

Student & Family Handbook



MOUNTAIN VILLAGE CHARTER SCHOOL

MountainVillageCharterSchool.org
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Welcome...

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This handbook has been created as a resource for Mountain Village Charter School's families and students.

It highlights the school's origins, the Montessori and Nature-based pedagogy and charter school basics.

It includes daily school procedures, safety standards and school-based policies to ensure the best implementation of the MVCS mission.

Thank you for taking the time to carefully review this document.

Please contact the administration should you have any questions.

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About Us

Mission

The Mountain Village Charter School is an educational community engaging the child through a Nature-based, Montessori approach. The curriculum inspires abstract thinking by exploring creative thought and critical reasoning. The approach places equal emphasis on rigorous academics, artistic expression, social development and community service.

“There is no description, no image in any book that is capable of replacing the sight of real trees, and all of the life to be found around them in a real forest.”

~Dr. Maria Montessori

Educational Vision

We believe that education is most effective when full attention is placed on meeting the needs of the whole child. We believe that a child’s full potential - physical, intellectual, social and emotional -can be realized through the exploration of the environment. We believe that patterns of concentration and attention to detail, when established early, produce a confident, competent learner in later years. By embracing the Montessori philosophy and Nature-based practices in our approach to education, we believe that engaging our students in child-centered and project-oriented learning will spark innate curiosity, nurture inner discipline and foster the child’s motivation to learn. We believe in creating a welcoming and nurturing environment for students from a diversity of backgrounds, skills, challenges, and needs. We believe in fostering a culture of respect, individuality and celebrating diversity of all kinds.

We believe in the vital importance of encouraging in children a sense of respect and stewardship for the natural world and for all the inhabitants of the earth. To this end we believe a nature-based curriculum offers unlimited opportunities to create a dynamic learning environment that integrates science and math, history and social studies, languages and art. We believe that in such an environmentally literate learning community students will develop the skills, knowledge, and inclinations to make well-informed choices and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a diverse world community.

We believe in offering individual work plans that encourage children to assume their full share of the responsibility for their own learning. We believe in promoting experiences where students create and develop real-world projects that enable them to apply new skills across content areas and to develop leadership skills. We believe in allowing children to take as much time as they need to master a skill and move on to the next

concept when they are ready. We believe in providing materials and lessons that appeal to a variety of learning styles. Finally, we believe in fostering creativity and curiosity in children, leading to the development of critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Our History

In the fall of 2012, a group of parents came together to discuss the feasibility of creating a charter school in the Plymouth area. With the assistance of many, eventually five parents were invited to defend their charter application in front of the Board of Education in the summer of 2013. It was quickly approved. Their idea was to create a free, diverse and public school that merges a Montessori and Nature-based approach with the NH Common Core. MVCS joins a small group of New Hampshire charter schools.

MVCS is in the unique position of being the first public Nature-based Montessori School in the state.

The Nature-based and Montessori Philosophies

“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

The Montessori Method is an educational approach that uses observation of the child's development to create an environment appropriate for that child at that stage. Nature-based early learning centers provide daily outdoor exploration and free play while also integrating the natural world throughout the curriculum. These combined approaches with structured and open-ended activities (physical, social, creative, and academic) meet children's developmental needs while inspiring them to care for others and the natural environment.

A Nature-based Montessori approach provides children with opportunities to learn about themselves, the world, and life. Experiences in the natural world meet children's developmental needs by encouraging fine and gross motor development, sensory experiences, and opportunities for social interactions and communication. By helping children to connect with the natural world, we hope to inspire a love of nature, foster an environmental ethic, and encourage a lifelong caring attitude. The trained Montessori educator observes each child, introduces materials and activities that meet the needs of the child and assists the child in meaningful interaction with interesting and appropriate activities.

Maria Montessori based her method on her observations and understanding of the child as he is, not as adults imagine she might or should be. The Montessori method allows each child to learn the way she learns best and easiest: by doing things herself. Dr. Montessori designed a total environment to help each child develop as a complete human being. She saw the role of the teacher as one of directing activity and facilitating each child's interactions in the classroom and outside in nature. Within appropriate limits, your child chooses work that appeals to her own inner interests. She exercises her sense of freedom and spontaneity; she feels joy and enthusiasm in learning because she is doing what she wants to do instead of what someone else tells her she must do. The child teaches himself through his use of specially designed Montessori materials. The work options are attractive and child-sized materials are self-correcting; that is, if a child makes an error, he can see it by looking at the material itself. Because the child can choose her own work and do it at her own pace, the child has many opportunities for success; the classroom is non-competitive. Gradually, the child builds a strong sense of independence and self-confidence as her skills increase. He learns to work alone sometimes and other times with others, taking turns and collaborating with his friends.

Children engage in self-directed and purposeful activities indoors and outside. Themes and concepts from the natural world are used throughout the curriculum. Because the organization of a Montessori program supports independence, responsibility, and social life, there is a natural match between the Montessori style of learning and the experiences of children in a nature-based early learning center as they explore their world.

The classroom and outdoor spaces are attractive places where your child is free to discover his world and build his mind, body, and spirit. Nature permeates the children's experiences. Nature-based activities happen indoors and outdoors; in whole groups, small groups, and individually; as planned teacher-facilitated activities, child-initiated interests, and spontaneous pursuits; in the play areas and throughout the Mountain Village Charter School grounds. This variety of outdoor activities supports appropriate physical, cognitive, and social childhood development. The foundation of Nature-based early learning is to foster children's emotional engagement with the natural world, developing into lifelong environmental literacy.

The Montessori and Nature-based early learning approach provides a variety of different experiences:

- In Practical Life, the child learns how to care for herself and her environment.

- The Sensorial area allows her to use her senses to learn about the world. Here, the child learns to judge different heights, lengths, weights, colors, sounds, smells, shapes, and textures.
- The Math area provides materials illustrating and teaching math concepts.
- In the Language area, the child practices literacy skills and expands upon foundational skills to broaden the ability to express himself through writing. Of course, the use of language, both oral and written, permeates the entire Montessori classroom.
- Through outdoor activities children use all of their senses to explore the natural world and use spoken and written language and art to record experiences.
- Making observations and discoveries, the child learns to:
 - Satisfy his natural curiosity and experiment with natural materials
 - Hike on trails, balance on logs, and climb rocks and trees
 - Appreciate the beauty of nature
 - Understand natural processes
 - Use all five senses in the natural world
 - Build understanding of themselves, as they relate to others and to the natural world
 - Communicate about nature in spoken and written language
- Other learning areas include geography, science, art, music, and large motor skill activities. Projects in the classroom are based on the children's experiences with living things in fields, forests, and wetlands.

Peace Education

*“Preventing conflicts is the work of politics.
Establishing peace is the work of education.”*
~Dr. Maria Montessori

Maria Montessori was twice nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for her work including peace education in academic curriculum. Peace education is practiced throughout the Montessori classroom. When disagreements arise, children at Montessori schools are taught to work things out by listening and talking to one another, practicing non-violent conflict resolution. The ability to be comfortable communicating comes as the child

practices voicing and listening to concerns, achieving compromise, and making decisions. The classroom environment disallows the presence of materials, behaviors, speech, or writing that promotes violence in any form. Care for the preservation of the natural environment and all living things are natural extensions of the peace curriculum. It is expected that the school and parents will work together to support the teaching of peace.

We maintain a calm atmosphere with clear expectations from everyone. Optimal learning occurs when there is freedom for discovery learning, enough structure to allow everyone to learn, and physical and emotional safety.

The Mountain Village Charter School Board of Trustees

The Mountain Village Charter School Board of Trustees is composed of not fewer than five and not more than fifteen members, of which a minimum of two will be parents of enrolled students, two will represent community members, and at least one will represent the business community. The Head of School attends all Board meetings, but is not a voting member. Faculty, while not members of the Board, will receive copies of agenda and minutes via email, and will be encouraged to attend and participate in open sessions of the Board as their schedules permit.

The responsibilities of the Board include the following:

1. Upholding the mission of the School and being the responsible agent for the accountability requirements established in the Charter.
2. Approval and oversight of annual budget and fund-raising programs.
3. Hiring of professional personnel.
4. Setting policy.
5. Appointment of one or more advisory members or committees.
6. Delineating educational priorities.
7. Overseeing the school's growth plan.
8. Setting professional salaries and total compensation program.
9. Reviewing and approving significant contracts, e.g., for facilities and benefit programs.
10. Matters for which the board serves as a hearing body for action and/or appeals.
11. Any other matters that are not administrative in nature and/or that are prescribed in statute or rule.

The Board will meet regularly, and meeting times and locations will be posted on the MVCS website. Meetings are open to the public except during closed sessions. All

parents are invited to attend board meetings and to address in person or in writing any concerns, questions, or feedback concerning the operation of the School.

School Year Calendar

The calendar for the year is sent home to families prior to the first day of school in the fall. The calendar is available at all times on the school website:

www.mountainvillagecharterschool.org. Please check the calendar for regular school closings and vacations. Any last minute changes or announcements of special events will be sent home to parents via email. PLEASE NOTE: THE JUNE CALENDAR FOR THE END OF SCHOOL IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. How long the school year lasts depends on the number of storm days.

Workshop Days: Several workshop days are set aside each year for work by teachers. **School will end at noon on these days.**

Sample Daily Schedule, Lower Elementary (1-3):

7:45-8:15 Students Welcomed to Morning Recess

8:15 School Starts: Morning Meeting may be indoors or out. This meeting includes greeting songs, show and tell, weather, calendar, and introduction of new activities

9:10 Work time - may be indoors and/or outside. The classroom is structured with shelves of nature, creative and academic activities, including Montessori materials. Children move freely in the space, choosing activities that are interesting and appropriate for their level of development. The teacher acts as a guide, introducing materials and assisting with interactions between children. Many days children start their day outside during this period, bringing activities outside, in unstructured play, or in a guided activity with a teacher. Children eat snack when they are hungry during this period.

11:30 Lunch time - inside or outdoors.

12:00 Recess.

12:30 Outdoor adventures. Activities include time for unstructured play and guided explorations with nature. Activities will be based on morning topics, allowing the opportunity to further investigate both classroom and outdoor interests.

2:45 School dismissal.

Note: outdoor time periods are adjusted for weather conditions but children will go outside every day.

Guidelines for a Well-Functioning School

Drop-Off and Pick-Up

We ask that you drive SLOWLY and carefully while in the parking lot of the Mountain Village Charter School. Please be respectful of our neighbors.

Students should arrive between 7:45 and 8:00 a.m. and should be dropped off by their parents or carpool drivers. The student will check in with a staff member on duty. The student will remain on the playground until 8:00. Class will begin at 8:00. At dismissal, promptly at 2:45, parents or carpool drivers should sign students out of their classrooms. If you stay with your child for outdoor play, please do not leave your child unattended. Maintain close proximity to the child. If you have scheduled a meeting with a school staff member and need childcare, please make arrangements with the aftercare teacher. Pick-up after 3:00 p.m. will result in an aftercare charge for that afternoon.

School Closures/Delays

Mountain Village Charter School will be making storm day closing decisions in accordance with SAU 48. School cancellations will be announced on www.wmur.com (Channel 9 news website), and we will utilize the One Call Now service.

Releasing Students

For the safety of the students, children will be released only to parents, guardians, and persons listed on the emergency forms. Please provide the School with documents about restraining orders or custody limitations. Notify the office if there is any concern that an individual with restricted access to the child might attempt to contact or pick up the child from school.

We understand that parent schedules can change. If you would like your child to leave with someone else after school, please send a note signed by a parent, stating the name of the person picking your child up and the relationship to the family. If an emergency arises during the school day please call the office as soon as possible to make arrangements for your child.

Before and After Care

The Mountain Village Charter School recognizes that work schedules and transportation needs can be complicated. Care beyond school hours is offered to parents in order to

meet the needs of a variety of schedules. The program is available in the morning beginning at 7:00 a.m. and in the afternoon from 2:30 until 5:00 p.m. Pick-up after 5:00 p.m. will result in a fee of five dollars for every five minutes after 5:00 p.m.

Both the morning and afternoon sessions will be learning environments that focus on activities that children would ordinarily be doing at home (meal prep, playtime, craftwork, etc.).

Care is available on a pre-arranged, long-term basis and on a temporary basis. In the case of a temporary need, 24 hours notice is required.

Visitors

Parents are encouraged to visit the School often and are always welcome in the classroom, but please check in with the teacher and the School office first. We ask that when you visit the School, you respect the instructional time of the teachers and students. If you have a matter to attend to with a teacher, please find a mutually agreeable time to discuss the matter.

Visitors in addition to parents and guardians are welcome, and are required to check in at the School office. Phone calls in advance are appreciated to set up an appropriate time to visit.

Age Entrance Policy

A 1st grade student must be 6 years old before September 30 in the year he/she proposes to enter school.

If child is not 6 by September 30 but will be 6 before December 31 a family can petition the school board to enroll. A child who turns 6 after December 31 is not allowed in any circumstance.

The petition process is as follows:

1. A formal letter of petition submitted to the chair of the board of directors.
2. If space is available, the school will provide a checklist, to be completed by a parent and a teacher, defining social, emotional, cognitive and physical readiness for that child.
3. Parents should include any letters of support, developmental evaluations, school records.

Students whose supporting documentation exhibits that they are capable of placement in first grade will be accepted.

Outdoor play/exploration

During outdoor play/exploration, all children are expected to go outside, unless special arrangements have been made by the teacher. Please be sure your child is always dressed appropriately for outside play.

What to Wear to School

Students at Mountain Village Charter School are expected to wear comfortable clothes and shoes which are appropriate for a broad range of school activities, indoors and out, including physical education, games, and movement. Children's clothing must protect them from the elements – the cold, the rain, the mud, and the hot sun. We will require extra clothing to be kept at school to ensure a seamless, comfortable day. Please label whatever your child brings to school with his or her name.

Layers work well as weather and temperatures fluctuate greatly from early morning to lunch recess to after school. Children should wear warm outer clothing, including boots, hats, mittens, and snow pants, in the winter.

Shoes

Students need well-fitting, closed-toe, footwear with strong, flat heels and soles. Backless clogs are not acceptable for outdoor activities and excursions. Shoes need backs to keep feet snugly in place. Platforms, high heels, and overly-cushioned shoes put a distance between the foot and the earth, hindering the foot's ability to develop optimally and often the student's ability to move freely. Winter boots should keep feet dry and warm. Please make sure your child has shoes that allow them to be safely active in play.

To help keep the buildings clean, outside footwear must be removed upon entering school buildings. Students are required to keep a pair of slippers or inside shoes to wear inside the buildings. For safety and liability reasons bare feet are not allowed on campus, unless teacher directed and supervised.

Clothes

Children are involved in many types of activities while at MVCS and should be dressed accordingly. Discovery learning requires freedom from restrictive clothing. This includes tight clothing, fancy dresses, and costumes that get in the way during active play. Children should be able to handle both indoor and outdoor clothing and footwear independently.

All children must have a change of clothes kept at the school for emergencies, including underwear, pants, shirt, sweater/sweatshirt, and socks. This extra set of clothes should be changed each season. Please include a reusable bag to transport clothes between home and school. Please keep slippers and clothing design non-commercial and simple. Be sure to label all clothing with your child's name.

Expect your child to go outside every day in every weather condition that is not hazardous. Children should be adequately dressed for outdoor play and study for all seasons of the year. Simple clothing and footwear which allows the child to dress independently is very important. Please provide your child with clothing he can manage himself. Clothing needs for each season include:

| Fall | Winter | Spring | Summer |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Rubber/waterproof boots | Insulated boots | Rubber/waterproof boots | Rubber/waterproof boots |
| Rain jacket with hood | Winter coat | Rain jacket with hood | Rain jacket with hood |
| Rain pants | Waterproof mittens | Rain pants | passive sun protection (hat, cool long sleeved shirts and pants etc) |
| Fleece/sweatshirt | scarf/neck cover | Fleece/sweatshirt | sunscreen |
| hat | hat | hat | insect repellent |
| | snow pants | | |
| | fleece/ wool socks | | |

Items from home

We ask that children not bring toys or trading cards to school. Toys distract from the school curriculum. Although some toys may have educational value, the inherent peer pressure to purchase the same toy is eliminated if toys are not present in the school setting.

Electronic games/toys

Please do not allow your children to bring any electronic games to school, as they are very distracting to other students and themselves. Toys that make noise should also be

left at home. Electronic devices, cell phones, CD players, iPods, etc. must not be brought to school by students for the same reasons.

Lunch and Snacks

Elementary students should bring their own nutritious lunches, snacks and beverages. The goal of the school is to promote healthy food choices by encouraging your child to bring wholesome food. If you are in question or need some suggestions, please see the Head of School. There is not space to refrigerate foods or time to reheat any foods, so please pack accordingly. Please leave all candy at home! Since mealtimes are essentially social, we request that you leave lunchboxes bearing pictures of violent characters at home, as they often distract the children and change the nature of their conversation and interaction with their peers.

Lunches must be in an insulated lunch bag with an ice pack to keep foods cold. We will not be able to refrigerate lunches. Parents should not send lunch items that need to be microwaved. We will not be able to heat any food. If you would like your child to have a warm lunch, please use a thermos.

Student Code of Conduct

Every student must abide by the Code of Conduct established by Mountain Village Charter School. Mountain Village Charter School provides a learning environment designed to meet individual needs and promote personal development and social growth. Every member of the school's community has the right to work, learn, and play free from disruption from others. Our School's Code of Conduct outlines expectations for behavior.

Through the implementation of the Code's rules and regulations, we assure a harmonious and a positive atmosphere where adults and teachers act as positive role models for the students, treating them with love and respect. Our students are expected to behave in the same manner, exhibiting traits such as courtesy and consideration for others, personal and intellectual honesty and a respect for the rights and property of others. We employ a strict policy on students who display aggressive behavior to others and jeopardize other students' safety. Self-discipline and a willingness of students to accept responsibility for and the consequences of their actions and conduct are fundamental to the Code. Every student at Mountain Village Charter School must abide by the following rules of behavior and conduct.

At all times, students shall:

- Respect others;
- Behave and be polite in and around the school, exhibiting grace and courtesy;
- Behave calmly and never resort to violence;

- Respect the physical condition and cleanliness of the property of others;
- Start school on time;
- Tell the truth and accept responsibility for own action;
- Follow instructions given by teachers;
- Immediately bring to the teacher's attention any verbal or physical action or conduct which violates the Code of Conduct;
- Keep their hands to themselves;

School Grounds:

- No tolerance on having weapons, drugs, alcohol or tobacco on the school premises;

While in outdoor setting, students shall:

- Stay within sight of the teacher unless otherwise instructed by teacher
- Act with concern for their own safety and that of their peers
- Refrain from inflicting unnecessary or malicious damage to the natural environment

Students are expected to comply with the school regulations at all times. When students fail to comply with these rules, disciplinary measures will be taken and parents will be notified of any occurrences and the consequences imposed on the child.

ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES & POLICY

The State of New Hampshire views school attendance as one of the primary indicators of a child's level of success in school. As such, State of New Hampshire RSA 193:1 requires "that every child between six and sixteen years of age [shall] attend the public school at the time the public schools are in session." The law RSA 193:2 further states that "every person having custody of a child shall cause the child to attend such a school during all the time the public schools are in session." At *Mountain Village* it is asserted that student attendance rates impact student learning and affect a school's culture. Montessori philosophy requires that we respect the child's concentration and follow the development of each child. In addition, teachers spend time and energy preparing curriculum and lessons for each day.

Absences and/or tardiness negatively impacts the offending child as well as all of his/her fellow classmates. Students are expected to attend school on time each day of the school year unless there is an emergency or a personal illness. Please help to ensure the development of your child's social and academic progress by avoiding unnecessary absences, tardiness and early dismissals.

Excused absences include but are not limited to the list below and may require documentation

- Illness of student or immediate family member
- Death in the family
- Religious holiday
- Scheduled medical/dental appointments if such cannot be scheduled outside of the normal school hours
- Chronic illness registered with the administration and verified by physician's note
- Classes missed due to an IEP or 504 plan
- Extreme weather conditions as discussed with the administration
- The administration shall determine if an absence is excused for any other reason not listed above.
- Excessive excused absences will be addressed on a case-by-case basis to determine if there is a pattern of non-attendance.

Examples of unexcused absences include but are not limited to:

- Absences as a result of incomplete immunizations records (without appropriate waiver on file)
- Family vacations outside of the established school calendar
- Leaving school grounds without permission during school hours
- Absences determined by the administration to be unexcused for any other reason not listed above. Extensive unexcused absences shall be addressed in a case-by-case basis to determine if there is a pattern of non-attendance. Please note the following policy on unexcused absences.
- **5 unexcused absences:** Parents/Guardians are contacted in writing by the teacher and/or administration regarding the absences.
- **8 unexcused absences:** Parents/Guardians are contacted again by the teacher and/or administration and a meeting is scheduled to develop a successful attendance plan. The plan shall include information regarding unexcused absences over 10.
- **10 unexcused absences:** Without full and reasonable explanation provided to the administration, documentation may be given to a Truancy Officer for intervention.

Absence Procedures: When a child is absent, the parent/guardian must notify the school. **If your child is unable to attend school please call the school office by**

8:30am. If the school is not contacted, you will be called inquiring about your child's absence by 10am. If there is to be an extended, planned (more than 1 day) excused absence, a note with the dates of the student's absences should be given to both the student's classroom teachers and the front desk, as all work together to monitor student attendance.

Tardiness: Students arriving after the start of school (regularly scheduled at 8:15am) **need to be accompanied to the reception area by their parent/guardian/adult driver and signed in.** Arriving at school on time is another important factor in a child's daily success. Morning routines and classroom meetings set the stage for what will occur throughout the day. A tardy student who is forced to play catch up begins the day at a disadvantage. If you do not contact the school regarding your child's delay in arrival, the school will call you by 10am. The first half hour of class is very important, as that is when teachers and students discuss their plans for the day. Parents/guardians of chronically tardy students will be notified and the teacher may convene a parent conference to address the pattern of lateness and a plan for remediation.

Please note 10 tardies are equal to one unexcused absence. Accumulated absences, even if arrived at through chronic late arrival, will trigger our absence policy noted above.

Early Dismissal: Ideally, children should be in school during all school hours. Please arrange appointments after school hours or on early release days whenever possible. If it is necessary to make an appointment during school hours, please be sure to send a note to school. As stated earlier, in order to dismiss your child to someone other than a parent/guardian, the authorized person must provide photo identification.

Please note 5 unexcused early dismissals are equal to one absence. Accumulated absences, even if arrived at through chronic late arrival, will trigger our absence policy noted above.

Health and Safety

Each student enrolling in the School will be required to provide evidence of a health examination by a medical doctor.

Immunizations

Each student shall present his/her immunization record certifying that he/she has received all required immunizations currently due, or shall present an exemption as allowable by law before he/she is admitted to the School.

Illness

Please keep your child home if s/he has:

- vomited during the night or before school, or has not tolerated solid food.
- a fever of 100 degrees or higher. The temperature should be normal for 24 hours without medication before returning to school.
- a sore throat with white spots, or accompanied by headache or fever.
- a rash that cannot be identified.
- strep throat, conjunctivitis (“pinkeye”), or impetigo: With these illnesses, your child must be receiving antibiotic treatment for 24 hours before returning to school.
- lice: If your child has lice, or you suspect the occurrence of lice, please contact the school immediately. Once treatment has occurred, your child must be examined by the Head of School before being readmitted to school to be certain no viable nits are in the hair.

Environmental Exposure

Mountain Village Charter School students will be outside a great deal of the time, far more than a typical elementary school student. Along with all of this outdoor experience comes increased exposure to the health risks of the sun’s UV radiation, and tick-borne illnesses. Additionally, there may be times when biting insects become a nuisance or distraction for outdoor learning. MVCS teachers teach their students how to care for themselves in the outdoor environment, but the school will also take specific measures to protect students from these three environmental factors. Parents will have the opportunity to inform the school of any specific choices relative to these environmental hazards.

Sunscreen

Mountain Village Charter School students will be outside for multiple hours a day throughout the school year. This amount of outdoor time also increases their sun exposure. Current guidelines from the CDC suggest that all children should be protected with sunscreen of at least SPF 15 whenever outside. Parents are strongly encouraged to apply sunscreen to their child’s exposed skin (particularly face and ears) every day, and to include a sun-protective hat and other clothing as part of their child’s daily wardrobe. During times of high sun exposure (which can include sunny winter days when there is little tree cover and a reflective snow layer), teachers may apply sunscreen to the students. ***If you do not want your child to receive this extra sunscreen application, or if you have a specific brand of sunscreen that you want***

to the school to use on your child, you must inform the school using the supplied form.

Mosquitoes, Black flies and other biting insects

Mosquitoes and other biting insects will typically not be an issue during the months of the school year. Mosquito-borne illnesses are also not a known risk in the Plymouth area. However, in times of unusually distracting or uncomfortable insect activity, students will be encouraged to utilize headnets and covering clothing if necessary. Also, the school may apply natural insect repellents to the skin, as long as they do not contain DEET or other similar synthetic ingredients. Products in this acceptable category utilize essential oils as the repellent ingredient, and include *Badger Anti-Bug Spray, Skeeter Skidaddler, Cardigan Mountain Soap Works Bugs Away*. *If you do not want your child to have this repellent applied, you must inform the school using the supplied form.*

Ticks

Tick-borne illnesses are still relatively rare in the Plymouth area, but they are a possibility. In order to protect our students from this risk, the school will be taking preventative measures. Students will be instructed on how to use their socks and pants to create a physical barrier to ticks. Also, when seasonally appropriate, we recommend that you check your child for ticks at the end of the day. During the times of the year when ticks are most active (usually early spring and late fall) the school may apply a tick-repellent containing permethrin or picaridin to the student's pant legs, but not to the skin. DEET-containing repellents will not be used. Permethrin and picaridin are highly effective against ticks, and are considered safe by the FDA for use with children. *If you do not want your child to have this repellent applied, you must inform the school using the supplied form.*

Food Restrictions and/or Allergies

Parents are expected to notify the school of any food restrictions or food allergies. Depending on the nature of the allergies or restrictions for some children, other parents may be asked to provide snack alternatives or eliminate certain types of foods.

Medication

Any pupil who is required to take, during the school day, a medication prescribed by a licensed physician, advanced registered nurse practitioner, licensed physician's assistant

or dentist, shall be supervised in taking the medication by the school health attendant (or school designee). The following regulations must be followed:

1. A written statement from the student's doctor indicating the frequency, dosage, route of administration, duration and possible side effects of the medication must be provided.
2. A written statement from the parent requesting that school personnel give the medication.

3. Medication must be brought to school by the parent. The student cannot bring in the medication.
4. All medication must be received in the original labeled container. Over-the-counter medications will be administered by school personnel with written permission from a parent or guardian.

School Injury/Illness

Parents will be notified in the event of child's serious illness or injury. First Aid will be provided by a teacher, head of school or certified first responder. Please notify the school of any changes in your work or home phone numbers. If parents cannot be reached, the adults listed on the emergency contact form will be asked to pick up your child.

Criminal Records Check

Any adult (18 or over) working with students is required by the State to undergo a Criminal Records check including fingerprinting.

Student teachers, methods students and substitute teachers should obtain forms and fee information from the Head of School.

Field Trips and Celebrations

Field Trips

At the Mountain Village Charter School, we believe that learning extends beyond the four walls of the School. The White Mountains Region and areas beyond have many resources to offer our children. Field trips, when used for teaching and learning, provide educationally sound and important enhancements to the instructional program. A field trip is any excursion in which the students travel off of the school grounds and its contiguous natural surroundings. Hikes and explorations conducted directly from the school building are not field trips. The classroom teacher will provide the parents/guardians with a field trip permission form that will include information concerning the purpose and destination of the trip, transportation, eating arrangements, date and time of departure, estimated time of return, arrangements for supervision, cost to the student (if any), safety precautions (if high-risk activity is involved), and a detailed itinerary when the field trip will extend beyond the school day. Parental permission shall include written consent from parents/guardians, authorizing the supervisors to arrange for necessary medical treatment.

The teacher or sponsors of the trip will inform parents in advance about the recommended amount of spending money, if any, that each student should have. Parents are encouraged to help out with field trips. Time spent on field trips counts towards the required 10 hours of parent participation.

Celebrations

Celebrations throughout the year will occur with an emphasis on traditions of the family and friends of the Mountain Village Charter School community. Respect for the diversity of our community is of the utmost importance.

Birthdays will be celebrated differently in each classroom. Please contact the teacher to make arrangements to send in a snack, arrange for a special celebration, or if you prefer that we do not celebrate your child's birthday.

Parties

If your child is having a party and wants to invite classmates, we request that you mail the invitations and do not bring party invitations to the school, unless the entire class is invited.

Discipline Policy & Conflict Resolution

Discipline

Respectful interactions are a core value for the school, and students will be regularly coached in behaviors that promote an enjoyable and functional learning community. Additionally, the school has a school-wide plan to help all students be successful both academically and socially, and to helping all adults at the school be consistent. Classroom rules are established based on behavior expectations, and adapted to fit different settings. Rules and expectations are taught and reviewed regularly in each setting.

We have set up a process for helping students who are not able to meet behavior expectations on a regular basis. The typical protocol for managing inappropriate behaviors at MVCS follows:

- Remind student of appropriate behavior
- Redirect student to another activity.
- Ask the student to take a break.
- Send the student to a "buddy teacher room" or the hallway.

- Send the student to the Head of School.
- When appropriate, staff will take the time to help the student process and take responsibility, including generating ideas for fixing the problem and strategies to prevent it from happening again.

As much as possible, teachers and other adults at the School try to observe carefully for behavior problems and work to prevent them before they begin. Often students lack experience working out conflicts with others or do not have the social skills to interact positively. Both conflict resolution and social skills are taught to all students as part of their regular work at each grade level.

When adults at school help students deal with problems, it is done privately and respectfully. We always try to hear "both sides" if two students are involved, and all students involved receive some kind of consequence or means of addressing the problem. We try to be fair and consistent, but children are different and sometimes what's fair is not always equal. Teachers strive to respond to each child in a manner that is effective for that child's particular temperament and developmental level. For example, in terms of temperament, one child might respond well to a discipline strategy of being asked to move closer to the teacher during class work, while another might better benefit from having a few minutes alone to center him or herself. Similarly, in terms of developmental levels, one child may be working primarily on learning impulse control, while another is working on assertiveness skills. A "one size fits all" discipline plan is not the most effective way to meet all children's needs.

Students' rights are protected, however, and no individual student's behavior or consequences are discussed with anyone who is not the parent or legal guardian, except for those school staff who need to understand the issue.

If students are still having problems after reminders or are being excessively disruptive or aggressive, they are sent out of the classroom to meet with another adult. During the meeting, the student and the adult may call or write a letter to the parents, letting you know what has occurred and strategizing about how to avoid future problems.

We feel strongly that keeping you informed and asking you to work with us are the most effective ways to help your children be more successful. The more we work together on establishing common expectations and prevention strategies, while also addressing problems that do occur, the more proactive we can be and the fewer disruptions we will have to student learning. It is therefore essential that the family work closely with the School to ensure that these social skills are in place at home and transfer to the school setting.

Students who repeatedly display behavior that is distracting to other students and/or counterproductive to the Mountain Village Charter School learning environment may be asked to leave. Our School is unique in that we are a school of choice. We are a team in which every player is choosing to be there and agrees to work toward a common goal all in an effort to keep small problems from growing into large ones. As a part of this team, parents are expected to work actively with their children and the School to help the child master the skills necessary to be a productive member of the school community. Parents who do not meet this expectation may be counseled to choose a school that better accommodates their needs.

Conflict Resolution

We strive to treat all students, families, faculty and staff in a respectful, fair and impartial manner. There may be times, however, when individuals have a complaint about the actions of a faculty or staff member, or a problem with school policies themselves. We believe it is in the best interest of all involved to raise those issues and work within the school community to resolve them.

Discussions about problems or issues will take place during non-class time and in a confidential setting. Complex issues will require an appointment and an agenda, so time and thought can be focused on positive solutions. If such a situation arises, please follow the procedure outlined here:

1. If the complaint is about the actions of a specific individual, make an appointment to speak directly to the faculty or staff member with whom you have the complaint. During this meeting identify a resolution and set a timeline for a check-in, if necessary.

- 1a. If the complaint is curriculum specific, make an appointment to speak with the Head of School. During this meeting identify a resolution and set a timeline for a check-in, if necessary.

- 1b. If the complaint is about the organization, management policy or procedures, make an appointment to speak with the Head of School. During this meeting identify a resolution and set a timeline for a check-in, if necessary.

2. If you are not satisfied with the proposed resolution by the appropriate faculty or staff member, schedule a meeting with the Head of School. In order for the Head of School to inquire into a grievance that relates to a specific incident or incidents, it will be necessary for the complainant to provide as much detail as possible in terms of date(s), time(s), student(s), teacher(s) and other people involved in or observing the incident. To avoid miscommunication and to expedite the process, this information should be

provided in writing prior to meeting with the Head of School, so that she may make internal inquiries and research school records before the meeting. If the complainant chooses not to do this, then the meeting may be recorded, a written record made of key allegations, and the complainant asked to sign that it is accurate. The Head of School will then need time to research the issue before scheduling a further meeting to attempt to resolve the issue.

3. Grievances that are not satisfied by a discussion with the Head of School may be brought to the Board of Trustees. The complaint should be made in writing and addressed to the Chair of the Board at the school's address. Full supporting information, as described above, should be supplied in order that a subgroup of Trustees may make inquiries prior to meeting with the complainant(s). Such meetings will be arranged at mutually convenient times for the complainant(s) and designated Trustees.

4. If this meeting does not resolve the complaint, the complainant may file a complaint with the NH Department of Education (www.education.nh.gov).

Bullying

MVCS is committed to providing a safe school environment. It is important for staff to address instances of bullying as soon as possible. We believe that it is important that all people at MVCS treat one another with respect. Bullying will not be tolerated. Bullies are intentionally mean to another person in an attempt to make their victim feel weak, inferior, or controlled. A pattern of bullying interferes with a safe school atmosphere. Whenever possible, it is important to get to the root of the issue, while insuring the safety and wellbeing of all those involved. The following procedure is meant to minimize and prevent bullying by addressing acts of verbal or physical mistreatment:

1. If a student reports harassment: Staff and parents should advise the student not to react to the bully. The staff should address the situation (without directly mentioning student names) during Morning Meeting – focusing on strategies for all students to:

- a. Treat each other respectfully.
- b. React firmly and assertively with their words.
- c. Encourage students to form positive friendships.

2. Staff should contact the parent/guardian of the bully and describe the situation (if the bully is in their classroom). If the bully is assigned to a different classroom, coordination between the two classroom teachers and the Head of School should occur quickly to offer quick communication with the family.

3. Staff should make a record of all bullying situations. If the situation persists or poses a danger or a safety risk (emotionally, academically, physically, or otherwise), a report should be made to the Head of School.

4. The Head of School should follow up with a written and verbal report to the parent, outlining expectations and consequences.

Parent Participation

Participating in our children's education and developing the strong sense of community that comes from working with others toward a common goal are central to the mission and vision of the Mountain Village Charter School. Parents' active participation in the classroom, governance and other aspects of the School organization is vital to the challenging work of educating our children.

Our goal is to have all families involved in the community in a way that is meaningful both to the family and the School. We require families to volunteer 10 hours per student per year per student. It could be in the classroom, or serving on a committee, and/or performing a School support job.

When you volunteer at school-related events, you may sometimes be exposed to sensitive issues involving students and their families, including physical, emotional, academic and social/disciplinary challenges. Just as you would like adults who interact with your child to be sensitive to issues of confidentiality, we ask that you treat information about all students and families with great care. All parents are expected to sign a volunteer confidentiality agreement. If you have particular concerns about children that stem from your observations during school activities, please consult that student's classroom teacher. Always refrain from inappropriate interactions with students and other parents that breach these confidentiality guidelines.

The Mountain Village Charter School is a parent participation school. By choosing to enroll your child, you are agreeing to participate in the work of the School. If this is not your intention, we strongly encourage you to choose another school that more closely meets your needs.

Parent Participation Agreement

Before your child is enrolled in the School, you are required to sign a "Parent Contract." Honoring this commitment is the way members of the School community demonstrate their belief in the philosophy of the School and its education practices, as well as their understanding of the vital role they play in the School. Adherence to the agreement is essential to the validation of the School Charter, as well as to the efforts of others in the

School community. The success of Mountain Village Charter School depends upon all families participating in the operation of the School.

Parent-Initiated Communication

Ongoing parent-teacher communication is vital to your child's well-being. Simple questions and concerns may be addressed at drop-off and pick-up times. For more complex concerns, please leave a phone message, send a note with your child, or use email. Your child's classroom teacher should generally be the first person you contact. Please do not expect to be able to come to school and have an in-depth talk with someone immediately unless it is very urgent. Teachers have many demands on their time, both before and after school. If you would like to discuss an issue, it is best to agree on a time for an appointment. This also insures more privacy. Regular parent conferences are held in November and April, and report cards are sent home four times a year, but please don't wait for those if you have questions or want information sooner. Talking together about our children is one of the most important things we can do. Without teamwork, we will be much less effective.

Concerns or suggestions can also be brought to the Head of school, either in person or writing. Mailboxes are located in the main office.

Parent Council

Parent Council is designed to assist the parents of the school in expressing their thoughts, ideas, support, and concerns to the greater school community, including the Board of Trustees and teachers. By facilitating clear and consistent communication between parents and the governing body of the school, the Parent Council will help to serve the mission of the Mountain Village Charter School. Parent Council will also serve the Mountain Village Charter School by supporting and facilitating school activities, celebrations, fundraising, and special events, in an effort to foster a strong sense of school community. There will be an opportunity for any parent to serve on a Parent Council committee. Parent Council meetings will be scheduled regularly and posted on the MVCS website. Parents are encouraged to come to the meetings.

Appeals/Grievance Procedures

Mountain Village places tremendous value on grace, courtesy, respect and responsibility. As such, we encourage parents/guardians and staff to develop open lines of communication with each other for the benefit of the children attending the school. We acknowledge, however, that from time to time, situations may arise that are upsetting. If a parent/guardian, student, staff member or other individuals or groups are not satisfied with a school decision, policy or act; or believes that Mountain Village has

violated or is violating any provision of New Hampshire General Law, they should follow the process outlined below in the *Grievance & Appeal Policy* (see *Appendix E*).

Mountain Village encourages all concerns and complaints to be resolved with the person(s) closest to the source as possible. When teacher conferences and communication to administration are not able to resolve an issue, a parent or guardian may initiate the grievance procedure to appeal any final decision of school personnel.

If a parent or guardian disagrees with established rules of conduct, policies or practices, he or she may express his or her concerns by following the problem resolution procedure mapped out in the *Grievance & Appeal Policy* (see *Appendix E*). No person will be penalized formally or informally, for voicing a complaint with the school in a reasonable, courteous, respectful, manner or for using the problem resolution procedure.

Emergency Management Preparedness

In the event of an emergency the Mountain Village Charter School is taking steps to be able to respond in a way that would protect students and staff in as comprehensive a way as possible. MVCS personnel are working diligently on planning, preparing and practicing emergency procedures.

What is an Emergency?

An emergency is any situation that would require the schools to respond in a way to protect students and staff from potential danger.

Emergencies can be caused by many sources:

- Natural hazards - such as weather related or environmental hazards
- Technological hazards - such as power lines
- Man-made hazards - such as dams, highways, school violence, terrorism

All emergencies require specific actions to be taken. These actions come down to five basic drills. Schools practice these drills periodically throughout the school year, in addition to fire drills.

Five Basic Drills

Evacuation - When all students and staff need to exit the building.

Reverse Evacuation - When students and staff are outside and need to return inside the building.

Secure Building and Lock Down- When all students and staff need to stay in rooms.

Drop Drill - When students and staff need to take cover and reduce visibility.

Shelter in Place - When students and staff need to remain inside and the building needs to protect from outside or inside conditions.

For fire drills, speed in emptying buildings and relocating occupants, while desirable, is not the only objective. When conducting fire drills, emphasis shall be placed on orderly evacuation rather than on speed.

A list of emergency numbers should be posted by each phone in the building and should include Local and State Police. In the event of an emergency, the MVCS Head of School is solely responsible for emergency/disaster operations and shall remain on site to:

- Observe and direct all operations.
- Ensure the safety of students, staff and others on school grounds.
- Lead by example: her behavior sets the tone for staff and students.

The classroom teachers, substitute teachers, and staff as assigned will ensure the care and safety of all students on campus. The school secretary will assure the reunification of students with their parents or authorized adult.

The Mountain Village Charter School uses the following Emergency Plan.

Emergency Plan & Evacuation Procedure

Administrators: Initiating Evacuation

If the director or her designee senses the students are in danger due to a bomb scare, gas leakage, fire or smoke in the building, the following procedures should take effect immediately:

1. Make immediate decision to evacuate the building or alert staff (not alarming students) of the possibility of impending danger.
2. In case of any danger, bomb scare, or threat of any type, call 911 to alert the authorities and/or seek advice.
3. Sound the fire alarms to evacuate the building.
4. THE ADMINISTRATOR IN CHARGE MUST CHECK ALL BATHROOMS BEFORE EXITING. S/he will also bring the "To Go" bag of supplies from the main office with her.
5. Meet all classes at parking area; ensure all students are

accounted for.

6. Meet emergency personnel in front of building to apprise them of situation.

7. Keep teachers informed. Allow re-entry of students and teachers only after approval by emergency personnel.

A note informing the parents of the situation should be sent home the same or following day. A written report should be submitted to the MVCS School Board by the director.

Staff: Evacuation Instructions

1. At the sound of the alarm, students and teachers should stop what they are doing.

2. Students should walk calmly and silently to the emergency exit door of the classroom they are in (the one that leads directly outside) and form a single file line. They should not gather coats or other belongings. Should this door be blocked by fire, students and teachers will use the secondary exit route through the hallway to the main door.

3. Teachers should retrieve their "To Go" bags positioned near the emergency exit doors, give the order to leave the building, and ensure that they are the last one to leave the classroom. Handicapped children should be accompanied by a pre-designated aide. Any students out of the classroom should proceed with whatever group they're with, rather than return to their classroom; if alone, they will proceed to the designated meeting area and join their class there.

4. Classes should exit to the designated meeting area. Teachers will meet the Head of School there and take attendance.

5. Classes will wait for the director and further instructions.

6. Children should not re-enter the building until an official tells them to do so.

7. Parents will be notified to pick up their children if necessary.

APPENDIX A:

Policy and Related Procedures for Transporting Mountain Village Charter School Students in Personal Vehicles

Purpose: To clarify the policy and procedure involved in transporting Mountain Village Charter School students to activities held away from the school site.

Policy: Mountain Village Charter School may need to engage in activities where children are transported for school activities. The School's insurance policy includes *Hired and Non-owned Auto Liability* coverage.

In most cases, the school will contract a bus service to transport Mountain Village students. The District buses provide both the vehicle and driver. In the event that a parent/guardian, teacher, or employee of Mountain Village acts as a driver and uses their personal auto for a school activity, the driver's policy is primary and the school's *Non-owned Auto Liability* would respond for the school, if named in a lawsuit arising from the "drivers" vehicle.

Policy-Related Procedures

All students being transported to an off-site activity, whether by hired bus or personal vehicle, will be required to present a parent/guardian signed permission form before entering the bus/vehicle. Those without signed permission forms will not be permitted to be transported to the activity site by anyone other than the child's parent/guardian.

Prior to any driver transporting Mountain Village children for school activities, the following must take place:

- Anyone transporting Mountain Village children must have a clean background check to ensure there is nothing in their past that could endanger children. Failure to generate a clean background check will make the driver ineligible to transport Mountain Village students.
- The driver must provide verification of his/her personal auto insurance. (While it is recognized that personal auto insurance is not mandatory in New Hampshire, Mountain Village requires that anyone transporting children must provide proof of insurance.)
- The driver's personal auto insurance must include liability limits of at least \$100,000/\$300,000 designated for bodily injury.
- The School Leader or the Teaching & Learning Coordinator will need to review the driver's paper work and initial it, before the driver is allowed to transport Mountain Village students.
- A copy of the insurance policy will be made and kept on file at the School.

APPENDIX B:

Parent/Guardian Guide to Classroom Observation

Inspired by Little Things Montessori

Welcome to Mountain Village for your classroom visit!

The parent/guardian observation is an opportunity for you to get a glimpse of what life is like in our Montessori classrooms. This may be your first exposure to the Montessori experience, your first time at our school, or you may be here to find out more about your child's day.

YOUR TIME AND YOUR ROLE IN THE CLASSROOM

In order to give you as clear a picture as possible, we ask that you observe the following procedure, and offer some tips below to help make your visit as meaningful as possible.

When you enter the classroom, you will find an adult-sized chair. This chair is for observation. Please be seated.

When you sit down, children may come up to you. Please try not to engage them in conversation. A polite "Hello" and a direct response as to who you are, is fine. Then quietly ask the child/children to return to work. The children understand that observers come to watch them working and they will understand your response in that context.

Please do not move around the classroom.

Don't be surprised if your child doesn't respond to having you there in the way that you might expect. Children sometimes respond differently to having their parents in the classroom than they do in the normal course of the school day or at home. The skill of the teacher will allow her to guide your child. Depending on the circumstances it may be suitable for you and your child to spend the observation time watching the class together if s/he is not able to separate. However, we do encourage parents to wait until their child is settled well into our classroom before observations take place so that the child is not confused about this observation process.

The teacher will not be able to take time from their classroom duties to converse with you during or immediately after your observation. If questions occur to you while you are watching, please write them down on the paper provided. We will be glad to answer these questions by telephone or in person at a later date. Please call or to set a mutually agreeable time.

If you are undertaking an observation with another person please refrain from chatting together during this time. Observing a Montessori classroom is a quiet, contemplative

experience that you will be able to talk together about when you have left the environment.

Observations are usually undertaken for a half hour. However, you may be able to make arrangements to stay longer prior to your visit. When you have finished your observation, please exit the classroom quietly and leave your question sheet on your chair if you wish discuss any areas of the classroom environment or the activities you observed your own child undertaking.

THINGS TO CONSIDER DURING YOUR VISIT

Upon first entering the Montessori environment, many parents are amazed by the diverse activities they see going on. The suggestions below are intended to be focus points for your attention.

Visual Perspective: There is more to the Montessori classroom than the activities of one particular child. Naturally, the first tendency of parents is to focus and follow their own child's activities. First time observers may be attracted to one child or a group of the oldest or youngest children. Try to view both the entire classroom and a focus on a particular child.

Auditory Perspective: Listen to the noise level as it rises and falls. Try to see which groups or individual children are generating the sound. You will hear the normal hum of children working together; the quiet of concentration and, at times, there may be a special peak of excitement — of discovery! See if you can differentiate.

Learning: Notice that children learn in different ways. With some types of materials you will see groups of children working cooperatively, and with others you will find an individual child working alone, intensely. Still other children are walking through the classroom seemingly not engaged in any direct activity. Very often, this last type of child is engaged in actively absorbing information through observation of the children and the materials in the classroom. It will help if you alternate your focus on these three learning patterns. Note the ease and joy with which the children work. You will see the intense self-gratification that the learning process affords each child.

Child-child Interaction: Listen to the way in which children talk to each other. Listen for the level of respect as well as for the normal pushes and pulls of childhood. Very often observers new to Montessori are surprised that a child will zealously guard his/her work and tell another classmate that they are disturbing this work, and that, as a result of this

verbal communication, the other child will leave. New observers may also find it interesting to observe the ways in which children help one another.

Teacher-child interaction: Watch the way teachers interact with children and compare it with the traditional classroom mode by which you were probably educated. Notice the way in which a teacher corrects a child, and look at the instances in which she does not. Listen to the teacher's tone of voice with the child. The teacher is a facilitator of the child's autonomous learning process. She guides rather than insists. She prepares the environment, gives the child the tools to utilize the materials and then does whatever else is necessary to help the child interact with the environment without assistance. Sometimes this involves direct encouragement, at other times indirect appreciation, and even judicious absence. There is a basic respect for each individual child's particular style of learning in the Montessori classroom. See if you can pick this up.

Sociability: Watch the ways in which the children offer assistance to one another - with the materials and with everyday tasks - and the ways that they are directly sociable with one another.

The Montessori classroom contains a wide range of both ages of children and of materials that are appropriate to the different developmental levels. Note how the children go to the materials that are appropriate to their developmental level. Note also how the younger children absorb the older children's work simply by being near them, and how, conversely, the older children may assist the younger ones with work that they have already mastered. There are always pockets of social activity occurring in any Montessori classroom, as the child's natural desire to form relationships and be part of an ongoing community is ever present.

Independence: Observe the independence of the children as they do for themselves in the classroom environment. Watch how even the youngest child takes responsibility for his/her personal environment. Watch, however precariously, a jug of water, or a tray with fragile materials on it is carried. Watch as a child chooses a piece of work, takes it from the shelf, completes the work, and returns it to its place so that the next child can use it.

Autonomy: The generation of autonomy is a function of the prepared environment of the Montessori classroom. What this means is that the child will have available all needed materials, in good working order, to complete a task that has usually been self chosen. The structure of Montessori provides the child with as much time as s/he needs to complete the task to his/her satisfaction, and success is the primary reward. As you look around the classroom notice the materials, how attractive they are in placement, color, cleanliness, quality, etc. The child is attracted to learn by this environment.

We understand that you will not be able to sort out and see all the dimensions of the classroom that are outlined above in the time you have with us. We hope that you are not disappointed, when you discover that all aspects of the classroom have either not been present during your observation or that you did not see it all. We know that learning how to "read" the Montessori classroom is difficult at first, but we know that with each successive observation your skills will become increasingly honed.

Thank you for joining us today! Parent/guardian partnership is a proven ingredient in successful student outcomes.

APPENDIX C:

Common Code of Online Conduct

Mountain Village is committed to the use of technology and the Internet for educational purposes, operational services and school-related communication. Technology has allowed the enhancement of curricula and school-based communication in ways not even envisioned a few years ago. Along with the advantages of using technology also comes the need to educate the students and adults in our school community about responsible and safe use of computers and the Internet.

Purpose. The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for using social media* to the Mountain Village Charter School staff, students and parent/guardian community.

*"Social media" refers to any form of online publication or presence that allows end users to engage in multi-directional conversations or interaction. Social media includes, but is not limited to: Facebook, MySpace, Ning, Twitter, Second Life, YouTube, blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, document sharing, online gaming, and email.

Common Code of Online Conduct. While the rules applicable to staff, students and parents/guardians vary in some particulars, a common code of conduct in the use of social media should be observed by all members of our community.

- Be respectful. Employees, parents/guardians and students are a diverse group of people with many different customs, viewpoints and beliefs. Broad generalizations ("all teachers ..."; "all students ...") are almost never accurate. Nor is it respectful to criticize particular persons in group communications. If the time, manner or content of a communication is not something you would share with

many others, before you send it, consider whether it is appropriate to share with *anyone*.

- Be reflective. Think before you communicate online. Do not skim statements and respond. Understand the thoughts of another before you comment on them. If you are upset or angry, give yourself time to calm down. Consider whether a negative communication you receive even requires a response. If it does, respond factually, not emotionally.
- Use Appropriate Language. Mountain Village is an inclusive and diverse public school setting and an Equal Employment Opportunity employer. Obscene, insulting, threatening, derogatory, inflammatory and bullying language is not appropriate and almost always detracts from your ideas. Communications that are racist, pornographic, threatening or bullying are not permitted in our school community. (Please see *Mountain Village's Bullying Policy*, Appendix D, for further details on this issue.)
- Be factual. Add to the information available to others, not just the noise.
- Discourage Rumors. Do not rely upon and do not pass on unsubstantiated information or gossip. If information seems unlikely, it is most likely untrue and may be inflammatory. When in doubt, go directly to the source.

Additional guidelines for staff are outlined in a separate staff policy related to this topic. Information about cyber-bullying may be found in the Mountain Village Charter School Bullying Policy.

- Write well. In a school environment, everyone should try to express himself or herself effectively. Re-read your posts or emails for form and content before sending. Check spelling, avoid slang and do not use excessive abbreviations. Use proper grammar, capitalization and punctuation. Send a polished communication, not a confused draft.
- Be transparent. Do not misrepresent who you are. Never assume the identity of another person. Do not attempt to hide or conceal online interactions with members of the school community.
- Respect the Power of Public Media. Social media may seem private, but it is both public and durable — many people are likely to see what you write or post, and it may last for a very, very long time. Always remember that posted information may seem private, but is highly public.

- Respect Confidentiality. Do not violate the privacy of others. Many personnel issues and many issues involving other families and students are confidential (and many are confidential by law). If you would not want information about your job or your child or family situation made public, do not convey such information using social media. Do not expect to see such information about others.
- Be smart. People share too much information electronically. Think about how information can be used and misused. People who reveal the names of their pets, parents/guardians, children or other details may give hackers the clues to passwords. Information about planned vacations can be used by burglars.
- Own your mistakes. If you make a mistake in your correspondence, correct it. If another calls you on a mistake, accept responsibility for the error. Apologize, if an apology is due.
- Make proper attributions. Follow copyright law and fair use protocols. When quoting or relying on another's work, make a proper citation to your source. When using a hyperlink, double check that it goes to the correct place and to appropriate content.
- Do Not Spam. Meaningless messages, mass messages and repetitive messages are not appropriate.
- Do Not Hack. Never access another person's identity or account, or restricted sources of information.
- Communication Between Teachers/Administrators, Students and Parents/Guardians should utilize school-based media whenever possible. Teachers/Administrators and students should not use non-school media to communicate. Students should not attempt to "friend" a teacher on any non-school social media site (such as Facebook) and Teachers/Administration is not to accept a "friend" request from a student and visa versa. Such requests should be reported to the school administration.
- Remember to Use Existing Channels for Concerns. If concerns with a student, parent/guardian, or teacher are not resolved through direct communication with that student, parent/guardian, or teacher, the administration is available to address such concerns. The administration welcomes prompt notice of concerns. If concerns with the administration are not resolved through communication with

administrators, the Mountain Village School Board Chair may be contacted to hear such concerns.

- **Debate Issues Constructively.** Schools often face legitimate controversies. The School respects and solicits parent/guardian voices in addressing such issues. Effective arguments are usually civil, measured, well supported and take into account the legitimate reasons for opposing views. Communications that are abusive, disrespectful of others, and marked by hyperbole or factual carelessness are ineffective. Help foster positive communication across all parts of our school!
- **Consequences.** Behavior that violates these guidelines will result in potentially serious consequences, ranging from warnings to an end of a relationship with Mountain Village. Violations will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

APPENDIX D:

Student Safety & Violence Prevention Anti-Bullying Policy

A core value of the Mountain Village Charter School Board and Staff is to create a safe and secure school environment for our students. All members of the school community are expected to conduct themselves with respect for themselves, for others and for the environment, in keeping with the Montessori philosophy of Grace and Courtesy. However, bullying has the potential to occur whenever groups of children are together.

NH law HB 1523 deems bullying a crime. This policy will clarify the definition of bullying and identify steps toward corrective action because Mountain Village Charter School will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior that interferes with student learning and orderly school operations, including any form of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation.

The Head of School is responsible for implementing this policy, but may delegate specific responsibilities to administrators and others, as he/she deems appropriate.

Prohibited Conduct

Students are prohibited from bullying and cyber-bullying actions or communications directed toward other students which:

- 1) Occur on, or are delivered to, school property or a school-sponsored activity or event on or off school property; or

- 2) Occur off school property or outside of a school-sponsored activity or event, if the conduct interferes with a student's educational opportunities or substantially disrupts the orderly operations of the school or school-sponsored activity or event.
- 3) Students are further prohibited from retaliating against or making false accusations against a target, witness or anyone else who, in good faith, provides information about an alleged act of bullying or cyber-bullying.
- 4) Protection of all Students
- 5) This policy shall apply to all students on school grounds and participating in school functions, regardless of their status under the law.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions shall apply:

1. "Bullying" means a single significant incident or a pattern of incidents involving a written, verbal or electronic communication, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at another which:
 - a. Physically harms a student or damages the student's property;
 - b. Causes emotional distress to a student;
 - c. Interferes with a student's educational opportunities;
 - d. Creates a hostile educational environment; or
 - e. Substantially disrupts the orderly operation of the school.

"Bullying" shall also include actions motivated by an imbalance of power based on a student's actual or perceived personal characteristics, behaviors or beliefs, or motivated by the student's association with another person and based on the other person's characteristics, behaviors or beliefs if those actions cause one or more of the results in items (a) through (e) above.

Bullying or cyber-bullying of a student on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, race, color, ancestry, national origin, religion, age, marital status, familial status, pregnancy, physical or mental disability may constitute illegal discrimination under federal and/or state laws.

"Cyber-bullying" means conduct defined in Paragraph B (1) that takes place through the use of electronic devices.

“Electronic devices” include but are not limited to telephones, cellular phones, computers, pagers, electronic mail, instant messaging, text messaging and websites.

“Emotional distress” means distress that materially impairs the student’s participation in academic or other school-sponsored activities. The term “emotional distress” does not include the unpleasantness or discomfort that accompanies a differing viewpoint.

“Aggressor” means a student who engages in bullying or cyber-bullying.

“School property” means all real property and all physical plant and equipment used for school purposes, including public or private school buses or vans.

“Target” means a student against whom bullying or cyber-bullying has been perpetrated.

Complaints regarding such conduct may be brought to the Head of School who may engage the Board of Trustees if the situation requires further assistance.

Prevention and Training

Our mission includes the creation of school culture that encourages students, teachers and parents/guardians to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behavior, both experienced and witnessed. We are committed to addressing these incidents and empowering students to be part of the solution.

As such, our staff professional development will include training in developmentally/age appropriate strategies to prevent bullying; appropriate strategies for immediate and effective interventions to stop bullying incidents; the power differential that can take place between and among aggressor, target, and witnesses of bullying; research findings on bullying and information on incidence and nature of cyber-bullying and internet safety issues. In addition, the teaching staff will be expected to integrate bullying awareness and prevention into the curriculum.

Students at Mountain Village will be taught the key dynamics of bullying and how to react appropriately and respectfully through modeling, teaching and recognizing pro-social and healthy behaviors. Mountain Village students are encouraged to take the following actions to prevent bullying:

- Treat each other and all members of the Mountain Village community with respect

- Report any observed bullying to a teacher or other adult
- Information on this bullying policy and larger issues related to bullying will be part of parent/guardian education as well. Mountain Village supports school-wide initiatives, which include relevant presenters, useful curricula and ongoing discussion.

All training and education programs shall be initially approved by the Head of School who is also responsible for scheduling the required training and education programs each year.

Reporting Bullying and Cyber-bullying

Mountain Village Charter School maintains an open reporting system. School staff and volunteers are required to report incidents of bullying or cyber-bullying to the Head of School as soon as practicable. Students who are subjected to bullying or cyber-bullying, or who observe bullying/cyber-bullying by or against other students are strongly encouraged to report it to the Administration, teacher or other staff. Parents/guardians and other adults are also encouraged to report any concerns about possible bullying or cyber-bullying of students to the Head of School.

Reports are to be made to the Head of School and may be provided in or oral or written form. However, all reports must be recorded in writing on the Incident Report Form. These individuals may make anonymous reports, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor based solely on an anonymous report.

Disciplinary Consequences and Intervention Programs

The Mountain Village Administration has the discretion to determine appropriate disciplinary consequences and/or interventions for violations of this policy based upon the relevant facts and circumstances in a particular case, including but not limited to the age and maturity of the students involved; the type and frequency of the behavior; a student's willingness to cooperate in the investigation and correct behavior; and the student's prior disciplinary record.

Disciplinary consequences may include, suspension or expulsion from school. In addition, students may be required to participate in education programs, mediation, counseling and/or other programs and/or activities to address and prevent recurrence of bullying and cyber-bullying behavior.

Forms for Reporting Incidents

The School will make available forms for reporting incidents of bullying or cyber-bullying and shall encourage the use of these forms. Incident Report Forms shall be available in the Head of School's office.

Report Handling and Investigation

The Head of School shall notify the parents/guardians of the alleged target(s) and aggressor(s) that a bullying/cyber-bullying report has been made within 48 hours of the report and in accordance with applicable privacy laws, unless it is seemed that a delay in notification would be in the interest of the alleged target(s) and aggressor(s).

An investigation of the bullying/cyber-bullying report will be initiated by the Head of School as soon as possible, but not longer than 5 (five) school days. The Head of School will investigate the report and speak with the target, the aggressor, the reporter and appropriate staff and family members, in order to determine the behavior, special needs, patterns of behavior and any past incidents.

The investigation will be documented through the use of the Incident Report Form, and there will be ongoing communication with the target and aggressor.

Privacy rights of all parties shall be maintained in accordance with applicable laws. The Head of School shall keep a written record of the investigation process.

The Head of School may take interim remedial measures to reduce the risk of further bullying/cyber-bullying, retaliation and/or to provide assistance to the alleged target while the investigation is pending.

The Head of School will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents. Progress monitoring in the form of goal setting and follow up conversations will be maintained through the Head of School in collaboration with the appropriate staff.

The Head of School may consult with the Executive Committee, as appropriate, concerning the investigation and any remedial measures or assistance provided.

The investigation shall be completed within 10 (ten) school days of receipt of the report, if practicable.

If the Head of School substantiates the bullying/cyber-bullying report, he/she shall determine what remedial and/or disciplinary actions should be taken against the

aggressor(s) and determine what further assistance should be provided the target(s), if any.

The Head of School shall inform the target(s), the aggressor(s) and their parents/guardians in writing of the summary of the investigation results and any remedies and/or assistance provided by the school, including strategies for protecting students from retaliation. Such written communication shall be provided as soon as possible but no longer than 10 (ten) school days upon completion of investigation and shall be in compliance with applicable privacy laws.

Appeals

As per our grievance policy, if the student target(s) and/or aggressor(s) remain dissatisfied with the decision by the Head of School, the student or parents/guardians may appeal. Please see the Family & Student Handbook for the *Grievance & Appeal Policy (Appendix E)*.

Annual Report to New Hampshire Department of Education

In the event that there have been any incidents, the Head of School shall prepare and submit an annual report of substantiated bullying/cyber-bullying incidents on the form provided by the New Hampshire Department of Education. Such reports shall not contain personally identifiable information regarding students.

Immunity

Any employee of the school unit or contracted service provider company, regular school volunteer, student or parent/guardian shall be immune from civil liability for good faith conduct arising out of or pertaining to the reporting, investigation, findings, and the development or implementation of any recommended response under this policy.

Policy Dissemination

This policy shall be included in student and employee handbooks. It shall also be provided to employees of any company contracted to provide services directly to students. The policy may also be disseminated by other means as determined by Head of School.

APPENDIX E:

Grievance & Appeal Policy

Mountain Village encourages all concerns and complaints to be resolved at the lowest level possible. When teacher conferences and communication to administration are not able to resolve an issue, a parent or guardian may initiate the grievance procedure to appeal any final decision of school personnel.

Step I – Head of School Conference

A parent or guardian wishing to invoke the grievance procedure shall make a written request for a conference with the Head of School to discuss the grievance and seek resolution. The request shall state in detail the basis for the grievance, name the specific policy, rule or law believed to have been violated, and specify the relief being sought.

The following additional guidelines shall be observed in Step I:

- No grievance will be heard unless it has been filed in writing within thirty (30) calendar days after the act or condition giving rise to the grievance and such filing must state with particularity the basis for the grievance, the policy regulation and/or procedure, rule or law believed to have been violated, and the remedy sought.
- The Head of School shall grant a conference within five (5) school days following receipt of the request. The Head of School will state in writing his/her position on the question to the parent or guardian within five (5) school days following the conference.
- Only the parent, guardian, or someone acting in loco parentis shall be permitted to join or represent a student in the conference with the Head of School.

Step II – Appeal to the Board of Trustees:

If the grievance is not resolved at Step I, the parent/guardian may appeal the Head of School's decision in writing to the Board of Trustees, via the Chair. The following additional guidelines shall be observed.

- The appeal must be made within five (5) days following receipt of the Head of School's written response (Step I above).

- The Board or its designee shall review the grievance within five (5) school days following receipt of the appeal. If the Board or its designee determines that additional time is needed to develop the factual record, the grievance may be put on hold for fifteen (15) additional days (or longer if by mutual agreement) to allow time for investigation.
- A written response shall be made to the parent, guardian, and Head of School from the Board of Trustees or its designee within ten (10) days following the review.
- If after following the Grievance Policy the outcome is not sufficient, the complaint may be submitted in writing to the Commissioner of Education.