

## Sunset Hills Montessori School Parent Handbook

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# WELCOME

Welcome to the new school year at Sunset Hills Montessori School. We hope this handbook will answer any questions you may have about our policies and procedures.

Throughout the year if you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact us. We look forward to a continuing partnership with you in the education of your child.

## I. MISSION STATEMENT

At Sunset Hills Montessori School we are committed to recognizing and cultivating the uniqueness of each individual child. Building on the foundation laid by Dr. Maria Montessori, our goals are:

- ❖ To provide a safe, nurturing, academically stimulating environment where exploration and discovery are an everyday experience,
- ❖ To offer a staff that is dedicated to inspiring each student to realize his or her potential,
- ❖ To foster independence of thought, and a tolerance for the ideas, beliefs and cultures of other peoples,
- ❖ To assist in the development of a sense of responsibility and awareness of the individual and the community,
- ❖ To give children a joy of learning that will last a lifetime, and
- ❖ To work in partnership with parents to create a caring school community where the child comes first, education is celebrated, and each student gains the skills and knowledge that will lead to a productive, creative, satisfying life.

## II. NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Sunset Hills Montessori School admits students of any race, color, or national origin to all rights, privileges, and activities available to students at the school and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sexual preference, or national origin in its admission policies, hiring and other programs.

## III. SCHOOL HISTORY

Eileen Dowds Minarik founded Sunset Hills Montessori School Children's House in September 1994.

Eileen founded Reston Montessori School in 1984 where she was a director, a Primary teacher and an Art teacher until 1994. She sold her interests in Reston Montessori in 1994 and bought 1980 Isaac Newton Square to be the home of a new school. When considering a name for the new school, Eileen turned to local history. Most of the land we now call Reston was known as Sunset Hills Farm for more than half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, so our school's name became Sunset Hills Montessori School.

The school's doors opened in September of 1994 with 40 children. By December of 1994 the school population had grown to the then maximum of 60 children. In the fall of 1995 we added the third Primary classroom of 20 children. As the school continued to grow, upon the insistence of parents, we opened our Elementary program in the fall of 1996. The Elementary program has grown from a classroom of first graders to one consisting of a Lower Elementary classroom of 6-9 year olds and an Upper Elementary classroom of 9-12 year old and Middle School Program.

For the first eleven years the school was located at 1980 Isaac Newton Square. The growth of our Elementary and the addition of two Pre-Primary classrooms and two more Primary classrooms led us to the purchase of our 11180 Ridge Heights Road location, where we added an addition to the existing building which gave us a total of more than 22,000 square feet.

Today, Sunset Hills Montessori School is the home of two Pre-Primary classes ages 22 months to 3 years, six Primary classes ages 3-6 years, and a Lower Elementary class ages 6-9 years, in addition to a large assembly hall space for aftercare and two nap rooms, for a total enrollment of 200 students.

## IV. PARTNERSHIP

At Sunset Hills Montessori School we believe it takes a partnership between family and school to create a community in which children are able to learn and grow in a nurturing environment. There are many ways that parents are able to participate with the school to enhance their child's time at Sunset Hills Montessori School.

### A. PARENT - TEACHER ASSOCIATION

During the fall of 2001, the parents and Administration of Sunset Hills Montessori School formed the non-profit group, Sunset Hills Montessori School PTA, which is affiliated with the National PTA. The purpose of this organization is to support the mission and goals of the school, to enhance the children's school experience, to provide a social organization for parents, and to offer an opportunity for parents to become more involved in the school community. The PTA is a prime way for new families to meet existing families and allow for support of the teachers and the classrooms.

#### 1. Volunteering

a) Volunteering one's time to the school is not required but is encouraged and always welcome. The second Saturday of the month, the PTA hosts a Volunteer Rewards Night (VRN). Children will be invited to attend the Volunteer Rewards Nights based on the amount of time their parents have volunteered to the school.

b) On Volunteer Rewards Nights children arrive at the school starting at 6:30 pm in their pajamas carrying sleeping bags. They play "dress-up," play with cars and trucks, puzzles, games, etc. until 7:45 pm. At 7:45 pm they clean up and share a treat (usually ice cream!). At approximately 8:00 pm the children lay out their sleeping bags and settle down to an evening of movie watching and/or drawing. Vegetables and fruit are available for the children to nibble on throughout the evening.

c) The VRN committee will determine and publish what types of work will accrue hours. The present policy and frequently a "volunteers needed for ..." list can be found in the Volunteer Activities Log Book located in the front lobby of the school. "Volunteers needed for ..." requests are also published in the school newsletter.

d) Parents who have accrued eight hours may have one child attend a VRN. Four (4) additional hours are required per additional child attending the same VRN. Hours earned by one family cannot be transferred to another family.

e) Fundraising

(1) The PTA sponsors different fundraising events throughout the year to support the PTA budget. Often, fundraising activities provide volunteer opportunities. With the funds earned the PTA is able to allocate money to different school and community projects.

(2) Any suggestions for fundraising events should be presented to the PTA's fundraising committee chair.

## 2. Donations

a) Monetary donations to the PTA are always welcome. Many companies have programs that match employee's contributions, so please check with your employer and please give generously. Because of the PTA's non-profit status, all contributions are tax-deductible, up to the limits set by law. The PTA's tax identification number is 54-2050991.

## B. GIANT FOODS A+ BONUS BUCKS

Giant Foods is a school supporter through A+ Bonus Bucks. This is a program that earns cash for our school. Designate Sunset Hills Montessori School to receive your bonus points. The school's ID number is **03374**. You can designate our school on-line or at your local grocery store. To register on-line go to [http://www.giantfood.com/bonuscard\\_aplus.htm](http://www.giantfood.com/bonuscard_aplus.htm)

## C. ESCRIP

eScrip is a hassle-free way for schools and groups that support children's programs to raise funds through everyday purchases made at eScrip merchants.

When you register any one or all of your existing grocery loyalty, debit and credit cards for use in this program participating merchants will make contributions to Sunset Hills Montessori School, based on purchases made by you, just by using the cards you have registered. Parents, teachers, friends and families are encouraged to register their credit, debit and grocery club cards as supporters with the eScrip program.

### 1. Registration

- a) Log on to [www.eScrip.com](http://www.eScrip.com) and go to "sign up".
- b) Designate Sunset Hills Montessori School, our group ID is **6575453**.
- c) Register your grocery club card from a participating merchant and your debit/credit cards.

**Your purchases are tracked and available to you on-line, allowing you to see just how much you are earning on your child's behalf!**

## V. ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

### A. FINANCIAL MATTERS

After execution of a new school year's contract, families each family will receive a tuition and fee schedule table indicating when payments are due. Tuition and other listed payments are due on the first of each month. We rely on your timely attention to the tuition and fee schedule in order for the school to run at its best for your child. A late fee of \$20.00 will be due for each

installment that remains unpaid after the fifth of the month. Failure to comply with the tuition payment terms by the twentieth of the month may result in the suspension of the child's enrollment until financial obligations to the school are met. No transfer of records will be granted until financial obligations to the school have been met.

Please remit tuition by mail or place tuition in the locked box located in the lobby. The office mailing address is **11180 Ridge Heights Road, Reston, VA 20191**.

#### B. TUITION REFUND PLAN

As you know, students are enrolled for the full academic year and no adjustment of fees can be made by the School for absences, withdrawal or dismissal.

This ruling is necessary as the School has continuing expenses such as building/grounds maintenance and faculty salaries. In order to plan and maintain these services for the year, it is essential that the annual income from tuition fees be stabilized. Therefore, in the interest of parents, we have made arrangements to protect students under the Tuition Refund Plan.

##### 1. Coverage

This Plan will not only provide an allowance of tuition fees in the event of withdrawal of a student for medical causes but also in the event of withdrawal for other reasons or dismissal by the School (annual tuition charges, both prepaid and due, are insured). The Tuition Refund Plan becomes effective on August 1<sup>st</sup> in the event of the student's inability to attend school due to a covered medical reason. The non-medical coverage (voluntary withdrawals and dismissals) does not become effective until the student has attended fourteen consecutive calendar days (including weekends) commencing with the student's first class day of attendance in the academic year. The Plan is fully described in the brochure that was mailed with your contract.

##### 2. Cost

- a) The cost is 2.5% of the annual tuition charges for the school year.
- b) Parents who do not pay the total annual charges in one lump sum must participate in the Tuition Refund Plan or present evidence of having secured comparable insurance coverage elsewhere.
- c) Participation is elective for those who pay the total annual charges in one lump sum.
- d) The School offers you the Tuition Refund Plan as a means to insure your *annual* financial obligation under the terms of the Enrollment Contract.
- e) In light of the no refund or cancellation enrollment terms, we recommend that all parents in their own interest participate in the Plan.
- f) If you have any questions on the Tuition Refund Plan, please speak to the Operations Manager.

#### C. WITHDRAWAL, SUSPENSION, EXPULSION

To **withdraw** a student after enrollment **parents need to write a letter specifically stating intent** to withdraw **and send it certified mail** to the Heads of School. The obligation of the parent(s) to pay the fees for the full academic year remains unconditional after receipt of the enrollment agreement by the school.

The School may suspend or may expel a student in disciplinary cases, following procedures outlined under "Discipline Policy" in this handbook. The obligation of the parent(s) to pay the fees for the full academic year remains unconditional.

#### D. RE-ENROLLMENT

The School reserves the right to offer enrollment agreements for the following year based upon teacher evaluations of the child's academic and social progress, the child's match with the school's Montessori environment, the relationship between the parents and the school, and the family's timely meeting of financial obligations.

##### **1. Contracts**

Re-enrollment contracts will be offered to existing families in the month of January for the following school year. These contracts, once offered, will be required to be returned within two week's time. To reserve your child's placement, your signed contract must be accompanied by a \$200.00 deposit which will later be applied to your annual tuition. This is a binding contract and families will be financially obligated to this contract upon its return of contract.

##### **2. Missed Deadline**

A fee of \$500 may be assessed to any student whose contract is not returned by the required deadline and who chooses to re-enroll at a later date for the same year academic year.

#### E. ELEMENTARY ENROLLMENT

When enrolling as a Pre-Primary or Primary student at Sunset Hills Montessori School, we assume that each child will continue into the Elementary program through the third grade. However, a child's acceptance into the Elementary program is not automatic.

Prior to being offered a contract for the Elementary program, parents must:

1. fill out an application for enrollment;
2. set up an appointment to meet with the Head of School and Asst. Head of School;
3. observe the class to which your child is applying;
4. schedule a classroom visit for your child.

These observations and visits are a mandatory part of the process for placing a child in the Elementary program.

We look forward to meeting and discussing our programs, and your expectations, with all prospective Elementary parents, and to working with you to decide if Sunset Hills Montessori Elementary is the optimum environment for your child's continuing education.

#### F. PROTOCOL FOR ADDRESSING ISSUES

All educational issues should first be addressed to the child's teacher. He/she can best resolve the situation or questions (interns/assistants are specifically instructed to refer parents to the Lead Teacher for any questions regarding academics and behavior). If, after that step, there are further questions, you can set up a meeting with both the teacher and Asst. Head of School.

All financial matters should be directed to our Operations Manager, Kristie Meixner.

Any school-wide issues should be addressed to the School Head, Eileen Minarik or Asst. Head of School, Melinda Cotter.

## **VI. SCHOOL POLICIES**

A. SCHOOL HOURS

<i>Lower School Before School Care (all classes)</i>	7:00 am – 8:30 am	
<i>Elementary Before School Care (all classes)</i>	7:00 am – 8:00 am	
<i>Pre-Primary Classes (18 mo.-3 year olds)</i>	8:45 am – 12:45 pm	<i>After Care Program: 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm OR 1:00 pm - 6:30 pm</i>
<i>Primary Classes (3-4 year olds)</i>	8:45 am – 12:45 pm	<i>After Care Program: 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm OR 1:00 pm - 6:30 pm</i>
<i>Primary Classes ( Jr/Sr Kindergarteners)</i>	8:45 am – 3:00 pm	<i>After Care Program: 3:00 pm - 6:30 pm</i>
<i>Elementary Classes</i>	8:15 am – 3:00 pm	<i>After Care Program: 3:00 pm - 6:30 pm</i>
<i>School Office Hours</i>	8:00 am – 5:00 pm	

B. ARRIVAL

1. **Morning Sunset Club**

- a) Morning Sunset Club activities begin at 7:00 am.
- b) Walk your child to the Assembly Hall for morning Sunset Club.
- c) Upon arrival please ask your child to hang up his/her belongings.
- d) After your child has been greeted by a staff member please say your goodbyes to your child and **please leave immediately**. It does not make it easier for the child if you linger at school. The staff will take care of your child, providing comfort, hugs and soothing words.

2. **Drop-In Morning Sunset Club**

See section XIV, part E

### 3. Pre-Primary Classrooms (18 mo-3yrs)

- a) The Pre-Primary classroom activities begin at 8:45 am.
- b) Children may arrive for Pre-Primary classes between 8:30 am and 8:45 am.
- c) It is important that the start of the day be as calm as possible so we ask that you say goodbye once you have walked your child to class.

### 4. Primary Classrooms

- a) The Primary classroom activities begin at 8:45 am.
- b) Children may arrive for Primary classes at the Main Entrance between 8:30 am and 8:45 am.
- c) It is important that the start of the day be as calm as possible so we ask that you say goodbye to your child (ren) in the foyer.
- d) Your child will be greeted and guided/escorted to the classroom where a teacher's assistant will help him/her put away belongings in his/her cubby.

### 5. Elementary Classrooms

- a) The classroom activities begin at 8:15 am.
- b) Children may arrive starting at 8:00 am.
- c) Between 8:00 am and 8:15 am parents must accompany their child into the building, assist them in storing their backpack and lunch, and then accompany them down the interior stairs and out to the playground. For safety reasons please, **DO NOT** bring your child to the playground through the parking lot.
- d) Late arriving children, after 8:15 am, must first report to the school's Main Office for a tardy slip before joining his or her class.

### 6. Late Arrivals

Please be aware that late arrivals are disruptive to our students, the school and your child. Our late policy reflects the importance of arriving at school prepared and on time. **It also models the importance of accountability for the children.**

The Main Entrance will be locked at 9:00 am, all parents and children need to ring the doorbell to gain access.

When bringing your child downstairs, please refrain from entering the classroom. It is important to let your child begin to independently prepare for his/her day. The teachers are in the midst of working and should not be interrupted or distracted. If you have any message for the teacher(s), please leave a note with the office.

### 7. Absences

If your child will be absent due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances, please call the schools attendance line by 9:00 am each day that he/she will be out of school.

### 8. Unexcused Absence

It is the policy of the Sunset Hills Montessori School that any absence that is not the result of an illness, an unforeseen circumstance such as a death in the family, a doctor or dentist visit, the observance of a religious holiday, or a school approved activity, will be designated as an unexcused absence.

Unexcused absences include family vacations, traffic problems when coming to school, or other excuses deemed inappropriate by the Asst. Head of School and/or the Owner/Founder.

## C. DISMISSALS

### 1. **Pre-Primary**

- a) Children will be dismissed from the classroom at 12:45-1:00 pm.
- b) Parents, grandparents, younger siblings, nannies, etc. are asked to go to your child's classroom to pick up. When picking up your child, please wait outside the classroom, and a teacher will bring your child to you. Please do not enter the classroom.
- c) When the parent or authorized adult arrives to pick up the child the child will put on his/her coat and backpack.
- d) A staff member will shake hands with the child and say good-bye.
- e) After 1:00 pm, parents will need to pick their children up from the office staff. The master attendance list will then reflect a late pick up and the family will be charged accordingly on their next invoice.

### 2. **Primary (Preschool only children)**

- a) Dismissal is at 1:00 pm.
- b) Children will be dismissed from their classrooms.
- c) It is imperative that when the parent or authorized adult arrives to pick up the child, a staff member shakes hands with the child and says good-bye. This will ensure that the child's departure is checked off the master attendance list.
- d) At 1:00 pm and after, parents will pick their child up from the office staff. The master attendance list will then reflect a late pick up and the family will be charged accordingly on their next invoice.

### 3. **Elementary, Jr/ Sr. Kindergarten and 3:00 Nappers**

- a) Dismissal is at 3:00 pm.
- b) Children will be dismissed from the playground except during cold or inclement weather, at which time they will be dismissed from their classrooms. The children will be ready with all outer garments, backpack, lunch box, etc.
- c) It is imperative that when the parent or authorized adult arrives to pick up the child, a staff member shakes hands with the child and says good-bye. This will ensure that the child's departure is checked off the master attendance list.
- d) After 3:15 pm, parents will need to pick their child up from the Sunset Club staff. The master attendance list will then reflect a late pick up and the family will be charged accordingly on their next invoice.

### 4. **Afternoon Sunset Club**

Children who are enrolled in after care or who are signed up for drop-in care will be picked up by their parents between the hours of 3:00 pm - 6:25 pm. When the parent or authorized adult arrives to pick up the child, the staff member will shake hands with the child and say good-bye.

- a) All families must exit the building by 6:30 pm.
- b) The parent or authorized adult must accompany the child to a staff member who will dismiss the child with a handshake and parting words.

c) **Please do not allow your child to “stay and play awhile.”** It is important that when you arrive, your child begin to put his/her work away and gather his/her belongings for dismissal.

d) This policy was designed to assure the consistency essential for a child’s development and a calm end to the child’s day. It is difficult for a child to understand that some days he/she can “stay and play”, and on other days you may be in a hurry and must leave immediately.

**CLASSROOMS ARE CLOSED AT 3:00 PM. PLEASE DO NOT ALLOW YOUR CHILD (REN) TO PLAY OR WORK IN THESE ROOMS AFTER THEY HAVE BEEN DISMISSED.**

**5. Drop-In Afternoon Sunset Club**

Please see section XIV, part E

**6. Special Dismissals**

a) If the child is being picked up at a special time for a doctor’s appointment or other commitment, please let teachers know ahead of time with a note left in their mailbox, located in the foyer, or by voice message.

b) When you arrive, please come to the office so that a staff member can retrieve your child from the classroom. The staff member will then shake hands with your child and dismiss him/her.

**7. Dismissal Authorization**

a) Parents must fill out a Dismissal Information Form each year stating who is authorized to pick up the child and who is not authorized.

b) Your child will not be released to any adult who is not listed as authorized.

c) Authorization can be obtained by sending a written note signed by the parent and sent to the school prior to the child’s departure if someone other than a listed authorized person is to pick up a child.

d) If in an emergency a parent calls and says that someone who is not listed as an authorized person will pick up, we may place a return call to the parent to confirm the arrangement.

e) If we are unable to confirm the arrangements we will not release the child.

f) The Dismissal Form includes a section on how you would like us to handle the situation if a listed unauthorized person attempts to remove your child from the school. In the absence of direction from you, or if we are unable to carry out your directions, we will call the police. If someone is not authorized to pick up your child, it is essential that we know the reason so that we can properly deal with any situation that should arise. If there is a court order barring a parent or family member from picking up a child, we must have a copy for our files. This information will be kept strictly confidential.

When completing all forms, please include as many emergency numbers as possible and remember to **KEEP THE OFFICE NOTIFIED OF ANY CHANGE IN PHONE NUMBERS OR ADDRESSES!**

**WE WILL NOT ALLOW A CHILD TO LEAVE UNLESS THE PERSON PICKING UP THE CHILD HAS PREARRANGED AUTHORIZATION TO DO SO ON THAT SPECIFIC DAY.**

**8. Dismissal Times**

<i>Pre-Primary Classes (22 months-3 year olds)</i>	12:45 to 1:00 PM
<i>Primary Classes (3-4 year olds)</i>	12:45 to 1:00 PM
<i>Primary Classes (Jr/Sr Kindergarteners)</i>	3:00 to 3:15 PM
<i>Elementary Classes</i>	3:00 to 3:15 PM
<i>Sunset Club</i>	<u>BY 6:30 PM</u>

### 9. Late Pick-Up

- a) Children who are not picked up by the end of dismissal will wait in the school office for pick up.
- b) If we have not heard from you, we will call you and expect you to arrive as soon as possible.
- c) If we cannot reach you, we will call the people who are listed on the emergency forms.
- d) We will continue to try to reach you or an emergency contact for one hour, and then we will call the police and/or social services.

A staff member will remain at school with the child until the parent or an authorized person arrives.

### 10. Late Pick-Up Charges

Parents will be charged Late Pick-Up Fees at the rate of \$10.00 for the first 15 minutes and \$1.00 per minute thereafter, based on the clock in the foyer. This fee should be paid directly to the staff working and divided evenly among them when after 6:30 pm.

- a) If you are unavoidably delayed, we ask that you phone the office so that we know what is happening and can reassure the child.
- b) **Please model for your child the importance of punctuality by being on time.** Remember, the staff has professional and/or personal commitments after the children are picked up. Give them the respect and courtesy they deserve as educators and care givers to your child (ren).

### D. ABSENCE

- ❖ Please call the School by **8:00 am** when your child will not be attending school for the day. If you get the answering machine, leave a message.
- ❖ If your child or someone in your immediate household has been diagnosed with a communicable illness such as strep, pink eye, chicken pox, scarlet fever, etc... you must notify the school within 24 hours so that we can identify a trend and notify other parents if necessary.
- ❖ If your child will be out of school for a planned absence (family trip, surgery, etc.) please send a note to the teacher in advance of the absence.

### E. SNOW DAYS/WEATHER EMERGENCY

#### 1. Snow & Ice

- a) If your child is in the **school only** program:
  - (1) We will have a delayed opening if FCPS have a delayed opening.
  - (2) To determine whether school is open or closed you can watch **WJLA channel 7** for information and/or call school (703-476-7477) between 6 A.M. and 7 A.M. for an answering machine message, or check the school website.
- b) If your child is a member of the Sunset Club:

(1) We will be open snow days unless the Fairfax County government closes.

(2) If the school is closed, or closes early due to inclement weather, the Sunset Club will close at **5:00 p.m.**

(3) If the Fairfax County government closes early we expect you to get here as soon as is possible to pick-up your child.

(4) If it starts snowing during the day, we expect you to leave work in enough time to drive safely but still pick-up your child by 6:30 p.m.

(5) When school is closed but the Sunset Club is open the Sunset Club members will spend the day doing crafts, playing games, watching movies, playing with the computer, and going outside to play in the snow.

(6) Older siblings are invited to attend snow camp at the rate of \$15 a child. This fee is to be paid directly to the staff working and split evenly among them.

**Sunset Hills Montessori School reserves the right to close the school for inclement weather if the owner deems conditions to be hazardous.**

c) When there is snow on the ground: We will go outside to play in the snow so your child must be **dressed for outdoor activities in boots, snow-pants, mittens**, etc. We also must have a change of clothes in your child's cubby or backpack in case he/she gets wet playing outside. Please be sure that your child has a complete change of clothes (top, pants, skirt, underwear, shoes and socks and be sure that the clothing is appropriate for the season. There are frequently shorts in some cubbies even in the dead of winter!). Sunset Club members should have two sets of clothes.

## 2. Natural or Human-Made Emergency

In the event of a natural or human-made emergency warning by the Emergency Broadcast System, faculty and staff will escort all children into the interior bathrooms and lower level interior corridor, stairwell, and kitchen, designated as shelter in place on our emergency plan.

## 3. Building Evacuation Plan

In the event of a natural or human-made disaster that requires the evacuation of the building during inclement weather for an extended period of time, one or more of the following will take place:

(1) Office staff will seek shelter for the children from one of our neighbors.

(2) Office staff will notify parents to pick-up their children as soon as possible.

## F. HEALTH POLICIES

### 1. State Board Requirements

The State Board of Health requires that all children attending school and pre-school receive the following inoculations as noted, prior to the first day of attendance:

- a) Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, and poliomyelitis before age two years
- b) Three doses of hepatitis B immunization
- c) Haemophilus influenza type B before age 60 months
- d) Pneumococcal (PCV conjugate), Measles (rubeola), German (rubella) measles, and mumps before the age of two years
- e) A second dose of measles (rubeola) vaccine prior to entering kindergarten or first grade.
- f) Children who have not received a second dose of measles (rubella) vaccine must receive the second dose prior to entering sixth grade

**2. State Law Requirements**

- a) The school maintains on file for each student a current Virginia Immunization Record before entering school. Your family physician has the necessary forms and information. You may also obtain these forms from our office.
- b) No certificate of immunization is required if you provide the school with one of the following documents:
  - (1) Certificate of Religious Exemption, which states that immunization conflicts with the child’s religious tenets or practices (the signature must be notarized)
  - (2) Documentary proof that the immunizations may be detrimental to the health of the child
  - (3) Demonstration of immunity evidenced by serological testing

**3. Communicable Illness**

In order to prevent the spread of communicable illness at Sunset Hills Montessori School, any ill child should be kept at home. **Also, as required by State Licensing, if any family member in your home has contracted a communicable illness, you must report it to the school. With- in 24 hours, except for life threatening diseases, which must be reported immediately.** Below is listed the exclusion-for-illness policy for some common illnesses and symptoms. Please contact the school office if you have questions regarding attendance at school when your child is ill.

Illness	Excluded until....
<b>Diarrhea</b>	<i>Excluded</i> until symptoms resolve
<b>Vomiting</b>	<i>Excluded</i> until vomiting has stopped for 24 hours before returning to school. It may be a general symptom of viral or bacterial diseases. <i>Please have your child evaluated by a health care provider</i>
<b>Chickenpox</b>	<i>Excluded</i> until lesions are dry and crusted
<b>Cold</b>	<i>Excluded</i> only if child has fever or is unable to participate in general activities
<b>Conjunctivitis:</b> (Thick mucus or pus draining from the eye, or pink eye) <b>Bacterial</b>	<i>Excluded</i> until 24 hours of effective

<b>Viral</b>	therapy <i>Excluded</i> until symptoms resolve
<b>Fever</b>	<i>Excluded</i> until temperature is normal for 24 hours before returning to school
<b>Impetigo</b>	<i>Excluded</i> until 48 hours of effective therapy
<b>Lice</b>	<i>Excluded</i> until live lice and viable eggs are eradicated. This usually means the child is excluded for 24 hours after effective treatment
<b>Mononucleosis, Infectious</b>	<i>Excluded</i> until symptomatically able to tolerate general activity
<b>Mouth Sores (Gingivostomatitis, Herpes Simplex virus)</b>	<i>Excluded</i> until skin lesions are dry and crusted
<b>Pinworms</b>	<i>Excluded</i> until treated
<b>Respiratory Infections (Upper Respiratory Infections, Colds, Bronchitis)</b>	<i>Excluded</i> only if child has fever or is unable to participate in general activities
<b>Scabies</b>	<i>Excluded</i> until treated
<b>Sore Throat, Streptococcal</b>	(Sore throat with no specific cause known) <i>Excluded</i> until 24 hours of effective therapy
<b>Child is irritable, continuously crying, or requires more attention than can be provided at the school without hurting the health and safety of other children</b>	<i>Excluded</i> until symptoms resolve

- a) It is very important that you notify the office by phone when keeping your child home due to an illness. Your child's teacher will be made aware of your child's absence.
- b) Parents of a child returning to school after an illness should be sure to be accessible by telephone in case their child is not able to handle the full day of school. **Please take care to ensure that sick children have sufficient time to recover before returning to school.**

**(Please note that it is recommended by health professionals that staying home one extra day after an illness encourages a complete recovery. If your child has been ill, consider giving him/her that extra time.)**

#### G. ACCIDENTS

In case of an accident resulting in minor injuries, the staff will administer first aid.

##### 1. Incident/Accident Forms

After attending to the child's needs, the staff member will complete an Accident/Incident Report form.

- a) The pink copy is left for the parent in your family mailbox.
- b) Parents will be notified if the injury is anything other than a simple scrape or cut.

(1) Any injury to the head or the face requires that a phone call be made to the parent. This phone call will be made to the parent even if dismissal time is less than 1 hour away. A message will be left if the parent does not answer his/her phone.

(2) Parents will be advised if the child should be seen by a physician, such as an injury near or to the eye, a possible concussion or fracture from a fall, or a cut requiring stitches.

(3) IN CASE OF SERIOUS INJURY, THE RESCUE SQUAD WILL BE CALLED AND PARENTS NOTIFIED. If a parent cannot be reached, the emergency contact listed will be called. If that person is not available, the child's physician will be contacted.

## 2. In a Life-Threatening Emergency

One staff member remains with the child at all times, a second staff member retrieves the child's emergency form located in the office, calls 911, and then the 1<sup>st</sup> emergency contact as listed on the child's emergency form.

- a) In case of a major accident resulting in the death of a child, the school will notify the Virginia Department of Social Services as soon as practicable but not to exceed one working day.

## H. MISSING CHILD

In the unlikely event that a child appears to be missing during the school day, each teacher will gather the children together and take attendance. An assistant will check the playground, while another assistant checks the school. The office staff will check the grounds. If the child has not been found, the office staff will call the police, the Virginia Department of Social Services, and then notify the missing child's parents.

## I. SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

**If a staff member suspects that a child may have been abused, they are required by the Code of Virginia (63.1-248.3) to report the suspicion of abuse to the Virginia Department of Social Services.**

### 1. Reporting Abuse

The staff member is encouraged to speak with the Asst. Head of School and /or the Founder as a first step in the process of reporting suspected abuse. However, it remains the responsibility of the reporting staff member to ensure that a report is made to Child Protective Service. A conversation between staff and the Asst. Head of School and/or the Founder does not relieve the staff member from the responsibility of reporting suspected abuse to Child Protective Services.

#### VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Child Abuse Hotline 800-552-7096

Fairfax Area Office 800-324-7400

## J. MEDICATION

### 1. Distribution of Prescription and Non-prescription Medications

- a) Parent must fill out and sign an "Written Medication Consent Form". ***This includes sunscreen, diaper ointment and insect repellent.*** If the child requires medication for more than 10 days this form must be filled out and signed by your child's doctor, copies of these forms can be obtained in the office. Sunscreen, diaper ointment, and repellent do not need a physician's signature even though they are for 10+ day use.
- b) Parent must give the completed form and the medication to an office staff member. **MEDICATION MUST NEVER BE IN THE CHILD'S BACKPACK OR**

LUNCHBAG. If your child is coming to school in a car pool, please give the medication to the driver to bring to school.

- c) Medications must be, without exception,
  - (1) in the original container with the prescription label intact (according to Virginia Law, Minimum Standards for Licensed Child Day Centers, part 7, article 2, section 7.14.),
  - (2) labeled with the child's name, name of medication, dosage amount and times to be given (part 7, article 2, section 7.13.),
  - (3) in a plastic sandwich bag labeled with the child's name,
  - (4) accompanied by a pharmacy medicine spoon or dropper, labeled with the child's name.
- d) Medications that require refrigeration will be kept in a locked refrigerator. Medications that do not require refrigeration will be kept in a locked cabinet in the office. Medication forms will be kept in a binder in the office.

**Special note:** Many pharmacies will divide a child's medication into two labeled containers so that one can remain at school. This can be very helpful since you will not have to remember to take the medication home and bring it back.

We would prefer, whenever possible, for you to give your child his/her medication before school. Often, antibiotics can be given in two doses per day, negating the need to administer it at school. Ask your child's physician if this is possible. We will follow your physician's instructions, so please provide specific times to administer the medication.

## K. CLOTHING

### **ALL CLOTHING AND PERSONAL PROPERTY MUST BE MARKED WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME IN PERMANENT INK OR PRINTED LABEL.**

#### **1. Pre-Primary and Primary**

Need a complete change of clothes, appropriate to the season, to be kept at school at all times. By complete we mean socks, pants, underpants, shirt, undershirt, etc. Assume that we must change everything the child is wearing. For younger children, two sets are preferable. Your child will have a box labeled with his/her name for these clothes, which will be stored in the bathroom. (Overalls should be avoided, unless the child can get him/herself in and out of them easily to prevent bathroom accidents.)

#### **2. Pre-Primary**

If not using the bathroom independently, a Pre-Primary child should also have a supply of disposable diapers labeled with the child's last name on the package.

#### **3. Elementary**

The children's clothing should allow freedom to engage in a wide variety of activities. All the children will take a nature walk every morning (weather permitting) and should be sure to **wear appropriate shoes and outerwear.**

**When dressing or overseeing the dressing of your children, please be sure that the clothing they arrive to school in is appropriate and not revealing. Children's midriffs should be covered at all times.**

Clothes should be comfortable and appropriate for the weather. We will go outside every day and your child must have clothes for outdoor activities. Include a sweatshirt or sweater in your child's backpack in case of temperature changes. All clothing should be easily managed by the child and washable

School clothes should be items that can get paint and mud and food on them without upsetting the child. Keep special clothes for special occasions.

#### 4. Shoes

- a) All Lower School children who do NOT know how to tie their shoes **must** wear shoes with **velcro** closures or stretch laces. These are the safest shoes for the playground (no tripping over untied laces) and give the child the independence he/she seeks at this age.
- b) All Lower School children must wear socks with any open toed shoes.
- c) Elementary children should be sure to wear appropriate shoes to school for their daily morning walks. Children are welcome to leave a pair of sneakers or hiking boots at school for convenience.

#### 5. Slippers

All children are required to wear slippers while indoors. We request they have no character heads and have rubber soles. The best ones for the children are the shoe type with a back.

#### 6. Backpacks

Your child must bring his/her backpack **every day**. This should be checked by you daily for homework, finished work, notes, wet clothes, etc.

- a) **The following items should never be in your child's backpack or lunch bag:**

(1) Toys should be left at home. They can get lost, broken and are a distraction. Please assure your child that toys are for home use and that at school he/she has special "work" to do. This includes toy weapons and replicas; inclusion of these items will result in suspension.

(2) Medication of any kind: This must be given to a staff member and a "Written Medical Consent Form" must be completely filled out.

(3) Candy or other treats: The children will be given a snack daily. When candy or treats are in a backpack, children tend to share it with a friend, who may be allergic to the treat. If there is not enough for every child, feelings will get hurt. You are welcome to send treats such as banana bread, muffins, etc. to school for the whole class with prior arrangement with the teacher.

(4) Make-up: Again, the children may share these items and someone may have an allergy to one of the ingredients.

- b) Please check your child's backpack daily and remove any items that should stay at home. If a child brings something to school that he/she should not have, the staff will hold on to it until dismissal. It will then be returned to the child and or parent.

#### 7. Jewelry

- a) The children at the Lower School level may not wear necklaces, bracelets, rings or jewelry of any kind to school. Jewelry can end up in children's mouths, which is unsafe and unsanitary. On the playground, jewelry poses a choking hazard. Do not allow your child to wear anything to school that you are not willing to lose.
- b) Children at the Elementary level may wear jewelry to school as long as it does not interfere with their ability to get their work done. Please remember not to allow your child to wear anything to school that you are not willing to lose.

- c) If your child's ears are pierced, the child may only wear studs to school – no hoops or dangling earrings.

## L. FOOD

### 1. Nuts

**WE ARE A NUT-FREE SCHOOL. PLEASE DO NOT PUT NUTS INTO ANY FOOD YOU SEND TO SCHOOL TO SHARE WITH THE CLASS. WE HAVE SEVERAL CHILDREN WITH NUT ALLERGIES. THIS INCLUDES PEANUTS AND TREE-NUTS, AND ALL ITEMS “PROCESSED IN A FACILITY...”**

### 2. Allergies

It is imperative that we have information on your child's food allergies. Some food allergies, such as those to peanuts, can be life threatening. We will keep a list of children who have allergies and to what foods they are allergic in each classroom and in the kitchen.

### 3. Daily Snacks

The school provides snack daily. It is almost always served at the snack table where children may serve themselves at any time between 8:30 am and 10:30 am.

- a) Elementary children have the choice of choosing an item of food out of their lunch bag for snack.
- b) Typical snacks include graham crackers, muffins, goldfish crackers, crackers and cheese, or fresh fruit.
- c) An afternoon snack is served at 3:30 pm to the children enrolled in Sunset Club. This is done as a group snack usually accompanied by the reading of a story.

### 4. Candy, Gum, and Individual Treats

You must not send candy, gum, or individual treats to school with your child. Please do not allow your child(ren) to arrive at school chewing gum.

### 5. Special Snacks

Families often like to bring a special snack to school to share with the class or Sunset Club. For these instances we ask that there be enough for every child in the specific group and that shared snacks do not include nuts or that they not be decorated with large amounts of icing.

### 6. Special Diets

If your child requires a special diet for medical or religious reasons, please let us know so we can accommodate his/her needs.

### 7. Breakfast

Suggestions from Mrs. Minarik: We have all heard, over and over, that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. This is true. If you are driving your car and the gas gauge needle is just about at empty, you go to a gas station and refuel. You do not wait until later and continue to drive. If your child eats dinner at 7 pm and has his/her next major meal at noon the next day, he/she is trying to work on an empty food tank. A child cannot go 17 hours without fuel. Morning snack at school does not provide the fuel needed to run a body properly. Snack is a snack, not a meal. A lot of the children are asking for snack from the moment they arrive at school. These children need to have a SUBSTANTIAL breakfast each morning. A pop tart is not breakfast. Pop tarts give a child a quick burst of energy from a sugar high and they crash as the sugar rapidly leaves their system. Breakfast does not have to be particular foods. Frozen waffles and pancakes work just fine. A peanut butter and jelly sandwich, a glass of milk, and a piece of fruit are an excellent breakfast.

Short on time in the morning? Consider the following:

- a) On the weekend, make five peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Put each in a zip-loc freezer bag or wrap in foil. Place in the freezer. Fill 5 “sippy” cups with milk, leaving room for the milk to expand as it freezes. Each night before bedtime, put a sandwich and a drink in the refrigerator to thaw and set the table for breakfast. Your child can help with any or all steps in this process.

Before bedtime, put cereal in a bowl and cover with a saucer, plastic wrap, or other lid. Put milk into a child-size pitcher and place in the refrigerator. Let your child serve him/herself breakfast.

- b) Teach your child how to make omelets, scrambled eggs or hot cereal in the microwave. Organize all of the ingredients and set the breakfast table before bed. Let your child prepare his/her own breakfast.
- c) Make extra pancakes or waffles on the weekend and freeze them. They can be heated in the microwave or toaster quickly each morning.

## 8. Lunch

Each child should bring his/her own lunch each day in the insulated lunch bag (provided by the school). We provide milk or an appropriate beverage at lunch. You must provide lunch for your child daily. Please read the Lunch Guidelines below.

## 9. Lunch Guidelines

As with breakfast, children need to eat a nutritious lunch in order to have the energy to do all of the work needed to become the “man he will” be (quote from Dr. Montessori). Provide lunches that contain the four basic food groups and avoid “junk food” in preparing lunches. No sodas or candy should be sent to school. The important thing to remember in packing your child’s lunch is that you should pack foods that he/she will eat. We do not care if your child has the exact same lunch every day as long as it is something that he/she will eat.

Your child’s lunch should consist of the following:

- a) Main Dish: sandwich, cheese & crackers, leftover pizza, pasta salad, yogurt, veggies & dip. We cannot refrigerate lunches so you may use small ice packs in the lunch bag to keep food cool. We cannot heat your child’s lunch but you can put a hot dish into a thermos.
- b) Fruit: whatever your child will eat.
- c) Napkins: at least one.
- d) Utensils: whatever is needed, such as a spoon or fork.
- e) Optional but nice: special notes, such as “Have a nice day!” or “I love you!”

The school will provide milk.

**YOUR CHILD’S LUNCH MAY NOT CONTAIN CANDY OR GUM OR TOYS. THESE WILL BE REMOVED FROM YOUR CHILD’S LUNCH AND PLACED IN YOUR CHILD’S BACKPACK UNTIL HE OR SHE IS PICKED UP.**

## 10. Forgotten Lunch

If you have forgotten your child’s lunch, we will call you as soon as possible so that you can pick up a lunch for your child and drop it off before lunchtime. Many parents run to Whole Foods, Safeway, or Subway rather than going home. Items from these stores are acceptable. **You may not get lunch from McDonalds or other fast food restaurants, as it is too hard for the other children.**

## 11. Lunch with Your Child

Once your child has settled in to school, you may join your child for lunch in the classroom or take him/her out to lunch. Speak with your child's teacher to see if your child is ready for your visit without being upset when you leave.

#### **12. Pizza Day -- Lower School**

We will have pizza once a week, the day will be determined at the beginning of the school year. Pizza day is optional. You may order pizza for your child one semester at time. The school will provide milk, carrots and dessert to complete the Pizza Day menu.

#### **13. Wednesday Lunches -- Elementary**

As part of their Practical Life curriculum the Elementary students cook lunch for themselves each Wednesday beginning in October. These lunches are tied to the curriculum in that the menus are chosen from the cuisine of the continent we are studying during that semester. Menus are focused around meals and foodstuffs common in different parts of that continent.

Although participation in the lunches is voluntary, we strongly urge you to encourage your child to participate. It is our experience that children who help prepare their own meals are much more likely to try new vegetables, fruits and grains. They become invested in the process, and the process isn't complete until they have at least tried what they have had such a close hand preparing.

One of our goals in offering this program to the children is to help them learn about foods and nutrition and to help them begin to make good food choices. Much of that work has already been started by you at home, so our work in the classroom is in support of your efforts. We've had much success with helping children try new things. We use fresh, organically produced food almost all of the time, and strive to provide the most nutritious, delicious meals possible.

A question we are frequently asked by parents is: "What if my child doesn't like what you are cooking that week? Should I send a lunch in with my child in case he/she doesn't like what the class is serving?" Our answer is always: It's your call. We have students who never bring in a lunch on Wednesday, and sometimes they are not especially fond of what we are cooking, or they try something new and find that they don't like it very much. Usually what those children do is eat more of one of the side dishes, and eat the parts of the main meal that they do like. With milk and the fruit we serve as dessert, they don't walk away from the table hungry. On the other hand, we have observed that children who bring lunches with them on Wednesdays "just in case" often don't like to try to eat the meals the class cooks for that week. They may taste it, but even if they like it -- if it is something new -- they tend to get their packed lunch out anyway and eat that. Picky eaters, we have found, are often eaters who are given many choices at each meal, eaters who have options. Children who don't have the option of a different meal almost always find *something* that they like about the meal the class has prepared, and as I mentioned, they never leave the table hungry.

The lunch program continues through the last Wednesday in May.

#### **14. Special Notes**

A child will never be forced to eat something at school. Food will never be withheld from your child as a punishment.

M. TOYS

Toys at school are a distraction; they may become lost or broken and are too often a source of disagreement or disappointment. Therefore, toys are not permitted at school. This includes stuffed animals (except nap items to be kept on a cot or in the child's nap bag), building toys, dolls, models, and pretend weapons. Please assure your child that toys are for home use and that at school he/she has special "work" to do.

Every classroom has their own "rules" on "sharing" items. Please check with your child's teacher before allowing your child to bring a "sharing" item to school.

#### N. TOILET TRAINING

Children entering the Pre-Primary program will be working on their independent bathroom skills if they have not already mastered them. As part of the process, it will be important that these children always have a supply of diapers as well as underwear in their cubby box.

Primary aged children are to be already using the bathroom independently and are not permitted to wear diapers or pull-ups during the day.

## VII. DISCIPLINE POLICY

### A. COMMUNITY GOALS

The goals of the Sunset Hills Montessori School community are the following:

- ❖ To provide an environment that supports and enhances the school community's ability to achieve peacefulness, independence, freedom, discipline, and respect for one another as a norm.
- ❖ To have open communication among students, faculty, parents and administration.
- ❖ To have a shared commitment to these principles throughout the entire school community.

### B. MONTESSORI GUIDELINES

The staff will use Maria Montessori's guidelines on freedom and discipline, including the following:

- ❖ All rules should be reasonable, consistent, and comprehensible by the children.
- ❖ Classrooms will be set-up to discourage inappropriate behavior.
- ❖ Children will be redirected to a different and more engaging work.
- ❖ Children may be asked to remove themselves to a quieter part of the room/area to quiet their body in order for them to rejoin the group or to continue their work in the classroom or play on the playground.
- ❖ Children will be helped to use their words and express themselves verbally rather than physically. This can take place through mediation with an adult and/or with the child's peers.
- ❖ Discipline issues will be dealt with promptly.

Unacceptable discipline methods include corporal punishment, verbal abuse and withholding food from a child as a form of punishment.

At the beginning of each year, each classroom teacher will introduce age appropriate classroom rules and guidelines for the children to follow. Teachers will discuss/role play with the children scenarios depicting how to interact with each other in a respectful manner and cover all aspects of respectful behavior. This allows the children to learn the importance of order and rules in the community. It is the school's and the teachers' aim for the children to meet the community

principles listed above. Children will be expected to follow these rules throughout the Before-Care, Montessori, and After-Care programs.

### C. UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIORS

While the teachers and staff have a thorough understanding of the intricacies of behavioral problems and strive to give the children the benefit of the doubt, there are certain behaviors for which the school will have little tolerance.

- ❖ Foul or abusive language (verbal or written) will not be tolerated. This includes rude remarks to get a laugh at another person's expense; intimidation such as threats, taunts, or bullying; and comments that would cause the disrespect and/or discomfort of another person
- ❖ Name-calling.
- ❖ Violent behavior, including hitting, kicking, shoving, biting, throwing objects at a person, etc.
- ❖ Violent role-playing including pretend gunplay.

If any of the above-mentioned behaviors occur with clear intent to harm another child, the child exhibiting the behavior will be sent home immediately.

### D. RESOLUTION PROCESS

#### 1. Behavioral Issues

The following steps will be taken when a behavioral issue arises:

- a) **First Offense** – Consequences are given at School by the teacher (e.g., loss of privileges and mediation).
- b) **Second Offense** – Parental Notification: This will be written by the teacher but may also include a conversation by phone or in person. A copy of the written notice will go to the Head of School to be placed in the student's file.
- c) **Third Offense** – Parental Conference: A parent conference will be arranged to exchange ideas to help the child. For this reason, several staff members may be present. A follow-up conference will be scheduled for a later date to ascertain the child's progress in making the needed behavior changes. Older children may be asked to participate in part of these conferences.
  - (1) If the behavior occurs again before the second conference, the parent will be called immediately to pick up the child from School. If the infraction occurs within an hour of School dismissal the suspension will carry over to the following day.
  - (2) If the behavior occurs only during the Sunset Club program, the student will be suspended from the Sunset Club program on the following day.
- d) **Fourth Offense** – Suspension: The staff will determine the duration of the child's suspension. Acts of violence and other acts deemed serious enough in nature by the staff may cause immediate suspension before a parent conference can be set up. This provides a “cooling off” period for the child
- e) **Fifth Offense** – Dismissal from the school: Teachers and staff will make the final decision. Parents should understand that a child may be required to withdraw as a last resort and that, in this unlikely event, their financial obligation to the School, as set out in the enrollment agreement, remains in force.

We reserve the right to determine the gravity of the action and begin the resolution process at the appropriate point.

## VIII. MISCELLANEOUS ACADEMIC ISSUES

### A. SPECIAL GUESTS/IN-HOUSE PERFORMANCES AND FIELD TRIPS

As Montessorians, it is our philosophy to “bring the world to the child and take the child out into the world.” That maxim is one of the foundational ideas in Montessori education. Throughout the school year the school invites different entertainers and special guests to help bring the world to the children. Sometimes these guests are parents from our school community who want to share their experiences, whether they are cultural, hobbies, or work related, with the children. We always welcome the opportunity to share with the children life experiences beyond the classroom setting. If you are a parent who is interested in sharing a topic of interest with the children, or know of someone who would like to visit with us, please be sure to let your child’s teacher know.

When taking the children out into the world, they can see, hear, and kinesthetically experience new learning. We choose programs that illustrate processes of how things work, or cultivate community awareness.

#### 1. Chaperones

Chaperones are always needed on fieldtrips. Teachers will indicate how many chaperones are needed when information about the individual trips are passed out. Every teacher has her/his own system for assigning parent chaperones to fieldtrips. When at all interested in volunteering, please talk directly to your child’s teacher.

#### 2. Transportation

Transportation for fieldtrips is provided by bus or parent drivers. When using parent drivers, drivers’ vehicles must comply with DMV safety and insurance requirements. Drivers must also provide a current drivers license, insurance policy card, and make, model and license plate number. All of this information will be xeroxed and kept on file. This will allow you to drive on any fieldtrips throughout the year.

When parents drive they will be provided with emergency information, written directions and cell phone numbers of other drivers in case of an emergency.

### B. PARENTS AS SUBSTITUTES

If you are willing to serve as a substitute for your child’s class or for other classrooms when a staff member is absent please inform the office of your availability. This allows us to know whom to call on when the need arises.

Before being able to substitute in a classroom, parents must first receive 4 hours of school safety and policy orientation per year.

When you substitute in a classroom, please be sure to log your hours in the volunteer book.

### C. BIRTHDAYS

We love to celebrate birthdays at school. If you would like to have your child celebrate a birthday at school, please let the teacher know a few days in advance.

#### 1. Items to Bring

- a) We would like you to send in some photographs of you waiting for your child to be born.
- b) We would like to have a picture of the family without the child whose birthday we are celebrating, and pictures of your child showing him/her at every age.

## 2. Lower School Celebration

- a) We will have your child walk around our yellow “Sun” candle one time for each year of his/her life. Your photographs will be used to show how your child has grown and changed each year. We will ask you to fill out a birthday form so that we can tell the class a bit about your child (the birthday form can be found in the back of the handbook). The pictures may be displayed for a few days and then returned to you.

## 3. Elementary Celebration

- a) In the Elementary, we celebrate children’s birthdays in much the same way as in our Primary department.

## 4. Snack

- a) Your child is welcome to share a birthday treat with the class after the circle ceremony. Please check with your child’s teacher to find out about dietary and other restrictions regarding birthday snacks.
- b) The simpler the snack, the better.
- c) The lower the sugar content, the better. **No Nuts.**

## 5. Invitations

If you are planning to have a birthday party at your home, please mail your invitations, invite the children by phone, or hand an invitation to the PARENT.

- a) Invitations placed in the cubbies or backpacks will be removed by the staff and placed in the office where you may pick them up.
- b) We know that you will not be inviting the entire class. We do not want to hurt the feelings of the children who are not invited.

## D. CLASSROOM PLACEMENT

Teachers and the School Heads place children in classrooms when they rise to a new level. Parents are welcome to provide a written request, but the teachers and Heads of School collectively make the final decision based upon the dynamics of the classroom, the chemistry of all of the children in the classroom and the classroom balance.

It is our recommendation that parents observe at least 3 primary classrooms prior to making any requests.

## E. PARENT EDUCATION NIGHTS / SCHOOL EVENTS

### 1. Parent Education Nights

At different times throughout the year the school will sponsor parent education talks on the Montessori curriculum. These talks allow parents to learn about the materials and different stages of the curriculum in which their child is working. We have found that these talks are valuable every year to all parents because each year your child is experiencing the curriculum in a new way due to his/her growth and development.

### 2. Mother’s and Father’s Nights

Every year the children will invite parents to attend Mother’s Night and Father’s Night. These are opportunities for the child to share with moms, aunts, grandmas

and other significant females (on Mother's Night) and dads, uncles, grandpas, and other significant males (on Father's Night) their classroom and demonstrate work that they are doing while at school.

### 3. PTA Events

The school and PTA also sponsor celebratory events in the fall, winter and spring that allow families to gather for an evening or afternoon of fun. Look for these different events in your school calendar and in the school Newsletter.

## F. CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Parents are welcome to observe their child's class; there is no better way to understand what the children are experiencing at school. **We ask that you give your child approximately one month to settle in before you observe in the classroom.** If your child starts at the beginning of the school year we ask you to wait until October 1st before you schedule a visit in the classroom.

### 1. Observation Procedures

Although you are welcome at any time it is best to ask permission of the teacher so that we are sure that there are not too many adults visiting at one time. This can be disruptive to the work of the children.

All visitors are asked to adhere to classroom observation protocol when visiting to minimize disruption to the children:

- a) Please sit very quietly and WATCH. This is not a time to interact with your child or the other children. If a child comes up to talk to you please say something like, "My work is to watch today, not to talk. Could you get out some great work for me to watch?"
- b) Please write down any questions you may have to discuss with the teacher. These can be answered for you at a different appointment time you and your child's teacher arrange.
- c) Please keep in mind that the presence of visitors changes the dynamics of the classroom somewhat and is particularly noticeable in heightened noise levels.

The staff greatly appreciates your taking the time to come in to observe. This will help us to help your child. We look forward to you visiting at least once this school year.

## IX. COMMUNICATION

We feel that it is essential to have frequent and open communication between the school and parents. This allows us to be partners in your child's education.

### A. MESSAGES AND PHONE CALLS

#### 1. Office Hours – 8 am to 5 pm

A voice mail system receives calls at other times. The teachers are not available for phone calls during school hours, but will return calls as soon as possible after 3:30pm. Messages for the teachers can be left via email, voicemail, or in the teacher's mailbox. Out of courtesy, please make an appointment if extended communication with the office or faculty is required.

#### 2. Sunset Club

To contact our aftercare staff or to relay a message regarding the dismissal of your child during Sunset Club hours please call the Sunset Club phone line at (703) 476-1985 or leave a note in the SSC mailbox in the front lobby.

**3. After Hours**

Messages may be left at any time at the school's main number and the appropriate person will return your call as soon as possible. If you are up in the middle of the night with an ill child, please feel free to call and leave a message at that time so you don't have to think about it later.

**B. BULLETIN BOARDS**

**1. Sign-up bulletin board**

Located here you will find permission slips and class event sign up sheets

**2. PTA bulletin board**

Parents can find current information on news and events sponsored by our school  
PTA

**C. FAMILY MAILBOXES**

Please check daily for current information pertaining to your child's class or general school information

**D. E-MAIL**

Parents are always welcome to contact us via email.

**Office:** [office@sunsethillsmontessori.com](mailto:office@sunsethillsmontessori.com)

**Operations Manager:** [kmeixner@sunsethillsmontessori.com](mailto:kmeixner@sunsethillsmontessori.com)

**Head of School:** [eminarik@sunsethillsmontessori.com](mailto:eminarik@sunsethillsmontessori.com)

**Assistant Head of School:** [mcotter@sunsethillsmontessori.com](mailto:mcotter@sunsethillsmontessori.com)

**Teachers:** [first\\_initiallastname@sunsethillsmontessori.com](mailto:first_initiallastname@sunsethillsmontessori.com)

When you e-mail please put "SCHOOL" or SHMS in the memo so that we know it is not junk mail.

**E. FAX**

Sunset Hills Montessori School: 703-476-7233

**F. NEWSLETTERS**

Newsletters are emailed to all families and sent home to families without email addresses almost every Friday. They keep parents informed of class and school events and topics to extend the child's school learning experience into the home. Please check your email or child's backpack every Friday for the newsletter and PLEASE READ IT.

Parents are welcome to contribute articles, information, ideas, babysitting requests, yard sale info, and book, toy, and movie reviews to the newsletter. Email items for the newsletter to [office@sunsethillsmontessori.com](mailto:office@sunsethillsmontessori.com), by Wednesday afternoon.

**G. WEBSITE**

[www.sunsethillsmontessori.com](http://www.sunsethillsmontessori.com)

**H. CONFERENCES**

Teachers are always willing to meet with parents to discuss the child's progress in the classroom. If you desire a meeting with your child's teacher, please contact him/her via email, voicemail or lobby mailbox.

During the school year the school will periodically close for Teacher Workdays. These work days coincide with the end of academic quarters. In the Lower School, parent/teacher conferences can be scheduled during these days. In the Elementary, parent/teacher conferences can be scheduled before or after school, at the respective teachers' discretion, and on Saturday mornings, beginning on the Monday following the teacher workdays. In the case of both the Elementary and Lower School, look for sign-up sheets in the school lobby. Please sign up for an appointment promptly when the sheets are posted and attend the conference at your scheduled time.

**1. Pre-Primary**

Teachers will meet with Parents in early fall and January. A written report will be sent home in January and May.

**2. Primary**

Primary Conferences are held two times a year for all new students and once a year for existing students.

a) Parents of new students will meet with their child's teacher to discuss their child's progress in November and January, written reports will be sent home in January and May.

b) Parents of existing students will meet with their child's teacher to discuss the progress of their child in January, written reports will be sent home in January and May.

c) Progress reports provided to the parents in January are in a skill based checklist format. In May a comprehensive written description of your child's progress for the year will be provided. Additional conferences may be scheduled upon request of the parents or the school.

**3. Elementary**

Upper School Conferences will be held for all students in November and June. Written progress reports will be provided in November, January, and June.

**4. Enrollment During the School Year**

If your child starts school after the beginning of the current school year, your first formal parent conference will be approximately two months after your child starts.

**I. CHANGES IN THE HOME**

In the event that a significant change occurs in your home, please inform your child's teacher as soon as possible. Significant changes can affect your child's behavior, attitude, and performance while at school.

**1. Common Causes of Distress**

Taking or change in medication	Any hospital stays
One or both parents away from home	An accident or death in the family
Pregnancy in family	New caretaker or new employee
A new person living in the home	Death of a pet
Illness of parent or sibling	

**X. PRE-PRIMARY PROGRAM**

**A. SUPPLIES**

The children should bring the following supplies to school:

- ❖ A pair of simple slippers with rubber soles; no slipper socks or slippers with character heads.
- ❖ Extra clothes appropriate to the season: shirt, pants, underwear or supply of diapers, socks, etc., all in a clear plastic bag with your child's name (please be sure to label all extra clothes, even socks).

- ❖ If the child is not using the bathroom independently you must have a supply of diapers labeled with the child's last name on the package or each diaper.

## B. PRE-PRIMARY CURRICULUM

The Pre-Primary classroom offers the young child a curriculum designed for their needs and sensitive periods.

### 1. **Areas in the Classroom**

- a) The practical life curriculum fosters independence and fine motor control through exercises such as pouring, spooning, dressing frames (learning how to zipper, button, buckle, etc.)
- b) The sensorial area helps the child recognize and categorize according to size, shape, and color.
- c) There is an emphasis on beginning language skills in all areas of the class but we also introduce the sounds and formation of the sandpaper letters and the identification of beginning sounds in words.
- d) In the Math area, the approach is to recognize sequence and match the symbols to quantities.
- e) The Art area is set up for daily exploration of painting, cutting, and designing as well as seasonal projects throughout the year. These activities will be introduced with a special emphasis on using and seeing the beauty in natural materials.

The classroom also provides many opportunities to develop gross motor skills, with balance beams, and a variety of manipulative materials to climb, jump onto, toss, and roll.

# XI. PRIMARY PROGRAM

## A. SUPPLIES

The children should bring the following supplies to school:

- ❖ A pair of simple slippers with rubber soles; no slipper socks or slippers with character heads.
- ❖ Extra clothes appropriate to the season: shirt, pants, underwear, and socks, all in a clear plastic bag with your child's name (please be sure to label all extra clothes, even socks)
- ❖ Children who are napping should have two fitted crib size sheets and two top covers. A pillow is optional but appreciated by most of the children. If you provide a pillow, two removable pillowcases must also be provided.

All items should be labeled and carried in your Sunset Hills Montessori School tote bag. Children are welcome to bring a small stuffed animal (labeled with their name) to sleep with if they choose.

## B. PRIMARY CURRICULUM

The Primary classroom is designed in a manner that allows children to work independently and at their own developmental pace.

### 1. **Curricular Areas**

- a) Practical life: Activities such as spooning, pouring, sweeping and buttoning, to promote small motor control, care of the environment and care of the self.

- b) Sensorial: Activities dealing with shape, size, color, weight, sound, etc, which promote further development of the senses.
- c) Language: There are two language areas: comprehension, which includes activities such as matching, classifying, and sequencing; and phonics and reading activities ranging from simple sound games to whatever reading level the child attains.
- d) Math: Activities range from one-to-one correspondence and object-to-numeral matches to whatever level the child attains. The emphasis is on using manipulatives to give the child a concrete foundation for the abstract math work he/she will do in later years.
- e) Cultural Studies/Geography: Activities include puzzle maps, materials that have an international aspect such as matching shoes from other countries or spooning rice with a Chinese soup spoons, books about other cultures, and international snacks. These form an introduction to physical and cultural geography.
- f) Art: Activities to introduce the children to famous artists, show the care and use of art materials, to encourage creativity, and just to have fun! Jr./Sr. Kindergarteners have an afternoon art class once a week.
- g) Science: Activities include nature related lessons such as living and non-living things, parts of a tree, weather, and the solar system.
- Spanish: Once a week the Primary children spend 30 minutes participating in Spanish lessons. During these lessons the children receive a basic introduction to the Spanish language as well as the culture.
- h) Music: Once a week the Primary children enjoy 30 minutes of musical instruction with our music teacher. In this class they are introduced to many songs, rhythm, beat, musical notation, composers and a history of music.

## XII. ELEMENTARY PROGRAM

### A. SUPPLIES

The following list is meant to guide you in your purchases of materials and tools for your child's use in the classroom. It is a guide – you do not have to get the exact brand or style that we suggest. You may discover something better, in which case we will be very grateful!

- Rubber soled slippers for classroom use (shoe style, with backs, no noises or flashing lights)
- 1 journal notebook of your choosing, standard 8x11 size (may have a decorative cover or the standard composition book cover)
- 1 set of wide and 1 set of narrow colored markers (classic colors, unscented only)
- 1 set of good quality colored pencils
- 3 wide-ruled composition notebooks
- 3 pocket folders in red, yellow, and blue
- 1 quad-ruled graph paper composition notebook \*\*Please determine which size square is appropriate for your child; however, all first years should have the graph paper with the larger squares.
- 1 sketch book of your choosing, standard 8x11 size
- 1 (½ ) inch binder
- A pair of scissors—Fiskars Student or Standard sizes
- A clipboard

Pencils, notebook paper, and glue sticks go towards a “community supply” that will be distributed as needed throughout the year.

This is not a comprehensive list but it will get your child started for the school year.

## **B. ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM**

The learning that goes on in the Sunset Hills Montessori School Elementary classroom is not just an abstract concept. It is learning that is intricately connected with the world. Our children are free to explore how the world works, both in the global and the local sense. Our teachers guide and motivate them to achieve the goals they set for themselves. In addition to giving them a foundation in the curriculum skills they will need throughout life, the Montessori method offers them a chance to discover themselves.

The following is a general summary of the sequenced lessons covered during the first three Montessori Elementary years.

### **1. Mathematics**

- a) Decimal system, including concept of number and quantitative relationships
- b) The four fundamental operations with whole numbers, fractions, and decimal fractions
- c) Memorization of math facts
- d) Introduction to algebra
- e) Problem solving
- f) Time
- g) Money
- h) Measurement

### **2. Geometry**

- a) Nomenclature for geometric forms
- b) Lines
- c) Angles
- d) Polygons
- e) Introduction to congruency, similarity and equivalence

### **3. Language**

- a) Reading taught through a combination of phonics and sight words: reading for comprehension, vocabulary development, interpretive reading, and beginning library and research skills.
- b) Jr. Great Books for 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> years
- c) Writing strategies including development of mechanical skills, creative writing of both prose and poetry, and beginning research skills
- d) Grammar studies
- e) Reading and Sentence analysis
- f) Spelling
- g) Word Study

**4. Physical & Cultural Geography**

- a) Continents and oceans
- b) Countries and states
- c) Flags
- d) Landforms: e.g. peninsula, gulf, bay, etc.
- e) Introduction to physical geography through mapping, geographical features, and creation of imaginary islands
- f) Astronomy and cosmology
- g) Structure of the Earth: the geological history
- h) Biomes
- i) Fundamental needs of humans

**5. History**

- a) Concept of time
- b) Natural history
- c) How cultures through time have met fundamental needs

**6. Science**

- a) Five Kingdoms
- b) Zoology
- c) Botany
- d) Astronomy
- e) Introduction to chemistry
- f) Energy studies: e.g. electricity, friction, and introductory physics
- g) Earth sciences/geology

**7. Physical Education**

Helps children to develop an initial positive feeling for vigorous physical activity while learning group games and “sports” of a competitive and cooperative nature.

**8. Music**

- a) Theory
- b) Technique
- c) Performance
- d) History/Appreciation

**9. Spanish**

- a) Conversation
- b) Vocabulary building
- c) Grammar
- d) Culture

**10. Art**

- a) Seven elements of design (color, line, shape, form, texture, space, and value)
- b) Composition and perspective
- c) Introduction to various media

d) Art appreciation

### XIII. THE SUNSET CLUB

#### A. PURPOSE

Every child deserves to feel special and belong. Therefore we decided to call the children who are enrolled in before and/or after school care The Sunset Club. This way they have a special place to go and a special group with which to be associated when some of their friends are going home or to home childcare providers instead of staying at school. Children are also able to make friends with children from other classes.

We have structured the Sunset Club hours to provide the children with a home-like environment. The children are able to enjoy structured and unstructured activities, Elementary children have study hall for a portion of the afternoon, and all children are provided an afternoon snack.

#### B. NAPPERS

State licensing requires us to provide preschool children with a regular naptime (or rest period) every day.

Naptime is from 1:00-3:00 pm, the school provides cots for the children to nap on. Parents must provide a minimum of **two** fitted crib sheets and **two** blankets. They must be labeled with your child's name. Every Friday sheets and blankets will be sent home to be cleaned. All cleaned items should be brought back to school on Monday.

If a child has an accident while napping, we will put clean linens on the cot and send the soiled ones home with you. They must be washed and returned to the school the next day. State law prohibits your child from using another's linens, so it is very important that this procedure be followed.

You may provide a small pillow with two washable covers and a soft sleeping toy (no action figures or Barbies). Each child will be given a tote bag for Sunset Club items.

#### C. SUNSET CLUB DISMISSAL

Children in Sunset Club may be picked up between 3:00 & 6:25 pm. All families must exit the building by 6:30 pm. The parent or authorized adult must accompany the child to a staff member who will dismiss the child with a handshake and parting words.

**Please do not allow your child to stay and play awhile.** It is important that when you arrive, your child begin to put their work away and gather their belongings for dismissal. This policy was designed to assure the consistency essential for a child's development and a calm end to the child's day. It is difficult for a child to understand that some days he/she can stay and play, and on other days you may be in a hurry and must leave immediately.

**CLASSROOMS ARE CLOSED AT 3:00 PM. PLEASE DO NOT ALLOW YOUR CHILD (REN) TO PLAY OR WORK IN THESE ROOMS AFTER THEY HAVE BEEN DISMISSED.**

#### D. DROP-IN SUNSET CLUB

Drop-in care is provided on a space available basis. The fee is \$12.00 per hour for one child, and \$6 per hour for each additional sibling, one-hour minimum. Parents will be billed for this service.

If you need consistent care for 1 or more afternoons every week you will need to arrange to add aftercare to your child's contract if space allows.

There is a Sunset Club binder in the foyer where parents can sign up for both Before and After school drop-in care.

If the need for after care arises during the day, please call the school by 2:00 pm and ask if there is space in Sunset Club that day. To be properly staffed for Sunset Club we can only accept a set number of drop-in students.

All children who have not been picked up by 3:15 pm will be sent to SSC and late charges will apply. A child who has not been picked up at dismissal is not considered a drop-in.

E. DISCIPLINE

The Sunset Club staff will follow Maria Montessori's guidelines on freedom and discipline. Please read our school discipline policy, section VII.

#### **XIV. Example Forms**

- A. WRITTEN MEDICATION CONSENT FORM
- B. DIETARY INFORMATION
- C. DISMISSAL FORM
- D. EMERGENCY FORM
- E. HEALTH FORM

Sunset Hills Montessori School's faculty and staff would like to thank the parents for sending us their children and for their continuous support throughout the school year. It is with the support of the parents that we are able to provide the best possible education and care to your children.

Sincerely,

Eileen Dowds Minarik

