HANDBOOK STUDY VERIFICATION

Dear Parent/Guardian,

In order to begin the 2021-2022 school year in a positive, well-informed manner, please complete the following steps:

1. Read the attached Mountain Laurel Montessori School Handbook.
2. Read the statements printed below.
3. Complete, sign and date this form by Monday, September 27, 2021.

I _____ have read
(Please print parent/guardian name: first/last)

the Mountain Laurel Montessori 2020-2021 School Handbook and understand the rules, procedures and scholastic policies by which the school operates. Further, I understand that by supporting the rules and procedures, I contribute positively to the Mountain Laurel community.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Mountain Laurel prides itself in having a joyful community. At times, disagreements may occur between adults. In acknowledging that differing opinions may occur, I have read and understand the Parental Conduct policy set forth on page 9 of the Handbook.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

I have read and understand the new section on Excessive Absenteeism on page 20 of the Handbook.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Name(s): _____ _____

_____ _____

www.mountainlaurelmontessori.org

2021-2022 School Handbook

Phone: (540) 636-4257
Fax: (540)636-4062
P.O. Box 102 (*all correspondence please)*
155 Biggs Drive
Front Royal, VA 22630
info@mlm-school.org

Where Learning is a Way of Life

CONTACT INFORMATION

Mountain Laurel Montessori School
Telephone: (540) 636-4257
Fax: (540) 636-4062
School Hours: 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 102
Front Royal, VA 22630
Location: 155 Biggs Drive, Front Royal, VA (no mail, please)

Office Hours: Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Unless otherwise noted, all staff members may be contacted at
info@mlm-school.org **and** **(540) 636-4257**

Financial inquiries directed to the Business Manager, Rose DiNinno at
rdininno@mlm-school.org **and** **(540) 636-4257**

Monica Nixon	School Co-Director
Margaret DeMato	School Co-Director
Rose DiNinno	Business Manager
Anna Burling	Office Assistant and Records
Odalys Martin	Special Events Coordinator and Licensing

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About This Handbook

The Mountain Laurel Montessori School Handbook provides parents/guardians and students with important and useful information about school policies and procedures. It is shared with families in an effort to offer a greater understanding of the daily routines, policies, and procedures within the school setting.

Parents and guardians are required to read the contents of this Handbook and discuss the policies and procedures with their children as appropriate. Any questions regarding the contents of this handbook should be directed to the school administration.

Disclaimers

The Mountain Laurel Montessori School Handbook is designed to be in harmony with Board policy and mandated regulations. Please be aware that the Handbook is updated annually while policy adoption and revision may occur throughout the year. Policies are used for guidance, and based on MLMS judgement, may not apply in all situations.

Changes in policy that affect portions of the Handbook will be made available to students and parents through newsletters, web pages, and other communication.

COVID-19

School Regulations regarding COVID-19 procedures and policies will be updated throughout the year. In general, we will follow the guidelines issued by the Virginia Department of Education (https://www.doe.virginia.gov/cc/). Major changes will be communicated to families as they arise during the pandemic.

About Mountain Laurel Montessori School

Why Montessori?

A Montessori education is designed to assist children in their task of self-construction as they grow from childhood to mature adult. This approach to life and education is founded upon the principles discovered by Dr. Maria Montessori and that complement the developmental characteristics of the human being.

Our Mission

The mission of Mountain Laurel Montessori School is to provide ideal learning environments for each stage of a child's development, adhering to the guiding principles of the Association Montessori Internationale. Above all, we are committed to an education that guides children to become joyful, lifelong scholars, and engaged, compassionate citizens of our diverse world community.

MLMS Fulfills Its Mission

We are committed to fulfilling our mission by

- Facilitating cooperation and involvement of parents, teachers, students, and the greater community
- Fostering a caring school community that emphasizes respect for one another and celebrates diversity
- Providing an environment that supports lifelong inquiry and exploration

MLMS offers a Montessori Beginnings class for parents/guardians and their children ages 8 weeks through 3 years, and Toddler, Primary and Elementary programs for children from ages 16 months to 6th grade. It is ideal when children begin their Montessori experience by or before age 3, but older children are accepted without prior Montessori experience.

One of the beauties of the Montessori environment is that children with exceptional learning abilities, children with learning differences, and those with physical challenges can fit comfortably into the classroom setting because of multi-age grouping and our individualized approach to instruction. MLMS provides a Montessori environment that is designed and prepared to fit the needs of the child at each stage of development. Each classroom is a rich and exciting environment that supports inquiry-based learning. In this optimal climate, children become active lifelong learners.

Board of Directors

MLMS is a non-profit 501 (c) 3 corporation and in so being, has a board of directors. MLMS is of no religious affiliation. The mission of the MLMS Board of Directors, as stated in the MLMS Articles of Incorporation is to support and uphold the mission statement of the school, providing for a Montessori environment, adhering to the standards of Association Montessori Internationale (AMI). Should you have concerns you would like to share with the Board, you may address them to info@mlm-school.org. The day-to-day operations and classroom policies of the school are the responsibility of the co-directors and staff. The co-directors are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the Montessori environment.

The Board is charged with the ultimate responsibility for financial, legal, and strategic planning and policy issues for MLMS. The Board ensures the integrity of Montessori philosophy within the school by hiring AMI trained and certified teachers. The Board is comprised of experienced individuals whose responsibility is the long-term health and stability of the school.

Our board members are

Kris Boucher (Chairperson)	Monica Nixon	Meg DeMato
Maureen McGowan	Ernie Ryles	

Admissions

Mountain Laurel Montessori School admits students of any race, color, religion, and national or ethnic origin, to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities made available to students at the school.

We may not have immediate openings in some programs; however, when this is the case, submission of an application and application fee ensures that your child will be included on a wait-list to be considered for the next available placement. We prefer that children begin their Montessori experience at or before the age of 3, but older children are accepted without prior Montessori experience.

Decisions for class placement are based on the needs of our learning communities and appropriate age and gender balances.

All inquiries, whether in person, via web or telephone will be processed through the front office.

Annual Giving Campaign and Fundraising Events

It is the continual goal of MLMS to provide

- A loving and supportive Montessori environment for our children
- A low tuition to meet the needs of a diverse population
- A quality Montessori program by attracting and retaining dedicated AMI trained Montessori educators and staff

We strive to meet the needs of our families by keeping tuition low. In order to maintain a quality program and facilities for the students, fundraising is imperative. Gifts to fundraising campaigns and other events, both monetary and in-kind support professional development, financial aid, purchase of classroom materials, program enhancements, and grounds development.

The efforts, time, and enthusiasm of parent volunteers are critical to the success of a school's annual fund and other school-sponsored fundraising activities. We invite all MLMS parents to have fun and meet new people by actively taking part in school fundraisers and events.

MLMS has launched its Annual Giving Campaign to help maintain its current quality of education. Making a donation to the Annual Fund and participating in other fundraisers makes a clear statement when we apply for grants, about the level of commitment families have to MLMS and to a Montessori education. We strive for 100% MLMS community participation. All contributions, regardless of amount, are welcome. MLMS is a 501(c)3 organization and all donations are tax deductible to the extent provided by law.

Our Professional Staff

Please visit our website for more information about our staff and teachers. All teachers are trained according to AMI standards. Staff members working with our children complete a minimum of 16 hours of annual training and continuing education.

Licensed Child Day Center

Mountain Laurel Montessori School is licensed as a Child Day Center under the Virginia Department of Education. MLMS adheres to all licensing standards as stipulated by the Virginia Commonwealth Code for our Toddler, Primary, Before and After Care and Camp programs. Our School undergoes at least two unscheduled inspections annually. The Standards for Licensed Child Day Centers can be found online at https://www.doe.virginia.gov/cc/.

MLMS Tax ID

The MLMS Tax ID is 54-1517985.

Hours of Operation

During the academic school year our Hours of Operation are 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

During scheduled camps our Hours of Operation are 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Age Group or Class	Hours
Before Care (a.k.a. Morning Laurel Club)	7:00 a.m. to start of class
Beginnings	9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Fridays only
Toddler Community (16 months to 3 years)	8:15 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. Half-Day 8:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Full-Day Children may arrive at the school as early as 8:15 a.m.
Primary Morning	8:15 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Primary students with Elementary siblings should arrive at the school at 8:15 a.m.
Primary Full-Day	8:15 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Primary students with Elementary siblings should arrive at the school at 8:15 a.m.
Elementary	8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
After Care (a.k.a Laurel Club)	3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Summer and Holiday Camps	8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Scheduled Closings

Throughout the year, MLMS will be closed for specific holidays and breaks. Please refer to our online calendar for the most up-to-date information regarding scheduled school closings.

Communication

Parent/School Communications

Please be sure all addresses and phone numbers on forms are kept current. Any changes must be made in writing and delivered to the school business office or via email.

Communication is key between school and home and we encourage you to contact us with suggestions, concerns and compliments! Questions or concerns regarding a child's class time activities or behaviors should be directed to the teacher. Policy and administrative questions should be directed to the co-director, Meg DeMato. Financial questions should be directed to the business manager, Rose DiNinno.

There are several ways we may easily communicate with one another:

- In person
- Telephone call
- Email
- Written notes
- Weekly "News Flash" and email updates

In Person

Your thoughts and concerns are important and we wish to address any questions (none too small) you may have as soon as possible. If you wish a mini-conference or even just a quick phone call, please schedule a time by speaking directly with the teacher after dismissal, sending an email, submitting a written request, or by calling the main school number.

In order to respect your child's privacy, any significant issues require a scheduled phone or in-person conference. Teachers WILL NOT be available for discussions during classroom hours, but may be available at other times.

To fully support your child, his or her teacher needs to be aware of important events in your child's life such as births, deaths, separation, divorce, serious illness of a parent or sibling, extended visits from grandparents, absence of a household member, or impending surgery for the child or a family member. Please keep us informed so we may support your child in his or her time of special need.

Phone (540) 636-4257

The school phone will be answered daily from 7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. You may reach any teacher or staff member by phone at the main number. Teachers and administrators have voicemail and if you are unable to reach them in person, you may leave a message with the receptionist, or a voicemail message. Your call will be returned as soon as possible. Teachers will be unavailable by phone during instructional classroom time.

Email info@mlm-school.org

Please direct all questions, requests and notes to info@mlm-school.org unless otherwise communicated by your child's classroom teacher. It is checked each day and your email will be forwarded to the appropriate person who will then respond in a timely manner.

Financial inquiries should be directed to the business manager, Rose DiNinno at rdininno@mlm-school.org or (540) 636-4257.

Family Emails

Please provide us with current email addresses and check your email regularly as email serves as the school's primary communication vehicle to inform parents about upcoming events, schedule changes, teacher correspondence, PTO information, etc. You should check your email at least once a day to see if there is information from the school or from your child's teacher.

Written

Any written communication from parents to the school must be clearly marked as to whom should receive it. In order to assure that it is delivered in a timely manner, please give it directly to a staff member.

Weekly "MLMS News Flash"

An email "News Flash" is sent weekly. It contains important information for parents and families. Other important information is emailed on an as-needed basis.

Text Alert

You can now receive emergency school closings, delays and other important information on your cell phone via text message! You must first sign up from your cell phone. **Remind** is our text alert system. To sign up, please send a text to **81010**. In the message, enter your child's class code from the list below. If you have children in different classes, you may sign up for more than one class group. It is not necessary to download the Remind app on your mobile device.

Mrs. Craft & Mrs. Veitenthal's Classes: **@edg67ac**

Ms. Goodman & Mrs. Irre's Classes: **@94ged63**

Mrs. Nixon's Class: **@36ckf38**

Who to Talk To

Our front office staff will be happy to direct your inquiries to the best resource possible.

For general information and questions please contact the staff in the front office.

For financial questions please contact our business manager, Rose DiNinno.

For classroom questions please contact the respective teacher.

For school policy and programmatic concerns please contact our co-director, Meg DeMato.

Any disputes or concerns that cannot be addressed by the classroom teacher should be directed to Meg DeMato.

Children are Consummate Observers

Children learn from our actions. Our mission to provide a positive environment requires that all communications be direct and forthcoming. When questions or concerns arise, please go through the proper channels at the school as this will eliminate any misunderstandings generated by gossip. Please address your concerns immediately and clearly with a staff member.

We work with our parents to ensure that any concerns are addressed and resolved appropriately.

Please note it is never appropriate

- To discuss an issue with children present unless their presence is necessary
- To discuss someone else's child
- To distribute leaflets or other items through the school without prior, expressed permission from the administration
- To distribute invitations to celebrations or parties in the classroom. (Please use private contact information provided in the School Directory to mail, phone or email invitations.)

Parental Conduct

Mountain Laurel will not tolerate parents, caregivers or visitors exhibiting the following:

- Disruptive behavior which interferes or threatens to interfere with the operation of a classroom, an employee's office, office area or any other area of the school
- Use of loud or offensive language, swearing, cursing, using profane language or displaying temper
- Threats to a member of the staff, visitors, fellow parents or students regardless of whether or not the behavior constitutes a criminal offense
- Open displays of disrespect to any member of staff
- Defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments in communication, either verbal or written (including emails, text/voicemail/phone messages or other written communication) to a member of staff
- Use of physical aggression towards another adult or child. This includes physical punishment against own child on school premises

- Approaches to someone else's child in order to discuss or chastise him/her because of the actions of this child towards their own child (such an approach to a child may be seen to be an assault on that child and may have legal consequences)

Such actions may be grounds for immediate dismissal from Mountain Laurel.

Lost and Found

If items are found without name tags or identification, they will be placed in the "Lost and Found" basket at the end of the school library. Please check this Lost and Found basket regularly. Unclaimed items may be donated at the end of each month. Items frequently not labeled with names include water bottles, winter gloves, hats and jackets. Please be aware that many Primary children are often unable to identify what belongs to them.

Arrival, Dismissal, Before Care & After Care

Parking Lot Traffic

DO NOT PASS VEHICLES IN THE ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL LINE AT ANY TIME. This is a safety issue.

Cars may **ONLY** be parked in designated parking spaces.

Biggs Drive must not be blocked at any time. Please stop at the bottom of the hill, at the MLMS sign. Make sure there are no cars in the roadway between that point and the school's driveway entrance; then proceed with care.

Please refrain from talking or texting on a cell phone while driving in our parking lot or waiting in an arrival/dismissal line.

Please do not park in any driveway or parking spaces that belong to our neighbors.

Arrival Times for Students

Please see arrival and dismissal times listed in the previous table of Hours of Operation.

Unless you have made alternative arrangements with the school office, **your children must arrive and be picked up at the times specified on your enrollment contract**.

Arrival Procedures

This year, Elementary students will be dropped off at the side ramp entrance, as you enter the driveway. They should exit the vehicle on their own. A staff member will be at the door to greet them. Please do not get out of the car with your children.

Primary children will be dropped off at the front of the main building. Please pull up to the front gate so that a staff member can assist your child(ren) getting out of the car. We encourage your child to unbuckle and exit the vehicle through the left door (adjacent to the yard fence). Please do not get out of the car with your child(ren). This is an instructional time and staff members need to be focused on students. A staff member will escort your children to their classrooms.

Toddler families, please park your car and walk your child(ren) through the Toddler courtyard to the front classroom door, where your toddler will ring the bell. For the safety of the students and staff in the parking lot, please be patient and do not pass cars in the car lane.

Additional Elementary Arrival Information: Your child is considered late if arriving in the classroom after 8:15. **If your child is late, he or she must be signed in by an adult** at the office before going to class.

Families who have Before Care contracts for their children: Before Care is offered by contract. Arrive no earlier than 7:00 a.m. Please park and walk your child to the front office door, where he/she will be greeted by a staff member. You must make contact with a staff member. Because of staffing issues, parents must notify the school before any drop-ins can be accommodated.

Dismissal Times for Students

A photo ID (driver's license) will be required of any person who picks up a child from Mountain Laurel unless the caregiver in charge recognizes the person *and* that person is listed on the approved pick-up list signed by the child's parent! Parents should not enter the gates or courtyard at 3:00 and 3:30 dismissals.

Toddler Community: Half-day dismissal time is 11:45 a.m. Full-day dismissal time is 3:30 p.m. Parents please park and come to the courtyard gate.

Primary Class: Dismissal from school for half-day students is 12:00 p.m. We dismiss from the playground or courtyard on fair weather days. Please park in a designated parking place and walk to the playground gate. If it is not feasible for you to come to the playground gate, we walk as a small group to the courtyard gate at 12:05 to meet parents. Dismissal is from the main gate on inclement weather days.

3:00 p.m. dismissal is from the front porch and parents may line up in the queue and step out of the car to get their children at the main gate. Please pull into a designated parking space if you have business inside or would like to speak with a teacher or another parent. We ask that you not leave your car unattended in the carpool line.

All Siblings: Students with older siblings will be dismissed at the latest dismissal time of all the siblings unless special arrangements are made.

Elementary Class: Dismissal time is 3:30 p.m.

A. If you are picking up siblings, please park your car and come to the gate.
B. Parking parents: If you wish to park in order to pick up your Elementary child, please park by 3:25 and meet him/her at the Toddler/courtyard gate. Our staff has an obligation to keep the Elementary pick-up line moving, so please understand that that will be their priority.
C. Car line: Parents pull up in the car to the main entrance/front porch gate to pick up students.

If you are running late to pick up your child, please call the front office.

Bus Riders: The buses depart for Marshall/Warrenton and Winchester at 3:30.

Emergencies: In case of any emergencies such as illness or injury, early closing due to inclement weather, or shelter at school after hours due to inclement weather, natural disaster, or emergency evacuation, we will make every effort to contact you by phone and email as soon as possible to inform you of action taken. We will care for your child until you or your authorized emergency contact provider arrives. A copy of our annually reviewed emergency plan is available in the business office.

Please be aware that the local police and Warren County Sherriff are often monitoring traffic near the intersection of Biggs Drive. We strongly recommend that parents abide by all safety seat regulations regarding the transportation of children, especially regarding the use of car seats.

After Care Contracts

Primary and Elementary students who stay in After Care may be in the woods, on the playground, or in the Elementary classroom. When the weather is pleasant, assume your child will be in the woods or on the playground. When these children are indoors for After Care, please use the Elementary classroom side entrance (the first door as you enter the school driveway) to pick up your child. The door will be locked, but staff members will be monitoring arrivals through the classroom windows.

Toddler students who stay in After Care may be on the playground or in Mrs. Veitenthal's Toddler classroom. When the weather is pleasant, assume your child will be on the playground. When picking up your Toddler child from the classroom, take the path to the rear side of the Toddler building, up the ramp, to the first door. Please knock and a staff member will greet you.

Before taking your child from the premises (woods, playground, etc.), please make contact with the After Care supervisor. If you are not at the school by closing time (6:00 p.m.), your child will still be under our care. However, the following charges will apply after 6:00 p.m.: $20.00 for the first 15 minutes or portion thereof; $1.00 per minute after 6:15 p.m. If your child is not picked up by the time the school has been closed for one full hour and we are unable to contact either parent or an emergency contact person, we will assume an emergency has occurred and will contact either the police or Child Protection Services.

Unplanned Early Dismissal, School Cancellation, Delays

We have no scheduled early release days planned in our calendar this year.

To get updated information about a school delay or closing, several options are available.

Website: www.mountainlaurelmontessori.org Closings and delays will be posted on our website after 6:30 a.m.

Email: We will send alerts via email available after 6:45 a.m. If your email changes during the year, please be sure to update us.

Phone: A message will be available on the school phone after 6:30 a.m. Please continue to check for updates because weather can become worse, requiring us to alter our instructions.

Text Alert: You can now receive emergency school closings, delays and other important information on your cell phone via text message! You must first sign up from your cell phone. **Remind** is our text alert system. To sign up, please send a text to **81010**. In the message, enter your child's class code from the list below. If you have children in different classes, you may sign up for more than one class group. It is not necessary to download the Remind app on your mobile device.

Mrs. Craft & Mrs. Veitenthal's Classes: **@edg67ac**

Ms. Goodman & Mrs. Irre's Classes: **@94ged63**

Mrs. Nixon's Class: **@36ckf38**

Each cell phone on which you want to receive this information must be activated. It's a good idea to let everyone who is likely to pick up or drop off your child know about this convenient way to receive our alerts.

We urge you to activate your cell phone to receive our texts because it will be the fastest way to receive this valuable information. This is especially important for those families whose children ride the bus!

If you have any questions, please contact Anna Burling at 540-636-4257 or aburling@mlm-school.org.

Radio

We no longer use radio stations for announcing delays or closings. Please refer to using one or more of the other sources listed above.

Schedule for Delayed Openings

Please follow the appropriate schedule in the event of a delayed opening:

	Elementary Starts at	Primary and Toddler Start at	Primary Car Pool	Bus Schedule
Two Hour Delay	10:00 a.m.	10:00 a.m.	10:00 - 10:30	Shift times to two hours later

Normal lunch and dismissal schedules are followed.

There is no Beginnings class on delay days.

Transportation, Field Trips & Bus

Car Seats

If you need to leave a child safety seat at school for any reason, please mark it clearly with your child's name and leave it in the front office. The school bears no responsibility for the custody or installation of your child's safety seat in a car. It is the driver's responsibility to ensure that the child is properly secured in a car safety seat/booster seat/seatbelt before driving away from the school.

If a child requires a car seat or booster seat by Virginia law, it is the responsibility of the family to provide the seat for the duration of the school year. The buses are equipped to transport children without the need for a booster seat. However, for children under the age of four, a car seat must be provided by the family. Both booster seats and car seats must be provided for the school van. The car/booster seats will remain on the bus, and are not brought to and from school every day.

Car Seats for Bus Riders: If a child requires a car seat or booster seat by Virginia law, it is the responsibility of the family to provide the seat for the duration of the school year. The buses are equipped to transport children without the need for a booster seat. However, for children under the age of four, a car seat must be provided by the family. Both booster seats and car seats must be provided for the school van. The car/booster seats will remain on the bus, and are not brought to and from school every day.

Field Trips

COVID-19 – All field trips are subject to COVID-19 regulations. Families may decide if they want their child to participate.

MLMS has the ability to transport students on scheduled field trips using our buses and/or van. MLMS complies with all regulations regarding the safety and standards for transporting children as defined by Virginia regulations.

Field trips may be planned for all programs and age groups. In the event that your child will be participating in a scheduled field trip, you will be notified in advance of the destination and program. If car seats are required, parents will be notified.

Bus Service

MLMS provides bus service to Front Royal, Linden, Marshall, Winchester and Stephens City. Bus stops and schedules may be modified each year, depending on the needs of our families using our bus service.

MLMS will make the below stops only when specific arrangements have been made with Rose DiNinno. If you have registered for bus service and not made arrangements to have your child picked up or dropped off at a specific stop, please contact Rose DiNinno.

FRONT ROYAL - WINCHESTER - FREDERICK COUNTY SERVICES

6:50 a.m. - Bus departs from **Winchester Rehabilitation Center (Old Hospital)**

7:10 a.m. - Bus departs from **Costco**

7:30 a.m. - Bus departs from **Dinosaur Land**

7:50 a.m. - Bus departs **Sunoco Gas Station on 522**

8:00 a.m. - Bus arrives at MLMS

3:30 p.m. - Bus departs MLMS

4:00 p.m. - Bus arrives at **Dinosaur Land**

4:20 p.m. - Bus arrives at **Costco**

4:35 - Bus arrives at **Winchester Rehabilitation Center (Old Hospital)**

MARSHALL/WARRENTON - LINDEN SERVICES

7:25 a.m. - Bus departs from the **Warrenton Village Center near Rankin's Hardware**

7:50 a.m. - Bus departs from the **base of Apple Mountain Lake**

8:00 a.m. - Bus arrives at MLMS

3:30 p.m. - Bus departs MLMS

3:40 p.m. - Bus arrives at the **base of Apple Mountain Lake**

4:10 p.m. - Bus arrives at **Marshall Library**

4:30 p.m. - Bus arrives at **Warrenton Village Center**

The buses are equipped with seat belts, and we require their use at all times. Appropriate safe behavior by students is expected on the bus. Unsafe or inappropriate behavior can result in suspension of bus privileges for a student.

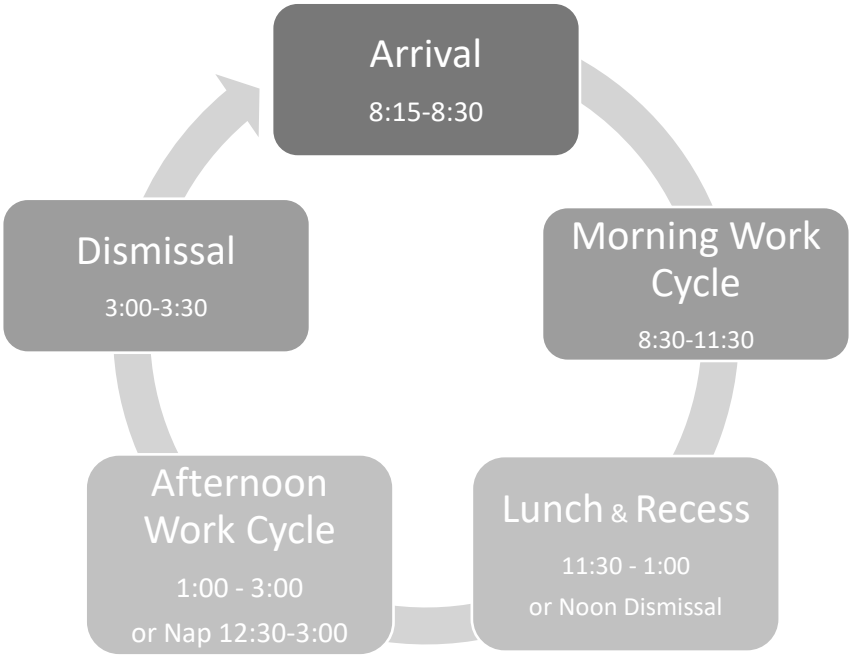
Car Seats for Bus Riders: If a child requires a car seat or booster seat by Virginia law, it is the responsibility of the family to provide the seat for the duration of the school year. The buses are equipped to transport children without the need for a booster seat. However, for children under the age of four, a car seat must be provided by the family. Both booster seats and car seats must be provided for the school van. The car/booster seats will remain on the bus, and are not brought to and from school every day.

Daily Routines

Daily Routine: Toddler & Primary

Routines are very important for children's health, well-being, and understanding of the world around them. Most days Toddler and Primary children will follow this approximate pattern. A general daily routine is posted inside each classroom near the door. A list of snacks that have been provided to the Toddler and Primary students can be found in their classrooms.

Our Primary and Toddler Work Cycle:



Afternoon Nap

After lunch a nap period is provided for all preschool-age children. A staff member will coordinate with supplies needed at the beginning of the year. Mats and linens are provided by the school.

Special Programs

COVID-19 regulation may alter our plans.

School Plays & Performances: All families, friends and relatives are invited to come and enjoy our performances. You do not have to be a parent of a participating student to enjoy our community events.

- School performances are generally given at the end of our fall session before the winter holiday break, and at the end of the year during our graduation ceremony.
- We typically have a winter performance and two plays during the year. Our 1st through 3rd grades perform a Greek play, and our 4th through 6th graders perform a Shakespeare play every year.

Grandparents' and Special Friends' Day: We open our classrooms once a year for grandparents and special friends. Our guests are invited to tour our school and spend time participating with the students in their classrooms. Please see our school calendar and email communications for more about this special event.

Going-Outs: Elementary students are allowed to participate in a special program called "Going-Out." This is a special topic-driven outing based specifically upon research currently being conducted by a student or group of students. The entirety of the outing is planned and organized by the student(s). Parents will be notified and permission forms will be provided in the event that a student or students wish to pursue this opportunity.

Snacks, Food and Lunches

Snacks and Lunch

****MLMS is a PEANUT-FREE Environment****

Mountain Laurel Montessori School is a peanut-free environment. Do not send food items prepared with peanuts or peanut products.

Please do not send in any snack items to share that contain nuts or nut products.

We do not allow candy or gum. Candy included in pre-packaged lunches will be sent home with your student.

Snacks: For Toddler and Primary classrooms, teachers will provide information to parents at the beginning of the year as to the dates of their responsibility for providing snack for their child's classroom and the number and amount of servings. A daily log of foods served is posted in each child's classroom and this information is retained for at least one week.

Toddler Lunch: Monday-Friday the children prepare their own snacks and lunch under the guidance of a teacher or assistant.

Primary Lunch: All children who stay past noon bring a lunch from home in an insulated lunch box and a reusable water bottle. All items should be clearly marked with the child's name, and VA licensing requires that **the lunch box must be labeled with the current date each day**. (This can be written on a piece of masking tape.) No item should display images of superhero/cartoon characters. Please place a clean, cloth napkin, tea towel, or placemat in your child's lunch box every day. Please include a protein and something fresh. Candy and juices are not permitted.

Elementary Lunch: All children need to have a clean cloth napkin or tea towel in their lunch container. Please clearly mark lunch containers with your child's name. Lunch should include a protein food and something fresh. Please go easy on the sweets. Elementary children should bring a refillable water bottle each day clearly marked with the student's name.

After Care: Children in After Care should bring a healthy snack in addition to their lunch. The snack container or lunch box must be clearly labeled with the child's name, and VA licensing requires that **the container must be labeled with the current date each day**. (This can be written on a piece of masking tape.) Children are often encouraged to snack on unfinished lunch items if they are still hungry and have no additional snack.

Forgotten Lunches

For children who arrive at school without a lunch, Mountain Laurel will attempt to contact the parent(s) to determine if they will be able to bring something by 11:30. If the parent(s) cannot be reached, or if they would prefer, a lunch will be provided from a selection offered by the school. Parents will be billed accordingly.

Dress Code/Uniform Policies

Please mark all student clothing and belongings with their name in permanent marker.

Unmarked items that are not claimed in a reasonable amount of time will be donated to the school uniform pool or given to Goodwill.

ALL STUDENTS

Articles of clothing should be neat, clean, and of proper fit and length. Please keep in mind that this is an active and involved environment, and although we have the children wear aprons when engaged in messy activities, sometimes accidents are unavoidable. Therefore, be advised that children at Mountain Laurel are at risk for staining their clothing while engaged in activities in our learning environments!

- **Shorts, skirts and jumpers** must be at least **knee length**. Leggings, tights or gym/bike shorts should be worn underneath skirts and jumpers. No cut-offs.
- Midriffs, shoulders, and undergarments must be covered at all times.
- Revealing and tight-fitting clothing and tank tops are not permitted.
- Pants must be worn at the waist and shirts must remain tucked or fully cover the waistband of the pants.
- Elementary students should not wear leggings or tights as pants (unless worn under a knee length solid-colored skirt or dress).
- Clothing must not promote drugs, alcohol, sexual innuendo, or anti-religious messages or be offensive to members of the school or wider communities.
- Clothing, jewelry, or hairstyles that are deemed unsafe, inhibit movement, or are **excessively distracting** to the community or the individual are not acceptable (ex. Mohawk).
- No make-up may be worn.
- **No unnatural colors of hair dye used.**
- Make-up (including flavored/colored lip gloss) may not be in a student's possession either on the bus or on school property.
- (Primary) No jewelry or watches of any kind (post style pierced earrings OK)
- (Elementary) Jewelry is to be limited to conservative earrings (post style), necklaces, bracelets and watches.
- Sturdy shoes or sneakers only. **No flashing light, gaming, or wheely shoes permitted**.
- Rain/snow boots that stay on the feet should be worn in inclement weather.
- A pair of rubber-soled slippers or indoor shoes only with backs and toes covered must be worn in the classroom.
- A large backpack capable of holding your child's lunchbox and papers/projects should be carried to and from school every day.
- Purses are not allowed at school.
- Shorts may be worn only when the outside temperature is 50^{o} F or above. If it is warmer out, but with the wind chill factor the temperature is 50^{o} F or below, shorts may NOT be worn.
- Hats or hoods may not be worn indoors.

Toddler Community and Primary Class Dress Code: All children wear rubber-soled slippers in the classroom. We ask that slippers, clothing, outerwear, backpacks and lunchboxes be simple and ***generic, without representations of commercial/fantasy characters*****. All items worn or brought to school should have your child's name clearly marked in permanent ink.**

Young children are just learning how to dress themselves. Please send your child in clothing with fasteners that he/she can easily manipulate. Pants should be easy for the child to pull up and down. Shirts need to have wide openings so your child can pull them on without frustration. If at all possible, please send your child in shoes that

he/she can put on and take off without much assistance. Velcro fasteners and large buckles are great ways to give your child practice with fasteners.

Children must wear shoes appropriate for outdoor activities—sneakers or hiking boots for days when the weather is pleasant and the ground is dry, rain boots for days that are rainy or muddy, and snow boots, snow pants, and gloves or mittens for days when there is snow on the ground. For Toddlers and Primary students, because of the obvious strangulation hazard, **scarves may not be worn or brought to school.** Rain jackets with hoods are encouraged. Children may not bring umbrellas to school.

Elementary Uniform Policy and Dress Code

Dress code for "ALL STUDENTS" applies to students in Elementary. Please see below for additions.

If your child arrives to school and is out of dress code, we will help him/her to change into appropriate attire.

Shirts & Tops:

- Mountain Laurel Logo Shirts – Any approved style shirt (short or long-sleeved polos, turtlenecks, oxfords, blouses, tees, sweaters or sweatshirts) may be ordered from the Lands' End uniform catalog in the following colors: gray heather, any blue or evergreen. Uniform shirts must have the Mountain Laurel logo and the logo must be embroidered. Please use the preferred school code: **900101627**.

ALLOWED	NOT ALLOWED
• MLMS logoed solid colors only: **gray, any blue or evergreen** • MLMS logoed sweaters, sweatshirts, hoodies, vests (in the above approved colors) • Solid-colored, long-sleeved shirts of the approved school colors may be worn under the unformed shirt, but the under shirt must be tucked in. • When children go out to play during colder weather, attire for outdoor play does not have to have a school logo, but should maintain the standards of general dress code policies.	• Multicolored, or any colors not listed as approved, unless it is an approved style of shirt from Lands' End. • While inside: jackets, coats, sweaters, sweatshirts or hoodies without a MLMS logo. • Striped or patterned shirts under uniformed shirts • Non-approved colors under uniform shirts (ex. red, orange, purple, pink, etc). • Anything exposing a midriff, shoulders or undergarments

Bottoms & Dresses:

- Approved colors of pants, slacks, shorts, capris, skirts or leggings: khaki, black, dark brown, or navy.
- Approved colors of dresses: khaki, blue or evergreen
- Solid-colored biker shorts should be worn under skirts and dresses (children are often working on the floor and sitting cross-legged)

ALLOWED	NOT ALLOWED
• Corduroys • Knee length or longer • Solid-colored approved colors • Solid-colored leggings or tights under dresses and skirts in the above specified school colors	• Jeans • Sweatpants or sports attire • Anything shorter than knee length • Plaids, patterns, or multicolored • Miniskirts over leggings • Leggings as pants • Multicolored or non-uniform colored leggings

Patterned shirts or leggings may not be worn under uniform shirts or skirts/dresses.

- **No Uniform Days**: In the event that MLMS offers a non-uniform day for Elementary students as a fund-raising event, children are required to follow the uniform guidelines that apply to all students. Jeans may be worn.

Student Health

Student Absences

Should a student be unable to attend for any reason, please contact the school at (540) 636-4257 by 7:30 a.m.

If your student rides the bus, please contact the bus driver in the morning, directly (on his or her cell phone) and email the bus driver directly at transportation@mlm-school.org to let him/her know your child will not be riding the bus. Please do this each day your child will not be on the bus.

Excessive Absenteeism

Excessive absenteeism is considered 10 percent of the number of school days available to your child, which means that if a child is regularly missing 2 days per month, it is likely that his or her school performance will suffer. Research shows us that children who are chronically absent are significantly at risk for dropping out of high school, developing long-term health issues, and exhibiting dangerous adolescent behaviors. We have certainly observed in our classrooms that children who are excessively absent and/or tardy, have a harder time sustaining their interest in learning. It is impossible for them to complete a series of lessons on a particular subject or concept. They also have a harder time feeling like they belong to the group. If your child misses 15 or more days this school year, they may not necessarily be promoted to the next grade the following year or when starting at a new school.

Medication Information

Mountain Laurel prefers not to administer medications on a daily basis. Please work with your child's physician to utilize options that would allow your child to take his/her medications at home.

MLMS must be made aware of any medications that are to be administered during the day. Please do not send any medications to school in lunchboxes, backpacks, etc. All medications must be submitted through the front office.

We may not administer any medication or apply insect repellant, sunscreen, diaper ointment or cream to your child without a release form that may be picked up in the front office or business office. Please fill out the form indicating dosage and duration of treatment (up to 10 days per form). *Medication required for chronic conditions (past 10 days) must be accompanied by an authorization form signed by the child's physician.*

MAT Certified Staff

MLMS maintains staff who are certified to administer medications after completing approved Medications Administration Training (MAT). Certified staff are trained to administer oral, topical, inhaled, and emergency medications such as Epi Pens. We do not administer diabetic or rectal medications.

Medication Forms

What is an OTC Medication (over-the-counter-medication)?

In addition to commonly thought-of over-the-counter medications, the Department of Education considers sunscreen, bug spray, hand lotion, hand sanitizer and lip balm over-the-counter medications, and therefore requires certain medication authorization forms be completed for their application at school.

Medication Forms: Three different types of medication authorization forms are provided at Mountain Laurel: one for specific types of over-the-counter medications such as bug spray or hand lotion, one for medications dealing with illness (chronic or short term), and one for special field trip authorization. These forms are available on our website under "Parent's Corner." You may also request them from the front office. Please contact the front office with any questions you have regarding which form to use or when.

Medications for Field Trips: A special medication authorization is required for field trips. This form will be included as an attachment in any emailed field trip notification. You may also request this form from the front office.

All medication must be in the original container, labeled with the child's name, dosage amount, and times to be given. It will be kept in a locked safety sack. Any medications that require refrigeration will be placed in a locked container and stored in the school refrigerator. If your child's medication needs to go home with him/her, it is your responsibility to pick it up in the office.

Illnesses: If your child is not to participate in physical activities because of illness or injury, please submit a note with your instructions to the front office. Also, please notify the school within 24 hours if your child or anyone in your immediate family contracts a serious illness or communicable disease, such as the following:

- Varicella (Chickenpox)
- Cryptosporidiosis
- German Measles (Rubella)
- COVID-19
- Infectious Hepatitis
- HIV/AIDS
- Impetigo
- Enterobius (Pinworm)
- Measles (Rubeola)
- Meningitis
- Mumps
- Pediculosis (Lice)
- Rotavirus Infections
- Salmonella
- Scabies
- Scarlet Fever
- Shigellosis (Dysentery)
- Tinea Corporosis (Ringworm)
- Whooping Cough
- Influenza

Illnesses at School: If the staff of Mountain Laurel Montessori School deems it necessary for a child to be removed from the classroom due to illness or injury, the parent has agreed to the following:

- The child will be picked up by him/her or someone designated by him/her within one hour of notification
- The child will not return to school until the child's condition has improved so that he/she is no longer contagious as evidenced by the following:
    - The child has not vomited within 24 hours of the last incident
    - The child does not have a fever of over 100 degrees (without the use of fever-reducing medications, such as Tylenol, etc.)
    - The child is able to participate in the normal activities of the school day.

Child Abuse: As mandated reporters, each staff undergoes Child Abuse Recognition and Intervention Training. We are required by law to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect to the Virginia Department of Social Services.

Observations, Conferences, Evaluations, Testing, Transcripts

Parent/Guardian Observations & Visits

Toddler, Primary and Elementary observational visits are typically encouraged. We usually begin observations in mid-October. We will let you know when and if we are able to have observations this year.

Parents of toddlers are encouraged to take their own children home after they complete the observation.

Please contact classroom teachers for additional guidelines about classroom observations.

Parents will have other opportunities to visit MLMS during parent and family events as well as volunteer opportunities. We encourage you to attend as many of these special events as possible. Sharing time with our community during these occasions provides valuable insights into our program and the nature of our work. A custodial parent/guardian always has the right to be admitted to the school whenever his/her child is in attendance.

Virginia Custodial Rights of Admission

MLMS will not deny access to any legal guardian of a student to our school.

All legal documents relating to custody should be submitted to the school office for our records.

Conferences & Student Evaluations

SCHOOL IS CLOSED for conference dates. Please respect our teachers' time by scheduling your conference on the date set aside for this purpose. Dates are published far in advance so that parents may make arrangements with their work for the time off. Parent-teacher conferences are held in late fall and spring. Additional conferences can be held throughout the year at the request of parents, teachers or students.

Toddler and Primary: A written or oral report of your child's lessons and achievements in various developmental and/or academic areas is provided twice per year at the parent conferences held in late fall and spring.

Elementary: Written reports are provided at the end of November and March. An end-of-the-year letter will be provided in early June.

IOWA Testing

Optional Iowa testing, administered in November, is offered for students in grades 4 through 6. Test prep books are available. Costs for the Iowa Test and test prep book are noted on our Fee Schedule.

Transcript Requests

When a student leaves Mountain Laurel Montessori School, school transcripts will be sent after the final reports are completed. Transcripts will be held if there are any outstanding financial obligations or fees. Transcript requests can be mailed to our P.O. Box or faxed to our business office.

Security and Discipline

Campus Security

The buildings of Mountain Laurel remain locked at all times allowing for unobstructed egress, and security cameras are placed on the premises. All parents and visitors must enter through the main entrance during regular school hours and sign in at the front desk before visiting any other part of the campus.

Children must be supervised by an adult at all times while outside the buildings. If you bring your child to school at a time when a staff member is not outside to greet him/her, you must park your car and escort your child to the front office or classroom.

Firearms

Firearms are prohibited on school property and school buses.

Smoke-Free Environment

Mountain Laurel Montessori School is a smoke-free environment.

Emergency Plan

Our Emergency Plan is updated annually and a copy is kept in every classroom, office and vehicle. In the event of an emergency, our families will be notified via our text alert system, and any protocols will be posted then. Fire Drills are conducted monthly, and Shelter-in-Place drills are conducted at least twice a year.

We invite our families to review our Emergency Plan so that they have a better understanding of our protocols during an emergency situation. An electronic copy will be made available to those who request it.

If electronic communication is unavailable, and if we are required to evacuate the campus, our meeting place will be the Moose Lodge across the street.

Classroom Community, Conflict Resolution & Discipline

A Montessori environment nurtures a child's sense of responsibility, cooperation and fairness. Teachers and older students serve as models and guides for appropriate behavior. This helps new and younger students learn the rules and expectations in the classroom in a positive way, eliminating many conflicts. At all levels, teachers devote a great deal of time in lessons of grace and courtesy that allow children to practice consideration for their teachers and friends. Age-appropriate techniques in conflict resolution are taught and practiced on a daily basis to develop empathy and to empower students to speak for themselves with confidence and integrity.

If a child fails to cooperate with peers or adults and his/her behavior becomes disruptive and/or dangerous, we will allow the child some time away from classmates yet supervised by an adult until the child regains control and is ready to participate cooperatively. Behavior that seriously frightens or endangers the community or its members will be cause for immediate dismissal from the program. Weapons and threats are against school policy and will be cause for suspension or dismissal.

At no time will MLMS use physical punishment, confinement, peer punishment, or demeaning remarks. We will never withhold food or rest, or administer unpleasant or harmful substances. Toileting accidents are never punished.

Items to and from Home and School

Toys, candy, gum, weapons, etc. are not permitted at school. Items of interest such as a rock collection, books, flowers, etc. are welcome. Your child may also bring wildlife (including animals); however please obtain permission from your child's teacher **before** bringing a live creature to school. The teacher needs notice in order to make any necessary preparations. The school and staff cannot take responsibility for the safety or whereabouts of items brought from home.

Computer and Internet Use

The older Elementary students at our school will use a filtered Internet. Any student bypassing or attempting to bypass this filter will thereafter be forbidden use of the Internet. All Internet use at the school will be public and for academic use only; no social or recreational use of the Internet is allowed.

Electronic Devices Provided by the School

MLMS offers filtered public Wi-Fi. Learning about being held accountable for the responsibilities of both school-owned technology and personally owned electronic devices is an important part of preparing students to be successful in the future. To preserve the community atmosphere, students are not allowed to use cell phones or other electronic devices during school sponsored events, i.e. dinners, picnics, etc.

Parents of students in grades 4 through 6 will be required to read and sign a written contract regarding the expectation of use of personal devices in the school setting.

Personal electronic devices such as cell phones, Kindles, e-readers, iPads, etc. are not allowed at school or on field trips.

Resources

Parent Resource Library

A “Parent Resource Library” is available for parents. We have a small collection of books by Dr. Montessori and other child development experts. We also have parenting books and tapes available. Your child’s teacher is an excellent resource for recommendations. Visit the front office if you would like to borrow any items from our Parent Resource Library.

Student Library

The student library is located in the main building along the inside corridor that connects the handicapped entrance to the Toddler courtyard. Students have access to the library with their teacher’s permission and books are for in-school use only.

Social Media

Mountain Laurel Montessori school maintains a presence on Facebook. Please refer to this site for short posts and pictures of happenings at our school.

School Calendar

Our school calendar can be found on our website. Please check it frequently for postings of field trips and special events. We do not provide a printed calendar because of additions or changes that occur throughout the year. Please be sure to refer to our email communications in order to keep up to date with our scheduled events.

Website

Our school website, www.mountainlaurelmontessori.org will always have the most up-to-date version of the School Handbook, School Directory and useful information about upcoming events. To access these secure documents, go to the For Parents page, click Parent Access and enter the password **caring**.

Finances

Tuition and Fee Payments, Contract Changes

All questions regarding contract changes and payments must be directed to our business manager, Rose DiNinno at rdininno@mlm-school.org or (540) 636-4257.

Re-enrollment contracts are sent to parents in early February each year, with a return due date of early March. Annual payments may be made directly to MLMS by the due date stated in the contract. Semi-annual or monthly payments must be made through our tuition management company, FACTS Tuition Management. The link for FACTS may be found on our website. Please see the re-enrollment letter for more detailed instructions.

NO CASH PAYMENTS please. We are not equipped to secure cash payments.

Volunteer Service Hours Agreement

Parents have the option of giving 20 hours or more of volunteer activity or paying a $200 fee.

There will be a variety of ways to sign up for activities or services, and log your service hours. More information will be provided in our News Flash and/or Friday Folders.

A record of service hours is maintained by the school and reports of hours completed will be emailed to parents three times a year with a summary report at the end of June. Hours completed between July 1st of each school year and June 30th of the same school year are credited for that current school year.

Up to 3 hours of attendance at a parent education event count toward volunteer service hours.