evaluated annually prior to the start of the new school year to determine that they are still following DEEC guidelines.

## **Communicable Diseases**

If a child has been exposed to a contagious disease, Amherst Montessori School must be notified. We specifically need to know when a child will return to school after a communicable disease according to the following schedule:

- Chicken Pox: One week to ten days after the appearance of blisters AND after ALL blisters have scabbed over
- Streptococcal Infection (aka “Strep Throat”): 24 hours after medication has started (must continue medication for 10 days)
- Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye): 24 hours after medication begins and no visible drainage from eye or with written physician permission
- Impetigo: 24 hours after oral medication begins or 48 hours after ointment medication begins
- Head lice: Morning after first treatment

## **Immunizations**

Amherst Montessori School requires families to submit a current immunization record (within the last year) and the Massachusetts school health record for each child. These documents can be requested from your child’s medical provider and must be submitted with registration paperwork before a child can start at AMS.

All public and private schools in the state of Massachusetts are required to report vaccination information for all students aged 2 and older to the state.

Additionally, DEEC requires that we collect and report the lead testing of all 2, 3, and 4 year olds.

The state of Massachusetts requires staff at AMS to prove MMR immunization or immunity.

## **Outdoor Recess**

Outdoor activity is an integral part of our program. Both indoor and outdoor activities are essential to the health, education, and development of children. Particularly in the winter with heated and dry air inside, outdoor playtime actually has many health benefits besides providing a change of scenery, a chance to run off energy, and to express oneself freely. The untreated air allows irritated dried membranes in the nasal passages to return to normal and thus children are able to resist and fight off colds and other infections. Children with allergies also frequently benefit from a “break” from the particle-laden indoor air.

**Parents, be advised that WE HAVE OUTDOOR RECESS DAILY, so please dress your child appropriately with hats, mittens, scarves, etc. Indoor play is NOT a choice at recess times** so, please don't put your child's grade on the spot by asking if your child can stay inside at recess time. It is Amherst Montessori School's policy that a child who is not well enough to be outside in the fresh air for 30 minutes is not well enough to be at school. We plan indoor recess only during storms, bitterly cold weather, and very low wind chill days.

## **Cold Weather Clothing Requirements for Infants**

The following items should be sent in daily from now until warmer weather returns in the spring:

- Mittens/Gloves
- Hat
- Neck Warmer (optional) NO SCARFS
- Waterproof pants/snow pants and a warm jacket or a one piece suit
- Insulated outdoor shoes
- Snow pants & a winter jacket or a one piece snow suit are required upon first snowfall
- Gloves/mittens should be attached to the coat with clips or elastic strung through the sleeves

### **Cold Weather Outdoor Policies for Infants**

The "feels like temperature" will be checked via Weather.com each day and will be used to determine recess time as specified below.\*

- Above 20 degrees: full recess, no time restriction
- Between 13-20 degrees: children may go outside for 1 minute per degree as long as they are dressed properly (i.e. if it is 15 degrees, children may go outside for 15 minutes).
- Below 13 degrees: children will not go outdoors; indoor recess.

\*The combination of the heat index and the wind chill factor are denoted collectively by the single terms "apparent temperature" or "relative outdoor temperature" or simply "Feels Like". Wind chill is the apparent temperature felt on exposed skin, which is a function of the air temperature and wind speed.

## **Cold Weather Clothing Requirements for Toddler and Children's House Levels**

- 40-50 degrees: long sleeve shirt or light jacket
- 30-40 degrees: winter jacket, gloves/mittens, hat

- Below 30 degrees: winter jacket, gloves/mittens, hat, insulated winter boots, scarf (optional)
- Snow pants required upon first snowfall
- Gloves/mittens should be attached to the coat with clips or elastic strung through the sleeves
- Rain boots and rain coat when rain is expected

### **Cold Weather Outdoor Policies for Toddler and Children's House Levels**

The "feels like temperature" will be checked via Weather.com each day and will be used to determine recess time as specified below, as long as children are dressed properly.\*

- Above 20 degrees: full recess, no time restriction
- Between 13-20 degrees: children may go outside for 1 minute per degree as long as they are dressed properly (i.e. if it is 15 degrees, children may go outside for 15 minutes).
- Below 13 degrees: children will not go outdoors; indoor recess.

\*The combination of the heat index and the wind chill factor are denoted collectively by the single terms "apparent temperature" or "relative outdoor temperature" or simply "Feels Like". Wind chill is the apparent temperature felt on exposed skin, which is a function of the air temperature and wind speed.

### **Cold Weather Clothing Requirements Elementary Students**

- 40-50 degrees: long sleeve shirt or light jacket
- 30-40 degrees: warm jacket
- Below 30 degrees: winter jacket, gloves/mittens, hat, scarf (optional)
- Snow pants and insulated winter boots required upon first snowfall

### **Cold Weather Outdoor Policies for Elementary**

The "feels like temperature" will be checked via Weather.com each day and will be used to determine recess time as specified below.\*

#### **Elementary**

- Above 13 degrees: full recess, no time restriction
- Between 0-13 degrees: 20 minute maximum
- Below 0 degrees: children will not go outdoors; indoor recess

\*The combination of the heat index and the wind chill factor are denoted collectively by the single terms "apparent temperature" or "relative outdoor temperature" or simply "Feels Like". Wind chill is the apparent temperature felt on exposed skin, which is a function of the air temperature and wind speed.

## **Fire Drills**

Fire drills will take place on a monthly basis during the school year. Most fire drills are in the morning, but a few will take place in the afternoon.

For the first several months, guides will prepare the children for the drill and let them know that the alarm will be going off. After January, the drills will not be announced to children unless a child is particularly terrified. NOTE: THERE WILL BE NO TIME TO PUT ON CHILDREN'S COATS, SHOES, OR BOOTS SO PLEASE SEND SLIPPERS WITH SOLES AS YOUR CHILD'S INDOOR SHOES.

## **Emergency Evacuation Plan**

Emergency Evacuation Plans are posted at all exits. During an emergency evacuation, the Montessori guide or classroom assistant will be responsible for taking the attendance book and for leading the children out of the building. Administrative staff will assist in the evacuation and check rooms to ensure no one has been left behind. Non-mobile toddlers and infants will be carried by the staff. A staff member will make a visual inspection of the classroom and bathrooms before exiting the building. All classrooms, once evacuated, will meet in a designated evacuation gathering area and wait for the go-ahead by the Head of School or the designated staff member before entering the building.

During all evacuations, staff will carry the emergency backpack, which includes a first-aid kit, and emergency contact numbers, medical treatment forms, and special medications needed by children. A staff member will have a cell phone to allow for calls to local authorities to determine whether to evacuate or seek shelter in the event of a natural disaster. Calls will also be made to parents via a staff member's cell phone.

Children are always counted before exiting the building, upon arrival at the designated area, and upon returning to the building. Attendance is taken when arriving at the designated "safe area" outside to ensure that individual children are present.

The school maintains a daily attendance list that is current. Staff members are responsible for signing children in and out of the school by arrival and departure times. The attendance list will be kept in a designated spot and be readily accessible in case of an emergency evacuation. The Montessori guide will be responsible for taking the attendance book and accounting for all of the children in the class once they are safely out of the building.

Emergency evacuation drills are conducted every month at different times of the program day as determined by the Head of School. Children and staff should practice using different evacuation routes so that they will be familiar with them.

The Head of School will maintain documentation of the date, time, and effectiveness of each drill in the fire drill log. This documentation will be maintained for five years.

In event of a fire, natural disaster, or other situations, requiring evacuation of the area, emergency vehicles will take the children to Hampshire College. Amherst Montessori School is included in the Town of Amherst's telephone and email bulletin regarding town disasters and/or unsafe conditions.

## **Emergency Plan for Missing Child**

Attendance is taken every morning and counts of children are consistently made throughout the day. If a child were discovered to be missing, the guide would immediately alert the other guides and the administration. Bathrooms and closets and all nooks and crannies would be checked, followed by looking outdoors for the child. Administrative staff would call the parent and 911. Once the child is found, the Department of Early Education and Care would be alerted about the situation.

## **Mandated Reports**

We, as caregivers at Amherst Montessori School, are required by law to report any suspected child abuse, physical or sexual, to the Department of Children and Families.

## **Special Events**

### **Birthdays/Ceremonies**

We have a very special birthday walk for children celebrating birthdays. The school will provide birthday popsicles during the birthday walk.

It is a Montessori tradition for children to present their class with a book for the classroom library as a part of their birthday celebration. This act enables children to learn the value and pleasure of giving rather than receiving and is harmonious with the school's "spirit of giving" theme..

Parents wishing to participate in this tradition can inscribe the book with the child's name, birth date, and the number birthday the child is celebrating. For parents' convenience you may ask the classroom guide if there is a book that the class would particularly enjoy. Most parents purchase their child's favorite book. This old favorite at storytime will hold the most meaning for you and your child's special day. Participation, of course, is voluntary.

### **School Events & Holiday Celebrations**

We celebrate holidays from a cultural perspective rather than a traditional or religious one. We strive to avoid the over-commercialization of most holidays and consciously focus on instilling in the children a sense of the true meaning of a celebration – that of sharing and loving.

Seasonal events include our harvest festival, the spring celebration, and the end of school celebration with a full school field trip.

## **Field Trips & School Events**

Kindergarten and Elementary students take field trips throughout the year to enrich their classroom learning experiences. For large group trips we take a big yellow school bus from First Student, Inc. For smaller groups, we often take personal vehicles. For many of our trips we will ask for parent volunteers to chaperone. Any parent, who transports a child other than their own for a field trip must complete a CORI check, provide a copy of their driver's license, and submit proof of their car insurance coverage. Parents will be notified of trip details in advance of each excursion via email.

All field trips are an automatic opt-in and parent permission granted unless you write to notify us otherwise when we send the field trip notice.