

Montessori School *of Greater Hartford*

2017-2018

Parent Handbook



“Education is a natural process carried out by the child and is not acquired by listening to words but by experiences in the environment.”

~ Dr. Maria Montessori

Dear Families,

Congratulations on choosing a Montessori education for your child and in particular, the Montessori School of Greater Hartford. In so doing, you have set your child on a path of independence, exploration and unlimited discoveries. It is an exciting time for you and your family and we are committed to providing your child with the best Montessori experience possible. In order for this to happen, we need to work together. Our staff will reach out to you in a variety of ways to familiarize you with what happens in the classroom, offer advice on extending Montessori to your home and support your parenting skills if needed. Please take full advantage of our resources by: attending our Parent Information Series; Family Association activities; Coffee, Tea and M.E. (Montessori Education); and of course, contacting your child's teacher whenever you have any questions or need more information.

This Parent Handbook is a guide to our policies and procedures. You will need to familiarize yourself with its contents and use it as a resource during your child's time with us. Should you have any questions regarding its content, please feel free to call me.

We are very excited to join you and your child on this journey. I believe you will find MSGH to be a warm, welcoming community. Please let us know if we can assist you in any way.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathy".

Kathy Aldridge
Interim Head of School

Mission

The Montessori School of Greater Hartford fosters a strong foundation for confident, compassionate participation in the world by nurturing each child's unique gifts, passion for learning, and independence. As a community, we enrich families, live our diversity, and embody the Association Montessori Internationale standards of excellence.

Non-Discrimination Policy

MSGH does not discriminate against any person in admission, employment, or otherwise on the basis of race, color, religious creed, gender or sex, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability (unless such disability prevents performance of the work involved), or on any other basis prohibited by law.

Accreditations

Association Montessori Internationale (AMI)

AMI is the international organization founded by Dr. Maria Montessori in 1929 to maintain the principles she established. Today AMI is recognized as the foremost authority on authentic Montessori education. As mandated in our by-laws, MSGH must be accredited by AMI. We must adhere to the following standards in order to meet this criteria:

- AMI diploma required for teachers
- One assistant, if present, is a non-teaching aide
- AMI consultation visit once every three years
- A complete set of AMI- approved materials
- Mixed age groups:

Toddler	15 months-3 years
Primary	3-6 years
Elementary	6-12 years
Adolescent	12-15 years
- Recommended class size:

Toddler	12-14 children
Primary	24-35 children
Elementary	24-35 children
Adolescent	N/A

- Uninterrupted morning work cycle 5 days per week:

Toddler	2 hours/day (at least 4 days per week)
Primary	3 hours/day
Elementary	Prolonged periods of work (2½-3 hours)
Adolescent	N/A
- Afternoon sessions 5 days per week:

Toddler	N/A
Primary	Extended day (2-3 hours)
Elementary	Prolonged periods of work (2-3 hours)
Adolescent	N/A
- Prepared Environment

Toddler	Indoor/Outdoor
Primary	Indoor/Outdoor
Elementary	Indoor/Outdoor
Adolescent	Land Based Environment (Farm)

Connecticut Association of Independent Schools (CAIS)

We maintain our CAIS accreditation through a rigorous outside review and a self-study process. CAIS is an organization promoting high standards for independent schools in Connecticut under the umbrella of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).

Expectations of MSGH Families

Informed & Engaged Parents

Your child will derive the most benefit from his or her experience here at MSGH if you make room for the principles and spirit of Montessori within your home. By observing your child in the classroom, attending Parent Information events, reading Follow the Child, checking our web site for additional resources, and conferencing with your child's teacher, you will learn many useful and practical ways to "bring Montessori home" and enhance your child's development. You will truly see the benefits as your child grows in independence, self-motivation, responsibility and respect for others.

Ambassadors for Admissions

Word of mouth is our most powerful form of marketing. As families in our community, we expect that you will help us promote our Admissions and school events (including Admissions Open House, Family Workshops, and Parent Education Nights).

MSGH Weekly Bulletin

Our Weekly Bulletin is the essential link between MSGH and parents for upcoming school events, procedural changes, Family Association business, volunteer opportunities, Board business and more. We ask parents to make a point of reading it each week.

School Calendar

The online calendar will be an active source for the listing of school events, activities, closings, holidays, vacations, etc., as well as important contact information. Please check our online calendar often and before events, to ensure that no changes have been made. We also list any changes or additions in the Weekly Bulletin. The calendar is available via our school web site at www.msgh.org. In addition to the online calendar, a one page quick reference calendar is mailed home in our summer mailing packet and is available on our website under parent forms.

Philanthropic Support of our Mission

Tuition alone does not fully cover our operating costs. As a result, we must rely on our past and current families and other constituencies, to allow us to realize the full richness of our mission. The Annual Fund, which runs from July 1 to June 30, is the school's annual fund-raising campaign. Every year we strive for 100% parent participation and we hope you will support your child's school via the Annual Fund campaign. Contributions support items budgeted for the current school year. Please give what is reasonable for you, but please do plan to give! MSGH is a 501(c)(3) organization and all donations are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.

Annual Giving

- Supports classroom materials and programming;
- Supports our commitment to faculty development, allowing us to recruit and retain the best teachers, since the best always want to continue learning;
- Supports financial aid, which balances our community and enriches all of us;
- Supports our endowment and allows us to commit to future generations.

Parent participation is a very important measure of parent engagement in our school, and we strive to have 100% parent participation in the Annual Fund. The Annual Fund positively impacts the daily lives of the children and faculty and is directly tied to delivering our school's

mission.

To gift securities, mutual funds, or planned giving, please contact the Director of Advancement.

Additionally, many companies and Greater Hartford area businesses have matching gift programs and will match your contribution to MSGH. Please check with your employer for additional information.

Respectful Behavior and Communication

As a staff, we strive to live the “Grace & Courtesy” lessons modeled for and practiced by the children in our classrooms. We commit to being proactive and to maintaining open and respectful communication with you. We ask that you commit to doing the same with us. We also ask that you keep the lessons of “Grace & Courtesy” in mind when interacting with or talking about fellow members of our community. Lively and vibrant debates or difference of opinion are signs of an engaged community, but please be mindful when discussions cross over into cruel behaviors such as gossiping, rumor spreading, etc. These are destructive behaviors that will not be tolerated in our school community.

We believe strongly that a positive and constructive working relationship between the school and parents or guardians is essential to your child’s welfare and the fulfillment of the school’s Mission. Therefore, we reserve the right to discontinue enrollment or to refuse to re-enroll any student if the school concludes that the actions of a parent or guardian disrupt the cooperative spirit of our community, or compromises either the school’s ability to accomplish its educational goals, or provide a safe, healthy environment for its members.

Communication

The Main Office staff is happy to accept your calls and direct your questions between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. every day that school is in session. You may reach us by phone (860.236.4565) or by e-mail (information@msgh.org). We check our e-mail throughout the day, but if you do not receive a prompt response, please call to be sure the message was received.

During Greeting, relaying oral messages is unreliable as staff are occupied with children. You may, however, hand a written note to a staff member at greeting or have your child deliver it to the Main Office.

Parents & Teachers

Teachers are available to speak on the phone outside of class time only and will return messages as promptly as possible. Please respect the morning and afternoon work cycle. Additionally, please respect faculty's and administration's privacy and leisure time and only contact them through their school extension or e-mail, never on their private cells or home phones.

Teachers make a point of communicating with you at least once a month regarding your child's development. It is your responsibility to initiate all other contact should you have any questions or concerns.

Please be sure to contact your child's teacher if there are significant changes at home that may affect your child. These changes may be temporary (for example, one parent is away on an extended business trip) or profound (for example, the death of a grandparent). When teachers are informed, they can support your child and understand changes in behavior.

Be sure to inform the teacher of your preferred mode of communication. You are welcome to schedule a time to talk to your child's teacher whenever you think it is necessary. Simply call the Main Office or speak directly with the teacher to arrange a time.

Newly-Enrolled or Newly-Transitioned Children

Parents of newly-enrolled or newly-transitioned children receive a call from the teacher within the first few weeks of starting school. This is an opportunity for you to discuss how your child has settled into the classroom, what you are hearing from your child about this experience, and to learn more about what lies ahead in the coming weeks.

Conferences

Parent/Teacher conferences are an opportunity for you and your child's teacher to discuss your child's development at home and in school. School is closed on conference days (see your MSGH Online Calendar) and child care will be provided for the duration of your conference.

Toddler: Conferences are held in November and March.

Primary: Conferences are held in November and March, followed by a written report in June.

Elementary: Conferences are held in November and March, with written reports in January and in June.

Adolescent: Conferences are held in November and March, with written reports in January and in June.

Observations

We encourage you to observe your child's classroom regularly throughout the year. Before you do this, please have a conversation with your child's teacher to discuss:

- your child's readiness for you to be in his or her classroom;
- how to manage the observations:
 - can your child tolerate you leaving after you have observed, or do you need to plan to take him or her home after the observation
 - how to manage your child's reaction to your presence in the classroom;
- and the appropriate frequency of your observations.

Classroom observations are particularly important prior to Parent/Teacher Conferences. Please fill out a pre-conference questionnaire before the conference to facilitate discussion. Observations and conferences should be scheduled through the Main Office by phone (860.236.4565) or e-mail (information@msgh.org). Any concerns regarding your child should first be addressed with your child's teacher; then, if a resolution cannot be reached, to the Director of Programs, Director of Admissions or to the Head of School.

Observation and Classroom Visit Guideline

We would like to remind all our visitors to refrain from using their cell phones, including camera functions, while visiting our prepared environments.

Social Media Policy

Please be advised that it is the policy of MSGH that staff do not engage with current families on social networking sites. For example, they may not "friend" or "like" current families on Facebook or Instagram School Facebook page:

- a) MSGH will not post non-public MSGH information to its Facebook page.
- b) MSGH reserves the right to delete or block any person engaging in behavior deemed inappropriate or behavior that conflicts with the values or mission of our school.
- c) MSGH will not post photos or videos from School events with

identifying features of our students to our Facebook page.

Emergency Notifications

There are times when we will need to contact you without delay (i.e., unexpected closings, health emergencies). It is essential that we have a phone number where we can reliably and immediately contact you in person at all times. Please make sure your emergency contact information is always current. If you are traveling, or will be farther from school than usual, please let the school know who your backup will be in the event of an emergency.

School Closings and Delayed Openings

Weather alerts will be posted to WFSB & NBCCT. You do have the option to receive a text or email alert directly from WFSB or NBCCT, once we post a snow day or weather delay. To access this service you must register your information with WFSB or NBCCT. If you have questions or difficulty registering your phone with WFSB or NBCCT, call the Main Office.

Adolescent Program Closings

In the event of inclement weather, our New Hartford Adolescent Program Campus will be closed if our West Hartford Campus is closed. If our West Hartford Campus is open and New Hartford Schools (Regional District 7) are closed, programming for our Adolescent students will be cancelled. Students will be asked to work from home and will be sent assignments electronically.

Delayed Opening Schedule

There can be a delay of 60 minutes, 90 minutes or 2 hours. If there is a delay of any sort, there will be no early morning drop-off. If there is a delay of 90 minutes or more, there will be no half-day Toddler program. Any planned observations, regardless of the length of delay, will be rescheduled.

If the delay is:	Greeting will begin at:
60 minutes	9:10
90 minutes	9:40
2 hours	10:10

Adolescent Delayed Bus Schedule

If the delay is:	Bus will leave MSGH	Arrive at Cobb Montessori stop at
60 minutes	8:35	9:00

If the delay is: Bus will leave MSGH Arrive at Cobb Montessori stop at
90 minutes 9:05 9:30

If the delay is: Bus will leave MSGH Arrive at Cobb Montessori stop at
2 hours 9:35 10:00

E-mail

MSGH communicates school and classroom news to families via e-mail and maintains one centralized e-mail database. To receive all this important and useful information, each family must have at least one active e-mail address in the school database at all times. Families are welcome to list more than one address. For example, many parents like to receive school news at both their home and work addresses and also like to ensure that news is received by both parents, grandparents, and/or caregivers.

Updating Your Contact Information

Please be advised that we contact families by telephone, mail, and e-mail using the information provided to us at the beginning of each school year. Should any changes to your information occur (i.e. a move, separation of parents), please contact the Main Office so we can update your family's file accordingly. Updates can only be made by direct parent notification to the Main Office.

Communicating with other MSGH Families

Parents communicating with MSGH families "en masse" about school, classroom, or Family Association business must route all communications through the Director of Advancement or Communications office, at karaf@msgh.org. (Personal, non-MSGH related, one-on-one communication is of course exempt.) This practice ensures that 1) parents are contacted at e-mail address(es) they have specified for school communications, 2) office staff remain abreast of school business, 3) the school maintains consistent, high-quality parent communications, and 4) the school is protected from potential liability. Parents who wish to share news with the MSGH parent population about significant educational, cultural, recreational, family services or community service opportunities should contact the Director of Advancement at karaf@msgh.org.

Non-Solicitation Policy

MSGH families may not use class mailing lists, directories or e-mail

addresses obtained from MSGH to solicit business or fundraise for non-MSGH purposes from the MSGH community be it families, staff, board members, donors, grandparents or alumni.

While we recognize that many MSGH families have an interest in promoting a family business, we ask parents to limit solicitation of MSGH families and staff to the formal avenues provided by MSGH or the MSGH Family Association. Family businesses may only use contact information for business purposes that is voluntarily and directly submitted to them by members of the MSGH community.

Procedures

Arrival and Dismissal Transitions

Separating from and reuniting with parents are delicate and important events in a child's daily life. For your child's sense of esteem, it is important that you be "in the moment" with your child at these times. This is mentioned because many times parents dropping off and picking up a child are engaged elsewhere i.e. cellphone conversations, texting, etc. Please make every effort to be present for your child when you say goodbye in the morning and when you greet him or her in the afternoon. You will be rewarded with a child who leaves you confidently and returns happily with exciting news and stories.

Easing Separation Anxiety

You can take the following steps to ease separation anxiety (yours and your child's) at drop off:

- The key to an easier transition for your child is an unhurried morning with a relaxed, positive adult.
- The best person to accompany the child to school is 1) the adult from whom the child will leave most easily; and 2) the adult who can most easily leave the child (usually the same person).
- Kind, firm, calm, consistent behavior on the part of the parent will reassure your child.
- Make the separation quick and simple.
- After you leave, you may call the Main Office to inquire about how your child settled, if you are concerned.

Careful Driving

During the school year, there may be construction on campus. We do operate on a campus for the deaf, so please drive accordingly. Take your

role as a driver seriously and refrain from speeding and talking on your cellphone. The parents of the children on campus thank you in advance for caring about their child's safety.

Early Morning Drop-Off

If you need to make use of our Early Morning Drop-Off Program, it is essential that you come directly to the Main Office and check in with a staff member. Please know that this is extremely important for his or her safety and ensures that he or she will be accounted for in the event of an emergency. This practice also prevents children being inadvertently dropped-off when school is closed. Parents who drop their children off at the front door without speaking to a staff member will be contacted by the Head of School. Please do not arrive any earlier than 7:30 a.m., as staff need time to prepare for the day. This program is available ad hoc if needed. If not prepaid, a fee of \$5.00 will be collected at the Main Office at drop-off. Please note, the New Hartford campus cannot accommodate children before 8:30 a.m.

Greeting

- Adolescent Students are to arrive at the West Hartford campus no later than 7:30 a.m. Our Bus will leave promptly at 7:35 a.m.
- For all other levels, families, not availing Early Morning Drop Off, may arrive between 8:10 a.m. and 8:25 a.m. for greeting. Please be prompt, as this allows our classrooms to begin the day on time without disruption. It also enables your child to take part in the familiar routines essential to his or her comfortable transition to school.
- For regular drop-off, please stay in line. For the safety of the children, do not pull around other cars.
- Have your child ready to leave the car as soon as you pull up to the sidewalk. (If appropriate, teach your child to buckle and unbuckle from his/her car seat.)
- Please keep your Toddler or Primary child in your car until a staff member opens the car door and greets him or her. If possible, put your child's car seat on the right hand side of your car.
- Stay in the driver's seat and allow a staff member to take your child out of the car seat. If this is not possible, hand your child to a staff member with a smile while showing great confidence, as this will inspire confidence in your child. Staff members will not take your child from your arms; they will wait for you to give your

child to them.

Late Arrival

- Adolescent Student Families: If you miss the bus from either MSGH or the Cobb Montessori stop, please drop-off your child directly to a staff member at our New Hartford Campus.
- All other levels, if you are unavoidably late, it is essential that you hand your child over to a staff member in the Main Office and sign him or her in to school. Please know that checking in your child at the Main Office is extremely important for his or her safety and ensures that he or she will be accounted for in the event of an emergency. This practice also prevents children being left alone at school inadvertently by parents when school is closed.
- A staff member will bring your child to the classroom. Please do not escort your child to the classroom after 8 a.m. as this can cause significant disruption. If you wish to communicate with the teacher, please leave a message with the Main Office.
- If your child has difficulty separating from you, short and sweet is best: tell your child he or she is going to school and that you will be back soon; give one kiss, one hug, and leave.

West Hartford Dismissal

- Stay in line. For the safety of the children, do not pull around other cars.
- During regular dismissal times, a staff member will bring your child to your car. Please avoid coming into the school to take your child as this causes confusion and delays.
- If you need to get out of the car at pick up, please wait until you see your child approaching. This is a safety issue, as children will often run to you when they see you.
- Parents are responsible for buckling their children safely into their car seats at pick up. We ask that you do so as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- Please do not engage staff in conversation. Instead, ask the teacher to call you, or call the office to schedule an appointment.
- Please pull away from the pick-up line before pausing to give your child a snack, etc.
- If you need to come into the building, always park in a designated MSGH parking space, as parking elsewhere causes congestion and is a safety hazard.
- If an adult unfamiliar to MSGH staff is picking up your child,

please ensure that:

- you inform the school beforehand in writing, giving the name of the person and a description of his or her car,
 - the adult brings photo identification, and
 - the adult is aware of pick-up procedures.
- If you need to pick up your child early, it is essential that you come to the Main Office to sign out your child. Please do not go directly to your child's classroom as this can cause significant disruption

New Hartford Dismissal

If you pick-up your child from the New Hartford Campus, please plan to arrive no later than 2:55 p.m. If you do not arrive to the Millstream campus by 3:00 p.m., your child will ride the bus back to the West Hartford campus.

Regular Dismissal times are as follows:

Toddler:	11:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.
Primary:	12:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.
Elementary:	3:15 p.m.
All Day Toddler/Primary:	5:30 p.m.
Primary & Elementary Enrichment:	3:15 to 5:30 p.m.
Adolescent :	3:00 p.m. at New Hartford 3:25 p.m. at Cobb Montessori and 3:55 p.m. at West Hartford Campus.

Scheduled Early-Dismissal Days follow this schedule:

Toddler (all Toddler and their older siblings):	11:30 a.m.
Primary (all Primary and their older siblings):	12:00 p.m.
Elementary (all remaining Elementary):	12:15 p.m.
Adolescent	12:15 p.m. (at West Hartford Campus)

Dismissal between 4:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

To pick up your child from the All-Day Primary and Afternoon Enrichment, please enter the building on the main level following directions on the door security system. After 5:15 p.m., all children may be picked up from the MSGH lobby.

If you are late picking up your child

If you are running late and will not arrive within 15 minutes of scheduled dismissal time, please notify the office if possible and no fees will be assessed unless this becomes habitual. Your child will be dismissed from the office if on a half-day schedule or from Afternoon

Enrichment if on a full-day program.

If the office is not notified, or if you arrive 15 minutes after scheduled dismissal time, a late charge of \$14.00 per hour, or any part thereof, will be collected for the half-day child and a flat fee of \$35 for the full-day child. Payment can be made at the Main Office when you pick-up your child.

Releasing Students to Adults

MSGH staff will not release children to individuals whom they suspect are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or who display behavior that has the potential to put a child in danger.

Volunteer Drivers

In keeping with recommendations by the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools (CAIS), parents volunteering to drive MSGH students must sign a Parent Volunteer Driver Agreement. The agreement outlines specific license, insurance and vehicle requirements and requires drivers to agree to abide by speed limits, and not take or place cell phone calls, eat or drink, or take medications or other substances that could impair driving ability. Forms are available in the Main Office.

School staff are prohibited from providing scheduled transportation to children between school and home.

Campus Information

Our building stays locked at all times. Please follow directions for entry and come directly to the Main Office to check in. It is the MSGH safety policy not to hold or open the door for individuals we do not recognize. To gain access to the building please press the "MSGH Call Button."

Procedures may change from time to time, so specific information on entry procedures will be sent to you as applicable.

As members of a shared campus, we observe the following:

Speed Limit

Please observe the 10 mph speed limit while on campus. All campus members reserve the right to call the West Hartford Police Department if warnings to unsafe drivers go unheeded.

Parking

- Please park only in an MSGH-designated parking space while on campus.

- Do not park or leave your car in front of our building any time, as this is a fire and ambulance zone. Your car may be ticketed.
- Do not park or leave your car at any time in the parking spaces labeled "Handicapped," "RESERVED," or "MSGH BUS."

Policies

Admissions

Montessori School of Greater Hartford welcomes students of every race, color, religion and national or ethnic origin who otherwise meet admission criteria. The faculty and administration stand together in our belief that its admission policies, consistently applied, will result in the very best Montessori experience for those children who attend.

MSGH accepts children in its Primary classes who will remain with us through the full Primary cycle (i.e through their kindergarten year). This policy has the complete support of MSGH faculty, and we welcome the opportunity to explain its importance in person.

When siblings are considered for admission or re-enrollment, the school will give precedence to families that have allowed their older children to complete the full Primary program cycle (3 or 4 years) over those who have not.

Elementary: MSGH accepts children in its Elementary classes who will remain with us through the full Elementary Cycle (i.e through their 6th grade year). This policy has the complete support of MSGH faculty, and we welcome the opportunity to explain its importance in person. A two- day visit will be scheduled for all Elementary applicants through our Director of Admissions.

Adolescent Program: MSGH accepts outside applicants to the Adolescent Program who will remain with us through the full cycle (9th grade). Outside applicants to our Adolescent Program are welcomed and students are reviewed on a case by case basis. As part of our admissions process, a visit day will be scheduled.

Six-Week Trial Period

Your child's first six weeks at MSGH are considered a trial period. If, during or after completion of this period, the teacher, Director of Programs and Head of School determine that your child is not yet ready for school, or that MSGH does not have the capability to meet your

child's needs, you will be asked to withdraw your child from school. From the date of withdrawal, the enrollment contract with MSGH will be terminated (see contract).

Toilet Learning

Toilet learning is part of the curriculum for children in the Toddler program. Primary children are required to be toilet trained before beginning school. Children are expected to be able to meet their own toileting needs with a reasonable degree of independence (occasional accidents are understandable). If your child has frequent accidents during the first six weeks of school, we may require you to withdraw your child until he or she has more consistent success in toileting, or you may be given the option to enroll your child in the Toddler program, if appropriate. Please keep in touch with your child's teacher if you are anxious about this aspect of your child's transition.

Student Schedules

Dr. Montessori recognized, and it is well documented, that a consistent daily routine allows children to feel secure and productive. Therefore, all MSGH programs require children to attend five days per week. Half Day, Full Day or All Day options are available.

Transition to Afternoon Work Cycle

Parents of a Primary child ready to move from a half-day to a full-day schedule will be contacted by the teacher to discuss the transition. Your child's readiness for a full-day in the classroom will be determined by the teacher, the Director of Programs, and you.

Cultural and Religious Celebrations

Teachers make every effort to honor the unique cultural and religious heritage of every child in the school. Each teacher selects poems, stories, songs, art, food and/or games, which are most appropriate for the ages, experiences and knowledge of the children in her class. While MSGH strongly encourages every family to share the recipes, literature, music and games that best represent its heritage, decisions as to the appropriateness of these offerings are always made in conversation with the teacher, the Director of Programs and the Head of School.

Birthday Celebrations

Each classroom has its own Montessori-inspired birthday ceremony to mark a child's birthday. This ceremony celebrates the individual

child's life and at the Toddler and Primary levels includes photographs and stories. Your child's teacher will let you know the particulars of the classroom celebration in the Classroom Orientation. Please save hats, balloons, party gifts, etc., for home parties. Food is not a part of MSGH birthday celebrations; please do not bring in any food. Please ensure that invitations and/or presents for after-school parties are not distributed at MSGH in deference to the feelings of children who have not been invited.

Cell Phone Usage

Classroom guests and observers are asked not to use their cell phones, including the camera feature, during classroom visits.

Toys

A cuddly toy, as a companion for naptime, is encouraged for your child. However, please do not allow your child to bring any other toys from home.

Babysitting

It is the policy of MSGH that teachers and assistants not provide independent childcare for their own students. Staff may not provide independent care for children when MSGH programming is available.

Tutoring

It is the policy of MSGH that staff may not provide independent tutoring for current students unless initiated by Administration.

Health & Wellness

Nursing Services West Hartford

Our School Nurse is located in the Main Office. To contact the Nurse call the Main Office 860-236-4565 ex. 28.

Or, email nurse@msgh.org.

Nursing Services Adolescent Program

The health needs and record keeping for the Adolescent Program students will be overseen by the nursing staff of New Hartford.

Physical Exam and Immunization Records

Each student must have a current State of Connecticut Department of Education Health Assessment Record on file in the Main Office.

Health Assessment Records for students in the Toddler and Primary programs must be updated annually on or before the calendar date of the previous medical examination. Records for Elementary students must be updated every two years on or before the calendar date of the previous medical examination.

The public health code of the State of Connecticut states that the Health Assessment Record must be “signed by a licensed physician or his authorized assistant or nurse practitioner. Such Certificate shall show that the child has been successfully immunized against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps, varicella, HIB, HBV and rubella.” The only exemptions permitted are those listed under the public health code. If an exemption is claimed on religious or medical grounds, the school must have a signed copy of the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health Religious Exception Statement. This form can be found on the MSGH website.

If Your Child is Ill

You are urged to keep your child at home if he or she is not well enough to participate in all of our usual activities, including work in the outdoor environment and outdoor play.

Communicable Diseases

Please remember that Communicable Diseases spread rapidly in a school environment. If your child has suffered any of the following symptoms, he or she should be symptom free, **without medication**, for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to school:

- Colds—Children experiencing constant sneezing, coughing and nasal discharge (the need for a box of tissue under the arm!) should remain at home, particularly if the discharge is colored (green or yellow).
- Fever—A temperature at or above 99 degrees taken under the arm or 100 degrees taken orally.
- Intestinal Disorders—diarrhea, nausea or vomiting.

Note: Children displaying any of these symptoms while in school will be isolated from the other children. Parents will be called by the nurse and are expected to pick-up their child as soon as possible.

Medication Policy

It is the policy of MSGH to administer only those drugs necessary for chronic conditions, including but not limited to nebulizers and

EpiPens. In order for MSGH personnel to administer medications, we must, according to Connecticut State Law and Regulations, be provided with the healthcare provider's written order and parent or guardian's authorization for a nurse, an administrator, teacher or care provider to administer medication. Medications must be in a child-resistant pharmacy prepared container and labeled with the name of the child, the name of the drug, strength, dosage, frequency and the name and date of the original prescription.

If your child has been prescribed medication for an acute illness, please ask your pediatrician to adjust dosages so that it may be taken outside of school hours, or make arrangements to have the nurse administer medication during school hours.

Head Injuries

It is our policy that you be notified in case of any head injury, regardless of severity. The school nurse or your child's teacher will call you to report the injury and to advise as to the status of your child's condition. We will not always require that you come to pick up your child, but we will always give you that option. If he or she exhibits any of the common signs of severe head injury, we will call 911 immediately and notify you as to the hospital:

- Severe headache
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Double vision, blurred vision or pupils of different sizes
- Loss of muscle coordination such as falling down, walking strangely or staggering
- Convulsions
- Bleeding or discharge from ear

Physician's Restrictions

Should your doctor recommend restricted activity for your child for any reason while in school, we must receive written notice from the doctor describing those restrictions. We also require notice regarding the date your child may resume normal activity.

Mandated Reporting of Abuse/Neglect

By law, all staff, faculty and volunteers associated with MSGH are mandated reporters of child abuse or neglect. As such, they are obligated to report ANY SUSPICION of abuse or neglect - emotional, sexual or physical - perpetrated on children, while in the school's care or in the care of others outside of the school. Reporting of abuse/

neglect is done by calling the DCF'S hotline at 800.252.2873 or 800.25ABUSE.

Discipline Policy

The focus of the MSGH “Discipline Policy” is to help your child learn from his or her experience and to support your child in developing a more appropriate and successful approach in the future. It is essential that parent and teacher collaborate to formulate a response to challenging behaviors, so that the child benefits from a consistent approach at home and at school.

Grace and Courtesy

Driven by an inner urge to become a part of the world around them, children are anxious to learn the subtlety of social relations. Therefore, Montessori teachers give “grace and courtesy” lessons that help children learn appropriate behaviors and navigate social relations. In Montessori, the focus is on preventing inappropriate behavior before it occurs and on respect and consideration for the rights of others.

"Grace and courtesy" lessons for younger children generally take the form of little dramatizations, while older children also participate in discussions about social responsibility, cooperation and related behaviors. If a child forgets to use appropriate behavior, a gentle reminder may be all that is necessary. This approach teaches the child the rules of the school and society while protecting the child's growing sense of dignity, self-worth and morality.

Managing Behavior

Children need constructive direction for their own sense of security and will respond positively to it as long as they feel it is reasonable and administered by caring adults who genuinely have their best interest in mind.

When we work with children exhibiting difficult behavior, our goal is to support the child in recognizing that he or she has choices not only regarding activities, but also in their behavior.

Dr. Montessori noted that a person who has developed the capacity to make appropriate choices has also developed the capacity for freedom.

A child who is struggling with managing his or her behavior will be supported by the teacher. He or she will be removed from the situation and given the opportunity to gain control or calm down. At no time will a child be left alone or out of direct visual observation of an adult.

Guidance can take several forms depending on the particular level of behavior and our knowledge of the child concerned.

- Children may be asked to choose an activity that will help them. Suggestions may be made such as, choosing a book, watching the fish or squirrels, raking some leaves or sitting in the observation chair to watch others work. This helps the child take control of his or her own behavior and also discover what helps him or her to become calm. In this way, with a quick reminder from the adult, the child can manage his or her own behavior in the future.
- In some cases, particularly if the child is upset, angry or disruptive, the teacher may offer support by accompanying the child outside the classroom. This serves to preserve the child's dignity, provide the child with the opportunity to gain control and prevent further disruption to the classroom. When the child is calm, he or she may have a discussion with the teacher, Head of School, Director of Programs, or other parties involved.
- When physical aggression is involved, the teacher will intervene and the parent may be called and asked to take the child home for the remainder of the day. This sends the child a clear message that this particular behavior is viewed seriously, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. If the behavior is repeated, the parents, teacher, Learning Specialist, and the Director of Programs or Head of School will collaborate to further investigate the cause of the behavior and to formulate an appropriate response that supports the child and parents in bringing an end to the behavior.
- In all cases, parents will be advised if any inappropriate behavior continues.
- Should a child's physical aggression become a safety concern for the children or staff, parents may be required to withdraw their child from the school.

Bullying

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. Behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

- An Imbalance of Power: Children who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve

the same people.

- Repetition: Bullying behaviors happen more than once, or have the potential to happen more than once. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Source: stopbullying.gov

MSGH will not tolerate bullying. If it has been established that a child is bullying another child or children, contact your child's teacher immediately. The teacher, the Director of Programs and the Head of School will work closely and separately with parents of all children involved. It is essential that parents are partners with the school and cooperate fully in this process. Strategies will be developed and implemented to support the bully(ies) and the victim(s). If, with intervention, the bullying does not stop immediately, parents of the bullying child may be asked to remove the child from the school.

Parents are asked to inform the school immediately upon recognizing a pattern of complaints from their child.

Guiding Your Child to Deal with the Unwanted Behavior of Others

With young children, it is important that parents listen and respond calmly to complaints about other children. Having listened to your child's complaints, ask, "What did you do when he or she did/said that?" In this way, you help your child understand that he or she has a responsibility to take care of him or herself. If your child struggles with being assertive in these situations, you can help by role-playing, using assertive language and behavior your child can practice. (Be careful that you are not modeling rudeness or aggression.)

Children who do not like how they are being treated are encouraged and coached to:

1. Make their feelings known to the offender, i.e. state clearly that they do not like the offending behavior, and that the offending child must stop that behavior.
2. Speak to an adult to inform him or her of the issue and ask for support if desired/required.

Remember, children learn what they live. You as parents and guardians are your child's most influential models for dealing with others. Always model understanding, kindness and assertiveness in your relationships with others and with your child, so that he or she

will learn appropriate responses.

Nutrition

Whole Food Policy

At MSGH we provide whole foods for the children whenever possible. We define this as foods that have been minimally processed and provide high nutritional content. When considering what to pack your child for lunch, we encourage parents to provide whole foods for lunch, as well. Water is available to the children at all times, including lunch.

Allergies*

The most common life-threatening food allergy in young children is peanuts and peanut products. We therefore strive to avoid the presence of any peanuts or peanut products in the school, as we endeavor to maintain as peanut-free an environment as possible. Please carefully check any food you send in with your child. If your child has eaten food containing peanuts before coming to school, please ensure that his or her hands and face are thoroughly washed with soap and water.

*If your child suffers from allergies, please be sure to inform the School nurse, the MSGH Administration and your child's teacher in person. Also provide details as to the reactions, severity and treatment in writing on his or her Emergency Form.

Snacks

Whole-food snacks are provided by MSGH. If you would like to provide additional snacks for your child, please follow the school's whole-food policy; we believe candy, cakes and cookies are not appropriate in the classroom.

Lunch (Toddler)

If your child is staying past 11:30a.m. in the Toddler community, lunch is provided. All meals are balanced and nutritious. Our young children learn to care for themselves by helping to prepare and serve their own foods. Lessons in language, grace and courtesy and practical life are all incorporated into the communal meals. Gathering for mealtime also gives children a sense of being a part of the community, and a sense of belonging.

Lunch (Primary and Elementary)

If your child is staying past 12:00 noon, please provide a healthy, nutritious lunch, cooled by an ice pack when necessary. It is not

necessary to send a beverage, as water is provided. Your child's uneaten food will be sent home so that you may monitor his or her eating patterns and adjust for your child's appetite and preferences. Note that staff will not tell children what or how much to eat, or instruct them to eat foods in a certain order. If you have questions or concerns about your child's eating habits, please speak with your child's teacher. You are welcome to join your child for lunch whenever space is available. Simply call the Main Office or email your child's teacher to schedule a date.

Clothing

Dressing for Independence

Dress your child in clothes he or she can manage without assistance to encourage independence and build self-esteem. Clothes for school should be casual and comfortable. Art, cooking, and outside work are daily happenings in a Montessori classroom; expect your child to get mussed, dirty and wet.

Dressing for the Weather

As Dr. Montessori observed, there is no such thing as inclement weather - just inappropriate attire - so please ensure that your child is ready to play outdoors, whatever the season. In winter, send in warm, sturdy, waterproof snow gear. The children will play outside as long as the temperature is above 20 degrees (including wind chill). In hot weather, send a hat and apply sunblock. Children may not wear boots in the classroom, so please make sure your child has slip-on shoes with rubber soles available for indoor use.

Change of Clothing

Please keep a full set of labeled and seasonally appropriate clothes at school (including socks and underwear). If your child needs to use something from our supply of extra clothes, please wash and return them promptly.

Labels

Please put your child's name on all belongings including boots, jackets, raincoats, snowsuits, etc. We cannot be responsible for clothing that is not labeled.

Additional Programs and Fee

Early Morning Drop-Off

Early morning care is available to Toddler, Primary and Elementary students from 7:30 to 8:10 a.m. at the West Hartford Campus. This program can be used on an ad hoc basis (if capacity allows). Unless prepaid, a payment of \$5 is required daily to use this program. If your student will use this service five days per week throughout the year the annual rate is \$700.

Afternoon Enrichment Programs

The MSGH Afternoon Enrichment Program provides Primary, Elementary, and Adolescent students a safe and enjoyable learning environment beyond the academic school day. Students have many choices of activities, including working in the garden, playing on the playground, using materials and manipulatives, cooking, crafts and art. Older students may choose to register for a club activity or spend time completing homework assignments.

The Afternoon Enrichment Program operates Monday through Friday when school is in session (unless noted otherwise) and runs from 3:00 to 5:30 p.m.

Primary and Elementary students may join this program for a minimum of 2 days per week. For programming purposes, the days need to be consistent so that we are never over capacity. Enrollment is on a first come, first serve basis and you should contact the Director of Admissions to schedule the days and arrange payment. The days your child is enrolled cannot be changed from week to week; however if circumstances change and you require different days on a permanent basis, we will accommodate you if space permits. No credit will be given for absent days and the fee quoted already reflects Holidays and scheduled school closings. If you need to withdraw your child from the program, a credit will be issued.

We will accommodate drop-ins for Elementary students if the office is notified in advance and space permits. A flat fee of \$35 will be collected at dismissal.

Adolescent students returning by bus to the West Hartford campus may stay in the Afternoon Enrichment Program at a daily flat rate of \$20 without notifying the Main Office. Unless the student has prepaid, payment is required by the time the student is picked up each day.

Tuition and Fees

SMART Tuition Management Program

Unless you prepay tuition in full, you will use the SMART tuition management program to make tuition payments. All payments should be made directly to SMART. A late payment fee of \$65 is charged if scheduled payments are late. Families who are late with payments will be asked to withdraw from the school if payment is not received in a timely manner. Please refer to enrollment contact.

Sibling Discount

If you have more than one child enrolled in a Full Day program, and have no other discounts or Financial Aid, a \$500 discount will be applied to each additional child's tuition.

Outstanding Tuition Balances

The previous year's tuition must be paid in full by March 31st in order for your child to re enroll at MSGH the following year.

Financial Aid

Financial Aid is available to those who qualify based on financial data submitted to a private school financial aid service. The deadline for applications is March 1st for aid the following year. Contact Mary McHale at marym@msgh.org for more information.

Technology

Student Use

Our Elementary and Adolescent Program students use limited technology as a complement to their curriculum. Prior to the start of school in the fall, we will ask our students to sign a Technology Use Agreement Form. The goal of this form is to honor the work cycle with appropriate use of technology.

Family Association Mission Statement

The mission of the Family Association is to nurture a cohesive, positive school community and offer support to teachers and classrooms. Like many Parent Associations, we want to engage our current parent base,

but as a Family Association, we also strive to encourage involvement from extended family and friends in supporting the mission of MSGH. By strengthening these bonds, we hope to achieve greater school support through a variety of volunteer contributions, which, in turn, will increase the social connections that create a close-knit community.

Volunteerism

MSGH depends on a variety of volunteer support, both in and out of the classroom, and volunteering is one of the best ways to feel socially connected to other families and form new friendships. We encourage you to communicate with your child's teacher or our Family Association President to express your interest in volunteering or to learn about opportunities available. The school's Director of Advancement is the staff liaison for the Family Association and can also help match your interests and availability with the right opportunity.

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This version of MSGH Parent Handbook was updated August 2017.

The most updated version of this handbook can be found at
msgh.org/community/parent-handbook