Family Handbook
2026-2027

Revised July 5, 2026

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Nurture the child. Empower the student. Unleash the Potential.

Oak Grove is committed to developing a strong sense of community in which every member feels valued. We welcome diversity in our staff and student body and promote access and equity with respect to backgrounds of race, creed, cultural heritage, political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation, gender orientation, national/ethnic origins or abilities. We expect that individual beliefs and feelings will be shared and valued and conflicts acknowledged, explored and peacefully resolved. Curriculum at Oak Grove is rich and varied with emphasis on multicultural and anti-bias learning. We educate to broaden students' views of themselves, local, social and global communities. We strive to strengthen understanding in the Oak Grove community about issues of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, gender identity, equity, peace and social justice through professional development and a variety of community activities.

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Head of School Welcome

Dear Oak Grove Families,

We are so pleased to welcome you for the 2026-2027 school year at Oak Grove Montessori School. Families have more choices than ever when exploring school options for their children. You have chosen something unique, where each day your child has the opportunity to experience connected learning, where their need for independence and autonomy is honored, while also fostering a collaborative community predicated on strong relationships of respect. We truly appreciate your commitment to our school community and values. Thank you for entrusting the guidance of your children's educational journey to our exceptional Montessori teachers and staff.

This Family Handbook sets out to support your family's experience in our school community. Please rely on it as a reference, but also know that our faculty and staff are here to guide you and answer questions as needed.. We welcome your feedback and are happy to provide clarification or assistance finding additional support.

We are available to discuss your child's development, the curriculum, specific projects, and/or your role in our school. We hope that all family members become connected to our school community. I look forward to supporting your child's Montessori journey with our dedicated faculty and staff, here at Oak Grove.

"The child who has felt a strong love for their surroundings and for all living creatures, who has discovered joy and enthusiasm in work, gives us reason to hope that humanity can develop in a new direction."
– Dr. Maria Montessori, *Education and Peace*

Thank you for choosing to be a part of something bigger than all of us. We are grateful for the unique gifts your family brings to Oak Grove and look forward to this partnership.

With gratitude,



Leela Pahl
Head of School

Introduction

History of Oak Grove Montessori School

The story of Oak Grove Montessori School is a story of a vision for our children and the growth of our community. It is Maria Montessori's story. It is our founding parents' story. It is also your story.

Founded in 1981 by a group of parents, Oak Grove opened with one lower elementary classroom in a rented space in Willimantic, CT. By 1984, this intrepid group had purchased land and built our current facility in Mansfield, CT, expanding to include an upper elementary classroom. In 1987, a third classroom was added to accommodate the newly formed primary classroom. In 2003, a large addition was added to the building, doubling the size. This addition gave us the room to add parent space, a health room, a conference room, office space, and a new upper elementary classroom.

Oak Grove is a non-profit corporation governed by a Board of Trustees consisting of parents, staff, community representatives and the Head of School. Oak Grove is affiliated with the American Montessori Society and the Montessori Schools of Connecticut. It is an accredited member of the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools.

Now in its 45th year, the school sustains its commitment to work to meet the educational needs of children. Dedicated board members, volunteers, and staff have contributed to accomplishing our goals. The leadership of the school comes from a combination of staff, families, and volunteers. Many former board members, staff and families continue to serve in an advisory capacity. This blending of past and current members helps to guide the school's evolution.

Our Mission

Nurture the child.
Empower the student.
Unleash the potential.

Our Philosophy

We will be accessible to a diverse community of children. We will be guided by Montessori methods and philosophy:

- Encouraging the development in each child a positive self-image
- Creating an awareness of the world around them
- Supporting an awareness of their own feelings
- Supporting a sensitivity to the feelings of others
- Fostering a lifelong love of learning through the development

of self-discipline and independence
- Developmental needs of children are universal and transcend cultural differences
- Children have within them a natural urge to explore and discover the world around them and find joy in learning when they are actively engaged in the learning process
- Children learn best when competencies are fostered through repetitive, successful experiences and failures are de-emphasized
- Children internalize concepts and skills at their own pace
- Children learn best in an environment of mutual respect and one that provides opportunities for cognitive, social, emotional, moral and physical growth
- Children need opportunities to make choices. These choices foster independence, self-esteem, and self-discipline
- Multi-age grouping provides opportunities for peer teaching, sharing and natural development
- A multi-sensory approach maximizes learning because it provides for individual learning styles
- We will utilize resources effectively, responsibly and creatively
- Family involvement will be a key component in supporting the operation of the school
- A balance between existing and new programs will be respected
- We will be realistic about available resources. We will be creative in developing new and expanded resources
- Community interaction will expand and diversify our program

Our Goals and Objectives

- To guide children in their natural development
- To provide rich experiences
- To stimulate growth and socialization
- To provide tools to help acquire skills
- To foster independence
- To encourage creativity
- To create a love of learning
- To develop the child's potential to the fullest

Accreditations

Oak Grove is a member of the Montessori Schools of Connecticut and is an American Montessori Society Verified School as part of the AMS Pathways to Continuous Improvement. Oak Grove is fully accredited by the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools (CAIS).

Contact Information

Administrative Contacts
Main Office: 860-456-1031

Head of School: Leela Pahl
leela@ogms.org
207.613.6262 Google Voice

Business Manager: Sherry D'Alessandro
sherry@ogms.org

Administrative Assistant: Cindy Henry
cindy@ogms.org

Damaris Carrero, R.N.
nurses@ogms.org

office@ogms.org - Reach the office team for general inquiries; this group email will reach Cindy, Sherry, and Leela

Oak Grove Montessori School Board of Trustees
Board@ogms.org
Oak Grove Montessori School Board Chair
BoardChair@ogms.org

Classroom Team Contacts

These group emails reach your child's teaching team, so that either faculty member may view it.

Primary: Primary@ogms.org
Lower Elementary: LE@ogms.org
Upper Elementary: UE@ogms.org
Extended Care: ExtendedCare@ogms.org

Classroom Faculty and Support Staff

Primary Classroom
KC Carrancio, Lead Teacher
kc@ogms.org

Sabrina Muccino-Salgado, Co-Assistant Teacher
sabrina@ogms.org

Lower Elementary Classroom
Roxana Mocanu, Lead Teacher
roxana@ogms.org

Maribeth Holer, Assistant Teacher
maribeth@ogms.org

Upper Elementary Classroom
Rachael DeHay, Lead Teacher
rachael@ogms.org

Chris Baldwin, Co-Teacher, Learning Support Specialist
chris@ogms.org

Extended Care
Heather Armstrong, After Care Teacher & Primary Afternoon Assistant
heather@ogms.org

Julie Giannelli, Morning & After Care Teacher and Classroom Support
julie@ogms.org

Extracurriculars
Yoga
Tami Toscano, Yoga Instructor & Substitute Teacher
tami@ogms.org

Music
Derek Waldron
waldronsstudio88@gmail.com

Support Staff
Joe Henry, Facilities Manager

Board of Trustees Overview

Support of Oak Grove's mission and long-range goals is essential to the life of the school. Although the school is a non-profit corporation and the Head of School directs its daily operation and teacher-student relations, Oak Grove's families are our mission's advocates within our school community and the community at large. The Board, comprised of current and alumni parents and community representatives, works to ensure the fiscal well-being of the school and to support its growth in concert with the mission statement. These are volunteer positions.

The Board of Trustees consists of 9-13 members, each serving a minimum 3 year term. Our volunteer Board is responsible for setting strategic direction and ensuring that the organization has the necessary resources to achieve its goals. The Board is also responsible for ensuring that the organization operates within legal and ethical guidelines. Trustees meet most months to work as a group, and also work in committees. If you are interested in volunteering as a trustee on the board or joining a committee, we invite you to contact the Committee on Trustees, CoT@ogms.org, to find out more.

2026-2027 Board of Trustees Oak Grove Montessori School

Katie Roy, Chair *(2nd term, ending 2028)*

Victoria Bachiochi, Vice Chair *(1st term, ending July 2029)*

Brandon St Jean,Treasurer *(Serving 1st term, ending July 2027)*

Matt Coolbeth, Secretary *(Serving 2nd term, ending July 2027)*

Emily Potz *(Serving 1st term, ending July 2027)*

Jocelyn Santiago, *(1st term, ending July 2028)*

Rachel Timm *(Serving 1st term, ending July 2029)*

Nancy Rawn, *(1st term, ending July 2029)*

Chris Ciarcia, *(1st term, ending July 2029)*

The Board of Trustees may be contacted via Board@ogms.org; this group email reaches all Trustees of the Board. Communication specifically for the Chair should be sent to BoardChair@ogms.org.

Educational Programs and Montessori Education

Student's Rights and Responsibilities

Student's Rights

- The right to be safe
- The right to work
- The right to use materials in good condition
- The right to listen in a group
- The right to talk
- The right to walk around
- The right to concentrate
- The right to a clean environment

Student's Responsibility

- To help comfort and protect people
- To cooperate and to use good manners
- To choose work you know how to do
- To raise your hand in a group to talk
- To use a quiet speaking voice
- To walk slowly and carefully
- To let people work and play undisturbed
- To help clean and maintain the environment

Montessori Philosophy of Education

Oak Grove offers an education based on the Montessori Method. This method, developed by Dr. Maria Montessori over 100 years ago, teaches the child how to learn independently and joyfully by providing a stimulating curriculum in a multi-aged "prepared environment." The prepared environment is a carefully arranged classroom that offers specially designed hands-on learning materials, displayed and easily accessible. The setting encourages independence in learning and allows children to develop at their own pace. The Montessori philosophy respects and embraces the natural world and the full view of cultures, knowledge, and arts. It respects both the individual and the community in its efforts to provide a well-rounded education with the following emphasis:

- **Intellectual:** Hands-on material and teacher-facilitated learning create a stimulating curriculum, responsive to individual learning styles and developmental stages. This enables the child to be both the student and the teacher; it fosters order, independence, and

creativity. This provides a strong basis for scholastic ability and for optimizing intellectual potential.

- **Social:** Adults and children in multi-age classrooms act as models and encourage appropriate choices and behaviors that honor the feelings of self and others. This demonstrates mutual respect for members of the classroom, school, and global communities. It also builds qualities of leadership and group contributions.

- **Physical:** Participation in play, fine and gross motor activities**,** fitness and performing arts reinforces the mind-body connection and enhances agility.

- **Creative:** Exposure to visual and performing arts strengthens and enhances intellectual and cultural development.

- **Moral:** Opportunities exist to learn and use ethical judgment and civility within the order of the classroom. With this, universal values such as respect, responsibility, honesty, self-discipline, compassion, perseverance, and loyalty are supported.

Oak Grove is dedicated to the Montessori philosophy and method of education. The aim is to enable a child to function in the environment independently. The underlying principle is one of freedom within established limits, which permits the child to gain self-esteem and self-reliance. With the close guidance of Montessori trained teachers, a child attending our school will be exposed to this method which promotes the development of the whole child and cultivates the child's own natural joy in learning.

The Role of the Montessori Teacher

The Montessori teacher's role is that of a facilitator and guide. The teacher must prepare and organize appropriate learning material to meet the needs and interests of each child in the class.

The teacher has four main goals:

- *to awaken the child's spirit and imagination,*
- *to encourage the child's normal desire for independence and sense of self-esteem,*
- *to help develop the kindness and self-discipline that will allow the child to become a full member of society,*
- *and to help the child learn how to observe, question and explore ideas independently.*

Another important function of the teacher is to set reasonable limits and foster responsibility in each child.

These guidelines must be true to the child's sense of fairness and consistent with values and attitudes outside of the school environment and respond to their developmental needs. In order to meet these goals, the teacher must serve as a coach, mentor, and friend.

The Classes

Oak Grove classes are organized into a series of three-year age groupings; The Children's House is for children between the ages of 2.9 and 6 years. The Lower Elementary classroom is designed for 6-9-year-olds and the Upper Elementary for 9-12-year-olds. Working with each student for three years allows the teacher to develop a deep understanding of that individual's talents, needs, personality and learning style. Spending three years in each classroom allows the student to explore new information and revisit familiar material with the perspective of that newly acquired knowledge. The child will take on different roles in the classroom as they grow through the three years. All of these classroom elements contribute to the development of self-discipline. Providing an environment that meets a child's need for exploring, learning and developing at their own rate socially, physically, and intellectually, greatly lessens the need for teacher-imposed discipline.

The Curriculum

Oak Grove's core curriculum is based on Maria Montessori's philosophy, methods, and material. The children's special interests and the individual teacher's unique talents, resources and experiences then extend this curriculum. Our students graduate from Oak Grove with exposure to the necessary academic "basics," and beyond. They acquire a broad background in the cultural subjects and an enthusiasm and curiosity that contributes to their lasting status as a lifelong learner.

The presentation of the curriculum is based on the students' natural developmental stages and sensitive periods of learning. In the Children's House at the preschool level, the children need to discover through their hands and their senses, in an ordered environment with lots of repetition. The Lower Elementary (6-9) students need their imaginations sparked and lots of variation in materials as they move toward a more abstract level of learning. The Upper Elementary (9-12) students are ready for a still more advanced level of research and responsibility. Throughout these stages and sensitive periods, we encourage self-direction, decision-making, problem-solving, and community involvement.

Although the curriculum is divided into three different age groupings, in reality, it overlaps into the different classes to meet the individual needs of all students. The curriculum revolves, as in a

spiral, each level returning to a more in-depth, detailed exploration of major curriculum areas already presented at a lower level.

This interdisciplinary curriculum stresses the interrelated nature of the information shared, which encompasses broad areas: practical life, language, mathematics, and cultural studies. Library work, physical education, music, and art are closely integrated into the curriculum.

Practical Life

The purpose of practical life activities is to promote independence and self-reliance through gaining competence in many everyday adult skills.

At the 3-6 level, these activities help develop eye-hand coordination, gross and fine motor skills, concentration, attention to detail, and a sense of order. Some examples are: pouring, buttoning, carrying a tray, sweeping, use of simple hand tools and utensils, food preparation, and flower arranging.

At the elementary level, practical life emphasizes the development of life skills that support independent thought and action. Some examples are planning and cooking meals,
public speaking, sewing, woodworking, animal care, gardening, composting, recycling, maintenance skills, peer tutoring and tutoring younger children.

Language

The purpose of the language curriculum is to encourage clear, meaningful communication both as a means of self-expression and as the foundation of better understanding among humankind.

At the 3-6 level, the association of sound and symbol is developed through work with sandpaper, metal insets for tracing, and “movable alphabet” letters. Preparation for reading is pervasive and takes the form of reading aloud, fingerplays, rhyming games, dictated stories, picture sequencing and object categorizing, to name a few.

At the elementary level, Montessori principles are applied within the context of a rich language environment. Reading, writing, storytelling, singing, and discussion of stories are closely interwoven with a study of the humanities. Colorful grammar materials help the child experience language in an orderly way and foster an appreciation for the power of the individual word. Writing takes many forms in the classroom. All students have regular opportunities for creative writing, peer editing, and sharing their finished publications.

Mathematics
The purpose of the mathematics curriculum is to provide students with the skills for daily living in an increasingly technological world and to foster the precise means of exploration that underlies all the sciences.

At the 3-6 level, all abstract ideas are first introduced using beautifully designed, hands-on materials. Early skills include a comparison of size and quantity, classification, and linear progression. Next, the child is ready to work with materials that teach linear numeration, introduction to the decimal system and geometry.

At the elementary level, the concept of the four basic mathematical operations is developed through manipulation of the math materials. Once the four basic operations have been mastered, word problems with practical applications predominate. At the same time, the most advanced materials foster an appreciation for the unifying patterns of mathematics.

Cultural Studies
The purpose of this curriculum is to inspire an appreciation of the wonder of our universe and to encourage the students to come to realize their part in it. The cultural curriculum includes the study of botany, zoology, geography, physical science, geometry, and history.

The Montessori classroom is prepared with many hands-on materials such as nomenclature cards and charts, timelines, and pin and puzzle maps, and science experiments. The teachers connect the many areas of cultural study with fascinating, dramatic presentations that Montessori termed Great Lessons.

As in the science curriculum, co-dependency and worldwide individual responsibilities are stressed in the history curriculum. Our goal is to paint a picture in the student's mind of the timeline of history from the beginning of the universe until, and including, today. Illustrated by this timeline is the recurring pattern of evolution. This is the evolution of both nature and society. We hope to show the timelessness of the basic human needs and how they shape civilizations. We also hope the students come to realize that these basic human needs are a common thread that unites all people.

Integrated Art, Music and Yoga
Art, music and physical education are an energizing part of the integrated Montessori environment. Art projects reinforce and expand academic and artistic skills and are a natural extension of the students' classroom work. Music includes the study of sound recognition, tonal relationships, music composition, and instrument instruction. Physical

Education is also integrated into the curriculum contributing, through movement experiences, to the total growth and development of each child. The development of a strong self-image is strived for in yoga. Safety skills, cooperation, and competitive attitudes are learned in outdoor play. Students learn the importance of participation, cooperation, and tolerance.

In these programs students experience interactions with their classmates and learn how the quality of their behavior influences others. In accomplishing these greater goals, we also strive to have lots of fun!

Homework

Dr. Montessori believed that if we do not dictate the work of the child in class, then it does not make sense to dictate the work they choose at home. Therefore, traditional homework is kept to a minimum. The Montessori Method supports the idea that children spend all day in the classroom learning and need their afternoons and evenings to pursue their personal interests, interact with their families, contribute to household responsibilities and relax.

Oak Grove families know that we encourage activities that constructively direct a child's pursuits during home hours while nurturing their interests and building family bonds. In the classroom, children are motivated to discover why and how things work. Therefore, homework is work that the child does at home, as an extension of his or her educational exploration. Many activities may constitute homework, including household chores. Responsibilities at home help the child develop language skills and cultural awareness. Making math a real part of the home environment (pairing socks and counting by twos; dividing a pizza into equal pieces; shopping and making change) and giving the child a voice in family decisions are important to the child's perception of math concepts and economic geography. Reading with and to your children, every day will result in quality family time and confidence building.

The teacher does not typically assign homework until the Upper Elementary level. And even then, it rarely looks like the homework that many adults remember from their school years. If a parent/guardian is interested in their child having some after school projects and work, please make an appointment and talk directly with the teacher. The teacher will help design some projects that will reinforce the work that is currently being done in the classroom.

Student Support

In a Montessori environment it is important for a student's teachers to

observe and measure your child's work and growth. Our classroom teachers are trained observers and childhood development experts with experience teaching a diverse community of children. If a teacher or teaching team feels it would be helpful to obtain specific information in order to facilitate curriculum planning for that child, a student's teachers may do individual informal assessments or request a faculty specialist to observe/consult. We recognize that some children may need additional support in academic and/or social and emotional areas and we work together with students and their families to provide additional services, when necessary.

Oak Grove has a clear procedure for supporting a student's learning needs. When more complete information would be helpful in assessing a child's learning, teachers will make that known to the family. Typically this will be in the form of initiating a Child Study. The Child Study Protocol's steps are designed to gather information in service to the child, keep parents informed along the way, and ensure a timely process for doing so.

Child Study Protocol

Children who demonstrate a pattern of challenging or disruptive behavior, or who demonstrate a need for academic intervention, will be referred to a **Child Study Team (CST)** to design an intervention strategy intended to support targeted skill development. Typically, a classroom teacher initiates the CST process for a child; this is often based on the teacher's observations but is sometimes in combination with concerns expressed by the family. The team members are selected based on their knowledge of the child and areas of concern; the Head of School as a trained facilitator and lead for Child Study, is a member of all CSTs. The Child Study Protocol is a collaborative, Montessori-aligned multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) that guides teachers and families in supporting children who are experiencing difficulties. Families are brought into the Child Study process through an initial family meeting. The CST will develop a written plan with specific goals, support strategies, and tools for monitoring progress. Information will be shared with families throughout the process and a follow-up meeting will be scheduled at the initial meeting. Additional meetings may be scheduled by the teacher and/or the family. The CSP promotes open, two-way communication, and families are encouraged to reach out to their child's teacher with questions or concerns about the process or their child's progress. CST recommendations may include referrals for outside services including but not limited to Occupational Therapy (OT), Speech-Language Pathology (SLP), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, General Assessment, or screening/evaluation for learning differences or disorders, as well as a request to have information from the service provider or

screening/evaluation shared with the team to improve intervention strategies. Outside consultation may be requested with the costs incurred by the family. If there are concerns that a child may be eligible for learning support services, the path to obtaining an IEP (Individualized Education Program) or a 504 plan (formal accommodations document) begins with the CST process. After the team has met multiple times and has collected sufficient data, the next step might be to refer a child to the public school Learning Support Services and request more formal testing. A family would be notified of such finding and recommendation prior to the referral.
A collaborative and supportive partnership is the best method for supporting children who demonstrate challenging behavior or who require academic intervention and should include the child, the family, guides, and administrators. Families are expected to participate in conferences, as requested, and to provide outside support as determined by the Child Study Team.

Student Preparedness and Transition Orientations

The intent of Oak Grove is to place children in a learning environment that supports their developmental level. Children will advance from one level to the next level based upon the appropriate stage of development and not based strictly upon age. In the spring, when it has been determined that the child is moving to the next classroom the following fall, the child will spend some time “visiting” the new classroom. The family will be given the opportunity to observe the new classroom as well. The child’s current teacher will work closely with the new teacher to familiarize them with the child.

If there is a concern from a family as to the next year’s placement of the child, a placement procedure and plan will be initiated. The family will meet with the Lead Teacher of the child’s current classroom and discuss the difference of opinions. The family will spend adequate time observing their child in the current classroom to gain a clear understanding of the child in the classroom. The Head of School will make the final decision with input from all parties involved in the team meeting.

Student Records

All student records, including Progress Reports, Student Releases, Teacher Recommendations, Health Records, and all information pertaining to student records are official and confidential school records. Copies and/or originals are kept in the student’s Cumulative Folder. School records may be requested in writing with a minimum of 30 days advance notice. Recommendation letters, evaluation forms and written communications for similar purposes require more time and every effort should be made to give as much advance notice of such a request as

possible. All requests for school records must be referred to the Main Office. The Head of School and/or the Administrative Coordinator approves the release of any student records.

Admissions Policies

Criteria for Eligibility

Our goal is to enroll students who will benefit from a Montessori education. In the classrooms, there is a broad cross-section of children representing different socio-economic, religious, cultural, racial and ability groups. Age is only one factor for admission to each level. Developmental readiness is also considered, and all applicants are considered in terms of space availability and classroom dynamics. Applicants to Primary are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. However, the school strives to balance the classes in terms of gender and age. In such an environment, we see children completing work cycles, exercising grace and courtesy and showing a joy of learning.

The school and families are viewed as partners in the educational care of children, with shared values and educational goals. Prospective families are invited to schedule an observation in the classroom by calling the school office. Families who are unfamiliar with Montessori education are strongly encouraged to observe the classroom and meet with the Head of School for an orientation into Montessori methods and education.

Additional Admissions Information:

- Special consideration is given to applicants with siblings currently enrolled in Oak Grove, to students with prior Montessori experience, and to staff children.
- All families meet with the Head of School during the admissions process.
- Copies of any educational or psychological testing reports must be submitted before admission to the school.
- Oak Grove abides by the Americans with Disabilities Act and other related state and federal laws. A child with disabilities will be considered for admission unless the accommodation would result in an undue burden.

Admissions Procedure

Our admissions process is as follows:

1. Inquire: Fill out an online inquiry form, call or email the office to inquire about admission to Oak Grove.
2. Parent Visit: We'll be back in touch with you to schedule a parent visit, and will include a discussion with Oak Grove Administrators

and a brief classroom observation.

3. Complete an Application: An application will be provided to you at the parent visit. The application and non-refundable $100 application fee is due in order to proceed with the admission process.
4. Math and Reading Assessment: At the Lead Teacher's discretion, your child may be required to visit Oak Grove to take a brief math and reading assessment.
5. Records Release: We'll request some basic information from your child's current school (if applicable).
6. Child Visit: If school is in session, your child will spend time in the Oak Grove classroom they would like to join. If school is not in session, an effort will be made for your child to meet with the classroom teacher.
7. Acceptance: Once steps 1-6 are complete, a timely decision will be made regarding your child's placement. A signed contract and a deposit equal to one month's tuition is required in order to hold your child's enrollment at Oak Grove.
8. Enrollment Forms: A link to complete enrollment forms online will be sent via email.

Enrollment

Enrollment of students is made on a first-come, first-serve basis given the following priorities:

- Returning students, who are up to date with tuition payments, are given priority until March 15 of the school year preceding fall admission.
- Siblings, former Oak Grove families, staff children and children from other Montessori schools are given priority over new students until March 15 of the school year preceding fall admission.
- The number of children that can be accommodated depends on Montessori guidelines and state regulations. When space is unavailable at the time of application, children may be placed on a waiting list at the parents' request.
- Deposits are required within ten days of notification that space is available.

Continued Enrollment

All current students are expected to confirm their continued enrollment at Oak Grove annually by:

- Submitting a signed Enrollment Agreement
- Completing all required forms
- Meeting all deadlines
- Comply with all school policies as they pertain to CT laws

Failure to complete any of the above-listed items in a timely manner may jeopardize the student's opportunity to continue in the school.

Essential Policies of Oak Grove Montessori School

Inclusion Policy

Oak Grove Montessori School is a learning community that cultivates independence, positive self-esteem, critical thinking, responsibility and respect to self and to others. We welcome all and we foster a climate of purposeful inclusion, an environment where all can feel safe, valued, and cared for. We cherish the diversity of humanity, a diversity which includes differences in sex, age, race, ethnicity and national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, financial means, education, family structure, political beliefs, and religion. These beliefs and practices apply to all of the activities of our community; they inform all of our decisions including student admission and employment decisions.

Diversity Statement

Oak Grove is committed to developing a strong sense of community in which every member feels valued. We welcome diversity in our staff and student body and promote access and equity with respect to backgrounds of race, creed, cultural heritage, political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, national /ethnic origins or abilities. We expect that individual beliefs and feelings will be shared and valued, and conflicts acknowledged, explored and peacefully resolved. The curriculum at Oak Grove is rich and varied, with emphasis on multicultural and anti-bias learning. We educate to broaden students' views of themselves, local, social and global communities. We strive to strengthen understanding in the Oak Grove community about issues of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, gender identity, equity, peace, and social justice through professional development and a variety of community activities.

Discipline in the Montessori Environment

In a Montessori environment, discipline is recognized as ongoing inner work developed through age-appropriate skill-building rather than through punishment or coercion. The word discipline is derived from the Latin words *discipulus* meaning learner and *discere* meaning learn. The prepared Montessori environment, classroom culture, and lessons

cultivate inner discipline in children by promoting a sense of autonomy, belonging, and purpose. At times, children may need additional support to meet classroom expectations or build the skills for self-regulation. Montessori pedagogy promotes an education for peace. Children in Montessori classrooms learn to care for their individual needs while recognizing the needs of the community. In addition to setting expectations for how to treat each other in the classroom, children learn a set of shared values within the community. At every level, children learn lessons in "grace and courtesy," prosocial skills, and conflict resolution. Each of these lessons is an opportunity to develop skills for inner discipline and peace.

Supporting Challenges

When a child struggles to learn a particular skill or to meet classroom expectations, additional lessons may be required. Children who demonstrate a potential pattern of challenging or disruptive behavior, or who demonstrate a need for academic intervention, may be referred to a team to design a proactive intervention strategy to support targeted skill development. The team may recommend a **Child Study** for persistent challenges, academic or behavioral. Families will be informed throughout the Child Study process. A Child Study may include recommendations for outside services including but not limited to Occupational Therapy (OT), Speech, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, or screening/evaluation for learning differences or disabilities, as well as a request to have information from the service provider or screening/evaluation shared with the team to improve intervention strategies. A student's schedule may be required to be shortened as part of a Child Study Intervention Plan while the child develops the necessary skills to remain for their intended schedule; teachers will communicate regularly with families and will invite the child to increase their school day, when/if appropriate. More information is available in the **Child Study Protocol section** under Student Support.

A Note on Teasing, Peer Conflict and Bullying

Oak Grove is committed to each child's success in learning within a caring and responsive environment that is free of discrimination, violence, and bullying. Our school works to ensure that all children have the opportunity and support to develop to their fullest potential and share a personal and meaningful bond with people in the school community.

Classroom rules and expectations are developed to support positive peer interactions. 'Grace and courtesy' lessons, thoughtfulness to others, good manners, prosocial skill development, and conflict resolution are taught regularly as part of the school curriculum and our commitment to educating the whole child. Adults model expectations to reinforce their value. Children are taught the importance of respect and dignity for

themselves and others within their community as well as respect and care for the learning environment.

Inherent in Montessori philosophy is respect and tolerance for all individuals, their work, and their learning process. Teaching the skills and the value of grace and courtesy is an important part of our curriculum. Acquiring social skills and emotional intelligence are also incorporated into the classroom culture. Therefore, we rarely have problems that would come under the heading of "bullying". In the unusual instance that we do, Oak Grove will comply with all state requirements for reporting to parents, and if called for, appropriate authorities.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is a willful, conscious desire to hurt, frighten, or threaten. Bullying is usually a series of repeated, intentionally cruel incidents, or threats of harm, that involve the same children, *in the same bully/victim roles*. It involves an imbalance of power, either real or perceived. It can be physical or verbal and can include intimidation, inappropriate gestures or touching, and social exclusion. Due to the willful and conscious nature of bullying, children in early childhood are not typically developmentally capable of carrying out bullying and are most often involved in normal peer conflict.

What is the difference between bullying and other types of peer conflict?

The chart below illustrates some differences between bullying, teasing, and peer conflicts.

Friendly Teasing	Hurtful Teasing	Peer Conflict	Bullying
Equal power	Unequal power	Equal power	Imbalance of power
Neutral	Occurs occasionally	Occurs occasionally	Occurs repeatedly, or has the potential to be repeated over time
Purpose is to be playful	Purpose is to upset	Unintentional	Intentional and serious
Funny to all involved parties	Excludes; not funny to all involved parties	Effort to resolve through withdrawal from conflict or negotiations; relationship is valued between parties	Seeks to gain power; perpetrator of bullying behavior shows no remorse; no effort to resolve; target is vulnerable

Assisting Children with Transforming Peer Conflict

Families who would like support in helping their child to navigate peer conflict should reach out to their child's lead teachers. Your child's guide is your first point of contact for sharing information or concerns regarding your child. Oak Grove faculty are committed to building a deep understanding of each child that honors the natural tendency of all children to be peaceful and to contribute positively to their community.

If a pattern of peer conflict emerges, faculty and families will work together with children to support healthy boundaries, compassionate communication, and conflict transformation.

Families should continue to keep the school informed, as children sometimes share information at home when they are reflecting on or processing their day that was not shared during the school day. Further guidance in **Appendix IV: Supporting your child in their relational development.**

Reporting a Concern of Bullying

Oak Grove requires all employees and encourages all parents to report any known or suspected incidents of bullying to their child's teacher and/or the Head of School. When an incident is observed, employees are required to complete an Incident Report and send copies to the Head of School and to the Administrative Assistant.
When an incident of concern is reported, the Head of School and Faculty will follow the procedures as outlined in: **Appendix V: Bullying Preventions, Response, & Intervention**

Issues of Conduct

Oak Grove defines unacceptable conduct as any behavior that creates unsafe conditions including, but not limited to acts of bullying, physical violence, harassment, and illegal acts.

Procedures to be followed when a pattern of unacceptable conduct is identified:

1. Notification to the parents/guardians of each child involved
2. Consultation with parent and teacher, and when appropriate the Head of School
3. Written plan for subsequent action and follow up review
4. If required, notification will be given to the relevant authorities

Channels of Communication

Communication is essential to maintain a welcoming, open partnership with you and your child. Please observe the following channels of communication.

Changes in children's lives (e.g. moving, death in the family, parent/caregiver out of town, new baby, separation of parents, etc) can be very unsettling for them. If the school is aware of the situation, we can be more responsive to their needs and better understand any changes in behavior, which may arise at school. We can also shower the children with extra and needed TLC.

Email is often the best way to reach your child's teaching team. While classroom teachers will check their email regularly and respond to emails in a timely manner, this will be done around class times, as their primary concern is to be fully present with the children. With this in mind, if you need immediate assistance or need to relay a message to your child's teachers for that specific day, please call the office **(860) 456-1031**, or email **office@ogms.org** . This email address will reach our administrative team, so that we can relay any time-sensitive information to your child's teachers.

Family Newsletter

While events are posted regularly on our school google calendar, we will also include upcoming events in the regular school wide newsletter for families. It will generally go out on Thursdays so that you can be aware of upcoming events for the following week, Open Playground Fridays each month, etc.

Guidelines for communication:

- Talk to Lead Teacher:
    1. Child's academic progress
    2. Child's developmental progress
    3. Child's behavioral/social progress
    4. Classroom procedures
    5. Classroom activities

Teachers at Oak Grove look forward to building a rapport with each parent to benefit the child at home and at school. We enjoy informal conversations to share news about your child. There are times that

an issue requires a parent-teacher meeting. We ask that you schedule the meeting ahead of time and come prepared for the discussion. Let us know the nature of the concern when the meeting is scheduled so we can be prepared for the meeting as well. The teacher may ask you to schedule a time to come into the classroom to observe the child in the classroom environment, and then follow that observation with a scheduled meeting with the teacher. We will respond as quickly as possible to your concern and schedule a meeting time. Help us to avoid miscommunication by voicing your concerns to the teacher first. If the issues go beyond the expertise of the teacher, the Head of School is the next step in the chain of communication. To schedule meetings with teachers, please contact them directly via email or leave a message for the teacher at the office.

To schedule a meeting with the Head of School, please contact her directly via email (leela@ogms.org) or leave a message at the office. Phone calls, zoom conferences, or in-person meetings may be scheduled with the Head of School during operating hours 7:30 a.m.- 6:00 p.m.. Please give 24 hours notice when possible to schedule a time to speak outside of regular office hours, 8:30 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. By scheduling our time together we can ensure that we are prepared, present, and attentive in our interactions and discussions.

Teachers and parents meet formally twice a year for a conference. Comprehensive evaluations of your child's progress in school are conducted on an ongoing basis throughout the year, and your child's teacher is prepared to talk to you and discuss current concerns at these conferences. Written Progress Reports are provided for fall and spring in addition to the conferences. These Progress Reports become a part of your child's permanent academic record.

- Talk to Administrative Assistant (Cindy Henry):
    1. Special events
    2. Daily scheduling needs, including absences, and tardies
    3. Extended Care sign up (contracted or drop-in care)
    4. Student records
    5. Volunteer organization - Families of Oak Grove Volunteer Association
    6. General questions

- Talk to the School Nurse:

1. All health-related issues

- Talk to the Business Manager (Sherry D'Alessandro):
    1. Billing/Accounts
    2. Tuition/Fees/Forms
    3. Tuition Assistance / Financial Aid
    4. Brody Memorial Scholarship
    5. Fundraising, annual giving
    6. General questions

- Talk to Head of School (Leela Pahl):
    1. Academic/Curriculum policies
    2. Family education
    3. Enrollment/Admissions questions
    4. School policies and procedures, including discipline
    5. Board governance
    6. Facilities/Equipment
    7. Website, marketing, PR
    8. Alumni relations
    9. School Communications and Announcements
    10. Transparent Classroom: login, record keeping, and communications

Notices regarding school activities and other timely information are sent via email and are available through the school's online record keeping system: Transparent Classroom (TC). Each parent/guardian will receive an invitation to join TC which will allow you to login and view your child's progress reports. The school will youse the TC notification function to send schoolwide emails and classroom announcements (such as 'News from the Grove').

If there is ever a time that you feel that your question/concern has not been addressed or followed through on, please contact the office to schedule a meeting with the Head of School.

Conflict Resolution and Grievance Procedure

The school will strive to maintain open and honest communication among all members of the Oak Grove community-teaching staff, administrative staff, support staff, parents and families. Oak Grove expects all members of the community to communicate in a respectful manner. It is hoped that conflicts arising between community members will be resolved directly. If such conflict cannot be resolved in this way, the following steps are to be followed:

Grievance Procedures

If you have a concern about a classroom related occurrence, please discuss it first with your child's teachers. In the event of conflict or disagreement with classroom teachers that is not resolved through meeting and/or discussion, parents/guardians may request a meeting with the Head of School. An action plan may be undertaken as agreed upon by the Head of School and the family. A follow-up meeting will be planned to measure the progress of the action plan. If, after implementation of the action plan and further conversation with the Head of School, parents/guardians do not feel that their concerns were adequately addressed, they may inform the Head of School of their intention to discuss the matter formally with the Board of Trustees. Concerns regarding school operations should be addressed to the Head of School. Concerns regarding the Head of School or school governance should be addressed to the Chair of the Board of Trustees, BoardChair@ogms.org .

Family Involvement

Parent-Teacher Partnership

Parents and guardians are the first, most influential and most important educators of their children. Because families recognize the benefits of their child's school experience, they invariably ask the Montessori teacher what steps they should follow at home to be consistent with the school's philosophy. Providing consistency in the home is of vital importance to the child, for it offers clarity and security and we are happy to provide insights where we can. Societal pressures on adults can at times be at odds with the decisions that are in the best interest of the household and their child(ren)'s development families in positions of making decisions For these reasons, it is important for families to stay in close communication with their child's teacher and avail themselves of the the many opportunities to understand the work of Oak Grove - through observations, conferences, classroom, and school-wide parent education programs, and the other information provided by the school. Your child's teacher and the Head of School are available to answer your questions. Together, the family, teacher, and Head of School can provide the support that children need to develop their full potential. Families at Oak Grove Montessori School are partners, without whom the school's work would not be possible.

Parent Education

In addition to the Parent Orientation, Observations, Parent/Teacher Conferences, Curriculum Night, Child Sharing Night, and other events

build a bridge between home and school. Parent Education occurs in a variety of different formats.

Participating in these meetings and events, whenever possible, is an essential part of your commitment to your child's schooling. Together we can develop consistency in thought and action. As a staff, we try to make these events interesting and fun. Please help us make them a success through regular attendance, comments, and feedback.

Parent Support

All parents are an important and integral part of the success of Oak Grove. A parent's role in the school can vary based on their own interest and availability. Our hope and expectation is that each parent will:

- Promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, and community
- Initiate, manage and complete projects to supplement operations of Oak Grove
- Develop and maintain an understanding and open communication between parents and staff of the school
- Develop a sense of unity between all levels of the school
- Create community awareness, cohesiveness, and understanding of our school's goals and the Montessori Method of education
- Organize, participate and support Oak Grove fundraisers and social events

Playground/Outside Rules

The playground is used for recess, physical education classes, outdoor learning, and the after school extended day program. The following guidelines were designed to ensure the safety of the children and to ensure that every adult (employees and families of OG students) responsible for supervising children on the playground will be prepared to maintain a consistent and safe environment.

These Playground/Outside Rules shall be posted at school for all to see.

- All children signed into the Extended Day Program will be under the direct supervision of the Extended Day Staff.
- Children will remain in the playground portion of the school, and in the view of adults supervising. They will stay away from wandering unsupervised too close to
  the parking lot, behind the sheds and greenhouse and garden and chicken coop or too far back on the playground or on the adjacent property.

- Shoes must be worn at all times by everyone on the playground and on school grounds.
- Playscapes are free from balls and toys.
- Playscapes are areas for walking and climbing. Running is encouraged in other areas.
- Picnic table tops are for food and drink only.
- Rocks are free from being thrown.
- Trees are free from climbing.
- Pretend weapons are counter-productive to a safe environment.
- We always respect each other on the campus - both inside the buildings and outside on the playground.
- Children will respect and leave untouched each other's creations made from nature, including snow.
- Swings and other playground equipment are to be shared and used appropriately.
- The large climbing structure is designated for ages 6 and up; children under 6 should remain on the smaller climbing area and playscape.

If a community member continues to disregard the playground rules, after redirecting attempts are made by the staff, the Head of School, the applicable staff, and the parent will meet to develop a clear action plan. The goals of the action plan will be to ensure the safety of everyone on the playground.

Electronic Device Policy

The trend in recent years has been that the age at which children are drawn to and allowed to use electronic devices for the purposes of playing, reading, texting and engaging in social media has become younger and younger. While we acknowledge that technology can have a positive role in a child's experience, and that it is up to each family to set their own standards regarding their children's use of technology and social media platforms, we also strongly believe that the use of technology is not fundamental to nor prioritized in a Montessori learning environment. In fact, the possession of electronic devices can be detrimental and distracting to the social and academic goals of our school. For that reason, no electronic devices will be permitted to be sent to school with children from pre-primary through Lower Elementary ages.

Electronic devices include but are not limited to cell phones, E-readers (Kindle, Nook, etc.), iPods, iPads, tablets, mp3 players, and gaming devices (Ninetendos, Playstations, etc.).

For Upper Elementary children, we strongly encourage families to leave all

devices at home; however, if you determine it is necessary to send a device with your child, we ask that you fill out an Electronic Device On-Campus form with both parent and student's signatures, and submit it to the office. Additionally, devices sent to school with Upper Elementary students must remain turned off and stowed away in the student's backpack while the student is at school and on school grounds. For any electronic device brought to school, Oak Grove Montessori School, its faculty and staff are not responsible for devices that are lost, damaged or stolen.

Electronic device usage is not permitted in before-care or in after-care, or during the time between dismissal and pick-up. Parents can get a message to their child at any time by calling the school, and likewise, any communication students need directed to parents will be facilitated by teachers and school administration.

For off-campus, school-sponsored outings, no electronic devices will be permitted, and any student who brings a device to school before an outing will be asked to leave the device securely locked in the classroom until the group returns from the outing. Parents of children who are participating in off-campus, school-sponsored outings will always be given the contact information for the teachers, staff members, and chaperones who are accompanying students on such outings.

Though parents may give their students permission to communicate electronically and engage in social media outside of school, Oak Grove Montessori School encourages parents to keep such activity to a minimum and to always monitor their children's Internet usage. Any student-to-student use of technology outside of school for bullying or harassing behaviors, i.e. an "electronic act," is unacceptable and against school policy. "Electronic act" means the transmission of a communication, including, but not limited to, a message, text, sound, or image, or a post on a social network Internet Web site, by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, wireless telephone, or other wireless communication device, computer or pager. An electronic act beyond school hours may create a climate of intimidation and fear, and runs counter to Montessori values of grace and courtesy.

Acceptable Use and Internet Policy Technology Use Agreement

Oak Grove Montessori School is pleased to make available to students: access to computer technology, Wi-Fi access, laptops, iPads, tablets and other means of technology. In order for Oak Grove Montessori School to continue to make these technology resources and connectivity available,

all technology used by students must be academically appropriate and lawful.

Students must understand that their misuse of the network and/or technology resources may jeopardize the ability of all students to enjoy such access. While the school's faculty and staff will make reasonable efforts to supervise student use of computers, network use, and Internet access, parents understand that faculty must have student cooperation in exercising and promoting responsible use of these resources. Parents understand that students are not allowed to change system settings, make browser changes, desktop changes, or any other changes that would affect the operation of the technological device. Parents also understand that students are not allowed to intentionally visit inappropriate sites or attempt to intentionally gain access to other student's equipment or credentials. OGMS has taken measures to protect the students from accessing inappropriate websites. This includes but is not limited to a compliant web filter and updated firewall. Oak Grove Montessori School makes no warranties of any kind, either express or implied, in connection with its provision of access to and use of its computer networks and the Internet provided under this policy. It shall not be responsible for any claims, losses, damages or costs (including attorney's fees) of any kind suffered, directly or indirectly, by any user or his or her parent(s) or guardian(s) arising out of the user's use of its computer networks or the Internet under this policy. Oak Grove Montessori School reserves the right to monitor, inspect, copy, review and/or store at any time and without prior notice any and all results of usage of computers, network and/or Internet access and any and all information transmitted or received in connection with such usage. All such information shall be and remain the property of Oak Grove Montessori School and users shall have no expectation of privacy regarding such materials.

Practical Information/Policies and Procedures

School Calendar

Our school calendar is shared each spring to give as much notice as possible for breaks, holidays, etc. The **Printable 2026-2027 Academic Calendar**, which is available on our website and in the Transparent Classroom sidebar, under School Info. Sometimes changes are necessary as the year progresses. The online google calendar is updated regularly and offers the option to 'subscribe' to the Google calendar so that you will see changes reflected as they are made. This google calendar is linked (and updated in real time) on our school website and on Transparent Classroom.

School Hours/Arrivals and Departures

Monday – Friday - 8:30 am – 3:00 pm

Primary Half Day Schedule - 8:30 am - 12:30 pm (Children eat lunch at school)

Full Day-Children should not arrive earlier than 8:20am, nor be picked up later than 3:10 pm. After 3:10 your child will be sent to the extended day program and you will be charged for extended care.

Arrival to School

Families should aim for arriving between 8:20-8:30

- **Primary** students should be escorted through the main entrance and to the classroom door.
- **Lower Elementary** enters through the main entrance and must be escorted into the main lobby. In the event of a late arrival and the classroom door is closed for morning meeting, the child will wait quietly in the lobby until the morning meeting has concluded, at which time the classroom door will open, and the child will be invited to join the classroom.
- **Upper Elementary** enters through the main entrance independently. In the event of a late arrival and the classroom door is closed for morning meeting, the student will wait quietly in the lobby until morning meeting concludes for them to enter their classroom.

It is important that your child arrive on time each morning. A late student not only misses out on learning time, but may delay a group presentation or disrupt the class once the children have begun work.

Teachers request that parents not engage in lengthy conversation with them at drop off, as they are busy getting the day started, and their focus is on greeting the children. For time sensitive matters, please leave a message with the office, pass the teacher a note, or send the teacher an email.

Morning Care is available (at charge) from 7:30-8:20am. Morning Care students must be escorted into the building and signed in with the staff member on duty. More information here: Extended Care Enrollment 2026-2027

School Dismissal

- **Primary** families will come through the main entrance and will stop by the 'Parent Pockets' to pick up any information.
    - Children will be indoors gathered at circle (the big area rug)

and picked up from the inside classroom entrance.

- **Lower Elementary** families will come through the main entrance and students will be dismissed from the lobby.
- **Upper Elementary** families will pick up from Upper Elementary's outside door (follow the sidewalk to the left of the main entrance).

Transportation and Driveway Safety

Transportation is the responsibility of parents/families. There may be opportunities to set up carpools and the office can assist with helping families identify others who live close and may want to carpool to school.

- Do not send someone to school to pick up your child who is unknown to the school or someone for whom you have not sent in prior authorization
- When you bring your child to school, please follow the drop off procedures specific to your child's classroom or before-care protocol.
- In order to ensure the safety of all children in the parking lot, please drive slowly, back out carefully, and obey the following guidelines:
    1. Be patient and wait for a parking space-do not park along the center island
    2. Teach your children to walk in front of parked cars
    3. If you need to stay for a few minutes after school, please maintain constant supervision of your child at all times
    4. All children must wait behind the sidewalks until you get to them

If an adult arrives to transport a child and appears compromised by the use of drugs or alcohol, the staff member responsible for dismissing that child is required to adhere to the following steps:

- Involve an administrator to assess the situation
- Call the authorized emergency contacts for that child
- If the parent or driver is clearly not competent to drive, but insists on doing so, the police will be called.

Classroom Handouts

Every family will have a designated paper handout pocket located outside their child's classroom. Please check it daily (either at arrival or dismissal) for important paper handouts as these will not be sent home in your child's backpack.

Attendance Policy

Regular student attendance in school is essential to the educational process. State legislation requires schools to be very aggressive in monitoring attendance and reporting students who are truant to an

appropriate state agency. To help us carefully monitor attendance, we ask that you do the following:

- If you know in advance that your child will not be coming to school please send a note, an email to office@ogms.org, or call the school and let us know.
- On days that your child is sick and will not be coming to school, please call the school or send an email before 8:30 am to inform us that your child will be absent.

Responsibilities lie with:
Parents/Guardians

- To stress the importance of regular school attendance
- To limit vacation to the scheduled school vacations
- To schedule appointments after school hours when possible
- To call the school office in the morning when there is an absence

School

- To keep accurate records
- To follow through on unexcused absences
- To identify students with irregular attendance patterns, and counsel such students and their parents. (The school may take any or all of the following actions, depending upon the number and kind of unexcused absences: phone call, letter, attendance team conference, youth counseling referral, DCF referral)
- To provide make-up work when appropriate (most Montessori assignments depend on classroom materials and cannot be easily duplicated at home. Because of the greater dependence on the classroom materials at the 3-6 and the 6-9 levels, no make-up work will be given at those levels)
- To contact family of absent child if not notified by parent of absence

Absences

Excused: Only the reasons listed below are considered legal reasons for being absent from school. The Head of School determines whether an absence is excused or unexcused.

- Personal illness
- Appointments with health care professionals that cannot be made outside of regular school hours
- Observance of recognized religious holidays when the observance is required during the regular school day
- Emergency family situations
- Educational testing

- Visits by 6th year students to prospective 7th grade placements
- Other reasons as authorized by the Head of School

To ensure that students will not be penalized for unavoidable absences, the Upper Elementary teacher will provide the opportunity to students with excused absences to make up missed work when doing so is not dependent on having classroom materials. Make-up work will not be offered for students at the 3-6 and 6-9 levels.

Unexcused: Absences for reasons other than those just listed are considered unexcused. In such cases, the amount and kind of assistance provided to the student is at the discretion of the student's teacher and the Head of School.

Tardiness: Students are expected to report to their classrooms on time each morning.

The parent or driver of students arriving late will need to call the office. Excessive tardiness is educationally detrimental and may necessitate a conference (after 5 incidents). Once the Head of School has determined that absences (more than 2 days in any month, excused or unexcused) or tardiness have begun to negatively affect a student's school experience, a meeting will be held to develop a plan for improved attendance. If there are a large number of absences for illness, a doctor's note may be required to excuse such absences.

Early Dismissal: Early dismissals should be avoided whenever possible. If a child must be dismissed early, a note should be sent to the school office, a call should be made to the office, or the appropriate form should be filled out through our online parent portal.

Any person not known to the school staff will not be allowed to take a child from school without permission (in writing, by phone, or through the online parent portal) from the parent or guardian.

Travel/vacation during non-school vacation time: In unusual circumstances, a family may wish to remove a child from school for the purpose of educational travel. In this event the following guidelines apply:

- A written request must be submitted to the school no later than three weeks before the intended trip is to occur
- The Head of School will determine if the absences are excused or unexcused
- Make-up work will not be provided at the Primary level or at the Lower Elementary level

- At the discretion of the Upper Elementary teacher, assignments may be modified to accommodate the trip setting, but should not be construed as a total replacement for classroom training

Evaluation of Child's Absences:

- After 10 or more absences in a school year, the student may be referred to a Child Study Team meeting. Excessive unexcused absences are grounds for dismissal.

Late Arrival/Early Departure Sign In/Out

Whenever a child arrives late, or needs to depart early, please notify the office. The parent/guardian/approved driver needs to sign them in or out in the school office.

Special Information from Home

If a significant change occurs in your child's life, please notify your child's teachers as soon as possible. We accept your judgment, as to the kind of change that might affect your child's behavior, security, or well-being. Common causes of distress include: either or both parents away from home, illness of a parent or a sibling, new person living in the home, any hospitalization, accident, death in the family, death of a pet, new caregiver, moving etc. The teacher will in-turn keep you informed of any significant change in the school environment, which may affect your child.

Dress Code

Families and students at Oak Grove are expected to demonstrate the willingness to belong to the community in many ways. One way is to acknowledge the dress code, as well as the spirit and intention that underlie it. All students are expected to maintain a 'clean and neat' standard and avoid putting others in the position of having to remind them of the school's expectations.

The dress code policy is mandatory for all students. Students whose personal attire does not meet the guidance, will be required to make necessary alterations. Our intention is to create and foster a safe, orderly academic setting in which students can concentrate on their educational endeavors with minimal distractions. Teachers and staff will determine what attire is acceptable and appreciate the support of families in discussing school attire with their child. When a student is out of dress code, parents will be contacted to provide a change of clothes before a student may return to class. Guidelines:

Acceptable Attire:

- Any Oak Grove logo attire may be worn.

- Clothing should be comfortable and appropriate for the weather as well as moving around in the classroom, sitting on the floor, etc.
- Clothing worn should allow for independence (i.e. elastic waist bands for younger children and child-user-friendly shoes and boots).
- Because paint and grass stains are inevitable, we suggest that you do not send your child to school in “dress clothes”.
- During snow and mud season, extra shoes or slippers are a must and may be left in the child’s cubby or locker for convenience.
- An extra set of clothes should be left at school as well. All clothing to be left at school should be clearly marked with your child’s name.
- Appropriate shoes must be worn indoors such as: sneakers, flats, or slippers
- Outdoors and at recess, appropriate shoes must be worn: sneakers or other sport shoes (boots for winter/rain)
    - Students without these shoes may not participate in running or using climbing equipment.
- Students playing on the basketball court must wear flat, closed-toe shoes.
- Shorts, skirts or dresses may be worn and should reach the tips of the fingers above the knee or can be longer.
    - The opening or slit in a skirt may be no shorter than five inches above the knee.
    - Shorts or tights must be worn under all dresses and skirts
- Belts, suspenders, and overall straps shall be worn in place and fastened.

Unacceptable:

- Any garment or object with obscene, offensive, or intimidating language, drug, tobacco, or firearms or alcoholic beverage advertisements, etc. may not be worn.
- Students may not wear midriff shirts, tank tops with less than a ½ inch strap, halter-tops, or undergarments (such as boxer shorts) as outer garments. Undergarments should not be visible. This includes: spaghetti strapped tops, undershirts as regular shirts and shirts which expose the midriff.
- Students may not wear garments made of see-through material, torn clothing, clothing with holes in it, cut-offs, pocket chains, or oversized pants, shorts, or shirts
- The waistband of shorts, skirts, and similar garments shall not be worn below the waist or in such a manner as to expose undergarments or torsos. All waistbands must be secure and remain at the waist.

Weather/Outside Guidelines:

- At 50 degrees or below, a jacket must be brought outside
- At temperatures between 20 and mid-40s, children are encouraged to wear a winter jacket, hat, and water resistant gloves or mittens. Boots and snow pants are necessary when the playground is covered in snow or in the extreme cold
- At 20 degrees or below (factoring in wind chill), the Early Childhood group will not go outside
    - Elementary Classrooms may go out under 20 (factoring in windchill) dependent on the judgement of faculty and staff as well as suitability of clothing necessary.
- The teachers will evaluate daily outside conditions and determine the appropriate clothing needed outside

We understand that choosing clothing, in general, and outdoor clothing in particular can be a challenging issue with some children. These guidelines are intended to make it easier for parents by providing their children with the school rules for dress in hopes of creating and maintaining a safe and healthy school environment.

Family's Responsibility: We ask that parents/guardians keep track of what their children need each day for extra clothing. We ask that wet clothes are brought home each day and that all clothes that stay at school are brought home regularly for cleaning.

Nutrition and Snacks and Lunch

We emphasize the importance of a nutritionally balanced diet to our children as part of the curriculum. We strongly encourage you to provide a nutritious breakfast for your child before school. Please send a nutritious, balanced lunch for your child each day along with a snack for the morning. Involving your child in planning and packing their lunch is an excellent opportunity to talk about food and nutrition. Teachers will contact families if they notice a pattern of eating which they feel does not support the student's learning and physical activity through the course of the day.

- All children who eat lunch at school must bring lunch from home.
    - Children should bring a small snack for the morning
    - Students attending the after-school program, past 3:00 p.m. should bring an extra snack specifically for the afterschool program.
- In order to respect individual family food choices, children are asked not to share or trade food. Any unfinished food will return home in their lunchbox so that you and your child can plan and pack accordingly.

- Please send lunches that do not need refrigeration or heating (or use a cold pack or thermos)
- Please limit desserts or sugary snacks. We try to keep our 'day to day' eating at school 'low sugar/no sugar' saving sweets for special occasions, baking projects, etc.
- Toothbrushes for use after snack or lunch may be kept in child's locker or cubby
- Our school nurse may provide guidelines for packing healthy snacks and lunches
- School Lunch Ideas and Resources - The linked handout has ideas and tips from teachers about including your child in food prep and packing as well as lunch ideas.

Birthdays

The teachers and staff at Oak Grove request that parents use the following guidelines for celebrating birthdays within the school community:

- If the celebration or activity does not include all the students in your child's class, please conduct this celebration outside of school (For example: mail party invitations or other holiday cards if your child is not including everyone, arrange for gifts to be given outside of school if there is not a gift for everyone, do not schedule a party immediately after school so that the inevitable change in transportation and excitement of those children who have been invited won't make others feel left out)
- The teachers should always approve the distribution of cards, gifts or food for the whole class first and well in advance of the celebration
- Please refrain from sending in treats with artificial colors and frosting. We appreciate and encourage nutritious, easy to serve snacks

Holiday Celebrations

The philosophy at Oak Grove is that celebrations within the classroom, during specials or as part of the extended day program should expose the students to a variety of traditions and holidays and enhance their knowledge and appreciation of cultures from around the world.

- Within the classroom, celebrations should be integrated with the curriculum and should emphasize a concept or cultural study
- Religious holidays will be presented in the context of the "story" of the holiday and how the mythology of a particular religious group has impacted their celebrations and traditions
- The objective will be to teach that celebrations and traditions are a universal form of cultural expression
- Parents will be asked to volunteer to present holiday traditions which are a part of their own heritage

- Sharing of cultural artifacts is encouraged

School Pet Policy for Visiting Pets

The following policy has been established to provide for the health and safety of all Oak Grove students, staff and visitors; for the protection, efficient use, and enjoyment of the Oak Grove property; and for the responsible management and operation of the school. Beyond the obvious concerns for personal welfare and property maintenance, it is hoped that this policy will foster an atmosphere where all can enjoy the school in a comfortable and relaxed setting.

- Any pet that is visiting a classroom **must be approved by the teacher and Head of School prior to the day of the visit.**
- While on school property, the visiting pet/animal must be on a leash, in a cage, and/or under the owner's control at all times.
- The owner must also have the means to clean up after the pet (Specifically, the owner shall possess the means of removal of any fecal matter left by the pet. Cleanup should be thorough enough so as to generate no additional work for the maintenance staff or inconvenience for members of the Oak Grove community at large.)
- All pets that visit the school must be up-to-date on their vaccinations.

As a general reminder for our receptions, potlucks, End of Year Picnic, Open Playground events, Ice Cream Social, etc, *please do not bring pets*. These types of community events at Oak Grove are best enjoyed by the various ages of crawling/walking/running little humans (and their grownups) that we are better equipped to serve! Thank you for your understanding.

Pet Policy for School and Classroom Pets

Pets in the classroom and the school can benefit all learners in the community. Animals tend to have a calming effect on children. Classroom and school pets can be brought into the curriculum in many ways to make connections to learning in a fun and motivating way. It is the first priority of Oak Grove to keep our students safe and comfortable in school and in the classroom. Before a school or classroom pet is introduced into the community:

- Authorization by the Head of School will be obtained by the teacher in advance
- The parents will be notified in advance of the pet's arrival
- The school nurse will confirm that there is no one in the classroom with known allergies to the pet (a Rabies Immunization Certificate may be requested for certain pets)

If you ever have any questions or concerns about a classroom or school pet, please notify the Head of School and a meeting will be set up to discuss your concerns.

These Policies do not Apply to Registered Service Animals

Toys and Household Items

Each teacher has their own preference and procedure for sharing time. Generally, toys should not be brought to school. Children are encouraged to share with the class a fascinating discovery related to culture, science, or nature. Label all items that are brought in for sharing, so that they can be returned home safely.

Please check in with your teacher regarding appropriate toys and other items that your child would like to bring to school.

No electronics from home are allowed at school; this includes hand-held electronic games, cell phones, tablets. Pocket knives are not allowed.

The school is not responsible for any loss or damage to a student's private property brought to school.

Snow Day/Inclement Weather Policy and School Cancellations

If Mansfield public schools are closed, we are closed. If Mansfield public schools have a delay, Oak Grove will start classes at 9:30 am for all students. There will be no Morning Care. If Mansfield has an early closing, Oak Grove closes at 12:30 pm.

However, in bad weather, the arrival or departure of any student is always at the family's discretion. Please listen to the radio or watch the local news for Mansfield's announcements. You will also receive notifications through our school communication system, via text and call. Oak Grove does not add make-up snow/inclement weather days to the calendar so that our families and faculty have a predictable start and end to the school year.

- You will receive an alert to your email address, text, and call.
- You are also able to check closings via the following locations that Mansfield posts closures, delays, and dismissals:
    - https://www.nbcconnecticut.com/weather/school-closings/
        - You are able to register your contact information to receive their alerts
    - TV stations: NBC, CBS
    - WILI 1400AM & 95.3FM
- If Oak Grove closes due to building/road specific issues (eg

Mansfield is open and we are closed due a downed tree) you will receive an alert via Text/email/call.

Visitors

We welcome parents/guardians to visit Oak Grove. Appointments are appreciated; please contact the main office for an appointment. Visitors must check-in at the office upon arrival. Arrangements for other family members to visit Oak Grove should be made by the parent/guardian to ensure permission and should be scheduled with the front office so that we can avoid scheduling conflicts.

Soliciting and Use of the School Directory

There will be no soliciting on the premises unless previously approved by the Head of School.

The school directory is for personal use only and may not be used for solicitations unless approved by the Head of School.

We will compile a separate directory of family owned businesses or services to be distributed school-wide. We encourage our community to support each other and value the many skills and talents of our parents and their extended family members.

Smoking

No smoking or vaping is permitted in any school building or on the school grounds.

School Safety and Emergency Alerts

The safety of our children is of the utmost importance to us. Many of the rules and procedures we have established have safety as their motive. By following school procedures and practices at all times, parents contribute to the safety of all children. Please assist us by reinforcing Oak Grove safety practices with your child. The school has developed a Crisis Management Plan which identifies procedures to be followed in case of unusual situations. This plan is maintained in the office.

Emergency Alert & Rapid Notification

Oak Grove utilizes a calling and texting service for rapid notification. In the case of an emergency, Oak Grove Administrators will utilize our system to text the parent/guardian numbers you have provided via enrollment in your Transparent Classroom account with information regarding locations, evacuation, lockdown, power outage, etc. Test messages will be sent at the start of the school year (followed by a separate email to confirm

receipt). If you do not receive these test messages, your prompt follow-up is appreciated. **The outgoing number for school texts is: (860) 266-5563, please add this to your contacts.**

Health and Medical Policies

State of Connecticut School Health Policies:

State of CT Current Immunization Requirements will be followed along with maintaining records as required by the Department of Public Health:

- **Physical Examination Reports and Immunization Records are required** *prior* to the start of school for *all new enrollees and all kindergarten students* (submit these documents in hard copy or email to office@ogms.org and nurses@ogms.org).
- *6th grade students* must submit a physical examination and immunization update during the school year (submit these documents in hard copy or email to office@ogms.org and nurses@ogms.org).
- Parents should report to the school nurse any significant health problems or changes in student health and immunization status.
- **Medication administration in school requires a written order from a health care professional**.
    - You may download Blank CT School Medication Administration Authorization Form or copies are available in the office
    - A Sunscreen And Insect Repellent Policy And Authorization Form is required for applying sunscreen and/or insect repellent at school, along with the product.
    - Please submit the completed written order form when you drop off medication at the front office/nurse's office.
    - Only children in grades 5 and 6 may be given acetaminophen or ibuprofen without an authorization from from their healthcare provider with prior parent authorization AND in specific circumstances (see section below on Medication for Students in grades 5 and 6)
- Staff must submit a physical examination and any required immunization information prior to employment and every two years, and should keep the school nurse updated on any health issues.

Medical Record Requirements

In accordance with the Connecticut Department of Health, children may

not be admitted to the school until:

- Their Health Assessment Records, signed by a Primary Care Provider, and parent portion is completed and is on file at school.
- Required Immunizations are current and documentation from the health care provider is on file at the school.
- **Religious Exemptions from Required Immunizations are no longer accepted unless a student was enrolled in a Connecticut K-12 school prior to April 28, 2021 and a valid Religious Exemption was filed with school prior to April 28, 2021.**
    - Policy for Religious Immunization Exemption mandated by the State of Connecticut: “After a confirmed epidemic (an epidemic is defined by 3 confirmed cases of a vaccine-preventable disease), the unimmunized child will not be allowed back to school for 21 days. 21 days is equal to the incubation period for such diseases.
    - During the 21 days the child is out of school, no portion of tuition or other fees will be waived or refunded.
- Further information regarding school immunization requirements, immunization schedules, and Medical Exemption certificates and submissions can be found on the CT Department of Public Health website.

Illness/Absence:

- Students or staff members must stay home if they have any one of these signs of illness: severe congestion not related to seasonal allergies, persistent cough, sore throat, temperature 100 degrees or greater, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or generalized muscle aches or weakness.
- A sick person should stay home until the temperature is less than 100 degrees for **24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication (acetaminophen or ibuprofen) and symptoms have resolved.**
- Parents/caregivers should notify the main office before opening of the school day if a student will be absent or late (this can be done by phone, or emailing the office team at office@ogms.org, you may CC the teachers, but the office will also be sure to inform them).
    - Please provide information regarding the illness/absence as our school nurse is required to track illnesses.

Student Illness or Injury During the School Day:

If a student or staff member develops symptoms of illness during the school day, they will be evaluated by the school nurse or administrative staff.

- If symptoms of respiratory illness are present, the school nurse or administrator will reach out to the parent.
- Parents/guardians will be notified if a student needs to be dismissed or referred for medical evaluation.
- If an individual has symptoms of a respiratory or other infectious disease, they will be masked, and kept in the health room until dismissed.
- All injuries will be evaluated by the school nurse or administrator and first aid will be provided according to standing orders from the school Medical Director. Parents/guardians will be notified of any significant injury.
- In case of an **accident or sudden illness at school, you will be called as soon as first aid has been given**. If you cannot be reached, the emergency number you indicate will be called. If that person is not available, your child's doctor will be called. If your child's doctor is not available, the medical advisor for the Mansfield Public Schools (and for Oak Grove Montessori School) is Dr. Kristin Gildersleeve and she will be called.

Covid-19 and Influenza Infectious Disease Prevention Mitigation Policies:

- The CDC provides update guidance on Covid-19 vaccines and boosters which families should use in consultation with their healthcare provider..
- The school will follow the Commissioner of Public Health in CT. If new guidance is issued, the community will be notified of the updates to school policy and health procedure.
- Flu vaccine prior to the fall/winter flu season is strongly recommended for all staff and students.
- Flu vaccine prior to December 31 annually is *required by the State of CT for all children under the age of 60 months (5 years).*
- **Handwashing thoroughly throughout the school day is our number one defense against illness.** Hand washing should occur after using the bathroom, before eating, and other times as appropriate**.**
    - **Mask Use:**
        - Well-fitted, clean masks have proven to be very helpful in preventing the spread of respiratory infections and protecting individuals *even with one-way masking*.
        - Personal choice regarding mask use will be respected by all.
        - Mask use in school is *optional*, guided by parental decision for each child.

        - *This policy may change based on advice from the local Health District or State Department of Public Health. Transmission rates are monitored on an ongoing basis and decisions/recommendations are altered based on Health Department reports.*
    - **Additional On-Going Mitigation Practices For the Prevention of Respiratory Illnesses:**
        - Routine daily environmental cleaning
        - Maximizing ventilation, opening windows when weather permits
        - Utilizing air filters in each classroom
        - Outdoor learning as weather permits
        - Frequent handwashing and availability of hand sanitizing stations

Open communication of health issues with the school nurse or administrative staff is critical in keeping our community healthy.

When to Keep Your Child at Home

School is a place for healthy children. Home is the place for children that are ill. Sick children seldom, if ever, gain anything by attending school. They are much better off at home where they are most likely to get the necessary care for recovery and achieve an early return to school. Keeping ill children at home protects other children, their families, and the school staff from infection. Ask yourself, "Would I want my child near someone with these symptoms?"

Contagious/Communicable Diseases

It is important that you ***inform the school office*** as soon as possible of any contagious diseases so that we can notify other families of the incident and the steps they should follow. We will not disclose your child's name to the other parents. Should the school notice that your child may have contracted chicken pox, scabies, impetigo, head lice, ringworm or any other contagious disease, you will be notified immediately to pick them up and ask that your child remain out of school until the disease is treated and no longer contagious. For the health and safety of all of us, we ask the cooperation of families in this matter. Upon recovery from a contagious disease, a doctor's written release is required prior to a child's return to school.

Medications

Please contact the school nurse if your child will require medication during school hours. The school nurse will work with you and your child's doctor to develop a medication plan, which meets the needs of your child

and is in compliance with the State of Connecticut Department of Health Services regulations. No medication (prescription or over-the-counter) can be given without the receipt of the mandated paperwork. No medications can be administered during extended day hours.

For students in Grades 5 and 6

Parents/guardians of children in Grades 5 and 6 are able to provide written authorization for the health room to dispense Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen for the following complaints:

1. Headache without injury or fever
2. Menstrual cramps
3. Recent dental work (toothache, dental brace discomfort)
4. Minor muscle and or joint pain discomfort

Please note that we are **not able to provide such medications for children younger than 5th grade without a medication authorization form from your healthcare profession** and that the health office may refer you for further evaluation if your child has had such medication and continues to complain of discomfort.

Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

Oak Grove Montessori School will follow the guidelines set forth by the Child Protective Services of the State of Connecticut Department of Children & Family Services. Employees or officers of any public or private school are required to report if there is reason to believe that child abuse or neglect has occurred or there exists a substantial risk that child abuse or neglect will occur in the foreseeable future.

Procedure:

- Any employee of Oak Grove Montessori School is a mandated reporter.
- Any staff member having evidence or suspicion of child abuse or neglect will personally report this information to DCF, after reporting to the Head of School in advance.
- The DCF report may be made by telephone, followed by a written report within 48 hours of the telephone report.
- All dealings with the police, staff, and public media will be the responsibility of the Head of School. No employee other than those authorized by the Head of School is to deal with the police or the media.
- The family's confidentiality will be protected. The exceptions to this would be when a court order subpoenas records, the police or DCF is investigating the case or a signed release of information has been

filed with the school.
● The confidential student's records may also be subpoenaed by a court order. In this case, the school is required to surrender whatever documents the court requests and may be required to submit reports.

Financial Policies

Information and Responsibilities

Oak Grove Montessori School is a nonprofit organization that relies on tuition as the major source of funding. The tuition payment plan has been made to be as convenient as possible for families, while still meeting the financial needs for the school. If you have any questions about the payment schedule, please contact the school office.

- There are 3 payment plan options available. Pay in full (5% discount), Semi annual (3% discount), and 10 month plans.
- You will be billed for tuition the first week of each month from July through April. Contracted billing for the extended day program will begin in October and end in May. Payments may be paid via credit card or ACH (electronic bank transfer), or checks or cash can be submitted to the Administrative Assistant in the school office before the designated due date.
    - **Beginning in the 2026-2027 school year**: OGMS will move away from the TADS Tuition Management portal, but will still allow for electronic payment via ACH bank transfer or Credit Card
        - N.B. All tuition and fees listed online and in our enrollment materials reflect a 3% discount if paid in cash (cash, check, ACH withdrawal).
        - Payment by credit card will reflect a <u>removal</u> of the 3% discount and thus a higher payment.
        - <u>For Example</u>: The monthly charge on the 10 month payment plan is $1,575 if paid by cash, check, or ACH bank withdrawal.
            - If a family elects to use a credit card to make a monthly payment, that charge will be: $1,622.25 without the cash discount.
- A late charge of $50 will be assessed 5 days after the due date.
- There will be a $25 charge for handling returned checks or insufficient funds
- An account that is 30-59 days late is classified as "overdue". Overdue accounts should submit either full payment of the overdue amount, or a payment plan that has been approved by the Head of School, describing how this balance will be paid. Any

families with overdue amounts that have submitted and followed acceptable payment plans to the school will continue to be treated as “overdue” and will avoid escalation to the “delinquent” category.
- Any account that is 60 days overdue without a payment plan will cause the account to be treated as ‘delinquent” and may, as a result, be sent to a Collection Agency for action.
- A family may not re-enroll a child for the following school year or apply for financial aid if their account is overdue or delinquent.
- *Transcripts and student records will not be released unless all obligations of this agreement are met, including but not limited to financial obligations*.
- If a parent or guardian withdraws a student prior to the end of the signed contract, the parent or guardian is still responsible and liable for the remaining tuition. No portion of the tuition, paid or outstanding, will be refunded or canceled.
- If for some reason the school finds it necessary to dismiss a student, any unused tuition already paid will be refunded on a prorated basis and any remaining obligation will be negated.
- There will be no refunds or discounts for absences.

Tuition Assistance

Oak Grove offers a limited amount of tuition assistance that is given according to financial need and without bias regarding color, religion, gender, national origin or disability. Formal applications are submitted to a third-party system on-line with TADS-SSS (School & Student Services), our Student Information System. This can be accessed via your TADS account for returning families, or via the school’s website, www.ogms.org, by clicking on the **TADS** logo on the admissions page of the website. Applications for tuition assistance are accepted on a rolling basis. Aid is awarded on the basis of need and all are welcome to fill out an application form. The Tuition Assistance Committee will consider each case and this is typically done in the spring for the next school year.

Fundraising

Like most independent schools, Oak Grove Montessori School solicits charitable gifts and has a limited number of key fundraising events each year to support its work for our young children. These funds supplement tuition income and enrich our educational programs. The tuition at Oak Grove covers a portion of our operating costs. We rely on our two major fundraisers to bridge the gap between tuition and operating costs.

Annual Fund

This fund-raising event is a letter or a phone call extended to parents, staff,

alumni, Board of Trustees, and friends of Oak Grove once a year. We ask these people to make a tax-deductible gift to support the operations of the school. These charitable gifts provide funds for extras not covered by tuition - additional classroom materials, media resources, computer equipment, cultural programs, outside equipment, and staff development programs. This annual campaign helps the school to operate with a balanced budget while maintaining an exceptional educational program. Our expectation for our Annual Fund is 100% participation by our current staff, families and Board of Trustees. This high participation percentage is critical in our work towards additional grant donations.

Spring Event

Each spring Oak Grove holds a family friendly Fun Run and Walk - The Hoo's Fooling Who? 2 Miler. This block party style event is intended to be fun for all with a variety of ways to participate, whether you walk, run, stroll, cheer on friends, or play some lawn games. We encourage everyone to attend this event and bring a friend. It is an opportunity for the greater community to come to an Oak Grove event that showcases our shared values of care for children and their families, inclusivity, outdoor play and recreation, healthy lifestyles, and kindness. Not to mention, great food, music, local businesses, and fun. Not only is it a time to get to know more people in our community, it is a wonderful way to support our school.

Other Ways to Give

The Endowment Fund

Gifts to the Endowment Fund may be made at any time. Opportunities include commemorative gifts to mark an event such as a birthday or an anniversary, or a memorial gift to honor a deceased loved one. Donors may endow a named scholarship with a minimum of $10,000. All bequests to the school are attributed to the Endowment Fund unless otherwise stipulated.

Capital Donations

Capital donations support major renovations to or expansion of the building or the outside space. Generally, these gifts are larger than an annual gift. Capital donations may be made at any time.

Special Events

Special events not only raise revenue for the school, they also provide entertainment and opportunities to socialize with other families in our community. All fund-raising activities are supported by volunteers who dedicate hours of work enthusiastically planning, staffing and participating at events to further the quality of education for our children.

Sponsorships
You or your company can sponsor special events hosted by Oak Grove such as the Spring Fling, Gala, Hibernation Festival, etc. Contact us for more information.

Apparel Sales
All proceeds from the purchase of OGMS apparel directly benefits the Brody Memorial Scholarship Fund. This fund honors the memory of beloved student Seth Brody by providing financial support to families in need so that they can attend Oak Grove.
https://ogms.org/our-community/spirit-store/

Cash Donations
Many individuals choose to give their gift by cash or check. Please make checks payable to Oak Grove Montessori School and send to:

Oak Grove Montessori School
132 Pleasant Valley Road
Mansfield, CT 06250

Gifts-in-Kind
Some donors may wish to contribute an item for a specific purpose. These gifts-in-kind, are as diverse as the interests of our friends and have included trees, benches, computers and software, outside play area materials, etc. The school is happy to accept gifts-in-kind such as these, provided there is appropriate need.

Matching Gifts
Many corporations will match their employees' and retirees' gifts to educational institutions—doubling or tripling your gift to Oak Grove Montessori School! The corporate personnel office can provide information and a matching gift form. OGMS will complete the application process and recognize both donor and corporation for their gifts. We encourage all of our constituents whose companies provide matching gifts programs to participate in them. It is truly a golden opportunity for all parties to make a difference.

Appendix I: Recommended Reading

The following resources may be helpful to you or your extended family as you learn more about Dr. Maria Montessori's work with children and educational and parenting philosophies that align with Montessori pedagogy of deep respect for the child. Many of these books are available to borrow.

Montessori, A Modern Approach, Paula Polk Lillard

From Childhood to Adolescence, Maria Montessori

The Secret of Childhood, Maria Montessori

Discovery of the Child, Maria Montessori

The Absorbent Mind, Maria Montessori

To Educate the Human Potential, Maria Montessori

The Science Behind the Genius, Angeline Stoll Lillard

Education for Human Development, Mario Montessori, Jr.

Maria Montessori, a Biography, Rita Kramer

Montessori Madness, Trevor Eisler

The Montessori Toddler and The Montessori Child, Simone Davies

The Montessori Potential, Paula Lillard Preschlak

Montessori for Every Family, Tim Seldin & Vanessa Davies

Follow the Child, Rob Keys

The Whole Brain Child; *The Yes Brain*; and *No Drama Discipline,* Dan Siegel & Tina Payne Bryson

Raising Human Beings, Ross Greene

Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life, Marshall Rosenberg

Beyond Behaviors: Using Brain Science and Compassion to Understand and Solve Children's Behavioral Challenges, Mona Delahooke

Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids: How to Stop Yelling and Start Connecting, Laura Markham

How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success, Julie Lythcott-Haims

No Bad Kids: Toddler Discipline Without Shame, Janet Lansbury

Balanced and Barefoot: How Unrestricted Outdoor Play Makes for Strong, Confident, and Capable Children, Angela Hanscom

Best Friends, Worst Enemies, Michael Thompson

Last Child in the Woods, Richard Louv

The Hurried Child, David Elkind

The Gift of Failure, Jessica Lahey

Appendix II: Key Philosophical Messages that Make Montessori Unique[1]

- Deep respect for children as individuals.

- Multiage classes allow teachers to develop close and long-term relationships with their students and encourage older students to become role models, mentors, and leaders to younger students.

- An integrated curriculum is carefully structured and connects subjects within programs (e.g., history and cultural arts to maximize the opportunity for learning that builds from program to program, progressing from concrete to abstract learning).

- Independence is nurtured and leads children toward being purposeful, motivated, and confident in their own abilities.

- Peace and conflict resolution are taught daily. Children learn to be a part of a warm, respectful, and supportive community.

- Character development is a central focus of the AMS Montessori curriculum. The child creates, in a very real sense, the adult that they are to be through their experiences, interactions, and environments.

- Hands-on learning is central to the curriculum in all programs and leads to children being engaged rather than passive with their work.

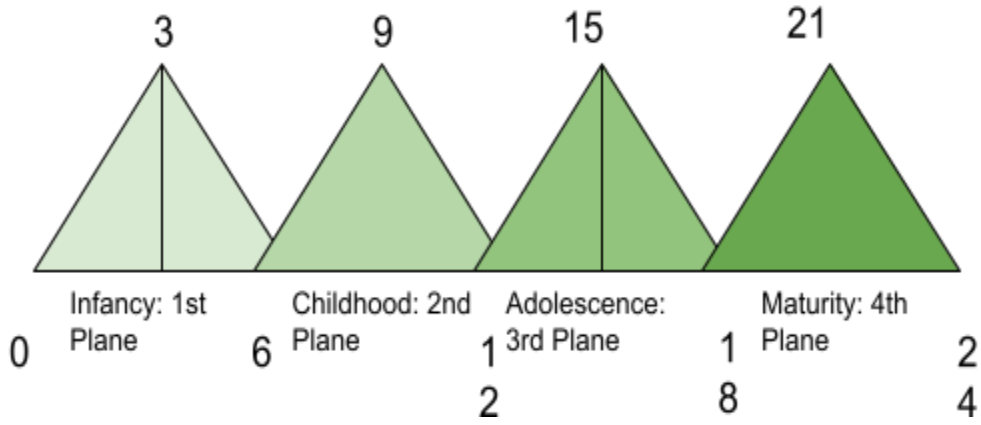
- The environments are responsibly and carefully prepared with multisensory, sequential, and self-correcting materials to support self-directed learning.

- Teachers, students, and families work together as a warm and supportive community.

- Self-expression is nurtured in all children. Children experience art, music, poetry, theater, writing, and other forms of creative arts with confidence and passion.

[1] *Montessori in the 21st Century.* The American Montessori Society. 2003.

Appendix IV: The Four Planes of Development[2]



1st Plane: Ages 0-6, 'Early Childhood', and Individual Creation of the Person
This stage is characterized by the young child's 'absorbent mind.' Children have a desire for physical independence (from "Help me to do it myself!" to "I can do it myself!") and are interested in real activities with an intelligent purpose. Sensitive periods during this plane include: movement, language, small objects, toileting, order, music, grace and courtesy, senses, writing, reading, spatial relationships, and mathematics.

2nd Plane: Ages 6-12, 'Childhood', and Construction of the Intelligence
Children in the second plane of development have a thirst for knowledge, love of imagination, fascination with fairness, and a desire for intellectual independence. This is the time for 'cosmic education,' in which the child explores their place within the world and comes to appreciate the interconnectedness of all things. This is also the 'bridge to abstraction'—the transition from concrete to abstract thinking. Children in this plane have a desire for intellectual independence. ("I can think it myself!")

3rd Plane: Ages 12-18, 'Adolescence', and Construction of the Social Self
Children in the third plane of development are characterized by self concern and self assessment. This is a sensitive period for both critical thinking and exploring social and moral values. Adolescents in this plane have a desire for emotional independence. ("I can stand on my own.")

4th Plane: Ages 18-24, Beyond 'Adulthood', and Construction of Self Understanding

The fourth plane of development is characterized by the construction of the spiritual self. Young adults are in the process of conscious discernment of right and wrong, seeking to discover their place within the world. Young adults in the plane have a desire for financial independence. ("I can get it myself.")

Intense Change & Assimilation
Within each plane, the child undergoes a period of intense change, followed by a period of assimilation. This also holds true within each three-year cycle. For this reason, the third, or capstone year in Montessori classrooms is sometimes known as the 'leap year.' This is when students internalize all the various skills for which they have both directly and indirectly acquired during the earlier years. It is also the time when students become self-possessed learners, confident in their abilities. It's when they emerge as leaders, eager to share their skills with their younger peers. Rising second and third year students enter the classroom in the fall

[2] Montessori School of Beaverton, https://msb.org/the-montessori-method/four-planes-of-development

with newfound confidence and autonomy, ready to take on leadership roles and greater independence. Children who move up to the next level of their Montessori education thrill at the opportunity to embark upon new and exciting journeys.

Appendix IV: Supporting your child in their social and relational development

Noted Montessori educator and writer Donna Bryant Goertz provides the following guidance for how to support our children's developing independence in their social relationships.

Preparing Ourselves to Receive Our Children's Reports of Concern from Their Community

From time to time our child may tell us about upsetting things that have happened to them or others.

Or things they have seen or heard at school that are in some way concerning or puzzling to them.

How we respond may have a strong effect on our child's future perceptions and feelings as well as his relationships with peers.

Listen. Let it be. Comfort the child with a touch or a hug. Breathe.

Listen. Make a sound or a comment of interest, compassion or support.

Wait. Listen. Stay focused but relaxed. Breathe.

Our children, especially while in Montessori communities, have amazing resources for advocating for themselves and others in subtle but powerful ways.

For our children to bring forth and develop these resources they need the calm and quiet attention of our listening ear and trustful heart, a heart that cares about everyone concerned.

When we react instead of responding with calm and quiet attention...

Or when we show heated feelings of judgment against other children, our own child loses touch with those resources.

This can be the birth of our child's tendencies of bully or victim, of bystander or follower...

As well as the attraction toward melodrama, intrigue and the manipulation of the adult in social relations.

In an environment of high emotion, children may choose to act to make things worse for themselves and others.

This is in direct opposition to their natural tendencies to make things better. Or our child might withdraw and shut down in order to exclude us.

Children have a strong need for self-agency in solving their own problems and working out their own relationships.

If our child reports repeatedly about the same child or about similar situations, it is important to let the Guide know privately.

Explain the child's concern so the Guide can keep an eye out for ways to give our child support in working through those relationships and situations.

Our Child Reports About Their Own Experience

Johnny hit me.

(First give physical comfort.) Oh, that could hurt. I'm so sorry you were hit! You'd like him to use his words. I trust he'll be learning soon. I wonder what you could do to help? What could you say?

Jamie took the book I was reading.

That could be frustrating. You'd like her to ask you and wait for your answer instead of just taking it. I wonder what you could do? What could you say?

Dana called me piggy face.

That could really hurt your feelings. You'd like her to call you by your name. You'd like her to tell you what's bothering her in respectful language.

Colin laughed when I fell down.

That could hurt your feelings. Maybe you'd like him to help you up when you fall down. Maybe you'd like him to ask if you're okay. Sounds like you know everyone feels better when they are concerned about others and helpful to them.

Susan said I took her pencil, but I didn't. She yelled at me in front of everyone.

That sounds embarrassing. Sounds like you wish she would have asked you politely about her pencil.

Our Child Reports About Another Child's Experience

Sally hit Martha.

That could hurt! I hear you care about people's feelings. Sounds like you know how important it is to use words instead of hitting. I trust that your guide will help Martha learn to use her words very soon.

Mabel pushed Stacy down.

I hope Stacy's okay. Being pushed down could hurt her body and her feelings. I hear you care about feelings. You know how important it is to use words instead of pushing. I trust that your guide will help Mabel learn to use her words very soon.

Danny took Cindy's hair bow.

It could be upsetting to Cindy to have someone take her hair bow. I hear that you care about how other people are treated. You know how important it is to respect others' things. You'd like Danny to respect Cindy's hair bow.

Bobby messed up David's work.

It could be very upsetting for David to have his work messed up. Sounds like you know how much better everyone feels when children respect the work of others. I hear that you know how important respect is to the whole community.

Delia called Sammy "stupid."

That could hurt his feelings. Sounds like you know how important it is to use respectful words to other children, even when very annoyed or frustrated. You'd like children in the community to be respectful even when they have very strong feelings. I wonder what the children and the guide will do to help Sammy feel better and help Delia find other ways of expressing her feelings.

Brenda never does her work. She just bothers other children.

You feel bad for Brenda and the other children who are bothered. Sounds like you know children feel happier when they find work they like and no one is bothered. You understand what makes the community work well. I trust that little by little Brenda will begin to find her work.

Sven is so mean. No one likes him.

That sounds sad and lonely for Sven. I hear you care about children when someone's mean to them. I trust that little by little Sven will soon learn to get along better with the children.

I trust the children and the guide will find ways to help him. I wonder what you could do to help everyone make it better?

Our Child Repeatedly Reports Concerns about the Same Situation or the Same Child

Jackson was mean to me again. He's always mean, and it's not getting better.

That could be discouraging for you. It could be discouraging to Jackson and to all of the children. I wonder what you could do?

I know you to be a person with many good ideas and people who could help. I trust everyone to find a way to change the situation. I wonder who could help you? What could you do?

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Appendix V: Bullying Prevention, Response, & Intervention Plan

At Oak Grove, we believe that every child has the right to an education and every child has the right to be safe. We do not tolerate bullying, we educate our staff and students about bullying, we closely monitor the behavior of our staff and students to ensure that bullying does not occur and we take swift action to deal with any bullying that does occur

Prevention and Management

Oak Grove encourages students to show respect for differences including but not limited to race, gender, sexual orientation, and religion while fostering a school environment free from all forms of bullying and intimidation whether physical, social, emotional or verbal.

The school's focus, based on Montessori pedagogy, is on preventative measures for such behaviors, by teaching children how to act RIGHT, an acronym which represents the five core values at OGMS:

- Respect
- Integrity
- Good deeds
- Hard work
- Team spirit

Definition of Bullying

In line with the State of CT guidance, Oak Grove defines bullying as a series of repeated intentionally cruel incidents, involving the same children, in the same bully and victim roles. This, however, does not mean that in order for bullying to occur there must be repeated offenses. Bullying can consist of a single interaction. Bullying behavior may also be defined as a criminal act if the bully is twelve years of age or older. Bullying is a willful, conscious desire to hurt, frighten or threaten.

It can be physical and/or verbal and includes racial, religious**,** and sexual harassment, offensive gestures, inappropriate touching, intimidation, extortion and social exclusion. It is behavior that is designed to hurt, injure, upset, embarrass or discomfort the other person.

Cyber-bullying is willful and repeated harassment and intimidation of a

person through the use of digital electronics. It includes, but is not limited to email, instant messages, text messages, and internet postings. Unwarranted contact may take place in, or occur on, social networks, chat rooms, blogs or cell phone text.

Scope
This policy is intended to address bullying behavior, including cyber-bullying, on the part of students enrolled in the school at the time of the incident. The scope of this policy covers any activity (whether initiated within the classroom, on the school grounds or elsewhere) that has a demonstrated, adverse impact on a targeted child. It will apply to the use of electronic devices as well as the use of school or non-school computers, programs or networks.

Discipline as the Foundation
Discipline at Oak Grove is based on a positive attitude toward children. To this end, the staff models grace, courtesy, respect, and problem-solving skills. Students are taught that Oak Grove is a peaceful school based on mutual respect and that there is no place for violence or bullying in our school. Appropriate use of non-violent communication is expected.

Oak Grove requires all employees and encourages all parents to report any known or suspected incidents of bullying to their child's teacher and/or the Head of School. When an incident is observed, employees are required to complete an Incident Report and send copies to the Head of School and to the Administrative Assistant.

School Commitment
In line with non-violent communication, the school will:

- Encourage teachers to embody programs against bullying in their classroom curriculum
- Record incidents of bullying in a consistent way, using the OG Incident Report form, that allows for monitoring of such behavior
- Discuss appropriate standards of behavior and school rules with all students
- Involve other agencies as necessary

The school will support students who are being bullied by:

- Improving the self-esteem of victims through activities that build self-confidence, self-awareness, and the ability to stand up for oneself
- Developing programs to assist those who have been bullying to work cooperatively with others rather than in a confrontational way

- Taking bullying seriously and thoroughly investigating all incidents

Response to Reports
In keeping with the Montessori philosophy, our policy is to help children to arrive at inner discipline through concentrated work. In all areas, the child is assisted in developing the skills necessary to control their own actions and develop self-discipline. Natural and logical consequences are used as a means of helping the child to develop inner limits.

The following will be Oak Grove's response to reported incidents of bullying behavior:

1. The Head of School will be notified of the incident. The student(s) involved will be addressed by the school staff member to whom the incident was reported.
2. The appropriate school staff member will speak privately with the student(s) to determine the severity and intent of the situation. Factors used to determine this will include but are not limited to: age, maturity level, special needs, degree of harm, surrounding circumstances, nature of the behavior, past incidents, the pattern of behavior, the relationship between parties and the context in which the alleged incident occurred. As is appropriate in a school serving children from 2 years to 14 years of age, incidents of bullying will be dealt with in a manner that is developmentally appropriate for the ages of the children involved.
    a. If the findings show a lack of intent to bully, the student will be directed to complete mediation with the other student(s) involved. Appropriate staff will facilitate this until it is sufficiently resolved. The parents/guardians of all parties will be contacted prior to dismissal on that same day.
    b. If the findings show intent, the process will continue. At this time an Incident Form will be filled out and passed on to the Head of School.
3. The student(s) will be taken directly to the Head of School where the staff will review the situation. The Head of School will begin an investigation. This may include further information gathering involving appropriate resources as needed, such as student file, past incident reports, etc. as well as speaking with other teachers, staff, and students. All investigative meetings and conversations will be held outside of the classroom and in a private location.
4. The parents/guardians of the student(s) will be called and a meeting will be arranged to discuss the situation and the consequences as relevant to the severity of the incident. **The student(s) will NOT re-integrate into the school population until such time as this

meeting occurs.

5. At the time of the parent meeting the following steps will be taken:
    a. The student(s) will explain what has happened and any background leading to the incident.
    b. Appropriate staff will acknowledge the integrity with which the student approached the situation and their willingness to take responsibility for their actions.
    c. The parents/guardians will be given time to respond.
    d. The Head of School will state the consequences to be agreed upon by all parties.
    e. The meeting will be recorded and signed by all present, reflecting agreement to the terms set within the meeting.
    f. All parties in the meeting will sign the Incident Report form.
6. Prior to returning to the classroom, mediation facilitated by the Head of School or the Lead Teacher of the given classroom will occur. Amends will be made for the incident. The safety of the targeted student will be openly discussed at this meeting as well as a plan for on-going communication. This will be documented and signed by all present reflecting this agreement to the terms set within the mediation.
7. Follow-up will include, but is not limited to the following:
    a. All student(s) involved will have regular check-in sessions with their teachers
    b. There will be a follow-up session with the whole class (or classes) to discuss and reinforce the community values
    c. The Head of School will meet with the involved staff to debrief the incident, identify additional resources for the student(s), the teacher(s) or the school and refine the system if needed
8. Copies of the Incident Report, all meeting reports, and the mediation agreement will be filed according to the school's system.
9. If a pattern of disruptive behavior develops:
    a. Teachers will record behavioral observations and visually observe the child at all times until the behavior changes
    b. The teacher will inform the student's parents/guardians
    c. Appropriate staff will be notified
    d. The student, teacher, parents, and Head of School will work together to modify behavior and determine when appropriate additional professional help will be required
10. If the child persists in the unprovoked, willful hurting of others, after being reasoned with and experiencing consequences, there will be an immediate one-day suspension from school.
11. Continued negative behavior will result in the school requiring

a behavioral evaluation by a professional, and the possible removal of the student from the school.

If reasonable suspicion exists that a criminal act may have been committed, the Head of School will also become involved and report the incident to the appropriate authorities.

Thank You

Oak Grove is a wonderful school in the heart of a diverse area of Eastern Connecticut. The opportunities for your child's growth and development are endless. The journey is exciting for the child, the family, and the school.

Thank you for choosing Oak Grove Montessori School to be a partner in your child's educational and developmental journey. We look forward to guiding your child to reach their fullest potential.

At Oak Grove, we encourage the feeling of an extended family. The Montessori belief in the child's unique talents and the ability for growth extends to the entire family. We welcome you to the Oak Grove family.

We look forward to sharing many milestones with you and building memories that will last a lifetime for you and your child.

There are so many ways to help both your child, and this school grow and thrive. We will be asking for your help in a variety of ways over the next several years, and we count on your participation to help meet the needs of all of our children.

If this handbook leaves you with any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask. We look forward to getting to know you and having you in our Oak Grove Community.