



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

**2022-2023
Policies and Procedures Handbook**

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<https://www.montessoricentermn.org/families/cornerstone-montessori-school>
www.cornerstone-elementary.org

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Please see the Cornerstone Program Guide for information about the Montessori program and background on your child’s experience. Policies in this handbook are superseded by the Safe Learning Plan during the 2022-23 school year.

INTRODUCTION

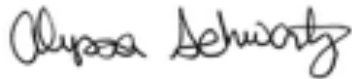
Dear Families,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2022-23 school year at Cornerstone Montessori School (CMS) and Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School (CMES)! As Covid-19 continues to be a concern in our community, our goal is to keep every child and adult healthy during this time, as well as to continue to provide the developmentally appropriate education your child deserves. The separate Safe Learning Plan, available on the CMES website, provides additional information about our response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Please note that any guidelines outlined in that handbook take precedence over the policies listed here and updates will be sent via email as needed.

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

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

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alyssa Schwartz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Alyssa Schwartz
Head of School

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

ACCREDITATION

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

APPLICATION & ADMISSION PROCEDURES

Cornerstone Montessori School (Private Early Childhood Program)

Cornerstone Montessori School enrolls an economically and ethnically diverse population in its Toddler Community (16 to 33 months) and Children's House (33 months to 6 years) programs. The school strives to enroll 1/3 families paying full tuition, 1/3 families receiving partial scholarship, and 1/3 families receiving full scholarship or state/county assistance. Applications are available at the school office and on the Montessori Center of Minnesota website.

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School (Public Charter)

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

ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL

Arrival

Children may arrive at school between 8:30 and 8:45 a.m. for the Toddler Community and Children's Houses, and between 8:45 and 9:00 a.m. for the Elementary. You may drop off using the car line or by walking your child to the curb. To use the car line, drive slowly into the parking area and around to the back where there are cones marking a safe turn-around. Pull up in line and when you get to the space between the cones, allow your child to exit the car and walk in. ***Please exercise courtesy, patience, and caution at all times in the parking lot.***

If you choose to park and walk your child to the curb, please park in a designated parking spot. Parking is available in the upper lot or along Ames Ave. To aid in your child's independence, please do not carry them into the building.

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

Dismissal

Dismissal for the Children's Houses and Toddler Community takes place at 12:30, 4:00, or between 4:00 and 5:00, depending on the program you have enrolled in. At the 12:30 dismissal, children will wait for you in the reception area; please park and wait for your child to be brought outside. At 4:00 you may use the car line (your child will be brought out to you) or you may park on the street or in the parking lot and walk to the curb to receive your child. Between 4:00 and 5:00, children will be in the classroom. Please call the front desk and your child will be brought outside to you.

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

Kindergarten children may register for Before or After Care in the Children's House environment.

Early Pick-ups/Late Arrivals

Please help limit disruptions to the environment and confusion by making every effort to arrive by 8:45 and pick up your child at their designated dismissal time. We understand that on rare occasions you may need to pick your child up early for an appointment; we ask that parents do this as infrequently as possible.

Before Care

Children registered in CMS Before Care may be dropped off as early as 8:00am. Please ring the front doorbell to have your child admitted to the building.

Children registered in CMES Before Care may be dropped off at 7:30am or 8:00am. Children who are not registered in the program will be admitted to their classroom at 8:45.

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 ensuring a smooth dismissal of your child, please:

- Notify the administration by phone or email of who will be picking up your child.
- Prepare your child, if possible, by letting them know who will be picking up.
- Have the authorized person be prepared to show a picture I.D.

Only persons 16 years of age or older will be permitted to pick up children from Cornerstone.

ACCELERATION AND RETENTION POLICY

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School accepts children into grade levels based on their age on or before September 1 of the school year with 5 years being the age for acceptance into Kindergarten. Cornerstone will provide each child with an educational environment that provides optimal challenge and meets the child's developmental needs. Due to the nature of the Montessori environment and the multi-age classrooms, lessons can be remediated or accelerated to meet the needs of each child.

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

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

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

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Parents are urged to make every effort to schedule appointments at times outside of the school day. **If your child will be late or absent, please notify the school by 9:00 at the latest.**

The following constitute excused reasons for student absences:

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

The following are examples that will not be excused:

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

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

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

If children are enrolled at Cornerstone Montessori School and receive CCAP funding, the school is required to report when a child is absent seven or more days in a row.

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

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

BULLYING PROHIBITION

Cornerstone is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment for all students. Acts of bullying, in any form, by either an individual child or a group of children, are prohibited on

school property and at school functions. For detailed information regarding the Cornerstone Elementary Bullying Prohibition Policy, please visit www.cornerstone-elementary.org or speak to school administration.

BUS POLICY

Cornerstone bus service is a service for children enrolled in Cornerstone Elementary only, provided by Centerline Charter. Centerline will determine a corner bus stop based on the address provided by the parents. Any concerns about the designated bus stop should be directed to Centerline.

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

Children will be dropped off at their bus stop whether or not an adult is present. It is the parent or guardian's responsibility to be at the stop to greet children or to make alternate arrangements. Cornerstone recommends that you plan with your child what to do if no adult is home when the child is dropped off.

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

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

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

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

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.
- Follow all school rules and expectations.

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

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

Parents must agree to these policies and give their signature in agreement on the Bus Ride Application for a child to be eligible to ride the bus.

CALENDAR

Cornerstone will publish a joint, yearly school calendar. Reminders, additions, or changes to the calendar will be posted on the website and distributed via NotifyMe.

CELEBRATIONS & THEIR IMPORTANCE

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. We do not, in general, observe holidays as a school, and request that children do not dress up for Halloween or bring Valentine's Day cards.

CELL PHONE USE

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

We ask parents to not use cell phones when at Cornerstone. As a demonstration of respect for the child, please give your child your undivided attention during arrival and dismissal. 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 police or the child protection program for the county in which the child resides. 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. More information about what constitutes abuse or neglect and what our requirements are as educators can be obtained from the administration.

CLOTHING

One of our goals at Cornerstone is for children to be independent with their clothing and able to move and work freely in our indoor and outdoor environments. Each child, regardless of age, should bring an extra set of clothing and a pair of extra shoes to leave at school. All items should be labeled with the child's name or initials; children should be able to put on and remove their clothes/shoes independently, and should allow children to get wet or dirty.

Shoes should have a hard sole, to protect the child's feet from injury. High heels and opened-toe shoes are not permitted at Cornerstone.

Clothing should include underwear, socks, pants, and shirts. We will launder soiled clothing at school, unless otherwise requested.

Outdoor clothing should also be appropriate for the season. Since our outdoor environments become particularly muddy, we ask that each child bring rain boots. In colder weather, the rain boots should be exchanged for a snowsuit and winter boots. In summer months, a sunhat should be provided to protect your child from harmful UV rays.

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

COMMITMENT

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

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS/CONFERENCES/PARENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Consistent and strong communication between parents and guides is essential in order to provide the most supportive environment for each child. The more informed we are about your child, the better we can care for them. We encourage you to share with your child's guide any changes at home that may have an effect at school.

Conferences are held twice a year, in the fall and spring, by Zoom or in person. Conferences will allow time to discuss the progress of each child. At the elementary level, children may be asked to be part of conferences. This helps children in taking ownership for their development and learning while supporting independence and goal setting. At the end of the year, a written report regarding each child's development will be completed and delivered to parents.

If you have questions for your child’s guide, please contact your guide by email or phone. We are invested in your child’s success and will contact you as soon as possible to respond to your needs. Please note staff are not required to check email outside of school hours. 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. If you have a question about your child, please arrange a meeting or send an email.

Parents/legal guardians may have access to their child at any time while the child is at school. Please notify the front desk that you would like to see your child and they will be brought to you.

Parents can expect news from the school each week, including administrative information and news about what is happening in our school and classroom communities. **Reading these newsletters thoroughly is an excellent way to be connected to your child’s life at school!** Parents are expected to sign up for NotifyMe at www.cornerstone-elementary.org.

Daily written reports to parents of toddlers will also go home about food intake, elimination, sleeping, and general behavior, per DHS regulations.

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

- Please read all signs and notes posted.
- Sign up for NotifyMe and check the website often.
- Send important information via email or written note. Please do not rely on verbal messages.
- Feel free to call the school to talk to school staff about any concerns you may have. The appropriate person will return your call at their earliest convenience.

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

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

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

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

DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-DISCIPLINE & BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE

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

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

Inner discipline is not something automatically present within the child, but rather evolves under the right care and in the proper environment. As adults in the child's life, we need to be a model and guide while supporting the child through the process of developing self-discipline. We offer limited freedoms based on the child's abilities to make appropriate choices at that particular time. As the child's ability to make choices and follow rules improves, more freedom is offered.

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

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

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

If the child disregards the rules of the community, the supervising staff person seeks the underlying causes of the child's behavior. In doing so, the adult tries to help the child understand the inappropriateness of his or her choices and to find an appropriate alternative. If a disruptive or inappropriate behavior occurs repeatedly, the guide may request that the Head of School, Director of Training at the Montessori Center of Minnesota, and/or another staff member observe the behavior and offer consultation and alternative solutions. If the behavior continues, the parents may be contacted for their support and cooperation. Unacceptable behavior includes but is not limited to:

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

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

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

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

DISMISSAL, REFERRAL, SUSPENSION & EXPULSION

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

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 help the child adapt their behavior to the environment. If the disruptive or harmful behavior persists, the child may be asked to leave the school.

Pupil Fair Dismissal Act

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

DRUGS & ALCOHOL

The use of controlled substances, including alcohol, is prohibited. Alcohol is never served at school functions. All staff and volunteers are oriented to this policy during training. Individuals who drop off or pick up children while intoxicated may be reported to the appropriate authorities.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Cornerstone conducts regular emergency drills. Maps and exit plans are posted in each room of the school. During monthly fire drills and tornado drills, held monthly April through September, children and staff practice where to go and what to do. 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. Lockdowns are practiced by staff only. A copy of the emergency procedure manual is available on the CMES website.

FACILITIES

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

FAMILY EMERGENCIES AND ISSUES

If you have an emergency at home or at work and you need to notify the school, we will respond as soon as possible in the same manner as the message was received. **Please remember to continuously update your phone numbers and emergency contact phone numbers.**

If you or members of your family are experiencing situations that may impact your child's well-being at school, such as birth, adoption, death, divorce, depression, remarriage, chronic illness, chemical abuse, or domestic violence, sharing that information with your child's guide and/or administration can provide vital support to help your child cope during a difficult time. In addition, our school social workers may be available to lend their expertise.

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 be distributed before the trip. Elementary students will have "going outs" that are focused on research or an area of interest, or are related to the care of their environment or pets. Field trips must always fit into the curriculum and be appropriate for the age of the child. Transportation for a field trip will always be in accordance with state regulations regarding transportation: children will only travel on a city bus or an appropriately equipped vehicle. Children's House children may go on walks, but will rarely, if ever, leave the campus.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The mission of Cornerstone is to serve a socioeconomically 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 and

state programs and also offer tuition assistance to families in need. Financial aid/tuition assistance is supported by a scholarship fund, funded through the Montessori Center of Minnesota. We expect families to keep their financial commitment to the school and pay tuition and co-pays on time.

FIRST AID ADMINISTRATION & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

All members of the Cornerstone staff are trained in First Aid, CPR, and Blood Borne Pathogens. In case of a minor incident, First Aid will be administered and parents notified. In cases requiring immediate medical attention, First Aid is administered and 911 is called. If necessary, the child is transported to the nearest hospital. After calling 911, the parents and the physician are contacted immediately. A staff member will inform the parent of the child's injury. Parents will sign a parent permission form for immediate medical care. Staff may not transport children for any reason.

If an injury requires medical attention, our first consideration must be the safety of the child. We will take whatever action is deemed necessary.

FOOD POLICY: BREAKFAST, LUNCH, & SNACKS

Healthy and nutritious food is a priority at Cornerstone School. The school has a "no sugar" and a "no nut" policy. Children are not offered products at school that contain refined sugar, nor will they be served items containing nuts. Lunches sent from home must comply with these policies.

Children are offered breakfast, lunch, and snacks each day. Water is available in the environments and common areas. An information sheet on children's allergies and dietary restrictions will be posted in the kitchen and spaces where children eat.

We work with our caterer, CKC Good Foods, to provide healthy lunches and breakfasts for the children each day. Menus are planned on a monthly basis and distributed to parents in advance. Breakfast and lunch comply with USDA requirements; parents who choose to provide food for their children must meet these requirements as well (including milk).

Children in CMS receive lunch and breakfast as part of their tuition. Children in Cornerstone Elementary receive lunch and breakfast for free if they qualify for free lunch or a reduced cost if they qualify for reduced lunch. Families of children who do not qualify may purchase lunch for \$3.75 and breakfast for \$2.25 per day. Children will not be denied a meal for lack of funds.

All children wash their hands before eating meals or snacks. Food preparation tools, flatware, glassware, and dishes are washed and sanitized between each use.

FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH

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

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, or reprisal or

retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

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

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

Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE PROHIBITION

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

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

HEALTH & WELLNESS POLICIES

Children at Cornerstone move freely throughout the environment and share many materials, thus germs have the potential to spread quickly. When your child is sick, they must be cared for at home. We understand the added stress and inconvenience of these times but ask for your cooperation so that we can establish a healthy environment for the whole community.

At Cornerstone we do our best to avoid illness by making hand washing an essential part of each day. Children wash hands after they use the bathroom or are changed, before and after meals, before they set the table or prepare food, when their hands look or smell dirty, after they touch pets, and when they arrive in the morning.

We will notify families when a contagious illness is present in the school. Children who are not fully immunized may be required to remain home when certain diseases are present in the community.

Parents must follow these guidelines regarding illness:

- If you notice a change in your child’s behavior, such as feeling tired, out-of-sorts, or irritable consider this a sign of the onset of illness, and keep your child home for extra rest.
- If your child has a contagious disease, you are required by Minnesota law to inform the school within 24 hours, exclusive of holidays or weekends.
- If your child has been prescribed an antibiotic, they 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
- Diarrhea that is uncontrolled or infectious
- Vomiting twice since arrival or within the last 24 hours
- Bacterial infections such as streptococcal pharyngitis (strep throat) or impetigo until the child has been on antibiotics for 24 hours
- Ringworm or scabies that is untreated or contagious to others
- Significant respiratory distress
- A temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher within the past 24 hours (If there are additional symptoms present, the child may be required to stay home for additional days after initial symptoms. Medication may not be used to bring down a fever.)
- An undiagnosed rash that may be related to contagious illness
- Unexplained lethargy or inability to participate

The Covid policies described in the Safe Learning Plan take precedence over policies outlined here.

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

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

HEALTH CARE SUMMARY, IMMUNIZATION RECORD REQUIREMENTS & SPECIAL HEALTH NEEDS

Minnesota's school immunization law requires that all children must be fully immunized by the first day of school or will not be allowed to enroll or remain in school. Immunization requirements can be waived with the necessary documentation. Immunization forms should be updated whenever new immunizations are given.

Upon admission and annually, a Health Care Summary must be fully completed, including the date of the child’s most recent physical exam (within six months) and signed by the child’s health care provider. Children enrolled at CMS must have a Health Care Summary on file to attend.

Please inform us of any special health needs your child has, such as allergies or asthma. All forms and information shared are for the safety of your child, and will be kept confidential.

HIV/AIDS POLICY

Cornerstone has a non-discrimination policy regarding HIV/AIDS. We will not dismiss or refuse to enroll a child, nor dismiss or refuse to hire a staff member who is HIV positive or has AIDS.

ITEMS FROM HOME

Children are encouraged to leave personal items at home. **Items such as food, candy, toys, and stuffed animals, money, purses, personal school supplies, binders, locker decorations, etc., may not be brought to school.** We will dispose of any item that resembles a weapon. Personal items disrupt the sense of community and can be distracting to the children. If your child would like to bring an item that has cultural or artistic significance, or educational value, to school to share, please ask him or her to arrange to do so with the guide/teacher. Planning ahead allows us to ensure that the child gets an appropriate amount of time dedicated to the discussion of their object.

LICENSURE

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

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School is licensed through the state and authorized by the University of St. Thomas. UST can be reached via Molly McGraw Healy, 1000 LaSalle Ave, Opus Hall 217, Minneapolis, MN 55403.

MEDICATIONS

Minnesota legislation states that school personnel may not administer medication during the school day without the written order of a licensed physician and a written authorization of a parent or guardian that can be placed on file in the office.

If a child requires medication, parents are encouraged to give the child medication at home. If a child must have medication administered during school hours and the necessary paperwork is completed, the medication must be in its original container 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, and updated at least annually. This includes over the counter medication such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

All medications, sunscreens, insect repellents, and diaper ointments must be administered according to manufacturer's instructions unless written directions are provided by a licensed doctor or dentist. Cough drops may be brought to the front desk for administration.

MYSTERIOUS OBJECTS

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

NONDISCRIMINATION

Cornerstone is committed to inclusive education and providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. Cornerstone does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion,

national origin, immigration status, sex, gender identity, marital status, parental status, status with regard to public assistance, disability, sexual orientation, or age in its programs and activities. Alyssa Schwartz, Head of School, is the human rights officer who handles inquiries regarding nondiscrimination. Alyssa can be reached at 651.774.5000.

See page 15 for policies related to USDA food and nutrition programs.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

OBSERVATION

Observation is an essential part of the Montessori environment. Guides observe the children to gain a greater understanding of the developmental needs of each child and the community as a whole. Children are encouraged to observe each other, allowing them to learn from one another. Parents of 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 be scheduled six weeks after school has started (typically after fall conferences). Administration will notify families of the opportunity and invite sign-ups. We ask that you thoroughly read and follow the Guidelines for Observation that you will receive prior to your scheduled observation. Your child's guide or the Head of School will follow up with you following your observation.

OFFICE HOURS

Cornerstone is open Monday through Friday, 7:30am-5:30pm. Outside of these hours, you may send an email or leave a voicemail. Staff are only expected to respond to emails during the work day.

OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT RULES

All children are expected to go outside daily for an opportunity for large motor movement and exposure to nature, weather permitting. Excluding extenuating circumstances, if children are well enough to be at school, it is assumed that they are well enough to participate in outdoor activities with the rest of the community. Every child should come to school with the items necessary to be comfortable in all varieties of Minnesota weather. Please let the school know if you need assistance in attaining necessary items such as rain boots and/or suitable snow clothes.

- **Play safely:** We do not allow pushing, pulling, hitting, tackling games, wrestling, kicking, fighting, blocking other children's activities, or throwing snow, ice, sand, wood chips or equipment in the play area.
- We encourage children to **include other children** in games and activities.
- No toys, games, bats, balls, dolls, action figures or other materials are to be brought from home for recess use. The school supplies buckets, shovels, brooms, rakes, appropriate garden tools, and sports equipment for work and play.
- **Conflict resolution:** Children should come to an adult if they have a problem they cannot resolve themselves. Adults step in to mediate observed conflicts as well.
- Children are expected to **respect all materials, tools and equipment**, and to use all playground materials for their intended use.
- **Slides:** Children are not allowed to climb on the inside or outside of any slide. There is one person at a time on the slide and no head first sliding is allowed.

- **Fence:** If a ball goes outside the fence, children should tell an adult so they 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.

It is important that all children understand and adhere to our rules for the outdoor environment. 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, they will be asked to take a five-minute rest. If, after the child returns to play, they continue to break the rules, they 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 their privilege to work/play outside for one or more days. Cornerstone staff will discuss this with the parent, should it occur.

PARENT PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

At Cornerstone, we believe that supporting our parents' understanding of our school philosophy and methodology, as well as learning from our parents about their children, families, and culture and traditions, are priorities.

Opportunities in our Parent Engagement Program include:

- **Parent Partnership/Education Events:** On these occasions, topics that are relevant to all children and parents in our community are discussed. Focus is placed on child development, parenting techniques, and Montessori-related topics so that our parent community can become more familiar with the Montessori philosophy and how it relates to their roles as parents. Parents with different areas of expertise or topics of interest are invited to share with other parents on these evenings as well.
- **Observations:** Parents are encouraged to observe in the environments. Please refer to the section regarding Observations on page 19 for further information.
- **Lending Library:** We encourage parents to borrow books about and by Maria Montessori and her educational methodology from the school, as well as other books about child development and parenting topics. Parents can also contribute books they have found helpful to the lending library.

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

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

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

PETS

Cornerstone has pets in the environments. All pets are living as humanely as possible and are in good health with updated shots, if required. Children are instructed how to handle each pet, if it is a pet that can be handled. We try to keep pets that most children do not have allergies to, but parents should inform guides/teachers if their child is allergic to various types of animals.

PHOTOGRAPHS & VIDEO

We often utilize photographs and videos to convey what happens in the Montessori environments. Photographs of the children are often used by Cornerstone or the Montessori Center of Minnesota as part of our publications and workshops. Parents are asked to complete a permission form during enrollment to indicate whether or not they permit us to utilize footage of their child in this manner. Children are never identified by name in publications or on social media, which may include the Cornerstone website and newsletters.

PLACEMENT

Children are placed in environments with the intention of maintaining an age, gender and ethnic balance within each multi-age group. To support each child's individual growth, we usually place siblings in separate environments. Parents may not request placement in a particular environment.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS

In order to provide each child with the highest standard of education, our staff meets regularly for staff meetings and professional/in-service training, and staff have the opportunity to attend workshops and conferences outside of school. Attendance at such events allows us to continue our development as a professional teaching staff, assists in developing staff commitment and enthusiasm, and allows staff to develop cohesive plans and communicate about school policies and procedures. Professional development days are marked on the school calendar; there is no childcare on professional development/in-service days.

PROHIBITED ACTIONS BY ADULTS

At Cornerstone, the children are treated with the great respect that all people deserve. Adults serve as role models in both action and language.

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

Any staff person found to be engaging in any of the above-mentioned behaviors will be subject to disciplinary action or termination.

RECESS AND LUNCH PHILOSOPHY

All parts of the day are considered educational or developmental opportunities including lunch and recess. Lunch is set up and cleaned up primarily by the children and served with recognition of health and safety protocols as well as children's development.

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

Children's connection to the outside world fosters children's curiosity and inspires their work, as well as provides much-needed physical activity and exercise. For these reasons, we are adamant that children participate in recess every day. **It is our policy that we go outdoors unless it is raining heavily or unless: for Elementary, the "feels-like" temperature is below -10; for Children's House, it is below zero degrees; for Toddlers, it is below 10 degrees.**

RECORDS

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

Records of children enrolled at Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School are classified as public, private, or confidential. State and federal laws protect student records from unauthorized inspection or use and provide parents/guardians and eligible children with certain rights. For the purposes of record access, an "eligible" child is one who is 18 or older who is enrolled in an institution of post-secondary education. The school's records policy may be obtained from the administrative office or found at www.cornerstone-elementary.org.

SAFETY & SECURITY

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

We discuss safety with the children and encourage you to also have these discussions at home.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

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

SEPARATION & TRANSITIONS

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

Our experience shows that children transition more quickly when parents show confidence and trust in the school by positively, concisely, and confidently saying good-bye. Never leave without

letting your child know that you are doing so. If your child is having a challenging time separating, please say good-bye and then phone the school to check on your child.

As a child transitions from one environment to another, they will be invited for one or more short visits to their new environment. Parents will be notified well in advance of a child's transition.

SMOKING

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

SOCIAL EVENTS

Cornerstone offers the following social events, among others throughout the year. We encourage families to collaborate on other events as well. If you have an idea for an event, please discuss it with your child's guide or the Head of School. These events are in addition to Parent Partnership events (please see page 20 for more information).

Back to School Fair

Each August we invite all families to join us for a Back to School Fair to reconnect with each other, complete required paperwork, and take school photos.

Stone Soup

In January, we will spend time together enjoying warm, tasty soup, conversation, and song.

Cornerstone Cafés

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

End of Year Picnic

We celebrate summer and the end of the school year with a community gathering in June.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Families will be asked to share with us if your child has special needs and is:

- Eligible for case management through the state and has an Individual Service Plan (ISP)
- Receiving services through the 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.

SUPPLIES & BELONGINGS

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

TRANSFERRING TO ANOTHER SCHOOL

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

TUITION FOR CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Children enrolled in Cornerstone Montessori School are expected to attend school Monday – Friday, for the hours they are contracted. We do not offer drop-in child care service. Tuition rates are 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 the 5th of each month for each child. Tuition is not prorated for absences due to sickness, vacation, or school closure. Cornerstone Montessori School accepts Child Care Assistance and ThinkSmall scholarships and will work with the county/state for those families who qualify. If you choose to terminate your contract with the school, we require 30-days’ notice.

VACATIONS

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

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

VACCINATIONS

Medical Exemption

A child with medical reasons (contraindications) or laboratory confirmation of immunity is not required to receive vaccinations. A health care provider must verify this information.

Non-Medical Exemption

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

WATER CUPS

The two Children’s House environments will use reusable cups for drinking water outdoors.

Each child has a stainless steel mug that is labeled with their name and a photo (the same photo that is on their locker, clothing drawer, work drawer, and lunch name card). The mugs are filled from the water fountain/bubbler located in the outdoor environment.

The mugs are organized on a wheeled cart and used exclusively outside. They are sanitized daily.



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

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

Why statewide testing?

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

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

Why does participation matter?

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

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

Academic Standards and Assessments

What are academic standards?

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

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

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

<p>Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) and Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the Minnesota Academic Standards; given annually in grades 3–8 and high school in reading and mathematics; given annually in grades 5, 8 and high school for science. • Majority of students take the MCA. • MTAS is an option for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. 	<p>ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS for English Learners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the WIDA English Language Development Standards. • Given annually to English learners in grades K–12 in reading, writing, listening and speaking. • Majority of English learners take ACCESS for ELLs. • Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is an option for English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities.
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Posted May 2018

Why are these assessments effective?

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

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

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

Are there limits on local testing?

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

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

What if I choose not to have my student participate?

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

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

When do students take the assessments?

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

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

When do I receive my student's results?

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

How much time is spent on testing?

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

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

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

Where do I get more information?

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

Posted May 2018



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

Parent/Guardian Refusal for Student Participation in Statewide Assessments

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

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

Date _____ (This form is **only** applicable for the 20____ to 20____ school year.)

Student's Legal First Name _____ Student's Legal Middle Initial _____

Student's Legal Last Name _____ Student's Date of Birth _____

Student's District/School _____ Grade _____

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

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

Reason for refusal:

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

_____ MCA/MTAS Reading

_____ MCA/MTAS Science

_____ MCA/MTAS Mathematics

_____ ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS for ELLs

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

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

Parent/Guardian Name (print) _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

To be completed by school or district staff only.

Student ID or MARSS Number _____

Posted May 2018