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.
### Oak Grove Montessori School
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Head of School Welcome

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to Oak Grove Montessori School. The decision to send your child to our school required you to make choices based on your family’s priorities, goals, and educational beliefs. We respect and appreciate your commitment.

We look forward to building a strong relationship between Oak Grove, your family, and our broader community. Thank you for entrusting the guidance of your child’s educational journey to the talents and commitment of our amazing teachers and staff.

The Parent Handbook is meant to support your experience as a parent in our school. The handbook consists of eight sections. Please read them carefully, as each section contains important information about a specific content area. Oak Grove reserves the right to interpret rules and policies as individual situations arise.

I am available to discuss your child, the curriculum, specific projects, or your role in our school. We strongly believe that Oak Grove offers children and their families an opportunity to be active participants in the creation of educational excellence. I invite you to come and visit me at any time.

Sincerely,

Sherrie Clune,
Head of School
History, Mission and Philosophy

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.

The school has achieved over 38 years of steady growth as it has worked to meet the educational needs of our young children. Dedicated board members, volunteers, and staff have contributed to accomplishing our goals. The leadership of the school comes from a combination of staff, parents, and volunteers. Many former board members, staff and parents 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-aged 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:

- Parent 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 affiliated with the American Montessori Society and the Montessori Schools of Connecticut. Oak Grove is accredited by the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools. Oak Grove is a member of Montessori Schools of Connecticut.
Faculty and Staff

Sherrie Clune, Head of School

Administration
Cindy Henry, Head’s Assistant
Jennifer Nelson, Business Manager
JoAnn Aitken, RN

Children’s House
Robyn VanLandingham, Head Teacher
Audrey Blake, Assistant Teacher

Morning Care Program
Audrey Blake

Lower Elementary Classroom
Willa Biewald, Head Teacher
Roxana Mocanu, Assistant Teacher

Upper Elementary Classroom
Hannah Army, Head Teacher
David Silsbee, Teacher

Student Services
Lisa Jordan, Director
Chris Baldwin
Sheila Kaytis

After School Programming
TBA

Board of Trustees
2019-2020

Chair
Ricardo Trindade

Vice Chair
Bill Piotroski

Treasurer
Bob Powell

Secretary
Tiffany Blumenstein

At Large Member
Dan Polhemus

Board of Trustees Overview
Oak Grove Montessori School is a non-profit corporation, formed under the laws of the State of Connecticut which is entitled “Non-Profit Corporation Act”, and is governed by a Board of Trustees. All monies received by the corporation are used to support the school, with the Board of Trustees receiving no salaries for their services. The Board of Trustees consists of 9-13 members, each serving a minimum 3 year term.
Trustees
Lindsay Baah
Sherrie Clune (ex-officio)
Bill Covey
Sherry D’Alessandro
Mike Gnazzo
Amy Lambeck

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 encourages 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 interest 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 life-long 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 for 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. The teachers supplement these with fascinating, dramatic presentations called “great lessons” and science experiments.

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 Physical Education
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 physical education. Safety skills, cooperation, and competitive attitudes are learned. 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 and relax.

Oak Grove parents 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 parents remember from their school years. If a parent 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 Services/Learning Support

At Oak Grove Montessori School, we aim to provide each child with the tools they need to succeed. Our classroom teachers are specially trained observers and childhood development experts with experience teaching a diverse community of children. We recognize that some children are exceptional learners who may need additional supporting academic and/or social and emotional areas. This is why we have a team of educators who work together with classroom teachers, students, and families to provide specialized services.

SST

SST stands for Student Support Team. The aim of the team is to provide support to children and teachers so that each child may experience success. The student support team and the HOS will meet weekly with the classroom teachers at each level to discuss student progress and challenges. The process sometimes serves as a pathway to determining a child’s eligibility for special education services as well.

The Process

Typically, a classroom teacher initiates the SST process for a child; this is often based on the teacher’s observations but is sometimes in combination with concerns expressed by the family. Children may be referred for a wide variety of reasons, including academic and learning challenges, behavioral difficulties, or any other reason that seems to be hindering the child’s success or growth. The entire process consists of three or more stages:

1. Initial meeting - The first SST meeting is an opportunity for the team to discuss the child’s strengths, goals, and what support attempts have been made thus far. The teacher will speak to the team about what strategies have been successful and which have not. The team will generate a plan including intervention strategies.
that hopefully provide the child with the support they need. The team will consist of the classroom teacher, the learning support director, learning support assistant teachers, and the Head of School. This would begin the Child Study Team (CST) process and parents will be notified.

2. Implementation - During the six to eight weeks following the initial meeting, the classroom teacher, and often other support staff, will implement the intervention strategies listed on the plan. It is critical that staff collect data during this time to help determine what strategies are working and which may need to be modified.

3. Follow-Up Meeting - After six to eight weeks, the team will reconvene to discuss the child’s progress. If the interventions have been successful, there is no need for further meetings. If the interventions were unsuccessful or only partially successful, the team takes the time to re-evaluate the plan, make adjustments and new suggestions and plans to meet again in another six to eight weeks.

Some other points to consider:

- Communication with parents is very important throughout the process. We share our progress with families, providing regular updates. We invite families to share their concerns and triumphs with us as we all work together to support the child.
- Occasionally, standard intervention strategies are not enough. If there are concerns that a child may be eligible for special education 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 Special Education Services and request more formal testing. Parents would receive written notification of such referral.

Intervention Strategies

What are ‘intervention strategies’? These are specific methods or tools that help address a challenge and work toward a goal. These strategies will be implemented, assessed, and documented. If the CST determines that a child has not responded to interventions, then
special services may be recommended or the team will refer the child to the public school Special Education Services and request more testing. While there is a wide range of intervention strategies developed to address various needs, the following are just a few examples:

- Teachers may have a child repeat directions back to them to ensure understanding.
- Special seating arrangements may be made to help a child with focus.
- Opportunities for additional movement may be made for children who have different energy, sensory, or focus needs.
- Visual schedules or graphic organizers may be helpful for some children.
- A child may need to have tasks broken up into smaller segments to make the task more manageable.
- Short-term counseling support may be helpful for a child experiencing big changes at home.
- Small group reading or math instruction with a specialist may be helpful for children with academic needs.

This list is a very small sampling of the ideas and tools available to children and teachers.

The Team

Depending upon the needs of the child, the team may consist of some or all of the following people:

- Classroom teachers and the HOS are always part of the IST team. Sometimes teachers from other classrooms or levels are invited to meetings to share their expertise.
- Administrative staff sometimes attend IST meetings in order to broaden awareness of the child’s needs and to offer support if needed.
Lisa Jordan serves as our Director of Student Services. This means she is the coordinator for all CST meetings, and also provides reading and math support services to individual students and small groups of children at the school.

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 parents 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 disagreement between the parents and the current teacher as to the next year’s placement of the child, a placement procedure and plan will be initiated. The parents will meet with the headteacher of the child’s current classroom and discuss the difference of opinions. The parents will spend adequate time observing their child in the current classroom to gain a clear understanding of the child in the classroom. After these two events take place, and if there is still a disagreement about the appropriate placement, a larger team meeting will take place. The meeting will include the parents, the current headteacher, the headteacher of the next classroom up, and the Head of School.

The Head of School makes the final decision for student placement. The Head of School will make this 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. All requests for school records must be referred to the Main Office. The Head of School and/or the Assistant to the Head of School 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 the Children’s House 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 parents are viewed as partners in the educational care of children, with shared values and educational goals. Prospective parents are invited to schedule an observation in the classroom by calling the school office. Parents 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 parents meet with the Head of School.
- 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 Procedures

- Requests for enrollment applications are taken by telephone, in-person and online.
- An information packet consisting of our brochure, stating the philosophy and objectives of Montessori education and an Oak Grove education, a fee and payment schedule, and additional information will be mailed or given to the interested parents.
- Observation of a class by prospective parents is required.
- Upon receipt of the application, the application fee and all other requested information are required. Oak Grove will respond to the applicant within 30 days.
- At the time of acceptance, you will receive several forms that must be completed and returned to the school by the child’s start date. These forms include health, immunization, and medical authorization forms, emergency contact forms, and allergy profile sheets. A tuition deposit is due at this time, equal to one month’s tuition in your child’s chosen classroom.

Enrollment

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

- Returning students, who are current with tuition payments, are given a 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 Parent Contract
• Completing all required forms
• Meeting all deadlines

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**

**The Continuum of Behaviors and The School Response**

The core of education is the development of character. It is our vision that families and school collaborate together to promote the growth and development of children. Oak Grove strongly believes in the importance of respectful behavior from adult to adult, adult to child, and child-to-child. Although there is informality about the school, there is a deep commitment to positive role-modeling on the part of adults, as well as the teaching and learning of thoughtfulness to others, good manners, conflict resolution, and other positive social skills.

**School Safety**

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.

**Definition of Bullying**

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 Policy
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 zero-tolerance for violence or bullying. Appropriate use of non-violent communication and frustration tolerance skills are expected.

Oak Grove requires all employees and encourages all parents to report any known 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 Assistant to the Head of School.

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 one’s self.
- Developing programs to assist bullies to work cooperatively with others rather than in a confrontational way.
Taking bullying seriously and thoroughly investigating all incidents

**Discipline Procedure**

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 his/her 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 13 years of age, incidents of bullying will be dealt with in a manner that is developmentally appropriate for the ages of the children involved.
   - 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 of all parties will be contacted prior to dismissal on that same day.
   - 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 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:
   - The student(s) will explain what has happened and any background leading to the incident.
   - Appropriate staff will acknowledge the integrity with which the student approached the situation and their willingness to take responsibility for their actions.
● The parents will be given time to respond.
● The Head of School will state the consequences to be agreed upon by all parties.
● The meeting will be recorded and signed by all present, reflecting agreement to the terms set within the meeting.
● 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 headteacher 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:
● All student(s) involved will have regular check-in sessions with their teachers
● There will be a follow-up session with the whole class (or classes) to discuss and reinforce the community values
● 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:
● Teachers will record behavioral observations and visually observe the child at all times until the behavior changes.
● The teacher will inform the student’s parents
● Appropriate staff will be notified
● 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 report the incident to the appropriate authorities.**

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. Verbal notification to each parent 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

School Safety - 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:

- Be caring
- Cooperate with others
- Deal with angry feelings
- Stand up for themselves without being aggressive
- Respect and celebrate the unique qualities

Channels of Communication

Good communication cannot be over-emphasized. The success of a child’s school experience relies heavily on the constant communication between family and school.

Changes in children's lives (e.g. moving, death in the family, parents 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.

Because we are a small and close-knit community, much information can be spread through word of mouth. Sometimes this creates “grapevines” and information can be distorted and misunderstood. Please talk directly with the Head of School and/or the Assistant to the Head of School with any questions.

Guidelines for communication:

- Talk to headteacher/assistant 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 directly via email or leave a message at the office. (sherrie@ogms.org)

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 the Assistant to the Head of School:
  1. Enrollment/Admissions questions
  2. Daily scheduling
  3. Extended day sign up
  4. Student records
  5. Billing/Accounts
  6. General questions
  7. Tuition/Fees/Forms

- Talk to Head of School:
  1. School Policies and Procedures
  2. Academic/Curriculum Policies
  3. Parent Education
  4. Fundraising, Annual Giving, Special Events
  5. Facilities and Equipment
  6. Website, Marketing, PR

Notices regarding school activities and other timely information are sent via email (unless families specifically request hard-copies). Also, please check your “parent pocket” for other notes and notices.

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
respective 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:

- Conflicts involving staff should be brought in writing to the immediate supervisor, and copied to the Head of School.
- Conflicts involving non-staff should be brought in writing to the Head of School.
- Conflicts involving the Head of School should be brought in writing to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

All written grievances will receive a written response from the appropriate party within 5 working days of receipt. Decisions may be in the form of an action plan to be carried out by one or both parties of the conflict and will be designed to resolve the conflict. A follow-up and check-in will occur 2 weeks following the presentation of the action plan.

**Parent-Teacher Partnership**

Parents are the first, most influential and most important educators of their children. Because parents 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. In addition, our fast-paced, competitive lifestyle and culture put a tremendous amount of pressure on parents to make choices that often conflict with their child’s best interests and healthy development. For these reasons, it is very important for parents to stay in close communication with their child’s teacher and make themselves available to the many opportunities to understand the work of Oak Grove - through observations, parent/teacher meetings, 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 parent, teacher, and Head of School can provide the support that children need to develop their full potential. Parents at Oak Grove Montessori School are partners, without whom the school’s work would not be possible.

**Parent Education**

In addition to the Observations and the Parent/Teacher Conferences, a Parent Orientation Night, Montessori Parent Education Night, Parent/Student Transition Meetings, and special events further help to build a bridge between home and school. Parent Education occurs in a variety of different formats.

It is essential that you participate in these meetings and events whenever possible to follow through with your commitment and interest in 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 and Procedures

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

- All children signed into Extended Day Program will be under the direct supervision of the Extended Day Staff.
- All children using the playground after school, but are not signed into our After School Extended Day Program, should be within the eyesight and under the direct supervision of their parent or guardian. If the parent or guardian is not actively watching their child, the Extended day Staff will remove the child from the playground and bring them to their parent. If a parent or guardian consistently is not watching their child after school while the child is on the playground, the Head of School will be notified and an action plan will be designed to ensure the safety of the child after school.
- Children will not wander 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 in the cornfield.
- Shoes must be worn at all times by everyone on the playground and on school grounds.
- Balls and toys are not allowed on the playscapes.
- Running up or down on the playscapes is not allowed.
- No standing on picnic tables.
- No throwing of rocks or stones.
- No climbing in the trees.
- The use of “pretend” weapons is not allowed.
- Games or dramatic play of a violent nature are not allowed (for example: play that involves grabbing, pulling or knocking each other down)
- Children will respect and leave untouched each other's creations made from nature, including snow.
If a child or a parent/guardian continues to disregard the playground rules, after redirecting attempts are made by the staff, the Extended Day Staff, the Head of School 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.

**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 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. The Head of School will be notified as well.
- The DCF report may be made by telephone, followed by a written report within 48 hours of the telephone report. The Head of School will notify the parents of the child that a report has been made and will be the sole source of information to the family.
- 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 confidentiality of the 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.

**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.

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 (Ninnetodos, 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 use 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, updated firewall and encrypted offsite access to the host server. 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 Hours/Arrivals and Departures**

Monday – Friday - 8:30 am – 3:00 pm  
Children’s House Half Day Schedule - 8:30 am - 12:15 pm

Full Day-Children should not arrive earlier than 8:20am, nor 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 the appropriate slot.

Half Day-There will be a $5 charge anytime your child is picked up later than 12:20 pm. Your child will go to the office and wait for your arrival after 12:20 pm.

*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. If a child in the 6-9 room arrives after 8:30, the child and parent will wait together in the lobby until 9:00. If a child in the 9-12 room arrives after 8:30, the child will wait in the lobby until 9:00.

Teachers request that parents do not engage in conversation with them at drop off, as they are busy getting the day started, unless it is urgent and cannot wait until a more suitable time. Please leave a message with the office or in the teacher's communication corner mailboxes, and that information will be forwarded to the teacher after morning meeting.

After dropping off your children, parents are encouraged to check front hallway bulletin boards for school news, check parent pockets, and visit with other parents. Please be respectful of conversational volume levels due to ongoing lessons in the classrooms.

**Dismissal:**  
Children's House and Lower Elementary dismissal takes place in the lobby.  
Upper Elementary dismissal takes place outside by the benches (in bad weather, it will be in the lobby).

***REMINDER***  
You are most welcome to remain after PM pick-up to socialize with other families. We ask that you follow the playground rules listed in this handbook. You are responsible for the supervision of your child at all times.

**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 cindy@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 and advise us that your child will be absent
Responsibilities lie with:
   Parents
   ● 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)

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 9-12 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.

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. Students arriving late will need to report to the office with their parent or driver. Excessive tardiness is educationally detrimental and will 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 in the morning.

Any person not known to the school staff will not be allowed to take a child from school without permission (in writing or by phone) 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 3-6 level or at the 6-9 level
- At the discretion of the 9-12 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 will be referred to a Child Study Team meeting or, in the case of a child in the Learning Support Program, to a Planning and Placement Team meeting.
- After 20 or more absences in a school year, the student will be referred to the Head of School who will determine whether the child should be re-enrolled and, if so, should the child be moved to the next grade level.

**Late Arrival/Early Departure Sign In/Out**
Whenever a child arrives late, or needs to depart early, the parent/guardian/approved driver needs to sign them in or out in the school office.

**Medical 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 physician, is on file at school
- Immunizations or a State of CT Exemption must be current and on file at school

**PLEASE NOTE**
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.

Health – 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 family, and the school staff from infection. Ask yourself, “Would I want my child near someone with these symptoms?”

A child must be kept home at least 24 hours after a fever drops to 99 or below and 24 hours after starting antibiotics.

A guideline to follow that is in compliance with the Department of Health regulations:

Keep your child home if:

- Fever. They have a morning temperature of 99 degrees or higher, or if their temperature is below 99, but they are achy, pale or tired
- Stomach Ache. They have had one episode of vomiting or diarrhea in the last 24 hour period and are feeling tired or ill
- Sneezing or Runny Nose. They are sneezing a lot and their nose is runny or their nose is runny with a yellow or green discharge
- Sore Throat. They have tender, swollen glands and a fever of 99 or higher
- Cough. They cough frequently, coughs up phlegm or their cough sounds like a bark or is accompanied by a sore throat or wheezing.
- Earache. Their pain is constant or severe
- Rash. The rash blisters, develops pus, or is uncomfortable.

Call or email the school office if your child will be absent due to illness by 8:30 am.

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 parents 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 health and safety of all of us, we ask the cooperation of families in this matter. Upon recovery for a contagious disease, a doctor’s written release is required prior to a child’s return to school.
**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 Mansfield Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine and they will be called. For this reason, we require you to sign an emergency release form prior to your child starting 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.

**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**

The dress code policy is mandatory for all students. Student dress and personal grooming are the responsibility of the student and parents. Students are expected to come to school clean, neat and appropriately dressed. Students whose personal attire or grooming distracts the attention of other students or teachers from school work 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. Parental support is vital to achieving this goal. Teachers and staff will determine what attire is acceptable. 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:**

- Any Oak Grove logo attire may be worn
- Any garment or object with obscene, offensive, or intimidating language, drug, tobacco, or firearms or alcoholic beverage advertisements 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. Under garments 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 skin-tight material, see-through clothing, torn clothing, clothing with holes in it, cut-offs, pocket chains, or oversized pants, shorts, or shirts.

Shorts, skirts or dresses must 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.

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 the abdomen. All waistbands must be secure and remain at the waist.

Belts, suspenders and overall straps shall be worn in place and fastened.

Appropriate shoes must be worn such as: sneakers, flats, sandals, flip flops, slippers.

At PE and recess, appropriate shoes must be worn- sneakers or other sport shoes.

Students without these shoes may not participate in PE and must not run or play or climb on equipment.

Students playing on the basketball court must wear flat, closed-toe shoes.

Clothing should be comfortable and appropriate for the weather. 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.

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 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), we will not go outside.
- 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.

Parent'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. Studies have shown that a child who begins their day this way, have a higher emotional and intellectual capability.

- Lunches: All children who eat lunch at school must be provided with a lunch from home. Sharing of lunches will not be allowed and uneaten food will be sent home with your child. Please send lunches that do not need refrigeration or heating (or use a cold pack or thermos)
- Please avoid all sugary desserts or sugary snacks
- Toothbrushes for use after snack or lunch may be kept in child’s locker or cubby
- Our school nurses have developed guidelines for packing healthy snacks and lunches, copies are available in the health room

**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.
- We discourage high sugar treats 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.

- 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
- Any pet that is visiting a classroom must be approved by the teacher prior to the day of the visit
- 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

**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 pets arrival
- The school nurse will confirm that there is no one in the classroom with allergies to the pet

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**

Each teacher has his or her 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 Policy and School Cancellations**

*If Mansfield schools are closed, we are closed. If Mansfield schools have a delay, Oak Grove will start classes at 9:30 am. 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 can also sign up for cell phone notifications.

Oak Grove does not make-up snow days unless there are more than seven. At that point, the Head of School will address the issue of whether or not to make up the additional days with input from the Board of Trustees.

**Transportation and Driveway Safety**

Transportation is the responsibility of parents. There is opportunity to set up car pools and the office can assist with this.

- 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 be sure that your child is checked in before leaving

In order to ensure the safety of all children in the parking lot, please drive slowly, back out carefully, and obey the following guidelines:

- Be patient and wait for a parking space—do not park along the center island
- Teach your children to walk in front of parked cars
- If you need to stay for a few minutes after school, please maintain constant supervision of your child at all times
- 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 follow the following steps:

- Involve an administrator to assess the situation
- Offer to provide alternative transportation and calling the parents of another child that lives nearby or is in a car pool with them
- If the parent or driver is clearly not competent to drive but insists on doing so, the police will be called

**Visitors**

All visitors are required to sign in and receive a visitor’s pass. Parents and other adults, who are going into the classroom to observe or to volunteer, must have a scheduled appointment, be known to and greeted by an employee of Oak Grove, or show a picture ID.

**Use of Facilities and Equipment**

Any group or individual wanting to use the school when it is not in session will submit a proposal to request the use of the facilities. Approval is at the discretion of the Head of School
Soliciting and Use of the School Directory
There will be no soliciting on the premises except if 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.

Smoking
No smoking 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 available in the office.

Oak Grove subscribes to the Blackboard rapid notification service. In the case of an emergency, Blackboard will call the numbers you listed on your Emergency Forms and relay information regarding locations, evacuation, lockdown etc. Your caller ID will display 411. This service may also be used to relay information that does not fall into the category of an emergency. In that case, your caller ID will display the school’s main phone number (860-456-1031).

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.

- 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 are due on the 20th of each month and may be left with the administrative assistant in the school office. Please pay by check if possible, through your bank online, or through your Venmo account.
- A late charge for accounts 30 days past due will be assessed at the rate of 1.5% per month on the unpaid balance as stated in parent contracts. Also, there will be a $25 charge for handling returned checks.
- 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 60-90
days overdue without a payment plan will cause the account to be treated as ‘delinquent’ and will, as a result, be subject to Board of Trustees review.
● Once an account is 91 days overdue, the Board chair will be notified and a decision about continued enrollment will be made.
● 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 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 cancelled.
● 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 outsourced and done on-line via the school’s website, www.ogms.org, by clicking on the F.A.S.T. on the admissions page of the website. Applications for financial aid are due April 14th. Aid is awarded on the basis of need and all are welcome to fill out an application form. The Financial Aid Committee will consider each case and this is typically done the beginning of May for the next school year.

Fundraising
Like most private schools, Oak Grove Montessori School solicits charitable gifts and has a limited number of 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 only ~85% 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.

Annual Gala and Auction
Each spring Oak Grove holds our Annual Gala and Auction. It is a fun night for all. We encourage everyone to attend this event. It is an evening of great food and music and fun.
There is a silent auction and a live auction. Not only is it a time to get to know more people in our community, it is a wonderful way to support our school. **The funds from this night make up a large percentage of our needed fundraising dollars.**

*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.

**Additional Easy Ways of Giving**

Contributions to Oak Grove may be made in a variety of ways, some of which provide tax advantages to the donor.

✔ The easiest and most expedient way is to make a contribution is a cash gift. However, 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.

✔ Oak Grove currently participates in the *Stop and Shop A+ School Rewards Program.* Our I.D. number is 07710. Go to their website and register your Stop & Shop card number. You must re-register your card each school year.

✔ If you shop at Amazon.com, please enter the website through our homepage and Oak Grove will receive 6% of every purchase made. See our website for more information (ogms.org).
Recommended Reading

Writings about Maria Montessori and this Method of Education

- Montessori Play and Learn
- Montessori Today by P. Lillard
- Parent’s Guide to the Montessori Classroom
- Introduction to the Primary Classroom
- Introduction to the Elementary Classroom
- Understanding the Human Being (0-3) by Dr. S. Monteanaro
- Montessori Madness by Trevor Eissler
- Understanding Montessori by Maren Schmidt Ed with Dana Schmidt

Parenting

- The Hurried Child by David Elkind
- Raising Your Spirited Child by Mary Kurcinka
- Punished By Rewards by Alfie Kohn
- Between Parent and Child by Haim Ginott
- At Home With Montessori by Patricia Oriti
- The World of the Child by Aline Wolf
- Our Last Best Shot by Laura Sessions Stepp
- Raising Cain, Protecting Emotional Life of Boys by Dan Kindlon, Ph. D. and Michael Thompson, Ph. D.
- Reviving Ophelia-Saving the Lives of Adolescent Girls by Mary Pipher, Ph.D
- The One Minute Mother by Spencer Johnson, M.D.
- The One Minute Father by Spencer Johnson, M.D.
- The Importance of Being Little by Erica Christakis
- The Gift of Failure: How Best Parents Learn to Let Go So Their Children Can Succeed by Jessica Lahey
- How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success by Julia Lythcott-Haims

Ecology

- Earth in Mind by David Orr
- The Great Work by Thomas Berry
- The Universe is a Green Dragon by Brian Swimmer
- Ecophobia by David Sobel
- Sharing Nature With Children by James Cornell

Child Development

- Your Child’s Growing Mind by Jane Healy, Ph.D.
- In Their Own Way by Thomas Armstrong
- The Hand by O. Wilson
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 parents, and the school.

Thank you for choosing Oak Grove Montessori 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 many different 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 join the Oak Grove Community.