



Nature's Classroom Institute
& Montessori School
Adolescent
Classroom Handbook

Updated September 2025

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NATURE'S CLASSROOM INSTITUTE & MONTESSORI SCHOOL

HISTORY OF NATURE'S CLASSROOM INSTITUTE & MONTESSORI SCHOOL

In 1995, Geoffrey Bishop established Nature's Classroom Institute of Wisconsin, Inc. (NCI) in Spring Green, Wisconsin. It gave school students the opportunity to experience a hands-on, multidisciplinary curriculum with an emphasis on field study and community living. An environmental educator himself, Geoffrey believed that students needed more than a typical classroom could offer them. Two years later Nature's Classroom Institute relocated to the Perlman Conference Center in Mukwonago, Wisconsin.

In 2002, Geoffrey was honored for his personal commitment to the environment with the Wisconsin Environmental Education Award for Non-Formal Educator of the Year. It was during that same year that Nature's Classroom Montessori School was formed. By 2005, the school included two Primary Classrooms for students ages 3-6 as well as an Elementary Classroom for ages 6–12. In 2008, Nature's Classroom Montessori was expanded to add Middle School Curriculum for ages 12-15, and in 2014, the High School curriculum to serve ages 15-18. In 2016, the school left the leased property it had been operating on and moved to its permanent home in Hwy E, Mukwonago.

From its inception, Nature's Classroom Institute has been dedicated to providing our students with the finest and most exciting educational experience possible. We have been equally committed to giving our teaching staff the opportunity to grow and learn. As NCI continues to develop exciting new curriculum and programs, we will strive not just to maintain the high standards of quality for which we have become known, but to exceed them.

NATURE'S CLASSROOM INSTITUTE OF WISCONSIN, INC.

This not-for-profit organization encompasses Nature's Classroom Institute, a five-day residential environmental education program, and Nature's Classroom Montessori School. The school and environmental education program are separate entities but will run consecutively concurrently on the property once built. Nature's Classroom Montessori Elementary and Adolescent students have an opportunity to participate in the residential environmental education program as a five-day class trip.

NATURE'S CLASSROOM INSTITUTE (NCI - EE)

Established in 1995, the residential environmental education program annually serves over 4000 students through the Midwest. The Program is overseen by the Executive Director – Geoffrey Bishop and managed by a Program Coordinator and several faculty members. The Environmental Education (EE) faculty members hold a minimum of a baccalaureate degree and come from wide personal and educational backgrounds. They work with a different group of students each week. In the field, they carry first-aid kits and two-way radios that give them a direct line to the office. The EE program will use Camp Lake Location for its operations. The faculty lives on campus throughout the school year in designated staff housing.

NATURE'S CLASSROOM INSTITUTE AND MONTESSORI SCHOOL (NCIMS)

Established in 2002, Nature's Classroom Montessori School serves students aged 2 1/2-18 years, from Children's House through the Adolescent program.

POSITIONS HELD AT NCIMS

Executive Director - Geoffrey Bishop

Head of School - Deepa Shreekumar

Office Manager – Carrie Benzinger

Montessori Faculty – Katelyn Bratz, Deepa Shreekumar, Lindsay Wurtzel, Joey Snyder

Montessori Assistant Teachers –Claire Gray and Bridgette Hopper

PABC (Parents Actively Building Community)

NATURE'S CLASSROOM INSTITUTE AND MONTESSORI SCHOOL: MISSION

To inspire, nurture and further the growth of empathetic and empowered stewards of the Earth through authentic Montessori principles and the natural world.

NATURE'S CLASSROOM INSTITUTE AND MONTESSORI: PURPOSE

Nature's Classroom Institute and Montessori School's (NCIMS) aims to prepare students to be vested learners by engaging their natural curiosities about the world. NCIMS adapts to the individual learner's needs through an interdisciplinary approach utilizing its natural and agricultural campus. Rooted in Montessori ideals of independence and mutual respect, NCIMS is fueled by practical and authentic learning experiences that develop academically, socially, and environmentally responsible problem solvers.

Through modeled values of a successful community, we immerse students in a dynamic learning environment. NCIMS inspires intrinsic, joyful learning and curiosity while nurturing mutual respect and understanding of oneself, others, and the world.

Nature's Classroom Institute and Montessori School is a private non-denominational school committed to providing an excellent education for students from diverse backgrounds, aged 2 1/2 to 18 years old. Professionally trained directors/directresses, using a carefully prepared environment, guide each student through the natural stages of learning so as to develop empathetic and empowered citizens and stewards of the planet.

The school curriculum of NCIMS implements the Montessori philosophy and methodology. The environment stimulates intellectual, emotional, social, physical, and cultural growth. The school promotes the development of self-motivation, independence, curiosity, cooperation, and concern for others within the framework of a strong academic program. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to support and participate in school activities and to share in their children's educational experience.

NCIMS does not discriminate based on race/ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, or age in the administration of any of its employment, educational programs, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, athletics, recreational, and other school-administered programs.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

- Children's House Program for students between the ages of 2 1/2 and 6
- Elementary Program for students between the ages of 6 and 12
- Adolescent Program for students between the ages of 12 and 18

All programs run 5 days a week.

ADOLESCENT PROGRAM

For students ages 12-18 – 8:00 a.m. – 3:20p.m.

Our Adolescent Program serves all ages of adolescence. It is a perfect capstone to the student's skills and knowledge developed in the Montessori Children's House and Elementary Programs. The program continues to be refined as it evolves and grows. The classroom environment is designed to meet the specific needs of adolescents in the third plane of development from the ages of twelve through eighteen. It covers the traditional grades of seventh through twelfth. Along with a strong academic curriculum, there is also an emphasis on the development of valuable personal life skills through independent studies, small group presentations, hands-on project work, large group activities, leadership experiences, and learning about adolescent cognitive, emotional, social and physical development. NCIMS recognizes the value of work, both intellectual and practical, that is valued by the community as an avenue to self-construction and an enriched sense of self worth. Therefore, each student is an active, vital member of the class, school, city, and global community. Students learn how to be efficient learners and are guided in implementing this knowledge through the use of a personal learning plan.

Students attend two weeklong trips to our own NCI EE program and one out-of-state trip which, again, are unique and character-building opportunities within our curriculum. Each student also completes several independent studies. We endeavor to offer an integrated curriculum including art, music, foreign language, technology, outdoor exploration, etc.

Before/After School Care

The Before/After School Care Program is offered as a service to the families whose students would not otherwise be able to attend our regular Montessori classes due to the work schedule of their parents/guardians.

If you provide a schedule for your student to attend our before/after school program a "reduced daily contracted rate" will apply. If you need care intermittently, a "drop-in" rate will apply. Before & after school care is available on regular school days when school is in session and will be billed monthly. This invoice is due the 15th of each month. There is no sibling discount provided and no financial assistance available for Before/After School Care. The contracted schedule may be changed at any time by contacting the office in writing. Any invoices, statements and other financial information will only be given to the parent/guardian who enrolled the student/s and whose name(s) are on the account unless required to do so by a court of law. Written permission must be given to the office for NCM to release financial information to other persons.

Before School Care begins at 7:30 a.m. and is available Monday through Friday. To register for this program and to reserve a place for your student, you must complete the Before School Care section on the registration form and indicate which days your student will attend and for how long. The fee for Before School Care is \$12.00/day for a contracted schedule (7.30am – 8am) or \$14.00/day for drop-in care.

The After School Care program will be offered until 5:00 p.m. Please take note that pick up is on the half hour. This allows for hikes and activities to be planned. The fee would be \$20.00/day for a contracted schedule and \$23.00/day for drop-in care. **Students staying later than 5PM will be charged \$5 per family for each 15 minutes they stay beyond 5PM.**

Please check with the Head of School / Office Manager for open invoices and any current balance due if you have any questions.

Adolescent Before Care Alternative

We offer Adolescent students a study hall session in the AD Classroom from 7:15 am to 8:00 am with no Before Care charge.

Adolescent After Care Alternative

We offer Adolescent students an after-school study hall session in the AD Classroom on Mondays, from 3:30- 4:30 at no charge. This is available for independent work time, the adolescent teacher is not available to provide student support during this time.

Students who choose to drop in for the study hall sessions will be expected to use the time as a work session, for group or individual work.

SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

TUITION POLICY

Tuition may be paid annually, semi-annually or monthly in accordance with the following payment schedule:

- Annual Due: August 15th
- Semi-Annual Due: August 15th and January 15th
- Monthly Due: 10 payments due the 15th of each month, beginning on August 15th

Statements will come by e-mail every month. There will be a late tuition payment (5% of the amount) charged for payments received after the 15th of each month

Tuition Credit

There is no credit given for absences (such as but not limited to illness, death in the family, vacation). There are no tuition credits for school closings.

If you need to leave NCM due to reasons as moving or change of economic status, enrollment fees will not be refunded. You will only be responsible for any open invoices and the tuition and contracted before/after school care for the months your student has actually attended. We do not prorate by days. If your student has attended more than 1 day in a month, that month's tuition and contracted student care will be charged to you.

Collection

Parents/Guardians are expected to make payments by the due date. If tuition has not been paid by the 15th of the month, they will receive a notice of late payment with the additional late tuition amount (5% of the amount owed). If by the 15th of the following month, tuition has not been made current, students will not be able to attend school as of the first day the tuition has not been paid. Students may return to school only when the tuition due has been paid. With thirty days written notice at the discretion of the Executive Director, Nature's Classroom Montessori School may cancel the contract and spaces of students with unpaid tuition and send the open invoice to Collection.

Returned Checks

A \$25.00 fee will be charged for all returned checks.

HEALTH POLICY

NCIMS does not offer care for sick students. Any contagious health condition is cause for exclusion from the program. We realize the difficulty this policy can present to working parents/guardians, but we do not have staff available to care for ill students. In the event of an illness that requires exclusion from school, parents/guardians are asked to report absences to the office at 262-363-2815.

Any student who is suspected of having a communicable disease is taken to the office immediately. The teacher or office staff will discharge the student to the care of their parent/guardian or the person who has been designated by the parent/guardian to take charge of the student. Students who have a contagious disease must be kept at home until they are no longer contagious. If your student has been diagnosed with a contagious disease, the parent/guardian must call and report such disease to the office so that other parent/guardians may be warned to look for symptoms. Related information will be sent by e-mail upon notification.

A student with any of the following signs or symptoms of illness shall be immediately discharged from school and/or asked not to attend school:

- Diarrhea (more than one abnormally loose stool within a 24-hour period).
 - Vomiting (more than two times within a 24-hour period).
 - Persistent coughing, causing the student to have difficulty breathing or to make a whooping sound.
 - Yellowish skin or eyes.
 - Suspicion of conjunctivitis.
 - Has or has had a temperature of 100.4°F or higher within the last 24 hours.
 - Untreated infected skin patch(es).
 - Evidence of lice, scabies, or other parasitic infection. Students must remain home until nit free for 24 hours.
 - Unusual spots or rash.
 - Severe sore throat and/or difficulty swallowing.
 - Any student with an unexplained rash must have a doctor's release to return to school.
- Students who have been out due to illness will need to stay out until fully recovered. A student must be symptom-free for at least 24 hours before returning to school.

Allergies

Parent/Guardians are required to make NCIMS aware of any and all known allergies as is requested on the Enrollment Contract. If the student has a life-threatening allergy, they must notify the NCIMS Administration upon enrollment and/or upon discovery of allergy. NCIMS requires the following medical documents:

- Physician identification of allergen(s)
- Physician prescribed treatment that can be administered by a non-medical professional

TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Cell Phone/Electronics

We believe that the use of devices and access to available technology, integrated throughout our program of instruction, will help prepare students for their future. The use of technology will allow our students to collect, consider, analyze, and communicate ideas and information from an enormous pool of available resources. Through effective planning, our staff will guide students in the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of this vast store of information and help them apply it to complex and practical real-world problems in the classroom. Through the use of various technologies, the teaching and learning process will change over time with the students assuming more responsibility for their learning.

Maintaining an Adolescent environment that prepares students for the adult world requires constant change, evaluation, careful planning and consideration as well as the application of effective policies and procedures. In many ways this program will demand an increased level of responsibility on the part of the students, the parents/guardians, and the school staff. This policy manual is intended to provide the critical information and infrastructure necessary to ensure the technology program's success. Since this is a dynamic and complex project, the policies and procedures covered in this document are not "all inclusive" and will evolve over time.

Students and parents/guardians will be required to sign a Computer Usage Agreement, found at the end of this packet. We ask that you familiarize yourself with the content of this policy document and follow the guidelines laid out during your usage of the iPad and other classroom devices. The Computer Usage Agreement will cover all individuals, returning and new.

We are very excited to take the technology in our classroom to the next level and help to prepare our students to function effectively in a technology driven world.

General Guidelines – School Owned Devices & Personal Devices

1) Accessing the Devices

- Devices will be available at the start of the school year. Parents/Guardians and students must sign and return the Technology Usage Agreement before the school technology can be accessed by the student.

2) Taking Care of Devices

- Students are responsible for the general care of a device they have checked out. If issues occur during the use of the device, it is the student's responsibility to notify their teacher as soon as possible.

3) General Precautions:

- No food or drink is allowed near school technology while it is in use. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that neither they nor a classmate have food or drink near any device.
- All Cords, Cables, and removable storage devices must be removed before the device is shut down or transported.
- Students should never carry the computers while the screen is open, nor should they carry the tablet by the protective case lid.
- Devices should be shut down before moving them to conserve battery life.
- Devices must remain free of any writing, stickers, drawing, or labels that are not issued by Nature's Classroom Montessori.
- Devices should never be left in a car or any unsupervised area.

- Students are responsible for keeping the device battery charged for school each day.
- 3) Carrying Devices
- Devices must remain attached to their protective cover at all times, unless permission is given by the teacher.
 - Devices must be turned off before placing them in a backpack.
 - Cords, cables, and removable storage devices should be removed before devices are placed in the backpack.
 - Students are responsible for careful placement of the devices within the backpack and of the backpack, to ensure the safety of the device.
- 4) Screen Care
- The device screen can be damaged if subjected to rough treatment. The screens are particularly sensitive to damage from excessive pressure on the screen.
- (a) Do not lean on the top of the device when it is closed.
 - (b) Do not place anything near the device that will put pressure on the screen.
 - (c) Always close the protective case when transporting the device.
 - (d) Do not place anything between the screen and the protective case.
 - (e) Only clean the screen with a cloth designated for the device, provided in the classroom.
- 5) Acceptable Use
- Students will have access to all available forms of electronic media and communication that support the educational goals and objectives of NCIMS
 - Students are responsible for their ethical and educational use of technology resources.
 - Access to the technology resources is a privilege and not a right. Students and/or parents/guardians are required to follow the Classroom Handbook.
 - Transmission of any material that is in violation of any federal or state law is prohibited. This includes but is not limited to the following: confidential information, copyrighted material, threatening or obscene material, and computer viruses.
 - Any attempt to alter data, the configuration of the surface, or the files of another user, without the consent of the individual, the teacher, or our technology administrator, will be considered an act of vandalism and subject to disciplinary action.
 - School devices may not be used for social media or non-school related activities without prior permission from the teacher.
- 6) Privacy and Safety
- Do not access chat rooms or chain letters without permission.
 - Do not access any social media platforms without permission of the teacher.
 - Do not access, use, or change computer files that do not belong to you.
 - Do not reveal your or any other person's full name, phone number, home address, social security number, credit card numbers, and/or passwords.
 - Remember that storage is not guaranteed to be private or confidential; Nature's Classroom teacher or administrators may access anything on school devices at any time.
 - If you inadvertently access a website that contains obscene, pornographic, or otherwise offensive material, notify a teacher or Head of School immediately so that such sites can be blocked from further access. This is not merely a request; it is a responsibility.
- 7) Legal Propriety
- Comply with trademark and copyright laws and all license agreements. Ignorance of the law is not immunity. If you are unsure, ask a teacher or parent.
 - Plagiarism is a violation of your Usage Agreement. Give credit to all sources used, whether quoted or summarized. This includes all forms of media on the Internet, such as graphics, movies, music, and text.

- Use or possession of hacking software is strictly prohibited, and violators will be subject to disciplinary procedures. Violation of applicable state or federal laws will be subject to prosecution.

8) E-mail

- Always use appropriate language.
- Do not transmit language/material that is profane, obscene, abusive, or offensive to others.
- Do not send mass e-mails, chain letters, or spam.
- Students should maintain high integrity about e-mail content.
- No private chatting during class, unless pertaining to class assignments
- Student's e-mail is subject to inspection by the teacher, parent/guardians, or administrators always.
- Google Classroom will be the main source for online communication.

9) Consequences

- The student in whose name the device is checked out will be responsible at all times for its appropriate use. Noncompliance with the policies will result in disciplinary action. Electronic mail, network usage, and all stored files shall not be considered confidential and may be monitored at any time by designated staff to ensure appropriate use. The school fully cooperates with local, state, or federal officials in any investigation concerning or relating to violations of computer crime laws. Contents of e-mails and network communications are governed by the state and the proper authorities will be granted access to the content if requested.
- Consequences may include, but are not limited to:
 - Device unable to be taken home.
 - Limited usage of device allowed.
 - Suspension of device privileges.
 - Suspension of technology privileges.
 - Meeting with student, parents/guardians, and teacher (potentially Head of School, if deemed necessary).

10) Student Responsibilities

- Students are responsible at all times for the device, when checked out, whether at home, school, or in transit.
- Students may only log into accounts using their assigned username. Students may not share passwords with other students.
- All device components are to remain in their protective cases at all times.
- Students may not loan their device to other students for any reason, without teacher consent. If a student chooses to share their device with a fellow classmate, the original student (who checked out the device) remains responsible for the safety and usage of the device.
- Students may not play games, load, or download any software, music, pictures, etc. on computers without permission of the Nature's Classroom Staff.
- Students are responsible for charging and maintaining the battery units daily. Student must charge the device for the next user.
- The device come with a standardized image loaded; the image may not be altered or changed in any way without the consent of the Adolescent Teacher.
- It is the student's responsibility to ensure that work is backed up regularly on an Internet server (Google Docs or Google Classroom).
- The students must take responsibility for the checked-out device and their work on the device. Technology difficulties or a forgotten item are not an excuse for missing or late work, without prior discussion with the teacher.
- All use of the Internet must comply with school guidelines. Log files may be maintained for each device and reviewed periodically.
- Do not leave the power cord plugged into the device during transit. This will cause damage to the tablet.

11) Parental/Guardian Responsibilities

- Parents/Guardians will be responsible for monitoring the student's use of the device at home.
- Parents/Guardians will be responsible for review the technology agreement in the Adolescent Classroom Handbook with their student(s).
- Parents/Guardians are asked to monitor their student's activities on the Internet on a regular basis.

Protecting and Storing Devices

12) Storing devices

- At school, devices must be stored in the designated storage rack. Nothing should ever be placed on top of the device.
- Devices should NOT be stored in a vehicle at school or at home.
- Please ensure if stored in a backpack that the backpack is kept in a safe place where no harm can come to the device.

13) Tablets left in Unsupervised Areas

- Under no circumstance can the device be left unsupervised unless in the Adolescent Classroom.

15) Technology FAQs

- Do I need a printer? – You do not need one. There are printers available at school. Students may also turn their assignments in electronically.
- How can I connect to the Internet at home? – Wireless internet is needed for the Internet to operate at home. Students may type assignments not connected to the Internet in Docs to Go and then submit them electronically at school the next morning if no wireless connection is available.
- How do I back up my files electronically? – Students may upload all their files to Google Docs.
- What has the school done to help prevent students from accessing inappropriate sites? – The school has blocks set up on certain key words and on specific sites on the Internet connections. Parents/Guardians are responsible for monitoring the site usage when away from the school campus.
- What happens if objectionable usage is found on the device? – The teacher and the Head of School will discuss the appropriate consequences, depending on the infraction. A loss of privileges such as: limited or suspended technology usage, access to school devices solely at school, or more severe consequences will be up to the school based on the severity of the infraction.
- What is unacceptable behavior? – Unacceptable conduct includes, but is not limited to the following:

Using the network for illegal activities, including copyright, license or contract violations, downloading inappropriate materials, viruses, and/or software, such as (but not limited to) hacking and host file sharing software.

Using the network for financial or commercial gain, advertising, or political lobbying, outside of school projects.

Accessing or exploring on-line locations or materials that do not support the curriculum and/or are inappropriate for school assignments, such as (but not limited to) pornographic sites.

Vandalizing and/or tampering with equipment, programs, files, software, system performance or other components of the network. Use or possession of hacking software is strictly prohibited.

Causing congestions on the network or interfering with the work of others, e.g.,

chain letters or broadcast messages to lists or individuals.
Intentionally wasting finite resources, i.e., on-line time, real-time music.
Gaining unauthorized access anywhere on the network.
Revealing the home address or personal information or yourself or of another person.
Invading the privacy of others.
Using another user's account, password, or allowing another user to access your account or password.
Coaching, helping, observing, or joining the unauthorized activity of others.
Forwarding/distributing E-mail messages without permission of the author.
Posting anonymous messages or unlawful information on the system or Internet.
Engaging in "bullying" language in public or private messages, e.g. racist, terroristic, abusive, sexual harassment, threatening, stalking, demeaning, or slanderous. Even meant as a joke, is inappropriate and subject to disciplinary action.
Falsifying permission, authorization, or identification documents.
Obtain copies of, or modify files, data, or passwords belonging to other users on the network.
Knowingly place a computer virus on a computer or network.

Personally Owned Devices

- The school is not responsible for damage or theft of personal devices at any time.
- Personal devices may only be used for school use during the school day.
- NCIMS reserves the right to revoke technology privileges, to school devices and/or personal devices as necessary, based on appropriate usage, time management and the discretion of the school administration.

School Phone Policy

- No electronic devices can be a distraction to the student or other students
- All electronic devices must be silent at all times.
- If using a device for personal use, students must receive pre approval from the teacher.
- For example-phone calls, text messages, personal email, etc.
- All students are responsible for their own devices. Nature's Classroom is not responsible for any damage or missing device.
- Personal devices may only be used for school use during the school day.
- Social media and gaming are not allowed.
- ALL use of cell phones for personal or school use, must be preapproved by the teacher.

Consequences

- 1st offense : phone will be removed from the student's possession and returned at the end of the school day.
- 2nd offense : phone will be removed from the student's possession and returned at the end of the school day. Parents/Guardian's will be notified of the misuse.
- 3rd offense : phone will be removed from the student's possession and returned directly to the parents/guardians, along with a student/teacher/guardian meeting to discuss actions and consequences.
- Nature's Classroom reserves the right to revoke all phone privileges at any time, based on the teacher's discretion.

Van and Field Trip Policy

- Students may use personal devices in the school van, but their personal use must be school appropriate and may not disrupt anyone else in the vehicle.
- Upon arrival at the destination, all personal devices will be put away. They may only be removed, after teacher permission for use has been granted.
- All electronics must be silent at all times.
- All students are responsible for their own devices. Nature's Classroom is not responsible for any damage or missing device.

Music Policy

- Students are permitted to listen to music on their personal devices.
- Headphones must be used at all times.
- Students must be able to hear teacher instructions and fire alarms at all times.
- Personal music may not disrupt anyone else in the classroom.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

At Nature's Classroom Montessori, we believe that the establishment of a helpful and caring prepared environment can be an effective aid in the student's journey toward self-discipline. "Freedom within Limits" is the core of the philosophy regarding discipline in a Montessori environment. Montessori students enjoy considerable freedom of movement and choice; however, their freedom always exists within carefully defined limits on the range of their behavior. They are free to do anything appropriate within the ground rules of the school community, but they are redirected promptly and firmly if they cross the line.

We value students' thoughts, perceptions and opinions and promote critical-thinking and shared decision-making. Under the guidance of the adults, the students develop a set of ground rules for the classroom.

- We respect ourselves.
- We take care of each other.
- We respect the materials in the classroom and on the grounds.

Each of these rules is explained from the first day of school and reviewed and practiced through group lessons throughout the year and individually as appropriate. Whether a problem involves only two people or the whole class, we aim to help the students learn how to solve problems on their own. We encourage students to come to a mutual resolution through talking about the problem, listening to each side, and understanding the differing points of view.

Teaching students to take responsibility for their behavior is as much the job of the teacher as the teaching of academics. However, sometimes problems do occur. When they do, we try first to protect the students from physical harm. We believe that consequences for inappropriate behavior should be related to the problem behavior. We approach the issue through positive, logical consequences, recognizing the importance of the student's responsibility in conflict resolution. Our goal is that the students become responsible for their own behavior, therefore any redirection should be a learning experience for the students involved.

Redirection will be:

- (1) Individualized and consistent for each student.
- (2) Appropriate to the student's level of understanding; and
- (3) Directed toward teaching the student acceptable behavior and self-control.

Our approach to discipline is based on empowerment, mutual respect, and trust. Corporal punishment is prohibited. There is no verbal abuse. No belittling remarks are used with the student. Withholding or using food, rest, or sleep as a punishment is prohibited. Methods of discipline or interactions that frighten, demean, or humiliate a student are prohibited. Only a teacher or staff member may administer discipline in the school setting.

When any student at NCIMS finds it difficult to meet the school's expectation of positive conduct, every effort will be made to bring the student, family, and staff together to achieve a solution.

Misbehavior

Misbehavior is defined as being damaging, disturbing, or dangerous to self, others, or the property of the school. Recurring misbehavior is defined as inappropriate behavior persisting after three weeks of focused strategies toward behavior modification. Examples include but are not limited to verbal or physical abuse of peers, directresses, or staff members; malicious name calling; refusal to do work; out of control hitting and kicking; throwing objects; damaging materials;

hitting, biting, scratching, kicking or pinching others.

Whenever there appears to be consistent discipline problems, every effort will be made by the teachers and Head of School to work with the student, parents/guardians and any other professional who may be involved. It is of vital importance that regular communication between parents/guardians and teachers be maintained during this time period.

Discipline Protocol

- 1st incident of misbehavior – student is **asked** to correct the behavior by a positive restatement of the rule; incident report sent to parent/guardian.
- 2nd incident of misbehavior – student is **told** to correct the behavior; incident report is filled out and given to parent/guardian.
- 3rd incident of misbehavior- student is **removed from the classroom** to work outside of the community until they are ready to rejoin the community; incident report is filled out and given to the parent/guardian along with a letter asking for a meeting to discuss the recurring misbehavior. The student may be sent home until the parents/guardians can meet with the teacher, the Head of School.

This meeting will be attended by the Parent/Guardian, Teacher, and the Head of School. A recommendation will be made that there be a 3-week Behavior Modification Plan Period. This may involve one-on-one sessions with an outside Specialist.

- Information and feedback about each of these sessions with a Professional Counselor/Specialist will be communicated on a weekly basis by the counselor or parents/guardians to the teacher.
- If after three weeks of these focused strategies, the student is still exhibiting misbehavior, the parents/guardians are again contacted, and the Dismissal Protocol explained.

Dismissal Protocol

The Executive Director with advisement from the student's teacher, Head of School and/or Professional Counselor will make the final decision about the student's dismissal from the school. Such a procedure will only occur if all efforts fail and/or the parents/guardians do not cooperate with the efforts of the school, or the school truly cannot meet the educational, physical, or emotional needs of the student.

Bullying Prevention and Management

Prevention is better than cure, and NCIMS takes bullying very seriously. Bullying can be defined as a deliberate act done to cause distress solely to give a feeling of power, status, or other gratification to the bully. Bullying can range from ostracizing, name-calling, teasing, threats, threatening or aggressive language or body posturing and extortion, through physical intimidation, assault on persons and/or their property. It can be an unresolved single frightening incident that casts a shadow over a student's life, or series of such incidents. Bullying is not limited to physical bullying. Social, emotional, and cyber bullying are also included in this protocol.

Staff, parents/guardians, and students work together to create a happy, caring, and safe learning environment. Bullying, whether verbal, physical or indirect, is not tolerated. Nature's Classroom Montessori has a ZERO tolerance policy when it comes to bullying within its community - which encompasses students, staff, faculty and parents/guardians. It is everyone's responsibility to try to prevent occurrences of bullying and to deal with any incidents quickly and effectively.

Our focus is based on Montessori pedagogy; is on preventative measures for such behaviors, by

teaching students how to:

- Be caring and courteous, cooperate with others, deal with angry feelings and stand up for themselves by being assertive.
- Respect and celebrate the unique qualities of every person.
- To promote in everyone a positive attitude and high self-esteem.
- To help individuals to understand and accept the consequences of their own actions.
- To help individuals celebrate and value their differences and to acknowledge and respect the differences of others.
- To instill in all members of the school community that bullying is unacceptable and that reports of bullying will be taken seriously, recorded, and acted upon.

Nature's Classroom Montessori reserves the right to intervene if any student is bullied or bullying on school property or during all school sponsored events.

Consequences for the bully may include following the Discipline Protocol as outlined in the Classroom Handbook AND/OR following the Dismissal Protocol as outlined in the Classroom Handbook.

The Role of Parents/Guardians

- Parents/Guardians, who are concerned that their student might be bullied, or who suspect that their student may be the perpetrator of bullying, should contact their student's teacher immediately.
- Parents/Guardians have a responsibility to support the school's bullying policy and to actively encourage their student to be a positive member of the school.

Academic Misconduct Policy

Nature's Classroom Institute and Montessori School believes that communities, including academic communities thrive when all members of the community understand and support open communication, integrity, and honesty. Our school community works with students throughout their time to support their independence and development of an individual moral and ethically understanding of their personal actions. Students are expected to work with the staff, parents/guardians and peers to develop and understand their own moral code. Within this development, students will be expected to work hard and submit honest representations of their personal achievement. Students who violate this expectation will accept the consequences for their actions. Teachers will work with the students to understand what academic misconduct contains and support the students through their understanding and development of their moral and ethical code of conduct.

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to the following:

Turning in an assignment as the student's work when all or part is the work of another.
Turning in an assignment without properly identifying the source(s) of the student's content.
Turning in an assignment where AI has been used to generate content, beyond idea generation.
Modifying or changing the work of another student without their permission.
Utilizing resources without instructor permission to complete the student's assignment. (i.e. online support programs)
Knowingly assisting or supporting another student in any of the aforementioned actions.

Consequences of Academic Misconduct

1st offense:

Teachers/Administration will first support the student in developing a stronger understanding of the policies, the ethical/trust violations occurred and consequences of their actions in both the school and the outside communities, through direct instruction and support. A meeting to discuss the student's actions between the teacher, the parent/guardian, and the student will be required. The student will be allowed to receive a "0" on the assignment or complete the assignment for a second time without misconduct.

2nd offense:

Teachers/Administration will continue to support the student in developing a stronger understanding of the policies, the ethical/trust violations occurred and consequences of their actions in both the school and the outside communities, through direct instruction and support. A meeting to discuss the student's actions between the teacher, the parent/guardian, and the student will be required. The student will not be allowed to redo the assignment and will receive a "0". A record will also be put into the student's academic file, referencing a violation of the schools ethics policy.

3rd offense:

A meeting to discuss the student's actions between the teacher, the parent/guardian, and the student will be required. The student will not be allowed to redo the assignment and will receive a "0". A record will also be put into the student's academic file, referencing a violation of the schools ethics policy. The student will receive an F in the class in question. The student may continue to take the class in audit form, but will not receive credit towards graduation.

Violations to the school ethics policy will remain on the student's transcript for two years. If, after a two year period, the student has remained violation free the previous violations will be removed.

If the student continues to have violations to the school ethics policy past the 3rd offense. All violations will become permanent on the student's final transcript.

COMMUNICATION POLICY

Your student and their development is our mutual priority. We look forward to building a rapport with each parent/guardian to benefit the student at home and at school. We e-mail updates as required and have a more in-depth online blog on our website that highlights specific happenings in each classroom, as well as informative feature articles. We encourage you to attend all Home School Connection Nights for informative sessions regarding child development and Montessori Philosophy.

All parent/guardian communications will be sent electronically or brought home by the students.

The health of our school, which includes your family, demands respectful and direct communication. Gossip is not only destructive; it works against the very essence of Montessori education of mutual respect and trust. Therefore, Nature's Classroom Montessori School requires the following protocol for communication. The choice to not follow this protocol may result in immediate disenrollment.

Communication Protocol

Parent/Guardian-Teacher

If you have any questions or concerns about your student's academic progress, developmental progress, behavioral and/or social progress, interactions with other students, classroom procedures, or classroom activities, please FIRST contact your student's teacher **via e-mail** to arrange a meeting time, **stating the nature of the concern**, so they can be prepared to answer your questions. They will respond within 24 hours of being reached. Please refrain from texting teachers or calling them on their personal phone numbers. Please note that if it is an important message for that day, you will need to call the office at 262-363-2815.

Parent/Guardian-Head of School

If your questions or concerns were not satisfactorily resolved by your student's teacher/s, or if you have questions/issues relating to general school policy, your student's teacher/s, tuition and billing, safety, building and grounds or anything else, contacting the Head of School is the NEXT step in the chain of communication. Please communicate via e-mail: deepa@nciw.org and she will respond within 24 hours of being contacted. Please note that if it is an important message that requires immediate action, you will need to call the office at 262-363-2815.

Parent/Guardian-Executive Director

If your questions and issues were not satisfactorily resolved by the Head of School, communicating with the Executive Director will be the FINAL step. Please communicate via email: geoffrey@nciw.org and he will respond within 24 hours of being contacted. The final resolution of issues and the communication of these will be done by and with the Executive Director in the presence of all parties concerned.

Fall-Spring Conferences

One of the most important means in the school for bringing about more effective home-school interaction is the Student Progress Conference. It is a means of emphasizing the mutual responsibilities of the home and school in the guidance of the student. The meeting of parents/guardians and teacher becomes a basis for that cooperation which is so necessary for the development of the student.

These conferences are held twice a year and are scheduled for the fall and spring. Please see the school calendar for specific dates. Both parents/guardians are encouraged to attend.

The conferences are always student-led with the teacher present. A conference without a student in attendance is also an option at the request of the parent/guardian. In which case, two conferences will be held. A student-led conference is a requirement, it is crucial for the development of the Adolescent to take responsibility for their actions and education.

Please note: In the event of a transfer, or when the student completes the program, a copy of the conference report will be provided to the next educational environment provided the attendance requirements have been met.

Adolescent Follow-Up Policies

As our Adolescent students learn to take on more responsibility and a larger workload, the teachers require assistance from home. Together we can help our adolescents take positive steps forward.

Although it will vary, we strive to balance the workload so that there is no more than 30-90 minutes of homework a night, taking into account class work periods during the day. Thus, the amount of work brought home on a given night often reflects how well your student uses their work periods. With correct priorities and time management, your student can complete much of their work in class.

Time management is one of the most important skills acquired at this age. All students will have an academic planner in which to write down due dates and assignments. The planner is a tool we use to help students develop the ability to break larger projects down into manageable chunks and teach them to plan. This is especially important when it comes to managing their workload for larger projects such as Magnum Opus.

In addition to the planner and time management lessons given in class, you can assist your student learning time and workload management skills by checking in daily and noting upcoming assignments. There are many levels of assignments ranging from their daily assignments, to the long-term Magnum Opus. Many students struggle with the idea that not all homework can be done the night before! Often assignments must be started several days or weeks in advance and worked on bit by bit.

Our Adolescent students may also come home with a homework notice. Homework notices are a way for teachers to communicate with you through your student. They should be viewed as a learning experience for your student and NOT as failure! Homework notices are given if an assignment is missing or incomplete and the student has not asked the teacher for an extension. The homework notice is sent home with the student to be discussed and signed by the parent/guardian, then returned the next morning with the completed assignment or a plan for completion.

Homework notices generally are a result of poor time management or organization. They are meant to provide an avenue for you to check in with your student on their workload and time management strategy and to problem solve with them. The first, second or even third homework notice that your student receives is no cause for alarm. However, if there is a recurring problem parent /guardian and teachers should talk directly and a conference with the student will be

scheduled. The goal of the conference will be to further support skill development of communication, time management, and accountability with a support system.

DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING POLICY

NCIMS makes every effort to incorporate all students in our classroom environments and to ensure that each student can reach their full potential. As a school we are committed to ensuring that each student's needs are met by the prepared environment. However, this does not mean every student needs the same amount or kind of attention from the adults in the environment. It is also a fact that some students may require modifications and adaptations in and to the environment for which the teacher may require specialist input. If the teacher recognizes there may be needs yet unidentified that the student is unable to meet through the current environment, the following protocol will be followed:

- The teacher will consult with the Head of School and request an observation of the student in the environment by the Head of School / another faculty member and/or parent/guardian.
- The teacher will then request a meeting with the parents/guardians where a special needs assessment is recommended to be done by the Mukwonago School District/specialist.
- Initiation of this assessment must take place within two weeks of the parent/guardian meeting.
- The formulation and implementation of the educational plan will be a team effort by the outside specialist, student's teacher, Head of School, and the parents/guardians.
- Regular updates will be made available to all parties concerned in the education plan, at mutually agreed times.
- The results of the assessment, teacher's observation notes, and parent's/guardian's work at home are all taken into consideration.
- The Head of School will make the final decision along with input from the teacher, re: the placement of the student, required teacher-student support and educational plan.
- If any outside agency/person/specialist is involved in the ongoing educational plan of the student, the school will be absolved of all financial obligations.

While this is the general policy regarding the school's approach to students who learn differently and who have different and differing needs, the school also reserves the right to modify this procedure based on the individualized needs of a specific student.

NUTRITIONAL POLICY

OUR SCHOOL IS A NUT- AWARE FACILITY

More and more people are having allergic reactions to food borne allergies: contact, air borne AND ingested foods. To protect all our students from allergic reactions to foods containing nuts, we ask that you do check the label of any item you send to school. **ALL foods need to be NUT – FREE.**

Students will need to bring their own snack. We recommend that you send a 5-day supply of healthy snack items for your student on Mondays.

Shared snack for the class also needs an additional precaution in that it **cannot be processed in a facility that uses or processes nuts.**

NCIMS will enforce its nut-free policy for all school and PABC sponsored events on and off campus. However, it **cannot** guarantee that food items have not been processed in a facility that included and processed nuts. Families who have students with allergies are encouraged to be aware of this and to bring their own food items to these events.

Fruits and vegetables are always nut free, and you can go to the following link for ideas on nut-free snacks (ignore the first few pages of advertisements) <http://snacksafely.com/snacklist.pdf> Please read your labels carefully, as students' lives depend on this. Some students have an airborne sensitivity.

NCIMS is committed to nutritional health. If a student forgets a lunch at home, a call will be made to the parent/guardian. On Fridays, we will offer cheese pizza lunch and invoiced at \$3.00 per meal every 3 months. Students receive at least 2 large slices. Any fruits and vegetables you wish to send along on Fridays to eat with the pizza are welcome. You need to notify the office if your student will take Friday's lunch. They will continually receive and be billed for Friday lunch until the office is notified your student will stop participating.

When you send a lunch from home, remember to care for our earth when packing cold lunches. Please include only reusable/washable packaging and pack perishable lunches with ice packs. Although there are refrigerators in our classrooms, they are often not large enough to accommodate lunches. We also recommend using a thermos for foods that need to remain warm.

Expectations

A lunch containing items from all the food groups below constitutes a well-balanced nutritional lunch:

- Protein – meat, fish, cheese, eggs, beans, plain yogurt
- Complex Carbohydrates – whole grain bread, rice, crackers, pretzels
- Fresh Fruits and Vegetables
- Beverage – milk, water, 100% fruit juice

SAFETY POLICY

The School's safety policy or practices will be strictly enforced. It is of utmost importance that no student shall be unaccounted for at any time. Suggestions from staff and parents/guardians to make security more effective shall be encouraged. Unsafe work conditions in any area that might result in an accident should be reported immediately to the Head of School. All substitutes will be made aware of the safety procedures.

NCIMS reserves the right to prohibit individuals with certain criminal backgrounds from entering school property.

Visitors

- All visitors entering the school must stop at the office.
- Classroom observations must be scheduled in advance through the office. Observers may not take photographs in the classroom.
- Visitors shall be escorted by school staff or wear visitor's passes given to them by the office.
- All visitor passes will be turned in prior to leaving the campus.
- School employees shall notify the Head of School if anyone is found on the property without a school escort or visitor's pass. The school employee shall escort this person to the school office, if possible. The Head of School will notify the police if necessary.

Incidents/Injury

Parents/Guardians will be contacted immediately by phone if any of the following occurs:

- There is a head injury no matter how slight
- The student is stung by a bee
- There is heavy bleeding
- There is an injury to the groin/pelvic area no matter how slight
- The injury requires emergency assistance from paramedics
- The behavioral incident is something that could cause harm to the student or others

Depending on severity, the teacher may use discretion when reporting an injury that will leave a scratch or bruise.

If a phone call regarding an incident is needed, the teacher will notify the parent/guardian. No attempt should be made to diagnose the seriousness of the incident for the parent/guardian. In cases where a student needs to go home or requires the attention of a doctor, the student will wait in the office for the parent/guardian to pick them up. Parents/Guardians will be called as per the Emergency Form submitted by the parents/guardians. If either the primary parent/guardian cannot be reached, the school will call the first person listed as the emergency contact and will go down the list until someone is contacted. The school reserves the right to contact Emergency Services should the parents/guardians be unreachable when the student is deemed to be in a serious condition.

Medications

Only soap, water, bandages, and ice packs may be used in the treatment of an injury. NCM staff administers no oral or topical medication, vitamins, or fluoride supplements unless instructions to administer such items are written, signed, and dated by the parent/guardian. In addition, over the counter and/or prescribed medications can only be administered by NCM staff twice to a specific student during a school day. Students are not allowed to keep any of these in their backpacks or on their person. Parents/Guardians are required to come to the class to sign the medication

administration form for over the counter and/or prescribed medication and leave the medication in the original container with the teacher. The staff member must log all medication administered.

If a student requires a medication longer than 30 days, an updated evaluation/examination is required. Neither prescription nor non-prescription medications may be taken by students on their own.

Parents/Guardians of students on chronic medication therapy that need medication to be administered by the school staff during the student's time at school need to secure the following information before the procedure is considered ongoing:

- They must turn in a letter from the prescribing physician which includes a statement regarding the side effects of prescribed medication
- They must give parental/guardian consent to administer medication
- Adolescent students may have an over-the-counter pain reliever on file.
- Parents/Guardians will be notified if students use more than 2x a day or of frequent use.
- Parents/Guardians must renew paperwork for each school year.

SCHOOL OPERATIONS

Drop Off and Pick Up

The Adolescent Day begins promptly at 8:00 am. In the Adolescent classroom, we begin our day working on the school farm. It is a time period where an immense amount of teambuilding and cooperative skill development takes place. Excessive tardiness is very detrimental to the growth of each student. One student's late arrival can affect the progress and teamwork of the class as a whole. After four late arrivals, an alert will be sent to parents/guardians and perhaps a conference will be held with the students and the parents/guardians to discuss ways to support on time arrival.

Pick up is between 3:15pm and 3.30pm. Adolescent students will be dismissed by their teacher and can make their way to greet their parent/guardian in the Parking Lot. The Pick-Up Authorization portion of the registration form for each student must be filled out stating who may pick up the student from school. We will not release a student to anyone but their parent/guardian, or to an adult designated by the parent on the Pick-up Authorization. Please contact the school before dismissal time to inform the teacher if someone not in our records will pick up your student. If you are adding a new person to the pick-up list, the school requires an email stating the same. Should you want someone already on your list to pick up your student, a telephone call will suffice. Verbal messages sent through your student will NOT suffice. Should your student's transportation schedule change (not taking the bus, etc.), please contact the Office either through a phone call / email. Similarly, if your student is participating in a carpool, please include this information on the form. If a student is not going home in their carpool, you must notify the school and inform the carpool driver.

We understand emergencies happen and being on time can be problematic or impossible. Therefore, each family will be given two grace late pick-ups per academic year. After that, please note that you will be charged the "drop-in" after-care fee when pick-up exceeds 10 minutes past dismissal time.

Students are welcome to stay and play/socialize after dismissal, under the parent's/guardian's supervision.

Farm Use

The farm is an integral part of Nature's Classroom curriculum, and you are welcome to visit.

During school hours when the students visit our farm with their teachers or the NCI-EE staff, they are reminded that this area is the animals' home...not to climb on anything, chase, scream or scare the animals. The animals can get overwhelmed should this happen.

Therefore, we need to insist that all students are supervised by their parents/guardians with no more than 2 families inside the farm at a time and you must make sure the gates are secure upon entering and leaving the farm. We request your cooperation to ensure that our "farm rules" are followed even after school hours.

Field Trips

NCIMS School recognizes the importance of off-campus educational experiences. To participate in a field trip a student must have the Field Trip Permission portion of the registration form filled out. The Teachers take a copy of this form along on the trip. Please make sure you update your emergency information with the office as changes occur. Many field trips require specific attire.

The teachers will inform the students and the parents/guardians prior to each field trip of the necessary attire. Please refer to the Dress Code for further information.

Nature's Classroom Institute Adolescent Overnight Trip

Nature's Classroom Institute of WI (NCIW) is the outdoor environmental education portion of the organization that includes NCIMS. Students from Elementary and Adolescent classrooms throughout Wisconsin, Illinois, and beyond spend five days on our campus working with a staff of trained environmental educators.

Our Adolescent students (7th-9th year) will take part in two different, weeklong Land Lab programs throughout the school year. The Land Lab program has been developed with a few very distinctive goals in mind. The first theme is to give the students the opportunity to develop strong connections with the natural environment. The second theme involves self-perception and self-understanding for each student. Our students will be introduced to a larger community of like-aged students from various Montessori schools. The students then enter into situations where successful cooperation and positive interactions among the students are the only means of achieving specific goals. Along the way students learn valuable life lessons. If you have questions regarding the Adolescent Land Lab program, please contact the Adolescent Teacher.

Please see the School Calendar for the specific dates of the Nature's Classroom Institute Overnight Trips. For more Information and prior to your student's participation in the **Nature's Classroom Institute of WI Adolescent Overnight Trip**, you must fill out and turn in the forms found on our website at www.discovernci.org. Click on the "Prepare for NCI" button and then "Parents Here's what you need" then "Visiting School Parent Package~Northern Region." All completed forms are due a week before the NCI/Land Lab session.

For the Adolescent's 2nd visit to NCIW/Land Lab you need only submit the medication authorization form and any updates to the previous visit's forms to the teacher.

Absences

IT IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL THAT ADOLESCENT STUDENTS ARE PRESENT THE FIRST TWO WEEKS OF SCHOOL. There are many group lessons and experiences that are impossible to repeat. If you choose to vacation, it may negatively affect your student.

Consistent attendance is important, as students make important and regular connections with their teacher, classmates, routines, and the environment. The students who benefit most from their Montessori experience are those who attend regularly. There are several reasons for this. Consistent routine provides security for the teenager and a sense of security enables a teenager to learn more readily. Secondly, a teenager's experiences are cumulative and build upon each other, and consistent attendance bolsters learning. Your own commitment to your teenager being present in school, reinforces in the student's mind the importance of attending school as a responsibility and a gift to appreciate. It is crucial at this time in a teenager's life for them to understand priorities and the importance of responsibility and education. The example, set by parents/guardians is crucial in a student's development.

If a student is to be absent from school due to illness, parents/guardians are asked to call the school office at 262-363-2815 and /or e-mail the office or notify their teacher in writing. If the absence is planned due to travel and/or a doctor appointment, parents/guardians are asked to notify the office and the teacher in writing or e-mail, as early as possible. If the parents/guardians

will be out of town while the student is in school, the office must be informed and given appropriate emergency telephone numbers.

Parents/Guardians are to notify the office or teacher no later than 9 am on the day of absence. Parents/Guardians must communicate the date and period of absence, as well as the reason for absence. Failure to communicate absence will result in the student being considered truant.

Parents/Guardians can excuse a student from school, no more than 10 days during the entire school year. Absences can include family trips/excursions, college visits, family or personal illness and emergency, religious holidays, personal, medical, or legal appointments unable to be scheduled outside of the school day.

We highly recommend that family vacations and trips be scheduled to correspond with school holidays, as extended time away from the classroom disrupts your student's classroom learning and the students' sense of community. However, we realize that sometimes a special trip can offer the student a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. On these rare occasions, please discuss any planned absences with your teacher well in advance of the trip.

When an absence has been excused, the student is able to make up the missed assignments. However, the student is responsible for communicating with their teacher concerning missed assignments and updated due dates. The teacher will coordinate an updated assignment schedule, taking absences into account. If a student's absence is unexcused/truant, they will receive a zero for the missed assignments during their day of absence.

Excused Educational Experiences-

Nature's Classroom recognizes that there are often educational opportunities and experiences that have great value for the student, which will take them away from the classroom. For a trip or absence to be excused as an educational experience, the educational value must be communicated to the teacher and student must meet the following criteria:

Students must be 100% caught up on their work, prior to the excused absence.

Students must communicate with the teacher prior to the absence and create a plan for making up all missed lessons and assignments during their absence.

Students are responsible for all follow-up assigned in their absence and students must be prepared for all group or in class discussions in the week following the absence.

If a student has 10 absences during the school year a meeting will be held with the parents/guardians and the school to discuss procedure and expectations moving forward. After 10 absences, a medical note must be provided accounting for every absence and tardy, within 48 hours before a student will be able to attend class.

Under Wis. State Statutes 118.15 (a) (am) (b), 118.16 (4), give the school administrators the authority to require doctor verified medical excuses for excessive absences and repeated trancies or tardy arrivals during the school year. When a student has a high rate of absenteeism and/or tardiness, a written doctor's excuse will be required for each absence, tardy, and early dismissal. All doctor excuses shall be in writing, on the medical professional's letterhead, and shall state the period for which it is valid, not to exceed thirty school days. A medical verification may be denied at the school administrator's discretion. All medical excuses must be turned in to the school's attendance office within 48 hours upon the student's return to school. Medical

excuses turned in outside of this timeframe may not be accepted and the absence will be coded unexcused. Wisconsin statutes define “truancy” as any absence of part, or all of one or more days from school during which the school has not been notified of the cause of absence by the parent/guardian of the absent student. A student is required to attend all assigned school classes. Failure to attend assigned classes without an acceptable excuse to the school administration, will result in the matter being recorded as truancy. “Habitual truant” is “a pupil who is absent from school without an acceptable excuse for part or all of 5 or more days on which school is held during a school semester.” Wis.Stat.118.16(1)(a). Students and/or parents/guardians who violate Wisconsin Statutes may receive a Municipal truancy citation and/or may be referred to the Waukesha County Social Services and to the court system of Waukesha County.

When a student plans to withdraw from NCIMS, a formal withdrawal process must be completed, and all fees and tuition must be paid prior to the student leaving the school setting. If NCIMS does not receive a request for the student’s records from the student’s new school within two weeks after the withdrawal date, it will be necessary to investigate the matter for a possible truancy referral. Absences beyond 10 days will be reflected on the student’s transcript.

NCIMS is unable to support a student’s education if and when they have beyond 30 days of absence in a school year. Due to the community focus of our school environments and the collaborative nature of the student’s work, excessive absences have a detrimental impact on not only the education of the student in question but also the community as a whole. NCIMS will do everything possible to support students and families through extended periods of absences as possible on a case-by-case basis. However, NCIMS reserves the right to terminate a student’s enrollment contract at 30 days absent, when the absences are negatively impacting the community and/or, or the student or the school is unable to support the academic needs of the student due to absence.

Late Arrival

When a student will arrive late to school, parents/guardians must contact either the office and/or the classroom teacher to explain the expected time of arrival and the reason for the late arrival.

If the student does not arrive before the expected time of arrival, the parent/guardian must have contacted the school with updated information, or the student will be marked truant.

After five late arrivals, an alert will be sent to the parents/guardians and further tardiness will be marked as unexcused absences.

Clothing

Please label everything that your student brings to school.

Students are expected to dress appropriately and safely in school and when on their field and school trips.

- Clothing (including footwear) which is extreme — too big, too tight, too long, too short – is not appropriate in a school setting.
- Clothing must cover from one armpit, down to approximately 3-4 inches in length on upper thighs, shirts must also include sleeves covering shoulders.
- Clothing may not display profanity or inappropriate slogans or logos such as drugs, tobacco, and other prohibited substances.
- Clothing may not contain any characters, cartoon or otherwise.
- Eyes must be visible when looking at eye level.

- Sunglasses are permitted indoors for medical purposes or with permission from the teacher.
- Clothing with excessive distressing and holes are not permitted.

Outdoor Clothing Requirements

Legs need to be fully covered for outdoor play as protection from injury and pests. If your student regularly wears shorts, or dresses, or skirts to school, you may wish to purchase a pair of bib overalls to be left at school. These can be quickly put on over clothing and prevents multiple students from needing the bathroom to change.

Weather Appropriate Clothing

We do go outside daily in all temperatures.

- Hats, snow pants, waterproof boots and mittens are necessary in inclement weather.
- Layering is important in the winter to facilitate comfort.
- Sometimes mittens and socks get wet after a play period. Therefore, we recommend sending your student to school wearing waterproof mittens.
- When there is even a hint of snow or excessive mud, students need snow pants, hats, scarves, and boots.
- Rain pants and rain boots are necessary in spring.

Field Trip and Presentation Attire

Students will be expected to wear clothing/shoes appropriate for the field trip venue and representative of NCIMS. The teacher will communicate with the students and guardians for each outing on appropriate clothing choices. At times each of the following may be required:

Business casual-button up shirts, sweaters, slacks, skirts, etc.

Casual – professional, clean attire appropriate for a professional work environment

Nature's Classroom attire – clothing with Nature's Classroom emblem

Work clothes – clothing following the NCM guidelines, but able to become dirty and complete manual labor.

At the adolescent age we allow the student to make decisions about the clothes they wear in regard to the weather and the activities they will be doing. However, if the student is dressed in such a way as to cause them harm during inclement weather, a teacher will intervene. The student's choices must also fall within the clothing policies.

If a student comes to school in inappropriate clothing, the student will be asked to change into something else from their spare set of clothing. A note will be sent home to the family explaining the reason for the change. If the student does not have a spare set of appropriate clothing, parents/guardians will be called and must provide an acceptable change of clothes.

Spare Clothing Set (must include):

Spring/Fall/Winter

- Pants •T-shirt •Undergarments •Socks

If the spare clothing set is used, it is EXTREMELY important that items be replaced the following school day.

Shoes

Two pairs of shoes will be necessary for the Montessori Adolescent Program.

1. Your student needs to keep an INDOOR pair of non-character/non-commercial, non-marking, enclosed toe and heel shoes at school, which are NOT to be worn outside. It is important that they are able to safely wear their indoor shoes inside on our tiled floors, and outside in the event of a fire drill; therefore, non-rubber-soled slippers are not permitted.
2. Whatever your student wears back and forth to school will be their outdoor shoes; therefore, they will need to be weather appropriate, fully enclosed, and conducive to heavy play and hiking. **Crocs / sandals are not allowed outdoors.**
3. It is recommended that Adolescent students have boots appropriate for farm work. Students are welcome to leave farm boots at school each day.

Water Bottles

All students are encouraged to bring water bottles to stay hydrated throughout the day. They can be refilled at school.

Backpack

When selecting a backpack, be sure it is sized appropriately for your student and will be adequate to manage winter gear. Do not purchase wheeled luggage style backpacks, as they can be a danger in our environment. They do not fit properly on hooks, are often tripped on when left unattended or in use, and the handles have been known to cause injury. Also be sure the backpacks are non-commercial and character free.

Student Drivers

Student drivers staying for the duration of the school day will need to park in the back lot, adjacent to the circle lot, next to the school vans. Temporary visitors are welcome to park in either lot.

All Student Drivers, Adolescent or otherwise, must be on the appropriate pick-up lists for student dismissal. Please refer to the dismissal section for further information.

Student Drivers must have a letter of consent signed by their parent/guardian allowing them to drive a friend from or to school. The letter must clearly identify who they are allowed to drive to and from school.

Drivers will need to obtain a gate fob from the main office. Fobs can be picked up from the office at the start of the school year for a \$20.00 deposit. Upon completion of a driver's time at Nature's Classroom the fob must be returned, and the deposit will be returned to the recipient.

All student cars must have a label that identifies them as a student of NCM.

Outdoor Play

Time outdoors is an important part of a student's day. Our school is situated on stunning 100+ acres, which we like to take full advantage of. Students are enriched by time spent outdoors as it provides the fresh air needed to ensure good health and helps in the development of social and gross motor skills. Considerable empirical and theoretical research asserts that Nature and outdoor activities have restorative and therapeutic benefits.

Tree climbing is another way our students reconnect with Nature. In an effort to promote independent exploration, while keeping students safe, NCM has created basic guidelines for

climbing trees. Students may only climb the trees that have been specifically designated and pruned for climbing. Students may not climb higher than the arm's reach of the supervising adult. At the beginning of each session, September and January, students will receive safety education on tree climbing, including which trees to climb.

In the case of a light sprinkle, drizzle or flurry the students may still go outside. They will go outdoors if the temperature, including wind-chill, is 0 degrees Fahrenheit or above.

If your student is recovering from an illness and still is not able to go outside, you are requested to keep them home. The school does not have adequate staff to provide for the care of one or two students inside the classroom while the others are outdoors.

Our outside experiences are an integral part of the education we provide. We welcome questions about this aspect of our curriculum.

Volunteering

NCM requires that each family commits to spend at least 20 hours of volunteer work for the school, over the course of the school year. Families are expected to keep track of their volunteer log and return it to the School Office before the end of the school year. Watch for volunteer opportunities mentioned in school emails or messages from the Directress.

Observations

Parents/Guardians are encouraged to schedule a visit to the school for a 1-hour observation two times annually (unless a special circumstance dictates more and is approved by the Head of School.) Observations begin about six weeks into the school year/after the beginning of the second term and extend until the second week of May.

- Call the office and schedule your observation. Observations are available Tuesday through Thursday during the work cycle by appointment only.
- When arriving for your observation appointment, you will be given the NCIMSGuidelines for Observation sheet and an observation feedback form that we ask you to fill out and return to the Office prior to your departure from the school.
- If, after your observation you have further questions for your student's teacher, you may indicate them on your observation form and the teacher will get back with you at their earliest convenience.

Birthdays

If you do not wish your student to participate in birthday celebrations, please inform their teacher immediately.

We welcome students to celebrate their birthdays with their school community here at Nature's Classroom. The following steps outline the procedure:

- We celebrate half birthdays for anyone whose real birthday falls during the summer.
- Parents/Guardians are welcome to send a **NUT-FREE** snack to share. If you have any further questions, please contact your student's teacher.

Holiday Celebrations

Holiday celebrations often reflect the feelings, beliefs and events that have great meaning in our lives. Holidays are viewed as times for us to express our feelings through celebration and come together as a community. While these are enjoyable and special, we must use care when we

incorporate holidays into our curriculum. Our community is composed of many individuals with varied religious and cultural backgrounds. Holidays can be an important and valuable part of a multicultural curriculum. Our curriculum aims to move students ahead in their thinking and help them learn to function in a culturally diverse society. To respect the individual choices of each person, we observe the following policies:

- Decorations that are hung in the school and made by the students will reflect the season, not religious holidays. During winter, for example, paper snowflakes, pinecone decorations, and snow sculptures are ways to decorate inside and outside of the classroom.
- We explore cultures with the students. Dances, songs, holidays, and decorations experienced as part of this cultural exploration are encouraged.

Gifts

While NCIMS does not discourage its employees from accepting gifts from /guardians and students, it cautions employees to remain above any hint of professional indiscretion. Donors may view their gifts with perfect innocence while others may view these same gifts in a less than flattering light. A large gift should be directed to the classroom or the school for the benefit of our whole community. Sound judgment and tact should always be used in personal dealings between employees, parents/guardians, and students.

Lost and Found

If your student is missing clothing and/or other belongings, please check the “lost and found” box located in their classroom. Clothing that is not claimed after a reasonable amount of time may be kept as extra items for students who may need it on any given day or donated to a good cause.

Reporting Suspected Abuse/Neglect

Under penalty of law, the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act requires the immediate report of any suspected neglect or abuse. Failure to report may constitute a misdemeanor and renders the non-reporting person liable for resulting damages. The duty to report concerns suspicion only; the burden of proof does not rest with the person reporting. No person may be sued for reporting a suspected case even if the suspicion proves to be unfounded. If such suspicion should arise it must be reported immediately to the Head of School, and a phone call made to the county welfare agency or local law enforcement agency.

Confidential Records

All records concerning present and past students shall be considered confidential and must remain in the school office. Duplication of confidential records is prohibited unless the Head of School approves. Confidential records include all records maintained by or in the possession of the school which identify one or more students by name, including, but not limited to: enrollment lists, grades, attendance records, health forms, accident forms, reports of directresses and consultants, photographs, financial forms, applications, registration forms, test scores, and all similar records containing information which students or parental authorities have a reasonable expectation of privacy. Any requests for information from confidential records should be in writing and should be given to the Head of School. All tuition, school fees and any other invoices must be paid in full in order for records to be released.

- 1. Release of Confidential Records:** Confidential records will be released only in the following circumstances and only to the persons indicated:
 - a. To the parental authority. A student’s confidential records will be released to that student’s parental authority upon receipt of a written direction, signed by the parental authority.

- b. To persons authorized by the parental authority. A student's confidential records will be released to a person designated by the parental authority upon receipt of a written direction, signed by the parental authority.
- c. To the student. A student's confidential records will be released to that students' parental authority upon receipt of a written direction, signed by the parental authority.
- d. Governmental authorities. Confidential records requested or demanded by governmental authorities making such request pursuant to statute, rule, regulation, subpoena or court order will be released to such authorities.
- e. Insurers and counsel. Confidential records will be released to the school's insurers or to an attorney representing the School who is not a member of the School, if the Executive Director determines that such release is necessary and advisable to enable such persons to undertake their duties to the school.
- f. Generic or statistical records. Generic records of compilations of statistics from records, which do not identify students by name, are not confidential records under this policy and may be released by the school at the discretion of the Executive Director.

2. Requests for Release of Confidential Records: All requests or demands for the release of confidential records, other than those clearly mandated by the terms of an applicable statute or regulation, shall be in writing, delivered to the School, and no such request or demand will be honored prior to the delivery of such written instrument. The School will retain all such written requests or demands for confidential records. All tuition, school fees and any other invoices must be paid in full in order for records to be released.

The School may require such reasonable proof of identity or of genuineness of signature as it deems necessary to protect the privacy of the students.

In the event a student's parents/guardians are divorced or separated, the School will honor requests from both parents/guardians unless a certified copy of an order of court of competent jurisdiction, which orders otherwise, is delivered to the School.

3. Corporate Authority Responsible for Records and Access to Records by Corporate Authority: The responsibility for the maintenance and enforcement of this policy shall be on the Executive Director of the School.

No member, officer, teacher, or employee of the School shall have access to confidential records (other than to which he or she is entitled under Section hereof) except for the Executive Director and Head of School, except as follows:

- a. A teacher may have access to a confidential record prepared by them.
- b. A teacher may have access to a confidential record of an academic nature of a student currently enrolled in their class which record was not prepared by them if in the judgment of the Head of School/Executive Director, such access is necessary for the proper performance of the teacher's duties.
- c. In the event of pending or threatened litigation, the Executive Director may have access to confidential records pertinent to said pending or threatened litigation if necessary to protect the interest of the School.
- d. If, in the judgment of an attorney representing the School who is not a member of the School, it should become necessary for some other person to have access to certain confidential records in order to protect the interest of the School, such person may have access to such records.

In every case where access to a Confidential Record is obtained under Number 3 (c) or 3 (d) above, such access shall be documented by a written instrument in the form from the requesting authority stating the date of the access, the purpose, the name of the person to whom access was given and a description of the Confidential Record to which access was given.

All persons who obtain access to Confidential Records under section 3 hereof shall maintain the confidentiality of the information obtained thereby.

4. Storage of Confidential Records: The School shall maintain all confidential records. Records of currently enrolled students and of students enrolled at any time within the past two years will be maintained by the School.

Emergency Evacuation Procedures

Fire Drill

All students and staff shall participate in routine fire drills. These drills will be held on a regular basis. A fire/tornado plan shall be posted in every building. The School shall install and maintain a fire alarm system, which will be hooked up to a monitoring company who will notify the authorities in case of an emergency. The School shall install and maintain fire extinguishers. These shall be tagged and tested at least once a year.

Fire drills will be held in accordance with state and city requirements and regulations. In conducting fire drills, order rather than speed shall be stressed. Written instructions shall be furnished by the Executive Director as to route and manner of exit during fire drills. It is the responsibility of the staff to be familiar with the safety plan and to be ready to implement it if necessary. Any person may pull the fire alarm box when there is any indication of smoke or fire.

Tornado Drill

Tornado drill instructions will be posted in each building. Severe weather alarm will sound in office; local Tornado Signal will sound outside. At the sound of the alarms, all staff and students are to go immediately to the assigned areas. Staff will instruct the students how to sit/kneel with head down. Staff shall remain with students until all clear is received or other instructions are given.

Evacuation of the premises is not recommended unless directed by appropriate officials on the scene or if the threat is imminent.

Inclement Weather and Early / Emergency Dismissal

NCIMS will communicate via text to all listed primary caregivers in the case of inclement weather closures, emergency closures or any other emergency information. Since most of our students are privately transported, we reserve the right to hold school if colder than normal temperatures force other districts to close. If it is necessary to close school beyond 2 days, additional school days may be added to the NCM calendar at the discretion of the Head of School.

REQUIRED FORMS

Registration Forms

Registration forms are sent to all student families in August prior to school starting. Parent/Guardian of all students, new or returning must have completed the registration forms which include the Emergency Information, Pick-up Authorization, and other permissions prior to the first day of attending school.

The Emergency Information portion of the registration form is to be filled out and returned before the beginning of school. Every effort will be made to contact parent, guardians, or other designated individuals as noted on the Emergency Information portion of the registration form if medical treatment is necessary.

Medical Forms & Immunizations

Medical Examination forms for returning students are kept in each student's school file, but we request that any changes be forwarded immediately to the office to keep a current and accurate medical examination form.

Upon admission, Parents/Guardians of all applicants are required to submit a complete medical history for their student. The completed NCIMS health form, signed by the student's physician, must be on file before the first day of classes. **New Students:** If it is determined that the student has a currently contagious disease or infection and, by reason of such disease or infection, would constitute a direct threat to the health or safety of other individuals or, by reason of such disease or infection is unable to benefit from the school program, the Head of School may elect to terminate admission. Withholding or falsification of health information is cause to reject an applicant or dismiss a student after enrollment.

A non-communicable disease does not prevent admission so long as the individual meets other admission criteria.

When deemed necessary, additional medical information regarding the student's health may be required from their physician before admission is considered. If it is determined that the student has a currently contagious disease or infection and, by reason of such disease or infection, would constitute a direct threat to the health or safety of other individuals or, by reason of such disease or infection is unable to benefit from the school program, the Head of School may elect not to accept the child for admission. Withholding or falsification of health information is cause to reject an applicant or dismiss a student after enrollment.

If a student contracts an acute communicable disease, they will not attend school during the period such a disease is communicable. It is within the sole discretion of the Head of School to determine a student's fitness to return to school. If a student has tested positive for a potentially infective agent, but has not actually developed the chronic communicable disease, they may, at the discretion of the Head of School, continue to attend school with restrictions as deemed necessary by the Head of School.

The Head of School will review development of a chronic communicable disease in a student. The opinion of the physician caring for the student may be considered. If it is determined that the student has a currently contagious disease or infection and, by reason of such disease or infection, would constitute a direct threat to the health or safety of other individuals or, by reason of such disease or infection, be unable to benefit from the school program, the Head of School

will terminate such student's attendance. Any tuition paid in advance will be refunded on a prorated basis.

Immunization is not required for admittance into NCIMS, but we highly recommend that students keep current with vaccinations in accordance with State law for school attendance. If you or your doctor has a conscientious objection to your student's receiving vaccinations, please sign the waiver portion at the bottom of the immunization form. During disease outbreaks, unimmunized students may be excluded from school and school related activities until the outbreak is over, both for their own protection and for the protection of others.

If there are any significant changes in health or additional immunizations, the office must be notified as soon as possible to update the forms. It is important to have the most current medical information on file in case of an emergency.



Nature's Classroom Institute & Montessori School
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Natures Classroom Institute & Montessori School

Adolescent Family Handbook Receipt

I/We acknowledge receipt of the Nature's Classroom Institute & Montessori School Adolescent Handbook.

I/We have reviewed the handbook and am/are familiar with the policies and procedures at NCIMS relative to the expectations of NCIMS families.

I/We understand and formally agree to support and adhere to the policies stated therein.

Student Name – Please print

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Parent's/Guardian's Signature _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian Name – **Please print**

Parent's/Guardian's Signature _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian Name – **Please print**

(Return this signed page to the office)



Technology Usage Agreement

I have read the Technology Policy. I understand the program laid out in the agreement. I understand the rules and conditions in the agreement and promise to follow them.

If I do not follow these rules I know that I may have my computer privileges restricted or taken away based on the severity of my infraction.

Name of Student (Please Print) _____

Signature of Student: _____ Date: _____

I have discussed the Technology Usage and websites with my student and my student and I agree to follow them.

Signature of Parent(s)/Guardian(s): _____ Date: _____

Please print and return this sheet to school.