CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI SCHOOL
&
CORNERSTONE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

2025-2026
Policies and Procedures Handbook

1611 Ames Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55106
651-774-5000
https://www.montessoricentermn.org/families/cornerstone-montessori-school
www.cornerstone-elementary.org

updated 7.21.25

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Please see the Cornerstone Program Guide for information about the Montessori program and background on your child's experience.

WELCOME TO CORNERSTONE!

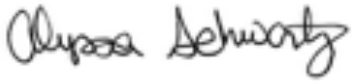
Dear Families,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2025-26 school year at Cornerstone Montessori School (CMS) and Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School (CMES)!

The staff of Cornerstone is committed to serving your child and to 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 all Cornerstone materials, including this Policies Handbook, the Program Handbook, and any emails/communications sent over the course of the school year, and commit to following them.

Please do not hesitate to call if you have any questions about the contents of this handbook or any other aspect of your child's experience at Cornerstone. We are excited to partner with you this year.

Respectfully,



Alyssa Schwartz
Head of School

CALENDAR

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School operates on a 10-month, *academic year* calendar.

Cornerstone Montessori School operates on a 12-month, *year-round* calendar. The calendars for both schools are the same when both schools are in operation (typically September-June).

Academic Year

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School | 2025-2026 CALENDAR
District # 4201-07 School Board Adopted on: April 15, 2025

AUGUST '25

21-29 Teacher Back to School Workshops
27 **Back to School Fair**
Classroom Visits
School Pictures
3:00-6:00 pm

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

SEPTEMBER '25

1 Labor Day
2 Teacher Workshops
3 First Day of School
19 Fall Festival
29 Parent Partnership

20 days

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

OCTOBER '25

10 Cornerstone Café
16-17 Professional Development & Conference Prep
20 Parent Partnership
30-31 Conferences

19 days

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

NOVEMBER '25

14 Cornerstone Café
17 UE Middle School Options
26-28 Thanksgiving Break

17 days

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

DECEMBER '25

12 Cornerstone Café
22-31 Winter Break

15 days

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

JANUARY '26

1-2 Winter Break
5 Professional Development Day
16 Cornerstone Café
19 Martin Luther King Day
24 Stone Soup

18 days

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

FEBRUARY '26

2 Parent Partnership
12 Cornerstone Café
13 Professional Development Day
16 Presidents' Day

18 days

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

MARCH '26

13 Cornerstone Café
19-20 Professional Development & Conference Prep

20 days

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

APRIL '26

2-3 Conferences
6-10 Spring Break
27 Parent Partnership

15 days

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

MAY '26

8 Professional Development Day
15 Cornerstone Café
25 Memorial Day

19 days

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

JUNE '26

5 Ice Cream Social
10 Fly Up Graduation
11 Last Day of School
12-16 End of Year Teacher Workshops

9 days

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

170 - School Days in Session – **ALL STUDENTS in School**

22 - Teacher Workshops – In-Service Days – Conferences - **NO STUDENTS in School**

22 - Holidays and School Breaks **NO SCHOOL for STAFF and STUDENTS**

Cornerstone Café: 8:30-9:30 am - Parent Partnerships: 5:30 pm

Summer (CMS only)

Cornerstone Montessori School
2026 Summer Calendar

JUNE '26						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

12-18 In-service days/no school for children
19 Juneteenth Holiday

JULY '26						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

3 4th of July Holiday Break

AUGUST '26						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

24-31 In-service days/no school for children

Teacher Workshops – In-Service Days –
NO STUDENTS in School

Holidays and School Breaks
NO SCHOOL for STAFF and STUDENTS

School Days - **Early Childhood ONLY - CMS**

HOW TO REACH US

Cornerstone is open Monday through Friday, 7:30am-5:30pm. All staff can be reached at 651-774-5000 and will return phone calls during the school day as promptly as possible.

Your child will have the best experience at Cornerstone when we work in partnership with you! 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 affect your child at school.

To respect each child's sense of privacy and dignity, we ask both parents/caregivers and guides/teachers to avoid speaking about children in front of them. If you have a question about your child, please arrange a meeting with their guide 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.

The following chart lists the guides and specialists that your child may work with, as well as their preferred methods of communication. Please note that the teaching staff is with children during the day and will respond to your emails and phone calls within a reasonable amount of time. Staff are not expected to respond to messages after business hours.

Administration	
Head of School	Alyssa Schwartz (she/her) *email*: alyssa@mtcm.org
Director of Business Operations, CMES	Chris Bewell (she/her) *email*: chrisbewell@cornerstone-elementary.org
Administrative Assistant, CMS	Emma Galvez (she/her) *email*: emma@mtcm.org
Elementary Program Manager	Lindsay Ruble (she/her) *email*: lindsayruble@cornerstone-elementary.org
Administrative Assistant	Daylin Galdamez (she/her) *phone*: 651-774-5000
Teaching Staff: Guides	
Toddler Community Guide	Laurie Pittman (she/her) *email*: laurie@mtcm.org
Toddler Community Co-Guide	Margaret Skelly (she/her) *email*: margaret@mtcm.org
Children's House 1 Guide	Claudia Vasquez-Lopez (she/her) *email*: claudia@mtcm.org
Children's House 2 Guide	Kristin Schoenherr (she/her) *email*: kristin@mtcm.org

Lower Elementary Pond Guide	Tom Fendt (they/he) *email*: tomfendt@cornerstone-elementary.org
Lower Elementary Garden Guide	Dannika Wright (she/her) *email*: dannikawright@cornerstone-elementary.org
Upper Elementary Forest Guide	Sara Wade (she/her) *email*: sarawade@cornerstone-elementary.org
Upper Elementary Marsh Guide	Jess Goff (she/her) *email*: jessgoff@cornerstone-elementary.org
Teaching Staff: Specialists	
English Language Learners Teacher	Cynthia Crooks (she/her) *text*: 651-235-9321
Literacy Specialist	Megan Riemer (she/her) *email*: meganriemer@cornerstone-elementary.org
Math Specialist	Jessy Fabel (she/her) *email*: jessyfabel@cornerstone-elementary.org
Special Education Coordinator	Tricia Domally (she/her) *email*: latriciadomally@cornerstone-elementary.org
Special Education Teacher	Emma Cornwell (she/her) *email*: emmacornwell@cornerstone-elementary.org
Special Education Teacher	Monica Olson (they/she) *email*: monicaolson@cornerstone-elementary.org
Special Education Teacher	Suzi Splinter (she/her) *email*: suzisplinter@cornerstone-elementary.org
School Social Worker (CMS)	Nora Springer (she/her) *email*: nora@mtcm.org
School Social Worker (CMES)	EG Saathoff (they/them) *email*: egsaathoff@cornerstone-elementary.org

If you have a question and are uncertain about whom to ask, please refer to the following chart. Our goal is to do the very best for your child, so please reach out at any time to discuss any questions or concerns.

Matter Related to:	First Contact
Child's progress	Guide
Environment activities	Guide
Day to day procedures	Guide
Arrival and dismissal information	Daylin Galdamez

Absences/tardiness	Daylin Galdamez
Observations	Daylin Galdamez
Pedagogical issues	Alyssa Schwartz
Academic/curriculum policies	Alyssa Schwartz
Parent education	Alyssa Schwartz
Changes in tuition	Alyssa Schwartz
Legal matters	Alyssa Schwartz
Public relations	Alyssa Schwartz
Facilities (including playground)	Alyssa Schwartz or Jessari Sutton (jessari@mtcm.org)
Admissions	Emma Galvez (CMS) or Chris Bewell (CMES)
Billing/accounts	Alyssa Schwartz (CMS) or Chris Bewell (CMES)
Child's records	Emma Galvez (CMS) or Chris Bewell (CMES)

HOW TO HEAR FROM US

Family/teacher conferences are held twice yearly (please see page 21 for more information). In addition, guides/teachers may contact parents/caregivers with success stories, questions, and concerns at any point during the year.

Families can expect news from the school each week, including administrative information and stories 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!** Families are expected to sign up for NotifyMe, our electronic delivery service, at www.cornerstone-elementary.org.

Families of CMS-enrolled children will also receive communications, including monthly invoices, through the Brightwheel app. Toddler caregivers may check the Brightwheel app daily to receive information about food intake, elimination, sleeping, and general behavior.

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

- Please read all signs and notes posted in front of the building or in the office;
- Sign up for NotifyMe and check the school 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.

Email messages that are for the entire school community and that relate to meals, weather, emergencies, and important deadlines will come from Chris Bewell or Alyssa Schwartz. Email messages regarding your individual child's progress and classroom happenings will come from your child's guide or special education teacher.

ABOUT OUR SCHOOL

NON-DISCRIMINATION

Cornerstone is committed to inclusive education and to 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, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, status with regard to public assistance, disability, HIV/AIDS status, or age in its programs, activities, or hiring. Alyssa Schwartz, Head of School, is the human rights officer who handles inquiries regarding non-discrimination. Alyssa can be reached at 651.774.5000.

Cornerstone Montessori School and Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School are equal opportunity employers.

ACCREDITATION AND LICENSURE

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 is a licensed childcare center through 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. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families Licensing Division can answer questions about licensure by phone at 651-431-6015. Cornerstone Montessori School has a 4-star rating with Parent Aware.

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

APPLICATION AND ADMISSION PROCEDURES

Cornerstone Montessori School (Private Early Childhood Program)

Cornerstone Montessori School enrolls an economically and ethnically diverse group of children in its Toddler Community (16 to 33 months) and Children's House (33 months to 6 years) programs. The school strives to enroll a balanced mix of families who pay full tuition, families who receive partial or full scholarships, and families who receive financial assistance from their county or the state. Applications for CMS are available at the school office and on the Montessori Center of Minnesota website. New children are typically admitted in September and on a rolling basis as space allows.

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School (Public Charter)

The open enrollment period for Cornerstone Elementary is set annually by the Board of Directors. 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. Applications for CMES are available at the school office and on the Cornerstone Elementary website beginning on the first day of the open enrollment period.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND TUITION

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.

Children in the Toddler Community and Children's Houses (ages 16 months-5 years) are enrolled in Cornerstone Montessori School. Families may be eligible to receive childcare assistance funding from county and state programs and we offer tuition assistance to families in need through a scholarship fund administered by the Montessori Center of Minnesota. We expect all families to follow the terms of their tuition and financial aid contracts, which includes making payments promptly and meeting enrollment commitments.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Reminders, additions, or changes to the school calendar will be posted on the CMES website and distributed via NotifyMe. Please note that our school closes from time to time for professional development and in-service days, when staff prepare and plan for events like family/teacher conferences, and that these closures make it possible for staff to attend meetings, trainings, workshops, and conferences. In-service days are marked on the school calendar, along with all other scheduled 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**, although the Head of School may consider factors that affect Cornerstone's specific community and situations when making decisions make decisions about closing that fits the community and situation of Cornerstone (for example, CMS may remain open if SPPS closes for busing reasons). Weather closures will be announced on the school websites, WCCO radio (AM 830), TV Channel 4, and WCCO online. Because we cannot change busing schedules, Cornerstone will not adjust arrival or dismissal times due to weather. Families who choose to arrive late or pick up early due to severe weather will be excused.

There is no childcare offered when school is closed.

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.

PREPARING FOR ENROLLMENT

THREE YEAR CYCLE COMMITMENT

When you enroll your child at Cornerstone, we look for a commitment through the elementary years. Children benefit most when they are in their Montessori environment (e.g., Children's House or Lower/Upper Elementary) for the full three-year cycle. A child cannot complete their developmental cycle if they leave a Montessori program early, and arrivals/departures during the three-year cycle can disrupt the children's sense of cohesion and community.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES AND PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Before your child transitions into an environment, we will distribute a list of items that they should bring to school. Clothing and personal items, such as medication, are discussed below. Although we ask families to provide school supplies, these are donations to the classroom and will be shared by all children within the environment.

Children should leave personal items at home. **Items such as food, candy, toys, stuffed animals, money, purses, personal school supplies, binders, locker decorations, etc., may not be brought to school. Jewelry, especially in the Toddler Community and Children's Houses, is strongly discouraged.** We will dispose of any item that resembles a weapon.

If your child would like to share an item that has cultural significance or artistic/educational value, please ask them to make arrangements with their guide before bringing the item to school. Planning ahead allows us to ensure that your child gets an appropriate amount of time to talk about their object with the community.

CLOTHING

All children should wear clothing that allows them to move and work freely in our indoor and outdoor environments. Our goal is that children will be able to dress and undress independently, so their clothing should make these tasks as easy as possible. For example, a t-shirt is easier for a young child to put on than is a shirt with buttons. We ask that clothing be in good taste and free of distracting imagery. Dress-up and fancy clothing, except for special occasions, is best kept at home.

Each child, regardless of age, should bring an extra set of clothing and an extra pair of shoes to leave at school. These extra items enable children to get wet or dirty during the day, which often happens if they are working with water or playing vigorously in the outdoor environment! "An extra set of clothing" includes underwear, socks, pants, and a shirt that the child can put on and remove by themselves. All items should be labeled with the child's name or initials. We will launder soiled clothing at school, unless families request otherwise.

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

Outdoor clothing should be appropriate for the season. Since our outdoor environments become particularly muddy, we ask that each child bring rain boots in the fall and spring to leave at school. As the weather gets colder, we ask families to exchange the rain boots for winter boots and a snowsuit. In the summer months, each child should bring a sunhat to protect them from harmful UV rays. Please see page 25 for detailed information about what kinds of clothing are needed for specific weather and temperature conditions.

We know our Minnesota climate means that a lot of different clothing is needed over the course of the year. If you need support in getting indoor or outdoor clothing for your child, please let us know and we will work with your family.

MEDICATIONS

School staff may not administer medication to a child without both a written order from a licensed physician and the written authorization of the child's parent or guardian.

If a child requires medication, families are encouraged to give the child medication at home whenever possible. If a child must take medication during school hours, then the necessary paperwork must be completed; the medication must be in its original container with the original label; and the label must show the child's name, prescribed dosage, instructions for use, prescription expiration date, and the prescription number.

Children enrolled at Cornerstone Montessori School who use long-term medication may be required to have an Individual Child Care Plan. This applies both to prescription medication and to over the counter medication such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen. The Individual Child Care plan form must be signed by both the parent/guardian and the child's licensed health care provider, and updated at least annually.

School staff must administer medications, sunscreens, insect repellents, and diaper ointments according to the manufacturer's instructions unless written directions are provided by a licensed doctor or dentist. Cough drops are not permitted.

Cornerstone provides sunscreen and moisturizing lotion for all children to use as needed. Parents/guardians of children enrolled in Cornerstone Montessori School need to give written consent on annual enrollment forms for staff to apply these products to their children.

HEALTH CARE AND IMMUNIZATION DOCUMENTATION

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

Medical Exemption

A child who has medical reasons for not receiving a vaccine (contraindications), or who has laboratory confirmation of immunity to a particular disease, is not required to receive those 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 a child may put the health and life of that child, or of the other children in their environment, at risk. Unvaccinated children who are exposed to a vaccine-preventable illness may be required to stay home from school in order to protect themselves and others. Cornerstone will contact the Minnesota Department of Health to determine whether unvaccinated children need to stay home. Non-medical vaccine exemptions must be signed by the parent/guardian and by a notary public.

When a child is admitted to Cornerstone and annually, their health care provider must complete and sign the Health Care Summary form. The Health Care Summary lists important information about the child's health and wellness, as well as the date of the child's most recent physical exam (which must be within the last six months). Children enrolled at CMS may not attend without a current Health Care Summary on file.

Please inform us of any special health needs your child has, such as allergies, asthma, or epilepsy.

SCHOOL MEALS

All children are offered breakfast, lunch, and snacks each day. Water is available in the environments and common areas. We post information about children's allergies and dietary restrictions in the kitchen and in the spaces where children eat, so that each child receives the correct foods.

Children in CMS receive lunch and breakfast as part of their tuition. Children in Cornerstone Elementary receive lunch and breakfast for free. Families of children enrolled in both schools are expected to submit a Household Income Statement/Application for Educational Benefits to determine their qualification for Free or Reduced Lunch. These forms help Cornerstone fund its meal programs and do not affect whether children receive food.

We work with our caterer, CKC Good Foods, to plan monthly breakfast and lunch menus that comply with USDA requirements. These menus are available on the CMES website.

Children who choose to bring lunch from home must comply with Cornerstone meal policies: lunches must meet USDA requirements (including milk) and may not contain refined sugar or nuts of any kind. Children may not bring snack or breakfast items from home. The USDA meal guidelines can be found on the School Meals section of the CMES website.

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

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.

WATER CUPS

The two Children's House environments may use labeled reusable cups for drinking water. If children choose to bring water bottles to school, they will be returned at the end of each day and must be cleaned and sanitized prior to returning to school. Elementary children may bring and keep a water bottle at school.

DAY TO DAY AT CORNERSTONE

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Arrival

School starts for all children at 8:45. Children who arrive with a parent/caregiver may arrive at school between 8:30 and 8:45 a.m. You may drop off your child using the car line or by parking and walking them to the curb. To use the car line, drive slowly into the parking area and turn around in the back, near the dumpsters. When you reach the curb in front of the school, allow your child to exit the car and walk in. We request that you do not walk your child in during busy

times if you are using the car line. ***Please exercise courtesy, patience, and caution at all times in the parking lot.***

If you choose to park and walk your child to the building, 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 who arrive by bus will be met by a staff member at the bus drop-off points along Ames Ave. Please see page 17 for busing policies.

Dismissal
School ends for all children at 3:30. Children may be picked up between 3:30 and 3:45.

Children in the Toddler Community or Children's Houses may enroll in a half-day program, with dismissal at 12:30, or stay for after care, with dismissal between 3:45 and 5:15.

At both the 12:30 and 3:30 dismissals, children will be brought out to you, whether you park or use the car line. If you choose to park, please do so in the upper lot or along Ames Ave (do not block bus access). Between 3:45 and 5:15, children will be in the classroom. Please call the front desk or come to the building and your child will be brought outside to you. Elementary children may take the bus or be picked up. If you are picking your child up, please use the instructions given above.

Children who are regularly picked up after 3:45 may be charged a $10 fee and the family will be requested to make alternative arrangements for dismissal.

Early Pick-ups/Late Arrivals
Please help us limit disruptions to the environment and reduce confusion for your child by making every effort to arrive by 8:45 and to pick up your child at their designated dismissal time. We understand that on rare occasions you may need to pick up your child early for an appointment, but we ask that families schedule appointments outside of school hours whenever possible.

Before & After Care
Children registered in Before Care may be dropped off between 7:45 and 8:30. We strongly encourage that children arrive either at 7:45 or at 8:00 to minimize disruption in the environments. Before Care for the Toddler Community and Children's House is $150/month; there is no cost for children in grades 1-6. Please contact the school to sign up.

Families with children enrolled in the Toddler Community or Children's House may register for After Care (3:45-5:15) for $150/month. Families with children enrolled at CMES, including kindergarten, may sign up for the free KidzTyme program at the Conway Center; children will be dropped off there by bus.

Alternative Person to Pick Up
Occasionally, you may need someone other than yourself to pick up your child from school. To ensure both your child's safety and a smooth dismissal for 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 are permitted to pick up children from Cornerstone.

SEPARATION AND TRANSITIONS

Independence is one of our primary goals, and we also understand that transitioning into a new environment is a process. When families and guides work together to show children that they trust and believe in one another, this creates an important foundation of support for the child who may suddenly see the world as a very new and different place.

In our experience, children transition more quickly into their environments when their parents/caregivers 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 short visits to their new environment. Families will be notified well in advance of their child's transition.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

We urge families to make every effort possible to schedule appointments outside of school hours. **If your child will be late or absent, please notify the school by 9:00 at the latest.**

The following are excused reasons for a child to be absent:

- Illness
- Serious illness in the child's immediate family
- Death of the child's immediate family member, close friend, or relative
- Other family emergencies
- Medical, dental, orthodontic, or counseling/mental health appointments
- Court appearances
- Natural disasters such as fire, flood, or severe storm
- Official school outings
- School suspension

The following are examples of unexcused absences:

- Missing school for no particular reason (truancy)
- If the child is working at home or in a business
- If the child is babysitting or caring for family members

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

Minnesota statutes allow the Head of School to ask the county attorney to file a petition with the juvenile court if a child enrolled at CMES has an excessive number of unexcused absences during a school year.

For children who enrolled at CMS and whose families receive CCAP funding, the school is required to report when a child has been absent for seven or more days in a row.

A habitual truant in Minnesota elementary schools is defined as a child under the age of 16 years who has been absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for seven school days and who has not lawfully withdrawn from school. This includes children enrolled in Kindergarten. The Head of School must refer a habitual truant child and the child's parent or legal guardian to appropriate services and procedures, under Minnesota Statute Chapter 260A.

Cornerstone expects that children will not miss more than 10% of the school days each year (approximately 17 days per year). Families will be notified when absences approach 10% of the school days that have already taken place. Please see page 31 for more information about how chronic lateness and absences affect individual children and the community.

BUS POLICY

Cornerstone bus service is available for children enrolled at CMES with a St. Paul address. Riding the bus to and from school is a privilege, and children must behave appropriately both while riding the bus and while waiting for it (see below). Children must treat the bus driver, supervising staff, and each other with respect.

Cornerstone, in conjunction with the bus provider, will determine a corner stop for each child based on the address provided by the child's parent/guardian. Concerns about the designated bus stop should be directed to the bus provider.

Buses will wait at each 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, their bus stop will be removed from the route.

Children will be dropped off at their bus stops whether or not an adult is present. It is the parent/caregiver's responsibility to be waiting at the bus stop or to make alternate arrangements. Cornerstone recommends that each family have a plan for what their child will do if there is no adult home or no one is there to meet them when they exit the bus.

If you would like your child to start or stop riding the bus, you must submit a request in writing to the Cornerstone office. If you need to change your child's bus stop, the written request must be submitted at least one week before the change should occur.

If you do not want your child to take the bus on a given day, the parent must **either notify the school administration by email or phone call at least one hour prior to dismissal to confirm the change in plans**. To ensure each child's safety, staff members are required to follow existing dismissal plans unless they receive written notice or a phone call stating otherwise. **If you do not speak with someone directly or receive an email response, please do not assume your message has been received.**

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

- Be at your bus stop five minutes before your scheduled pick up time. The school bus does not wait for late children;
- Respect others' property while waiting at the bus stop;

- Keep your arms, legs, and belongings in your own space;
- Use respectful language;
- Stay away from the road while waiting for the bus;
- Wait until the bus stops before you approach it;
- After getting off the bus, step back and move away from it;
- 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 on the school bus, all riders must comply with the following rules:

- Always follow the driver's instructions;
- Face forward while the bus is moving;
- Remain in your seat at all times;
- Talk quietly and use respectful language;
- Keep all parts of your body inside the bus;
- Keep your arms, legs, and belongings in your own space and out of the aisle;
- No fighting, harassment, intimidation, or horseplay;
- Do not throw any objects;
- Food and drink may not be brought on the bus;
- 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 or around the bus will not be tolerated and will be handled as follows:

- First Incident: The child will be warned by Cornerstone administration and their parents/caregivers will be notified;
- Second Incident: The child's parents/caregivers will be notified. Cornerstone and the child's family will create a plan to address the issue both at home and at school;
- Third Incident: The child will be suspended from riding the bus for one whole day (morning and afternoon);
- 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 we determine that their riding is not in the best interest of the child, the other children, or the school.

Parents/guardians must agree to these policies and sign the Bus Ride Application in order for a child to be eligible to ride the bus.

MYSTERIOUS OBJECTS

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

CLASSROOM PLACEMENT

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

ACCELERATION AND RETENTION POLICY

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School accepts children into grade levels each year based on their age as of September 1. Children must be 5 years old to begin Kindergarten, unless they have requested early admission and meet the qualifications listed in the CMES Acceleration and Retention Policy (found at cornerstone-elementary.org). The Montessori environment and mixed-age classrooms make it possible for lessons to be remediated or accelerated as needed, and this enables Cornerstone to provide all children with an educational environment that meets their developmental needs and provides optimal challenges. To ensure that all children's environmental needs are met, Cornerstone teachers and administrators will meet continually and consistently assess each child's development.

Children enrolled in Cornerstone Montessori School will be placed in the appropriate environment based on childcare licensing rules (see Licensure on page 10). CMS placements are also based on the guides' evaluations of each child's needs.

The Head of School will consult with the child's parent/guardian before deciding to advance or retain a child in either the Early Childhood program or the Elementary school. This decision will be based on the teaching staff's experience with and evaluation of the child's needs.

FAMILY PARTICIPATION

CELEBRATIONS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE

We believe that learning about different cultures is an important part of developing appreciation for oneself and for others. Throughout the year, we present lessons and activities that give the children opportunities to experience other cultures. The children learn about celebrations through stories, and we invite representatives of featured cultures to share their experiences with the children whenever possible. We do not, in general, observe holidays as a school, and we request that children do not dress up for Halloween or bring Valentine's Day cards.

Each environment has its own unique way of celebrating birthdays. In general, we ask that families send in photos but refrain from sending treats or gifts. Party invitations should not be brought to school unless the entire class will be invited.

PARENT PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

At Cornerstone, we prioritize supporting our families' understanding of our school philosophy and methodology. We equally prioritize learning from parents and caregivers about their children, families, cultures, and traditions.

Opportunities in our Parent Engagement Program include:

- **Parent Partnership**: At Parent Partnership/Education events, we discuss topics that are relevant to all children and parents/caregivers in our community. We focus on child development, parenting techniques, and Montessori-related topics so that our families can

become more familiar with the Montessori philosophy and how it relates to their relationships with their children. Parents/caregivers are also invited to share their interests and expertise with each other parents.

- **Observations**: Parents/caregivers are encouraged to observe in the environments. Please see page 21 for more information.
- **Lending Library**: We encourage families to borrow books about Maria Montessori and her educational methodology from the school, as well as other books about child development and parenting topics. Families can also contribute books they have found helpful to the lending library.

If requested, Cornerstone will provide information regarding the professional qualifications of your child's guide, including:

- Whether the guide has met state qualification and licensing criteria for the grade/age level they are teaching;
- 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 your child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their level of qualifications.

In addition, Cornerstone will provide families with information about their child's achievement on both state academic assessments and school assessments. Cornerstone Elementary will provide notice to families if, for four or more consecutive weeks, their child has been assigned to or taught by a teacher who holds only a substitute license.

SOCIAL EVENTS

Cornerstone hosts the following social events during the school year, along with others that are ad hoc. We encourage families to collaborate on additional events; if you have an idea for an event, please discuss it with your child's guide or with the Head of School. These social events are in addition to the Parent Partnership nights discussed above.

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

Fall Festival
We celebrate the return to school with a community gathering in late September.

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

Cornerstone Cafés
Parents are invited to enjoy coffee together in the MCM coffee bar on a Friday morning. Guides and administration rotate visits and children present their work to all who attend.

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

CONFERENCES AND REPORTS

Conferences are held twice a year, in the fall and in the spring. Conferences allow time for families and guides to discuss the progress of each child. At the elementary level, children may be asked to participate in conferences. This helps children take ownership of their development and learning, and also supports independence and goal setting. At the end of the year, a written report about each child's development will be completed and sent to CMES families. Written reports for children in the Toddler Community and Children's Houses are provided twice per year, at the time of each conference.

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 of the community as a whole. Children are encouraged to observe and learn from each other. Families are also encouraged to visit and observe. Observing in the environment allows parents/caregivers the opportunity to see how children work in the room and to see the progress and successes of their child.

So that all children have time to adjust to their new environments, observation times are scheduled six weeks after school has started (typically after fall conferences). Cornerstone will notify families of the opportunity to observe and will invite sign-ups. We ask that you thoroughly read and follow the Guidelines for Observation that you will receive by email prior to your scheduled observation. Your child's guide or the Head of School will follow up with you following your observation.

CELL PHONE USE

Children may not bring cell phones, smart watches, or other mobile devices to school unless it is absolutely necessary. If it is necessary, the child's device will be stored in administrative offices until the end of the day when it is returned to the child. Mobile devices may not be used on the school bus.

We ask parents not to 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 pledges to use cell phones only when they are on breaks, away from the children, or during emergencies.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

If a problem arises, parents/guardians should address it as follows:

- 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, Cornerstone administration will support you in setting up an appointment with all concerned groups.

LEARNING AND GROWING

BULLYING PROHIBITION

Cornerstone is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment for all students. Acts of bullying, in any form, either by an individual child or by a group of children, are prohibited on school property and at all school functions. For detailed information regarding the Cornerstone Elementary Bullying Prohibition Policy, please visit the CMES website or see page 32.

DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-DISCIPLINE AND BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE

In a Montessori environment, discipline is not imposed on the child. Instead, discipline is created within the child when there is a beautiful blend and perfect balance of both freedom and structure. Maintaining this delicate balance is one of the foundations of the Montessori environment and the child in turn builds discipline on this foundation of freedom and structure. Freedom is not often associated with discipline. Often people assume that because the child is offered freedom—freedom to move, to choose, and to repeat—there is no structure to the Montessori environment. Freedom, however, does not mean that one can do whatever one wants. Responsibility to oneself and to one's community are essential components of freedom. We offer freedoms along with limitations that facilitate the child's development of responsibility and an internal center of control. Developing self-discipline in this manner allows the child to choose the right behavior because it is right for them and for their community.

We recognize that inner discipline is not 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. We offer more freedoms as the child grows in their ability to make choices and follow rules.

All members of the Cornerstone community – children, staff, and families – are expected to honor these rules of respect in their lives at the school:

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

When a child has difficulty following the community rules, our response will be age-appropriate. Some typical responses we use at Cornerstone include personal attention, redirection, distraction, substitution, and/or removal from the situation. Children often correct their own behavior after they experience the logical or natural consequences of their actions (for example, when a child wipes up paint that they threw on the floor).

When a child disregards the community rules, the supervising staff will look for the underlying causes of the child's behavior. Adults will help the child to understand why their choices are inappropriate and will help them to find appropriate alternatives. If a disruptive or inappropriate behavior occurs repeatedly, the guide may request that the Head of School, the Director of Training at the Montessori Center of Minnesota, and/or another staff member observe the child and offer consultation and alternative solutions. If the child continues to demonstrate disruptive behavior, the family may be contacted for support and cooperation.

Unacceptable behavior includes but is not limited to:
- Inappropriate language (for example, swearing or sexual talk)
- Demeaning name-calling
- Teasing or purposefully hurting feelings
- Disrespectful talk to any person
- Disrupting another child's work or consistent noise-making
- Purposeful destruction of class materials or equipment
- Hitting, spitting, kicking, or biting
- Aggressive play, or any form of guns or weapons "play"
- Inappropriate sexual touching
- Negatively impacting the health or safety of another community member

Cornerstone practices behavior guidance by providing all children with challenging and absorbing activities and by treating all children with dignity and respect. We establish clear and realistic limits that are developmentally appropriate and that are held firmly and consistently. The school will take immediate steps to work with a child and their family when the child's behavior is harmful to themselves or to the other children in the environment. Cornerstone is a non-restraint school: children will not be held or restrained in any way, and specifically not in prone or contraindicated positions.

When staff notes that a child requires increased amount of staff guidance and time, they will document the change and contact the child's family, if necessary. Cornerstone staff is committed to using positive behavior guidance, to observing behaviors and recording them, and to meeting with the child's family to learn how best to encourage positive behavior**.** If a child is repeatedly aggressive and does not respond to the positive behavior guidance strategies discussed above, the staff may work with the child's family to develop a formal Behavior Plan addressing the child's violent or unmanageable behaviors. 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 Behavior Plan does not have any effect on a child's continued behavior, Cornerstone will discuss best next steps in a team meeting with the child's family. Children may be required to attend school on a shortened day when disciplinary issues continue.

DISMISSAL FROM SCHOOL

Children may be dismissed (unenrolled) from CMS for non-behavior reasons if their family does not pay agreed-upon tuition or fails to follow the tuition contract.

Children can be suspended if they repeatedly threaten the physical safety of other children, threaten their own physical safety, or damage property. In some situations, a child may be asked to remain at home until a plan is adopted to address dangerous behavior. Children in grades K-3 may ONLY be dismissed (meaning expelled or suspended for more than one day) from school after one of the following methods has been tried first:

- Collaborating with the child's family, a mental health consultant, or another community-based support;
- Developing a written plan that details the actions and supports needed for the child's full participation in school;

- Providing a referral for needed services, which may include parenting education or a special education/504 evaluation for the child.

Cornerstone views expulsion as a last resort. Children will only be expelled from school in extreme circumstances when their ongoing behavior poses a safety threat to other children or themselves. Guides/teachers are responsible for trying several forms of redirection and positive behavior guidance before the school considers expelling a child. The child's family and guide 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.

If general education staff members are unable to guide a child toward appropriate behavior without the expertise of other specialists, Cornerstone may refer families to outside providers for additional assistance. Help Me Grow is a county service available to all families of children under five for developmental referrals, including behavior challenges, speech/language concerns, and motor delays.

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

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.

OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT RULES

Weather permitting, all children will go outside daily for an opportunity to engage in large motor movement and exposure to nature. If children are well enough to be at school, then we assume they are well enough to participate in outdoor activities with the rest of the community, excluding any extenuating circumstances. Each child should come to school with the items necessary to be comfortable in all varieties of Minnesota weather. Please see the section on Clothing (page 12) and please let the school know if you need assistance in obtaining necessary items such as rain boots and/or snow gear.

The outdoor environment rules are as follows:

- **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 their games and activities.
- No toys, games, bats, balls, dolls, action figures or other materials may 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 ask an adult for help if they have a problem they cannot resolve themselves. Adults will also step in to mediate conflicts they observe.
- Children are expected to **respect all materials, tools and equipment,** and to use all playground materials for their intended use.
- **Fence:** If a ball goes outside the fence, children should tell an adult so the adult can retrieve it. Climbing on the fences is not permitted nor may they push 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 trees and plants in the outdoor environment.

It is important that all children understand and follow our rules for the outdoor environment. When a child does not follow these rules, the adult supervising the playground will talk with the child and restate the expectations. If the child continues to not follow the rules, they will be asked to take a five-minute rest. If the child continues to not follow the rules after returning to play, they will be brought inside and supervised by an adult for the remainder of the outside time. If a child repeatedly plays unsafely, they may lose their privilege to work and play outside for one or more days. In this case, Cornerstone staff will discuss the matter with the child's family.

Children will not be removed from recess as a disciplinary measure for classroom behaviors.

RECESS AND LUNCH PHILOSOPHY

We consider all parts of the day to be educational or developmental opportunities, including lunch and recess. Lunch is set up and cleaned up primarily by the children and is served with recognition of health and safety protocols as well as of children's development. Children are served lunch by the adults in the CMS environments and either by adults or peers in the elementary classrooms.

Children plan and lead many activities during recess. Some activities are free play and others 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 is the children's physical education class for children enrolled in CMES.

Children's connection to the outside world fosters their curiosity and inspires their work, and it 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 the temperature is too low. Elementary children stay inside when the "feels-like" temperature is below -10; Children's House when it is below zero degrees; and Toddlers when it feels like it is below 10 degrees.** A detailed list of what clothing is expected under different weather conditions is included below.

CLOTHING FOR THE SEASONS

<u>Fall</u>

Closed-toe shoes
Clothing that can layer to accommodate daily temperature variation
Longer pants, skirts, or leggings

Optional (depending on the temperature):
Gloves

Light jacket or hoodie
Hat
Boots

Winter (32 degrees or below)
Hat (or hood) to cover head
Gloves (waterproof preferred for snow/mud)
Winter boots
Winter jacket (multiple hoodies not an equivalent)
Snowpants
If the "feels like" temperature is above 25 degrees and children are doing an activity with constant running, children can choose to wear their jackets open or, with adult permission, take off their jacket if they are wearing long sleeves underneath.

Optional:
Warm, thick socks
Mittens if gloves are thin
Scarves as needed to cover face

Spring (after mud season)
Thin, lightweight clothing for daytime temperature variance
Jacket or hoodie for cooler times/days
Closed-toe shoes

Optional:
Sunscreen
Hat to protect from sun

Summer
Thin, lightweight clothing
Closed-toe shoes
Hat to protect from sun
Sunscreen

Rain/Mud Gear
Rain jacket
Rain or snow boots
Layers as needed
Ponchos are available as needed.
Recess will move indoors if it is raining hard (more than a drizzle) or if thunder/lightning is present. Otherwise, temperature-permitting, children will go outside in the gear they have.
**Umbrellas are strongly discouraged.*

SPECIAL EDUCATION

We ask families to tell us if their child 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.

Children who enter Cornerstone with either an IEP or an ISP will immediately begin receiving Special Education services, either through Cornerstone Montessori Elementary (for K-6) or through St. Paul Public Schools (16 months-age 5). Children who enter with a diagnosis may be eligible for a Special Education evaluation and/or a 504 Plan, which provides environmental accommodations for a disability. Both Cornerstone staff and families may request an evaluation if a child shows academic or behavior needs. In any situation where you feel your child would benefit from extra support, please contact school administration.

FIELD TRIPS/GOING OUT

When a child is admitted to Cornerstone, their parent/guardian must sign a permission form allowing the child to go on group walks to the park or to other nearby locations.

In the event of a field trip or Going Out (more below), families are notified in advance and a permission slip may be required. Field trips will always fit into the curriculum and be appropriate for the age of the child invited to attend. Transportation for a field trip will always be in accordance with state regulations: children will only travel on a city bus, school bus, or an appropriately equipped vehicle.

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. The children design and plan their own Going Outs, with adult support, and are always accompanied by a state-licensed teacher. Children's House children may go on walks, but will generally not leave the campus.

PETS

Cornerstone has pets in many of the environments. All pets are living as humanely as possible and are in good health with updated shots, if applicable. For pets that can be handled, children are guided in handling them safely and gently. We try to keep pets that most children do not have allergies to, but families should inform staff if their child is allergic to any kind of animals.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEO

We use 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. Children are never identified by name in publications or on social media, which may include the Cornerstone website and publicly-available newsletters. Parents/guardians are asked to complete a permission form during enrollment to indicate whether or not they permit us to use photographs or videos of their child for these purposes. Parents who take photos of children at school events may not share them on social media or in public spaces.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

FIRST AID ADMINISTRATION AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

All members of the Cornerstone staff are trained in First Aid, CPR, and Blood Borne Pathogen safety measures. In the event of a minor injury, staff will administer First Aid and notify the child's family. In cases requiring immediate medical attention, staff will administer First Aid, call 911, and notify

the child's family. If necessary, the child will be transported to the nearest hospital by medical personnel. Staff may not transport children for any reason.

Upon enrollment, parents/guardians will sign a permission form authorizing immediate medical care as needed. If you use a "do not disturb" setting on your cell phone, we strongly recommend that you allow calls from Cornerstone and consider allowing repeat calls from the same number. If an injury requires medical attention, our first consideration must be the safety of the child. If we cannot reach you, we will take whatever action we deem necessary.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS POLICIES

Because children at Cornerstone move freely throughout the environment and share many materials, it is possible for germs to spread quickly. When your child is sick, they must stay home. We understand how stressful and inconvenient it can be for families when their child cannot attend school, and we ask for your cooperation to help us maintain a healthy environment for the whole community.

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

We will notify families if 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 (see page 13 for Cornerstone's immunization policies).

Families 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 it a sign that they may be becoming ill, and keep your child home for extra rest.
- If your child has a contagious disease, Minnesota law requires you to inform the school within 24 hours, not counting holidays or weekends. Contagious diseases include sicknesses like strep throat, norovirus, or impetigo, as well as vaccine-preventable illnesses like chicken pox, influenza, or Covid-19.
- If a health care provider prescribes antibiotics for your child, your child must take medication for 12-24 hours before they can return to school. Please consult with school administration regarding your child's specific symptoms/illness.

Children with the following conditions must stay home from school for 24 hours or until the guidelines for individual conditions have been met:

- Chicken pox, until the sores have crusted over
- More than three loose stools in one day
- Diarrhea that is uncontrolled or infectious
- Vomiting twice after arrival at school or within the last 24 hours
- Bacterial infections such as streptococcal pharyngitis (strep throat) or impetigo
- Ringworm or scabies that is untreated or contagious to others
- Significant respiratory distress
- A temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher within the past 24 hours
    - Children must be fever-free for 24 hours *without the use of fever-reducing medication*.

    - If the child has additional symptoms, they may be required to stay home for more than 24 hours.
- An undiagnosed rash that could be related to contagious illness
- Unexplained lethargy or inability to participate in school activities

Children who have Covid symptoms or who have been diagnosed with Covid will be excluded from school in accordance with the most recent CDC and/or MDH guidance. Cornerstone administration may request that a child be kept home under certain circumstances based on factors such as a child's ability to keep a rash covered or their hands clean, for example.

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, 18314 Duluth St., Farmington, MN 55024.

Cornerstone will cooperate with state and local government disaster planning agencies working to prepare for or react to emergencies presented by a pandemic outbreak.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Children do not leave the building without the permission and supervision of an adult. All outside doors to the school are locked throughout the day and staff members monitor building entrances at all times. Video cameras are placed outside the doors and in the parking lots to allow for monitoring both during and after school hours.

We discuss safety with the children (for example, why it is important that they not leave the building without permission and/or supervision) and encourage you to have these conversations at home, as well.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Fire drills are held monthly throughout the year, and tornado drills are held monthly April through September. During these drills, children and staff practice where to go and what to do during an emergency. We treat these drills as if they were real emergencies, while taking care to explain the process to the children so they are not alarmed. Lockdowns are practiced by staff only.

Maps and exit plans are posted in each room of the school. A copy of the emergency procedure manual is available on the CMES website.

PROHIBITED SUBSTANCES

The use of controlled substances, including alcohol, cannabis, and tobacco, is prohibited on school property and during school events. Alcohol is never served at school functions. All staff and volunteers are oriented to this policy during training. Staff may report individuals who drop off or pick up children while intoxicated to the appropriate authorities.

Cornerstone is a smoke-free environment. Smoking or vaping of any substance is not permitted on the property.

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 way we received your message. That is, we will return a phone call with a phone call and an email with an email. **Please remember to keep us updated with your current phone number(s) and emergency contact phone numbers.**

If you or members of your family are experiencing situations that could affect your child's well-being at school, such as birth or adoption, death of a loved one, divorce or remarriage, depression or other chronic illness, substance dependency, or violence within the home, sharing that information with your child's guide and/or the administration can help us provide vital support to your child during a difficult time. Our school social workers may also be available to lend their expertise to you or your child.

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING

Under Minnesota law, Cornerstone staff members are required to report suspected physical and sexual abuse of children, as well as certain forms of child neglect. These reports must be made to the police or to the child protection program for the county where the child lives. If a person who is required to report abuse does not, they can be charged with a misdemeanor. Cornerstone immediately reports all suspected cases of abuse or neglect. More information about what constitutes abuse or neglect, and about our requirements as educators, can be obtained from the administration.

PROHIBITED ACTIONS BY ADULTS

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

Under no circumstance will a Cornerstone employee ever:

- Use corporal punishment to discipline a child
    - Corporal punishment 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
    - Emotional abuse includes, but is not limited to, name calling, ostracism, shaming, making derogatory remarks about the child, or 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 when necessary to hold a child to protect themselves or others from harm
- Separate a child from the group except as within the Rule 3 guidelines (found at the DCYF website).

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

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

RECORDS

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

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

VACATIONS AND ABSENCES

We consider each child's time in the environment to be a vital part of their on-going development and ask that you please respect the learning and growing that goes on each day by limiting the number of days off from school as much as possible. Work is not provided for children who are on vacation. If a vacation or absence is necessary, please inform your child's guide and the administration. **Families with children enrolled at Cornerstone Montessori School are responsible for paying tuition even when the child is on vacation or at summer camps.**

APPENDICES

FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

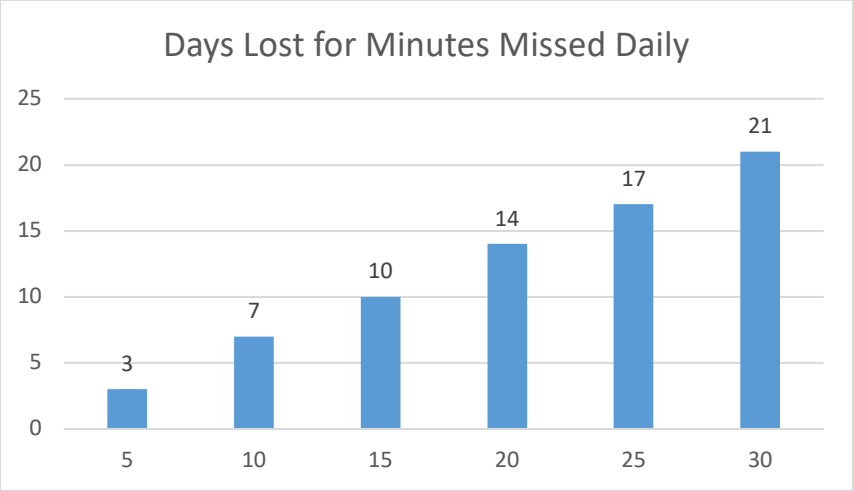
To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted 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; or

(2) **fax:** (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
(3) **email:** program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

ATTENDANCE CHART

Being on time to school is an important part of attendance. If a child misses just 5 minutes of school each day, they will have missed 3 full days by the end of the year. If a child misses 30 minutes of school each day, they will have missed the equivalent of 21 days by the end of the year.



Studies show that 59% of children who miss 18 or more days of school in *either* kindergarten *or* 1st grade can't read at grade level by the time they're in 3rd grade. Meanwhile, 83% of children who missed 18 (or more) days of school in *both* kindergarten *and* 1st grade can't read at grade level by the time they're in 3rd grade. It takes fewer than two absences per month to miss 18 days of school, which is just 11% of the school year.

BULLYING PROHIBITION (POLICY 514)

PURPOSE

Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School strives to provide safe, secure, and respectful learning environments for all students in school buildings, on school grounds, on school buses, and at school-sponsored activities. Bullying is conduct that interferes with a student's ability to learn and a teacher's ability to educate.

This policy protects students against bullying and retaliation by other students. This policy also protects any student who voluntarily participates in any district function or activity from prohibited conduct, whether the student is enrolled in the district or not.

This policy can be found in the school's student handbook, within the school and district administrative offices, and electronically at Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School. The policy is also provided to all school employees, independent contractors, and volunteers who interact with students.

DEFINITIONS

"Bullying" is objectively offensive intimidating, threatening, abusive or harmful conduct directed by a student toward one or more students: when either (1) there is a real or perceived imbalance of power between those involved and the conduct reoccurs or forms a pattern; or, (2) the conduct materially and substantially interferes with the student's educational opportunities, performance, or ability to participate in school functions, activities or programs.

Bullying can be, but need not be, based on an individual's actual or perceived race, ethnicity, color, creed, religion, national origin, immigration status, sex, marital status, familial status, socioeconomic status, physical appearance, sexual orientation, including gender identity and expression, academic status related to student performance, disability, status with regard to public assistance, age, or any additional characteristic defined in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 363A (commonly referred to as the Minnesota Human Rights Act). Bullying in this policy includes "cyberbullying," as defined below.

"Cyberbullying" is bullying that occurs when an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a computer or cell phone, is used to transfer a sign, signal, writing, image, sound or data and includes a post to a social network, Internet website or forum.

"Intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harming conduct" may involve, but is not limited to, conduct that causes physical harm or reasonable fear of harm to a student or a student's property, violates a student's reasonable expectation of privacy under Minnesota common law, defames a student, or constitutes intentional infliction of emotional distress against a student or retaliation for, or knowingly making a false report.

"Prohibited conduct" means bullying or cyberbullying as defined under this subdivision or retaliation for asserting, alleging, reporting, or providing information about such conduct or knowingly making a false report about bullying.

"Remedial response" is appropriately prompt action taken to intervene, investigate, correct and prevent bullying from recurring, including protecting and supporting a student subjected to bullying and those who provided aid and support to the student.

"School" means a public or public charter school.

"Student" means a student enrolled in a public or charter school.

PROHIBITED CONDUCT

Bullying is prohibited:

1. On school property, school district-provided transportation, or at designated locations for students to wait for school district-provided transportation.
2. During any school-sponsored or school-sanctioned program, activity, event or trip.
3. Using school computers, electronic technology, networks, forums or mailing lists.
4. Using electronic technology off the school premises that materially and substantially disrupts a student's learning or school environment.

Apparent permission or consent by a student does not mean that bullying should be tolerated or allowed.

Retaliation is prohibited by any student or district employee against anyone who in good faith asserts, alleges, reports, or provides information pertaining to an alleged incident of prohibited conduct. The school district will take appropriate action against any student or district employee who engages in retaliation. Filing a false accusation of bullying is also prohibited.

INITIAL RESPONSE AND REPORTING

Head of School: Head of School or designee ("Head of School/designee") is the person responsible for receiving reports of bullying at the school level. The Head of School/designee will ensure this policy and its procedures are fairly and fully implemented and serve as the primary person to address policy and procedural matters. If the complaint involves the Head of School/designee, the complaint shall be made to the School Board Chair.

Students: Students who believe that they have been bullied or have witnessed bullying are strongly encouraged to bring their concerns to the Head of School/designee but may bring their concerns to any school employee.

School Employees: Any employee who witnesses an incident or who possesses reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to believe that bullying has occurred shall:

1. Immediately intervene to protect the safety of the student subjected to the incident and other students involved, as appropriate to the context.
2. Make reasonable efforts to address and resolve the incident, including reporting the incident to the Head of School/designee, as deemed appropriate.
3. Cooperate fully in any investigation and resolution of the bullying incident.

Independent Contractors/Volunteers: Any independent contractor or volunteer who witnesses bullying or who possesses reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to believe that bullying has occurred should report the bullying incident to the Head of School/designee or any school employee and cooperate fully in any investigation and resolution of the bullying incident.

Anonymous reports will be accepted by the Head of School/designee. However, no disciplinary action will be determined solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

INVESTIGATION

Information Pertaining to Bullying Incidents:
The use of, access to, and disclosure of information pertaining to reports and investigations of prohibited conduct are subject to state and federal data practices laws. The school will notify affected individuals, including students and parents, of their rights related to information provided to and obtained by the school, in accordance with the school's legal obligations. Information you provide to the district or school is subject to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. This law classifies certain information as available to the public on request.

Procedure:
Investigation of an alleged bullying incident shall be initiated as soon as possible, but in no instance after more than three school days of receipt of a report, and completed in a timely

manner. Investigative records shall be maintained and regulated by the Head of School/designee.

The investigation should determine whether the reported incident constitutes a case of bullying. The determination should take into consideration the totality of the facts and circumstances surrounding the incident, including, but not limited to:

1. The developmental ages and maturity levels of the parties involved.
2. The level of harm, surrounding circumstances, and nature of the behavior.
3. Past incidences or past or continuing patterns of behavior.
4. The relationship between the parties involved.
5. The context in which the alleged incidents occurred.

In all cases, the alleged actor will be entitled to raise a defense and any other recourse in the district discipline policy.

REMEDIAL RESPONSE

The Head of School/designee shall design and implement remedial measures to correct and prevent further prohibited conduct, protect and provide support for the target of the bullying, and take corrective action for documented systemic problems related to bullying.

Many student conflicts can be resolved immediately and do not require reporting or creation of an incident report. Schools must respond to bullying in a manner tailored to the individual incident, considering the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student, and the student's history of prohibited conduct and performance.

When a student engages in bullying, a school should use multi-tiered levels of response that are individualized, consistent, reasonable, fair, age-appropriate, and should match the severity of the student's behavior and developmental age.

When appropriate, the school district shall provide the target, actor, and other affected individuals with information about available community resources to aid in the remedial process.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

School Employees: The school district shall require employees to receive ongoing professional development training to build their skills to implement this policy. Training will be required for new employees and on a training cycle that does not exceed once every three years for all employees who regularly interact with students. The content of the training will include, but not be limited to:

1. Strategies to prevent, intervene and effectively stop bullying in a manner developmentally appropriate to the context of an incident.
2. Information about the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an actor, target, and witness to bullying.

3. Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk, and any specific interventions that may be particularly effective for addressing bias-based bullying.
4. Information about Internet safety issues as they relate to bullying.
5. A review of the district's reporting requirements related to bullying.

Students: The school will encourage character development and other developmentally appropriate programmatic instruction to help students identify, prevent, and reduce bullying and create a safe learning environment. The Head of School or designee shall determine the scope and duration of the units of instruction and topics covered but the training shall include evidence-based, social-emotional learning to prevent and reduce discrimination and other improper conduct and to engage all students in creating a safe and supportive school environment.

Where appropriate for a child with a disability, as determined by the child's Section 504 or Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, the school district shall allow the child's IEP or Section 504 plan to address the skills and proficiencies the child needs to respond to or not engage in bullying.

LEAD IN DRINKING WATER AND PESTICIDE NOTICE

All taps that are used for drinking water are tested at least once every five years. The remediation plan for any water sources found to have lead concentrations greater than 5 parts per billion can be found on the CMES website. In the case of a water source having a lead concentration greater than 5 ppb, the faucet will be rendered inaccessible and remediation will take place. If remediation fails for any reason, stakeholders will be notified by email. Notification of scheduled testing will be sent via email each fall. Stakeholders will be given instructions for finding testing results at that time.

Pesticides are sprayed on grass twice per year on a Saturday. The Toddler Community grounds are not sprayed with any chemicals. The pesticides sprayed are in toxicity category II (moderately toxic and moderately irritating) and toxicity category IV (practically non-toxic and not an irritant). Additional details are available by contacting school administration.

LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

- All email communications at Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School are translated into Spanish.
- Simultaneous interpretation is available for in-person communication in Spanish and other languages, as needed, through Language Line services.
- IEPs are translated into Spanish if needed and additional language services are available upon request.
- The CMES website is able to be translated into any language using Google Translate features.
- Families with disabilities who require ASL interpretation, Talk to Text support, or visual displays will be accommodated.
- Families may request additional assistance by speaking to school administration.

The full Language Access Plan can be found on the Cornerstone Montessori Elementary website.

ASSESSMENTS AND PARENT GUIDE/REFUSAL

Cornerstone administers internal assessments at both the Children's House and Elementary levels. Children's House families are asked to opt into assessments that may include the EFGo Pro and Bracken Basic Concepts Scale. FastBridge assessments are used with all K-6 grade children in reading, math, and social-emotional health; these assessments are required for Cornerstone's charter and are instrumental in helping us to determine children's progress and growth. Families may not opt out of the FastBridge tools.

The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments are administered each spring to 3rd-6th graders. The following documents from the Minnesota Department of Education provide more information about the MCAs and allow families to opt their child out of participation; they can also be found on the CMES website under Assessments.

Statewide Assessments:
Parent/Guardian Participation Guide and Refusal Information

Your student's participation in statewide assessments is important as it allows your school and district to ensure all students have access to a high-quality education. In the past, students with disabilities and English learners were often excluded from statewide assessments. By requiring that all students take statewide assessments, schools and teachers have more information to see how all students are doing. This helps schools to continuously improve the education they provide and to identify groups, grades, or subjects that may need additional support.

Assessments Connect to Standards

Statewide assessments are based on the Minnesota Academic Standards or the WIDA English Language Development Standards. These standards define the knowledge and skills students should be learning in K–12 public and charter schools. Minnesota prioritizes high-quality education, and statewide assessments gives educators and leaders an opportunity to evaluate student and school success.

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) and Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS)

MCA and MTAS are the annual assessments in reading, mathematics and science that measure a snapshot of student learning of the Minnesota K–12 Academic Standards.

ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS for English Learners

The ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS are the annual assessments for English learners that provide information about their progress in learning academic English based on the WIDA English Language Development Standards.

Statewide Assessments Help Families and Students

Participating in statewide assessments helps families see a snapshot of their student's learning so they can advocate for their success in school. High school students can use MCA results:

- For course placement at a Minnesota State college or university. If students receive a college-ready score, they may not need to take a remedial, noncredit course for that subject.
- For Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) and College in the Schools programs.

English learners who take the ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS and meet certain requirements have the opportunity to exit from English learner programs.

Taking Statewide Assessments Helps Your Student's School

Statewide assessments provide information to your school and district about how all students are engaging with the content they learn in school. This information helps:

- Educators evaluate their instructional materials.
- Schools and districts identify inequities between groups, explore root causes and implement supports.
- School and district leaders make decisions about how to use money and resources to support all students.

Student Participation in Statewide Assessments

Student participation in state and locally required assessments is a parent/guardian choice. If you choose to have your student not participate in a statewide assessment, please provide a reason for your decision on the form. Contact your student's school to learn more about locally required assessments.

Consequences of Not Participating in Statewide Assessments

- The student will not receive an individual score. For ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS, the student would not have the opportunity to exit their English learner program.
- School and district assessment results will be incomplete, making it more difficult to have an accurate picture of student learning.
- Since all eligible students are included in some calculations even when they do not participate, school and district accountability results are impacted. This may affect the school's ability to be identified for support or recognized for success.

Check with your local school or district to see if there are any other consequences for not participating.

Explore the Statewide Testing page for more information.

(education.mn.gov > Students and Families > Programs and Initiatives > Statewide Testing)

Additional Information

- On average, students spend less than 1 percent of instructional time taking statewide assessments each year.
- Minnesota statutes limit the total amount of time students can spend taking other district- or school-wide assessments to 11 hours or less each school year, depending on the grade.
- School districts and charter schools are required to publish an assessment calendar on their website by the beginning of each school year. Refer to your district or charter school's website for more information on assessments.

(Note: This form is only applicable for the 20_____ to 20_____ school year.)

By completing this form, you are acknowledging that your student will not participate in statewide assessments and will not receive individual assessment results. This form must be returned to your student's school before the applicable test administration.

Statewide Assessment: Parent/Guardian Decision Not to Participate

Student Information

First Name: _____ Middle Initial: _____ Last Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____/_____/_____ Current Grade in School: _____

School: _____ District:_____

Parent/Guardian Name (print): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

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/Alternate ACCESS

Contact your school or district for more information on how to opt out of local assessments.

Updated April 21, 2022 2