

**NATURE'S WAY MONTESSORI SCHOOL  
ADOLESCENT COMMUNITY**

**PARENT/STUDENT  
HANDBOOK**

**Ninth Edition**

**2022-2023**

## **Table of Contents**

**Guiding Principles of Nature’s Way Montessori School 4**

**Program Overview/Introduction 4**

**Mission Statement of the Adolescent Community 5**

**Program Overview 6**

**Vision Statement of the Adolescent Community 6**

**Land Partnership at Murphy Springs Farm 7**

**Adolescent Community Plan of Study and Work 8**

Cycles of Work 8

Weekly Schedule 9

Mathematics 9

Science Occupations 10

Humanities 11

Language Arts 12

Spanish 13

Mini-Cycle 13

Self-Expression Classes 14

Workshops 14

Committees 14

Literature Seminar 14

Community Work and Care of the Environment 15

Community Service\* 15

Microeconomy\* 16

**Observation and Evaluation 17**

Advisory Program 17

Planners and Organization 18

ThinkWave and Status of Work 19

Homework 19

End-of-Cycle Evaluation 20

Standardized Testing\* 20

**Family-School Partnership 21**

Parent Participation\* 21

Parent-Guide Communication 22

Conferences (Guide-Led and Student-Led)\* 23

**Policies and Procedures 24**

Attendance\* 24

Scheduling Appointments 24

Assisted Arrival 24

Late Arrivals 26

Early Morning Care 26

Assisted Dismissal 26

Early Departures 26

Extended Day 27

Release of Students to Persons Other Than Parents 27

Emergency Closings 27

Medication 28

Accidents and First Aid 28

Supplies 29

Lunches, Snacks, and Drinks\* 29

Dress Code 31

Field Trips and Outings\* 32

Eighth Grade Year\* 32

**Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution 33**

The Adolescent Community Approach to Problem Solving 33

Community Conflict Resolution Procedure 34

Positive Discipline 34

Schoolwide Procedures for Addressing Behavior Incidents 35

What is Bullying? 37

**Guidelines and Civility 38**

Guidance in Civility 38

Expectations for Civility 38

Academic Integrity 39

## **Computers and Technology 39**

Computer Guidelines 39

Telephone/Cell phone Guidelines 40

## **Forms**

AC Communication Form 42

Medication Form 44

Health Patterns and OTC Medications Permission 45

Skateboards, Roller Skates, Bikes, and Scooters (SRBS) Guidelines 46

SRBS Waiver 47

Parental Consent and Release Forms for Field Trips 48

## **Guiding Principles of Nature’s Way Montessori School**

The Montessori approach to learning is the educational framework at Nature’s Way Montessori School.

Maria Montessori recognized that “the process” itself was paramount in learning. We embrace this idea that learning is dynamic and welcome new ideas as we grow.

This document serves as a reference point for our thinking about learning at this time. We will review these ideas annually and as necessary to monitor how our choices reflect them.

## **Introduction**

We affirm that education begins at birth and continues throughout life. While our emphasis is on our children, we are a center of support for all of us to continue learning and developing toward becoming whole and healthy people.

Our goals for students are for them:

- to be open-minded and compassionate
- to gain a sense of themselves and others
- to be well trained in the basic academic disciplines
- to fulfill their creative potential
- to gain satisfaction in their physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development
- to love learning
- to value knowledge, creativity, and humor

- to understand that life is a process and engage in it fully
- to be challenged by difficulties and find joy in problem solving

Finally, we hope they will be responsible, critical, and caring members of society and recognize that they have the power and resources to effect change, as well as the confidence to pursue their goals.

## Mission Statement

- Every member of our community has a fundamental right to be treated with respect.
- Intelligence and wisdom can be cultivated.
- Self-esteem is crucial for the full expression of a person's potential.
- The development of a whole being requires the nurturing of the spiritual, intellectual, physical, and emotional dimensions.
- The school is centered around the stages of personal development.
- The school seeks to provide a broad preparation for life.
- The school believes in flexibility in its methodology.
- Strengthening our connection with nature and the environment is an integral part of school life.

## Program Overview

**"The school should become the place where the child may live in freedom, and this freedom must not be solely the intimate, spiritual liberty of internal growth. The entire organism of the child, from his physiological, vegetative part to his motor activity, ought to find in school the best conditions for development."**

**– Dr. Maria Montessori**

The Adolescent Community staff is committed to Dr. Montessori's ideal of ensuring that the adolescent's needs and tendencies are satisfied appropriately through meaningful work. Whether through microeconomic activities, service in the community or lessons in the classroom, the prepared environment of the Adolescent Community strives to facilitate adolescents' self-construction and formation of the personality while preparing them for entry into adult life and society.

The handbook provides a closer look at specific program elements. As described in Dr. Montessori's book *From Childhood to Adolescence*, the "Plan of Study and Work" is both an overview of the program as well as an exploration of the kinds of work required by the adolescent. There are also descriptions of policy and procedures critical to the overall function of the school, sample forms, and other information.

## **Mission Statement of the Adolescent Community**

**"There are two needs of the adolescent: for protection during the time of the difficult physical transition, and for an understanding of the society which he is about to enter to play his part as a human..."**

**-Dr. Maria Montessori**

Keeping this in mind, it is our mission to support the natural development of our adolescent students while providing them with a safe environment in which they can explore means of social and economic independence. We will do this by using the land as a point of departure for community engagement, experiences of production and exchange, self-expression, psychic formation, and preparation for adult life.

## **Vision Statement of the Adolescent Community**

Nature's Way Montessori School will provide a rich environment rooted in the work of Maria Montessori, where our students can develop to their full potential and prepare to enter adult life. We will strive to assist the development of the adolescent with the following:

- Supporting the natural human development of the adolescent
- Connecting the adolescent to the land through scientific and historic studies
- Providing opportunities to explore a variety of social and economic roles
- Engaging both the head and the hands in purposeful activity
- Stimulating valorization through meaningful work
- Assisting the adolescent to become independent
- Promoting the moral development of the adolescent
- Encouraging self-expression and critical thinking skills

- Fostering a lifelong love of learning
- Learning what it means to make a contribution
- Understanding interdependency with the rest of the world
- Adapting to a variety of work demands for the sake of others; the beginning of social consciousness
- Understanding work as a product of commerce necessary to community life and leading to a beginning view of economic independence and interdependence
- Learning the meaning of rules and their importance to harmonious living • Learning to live in domestic relations with others; to work through human problems

from David J. Kahn (in part)—The Hershey Montessori Farm School

## Land Partnership at Murphy Springs Farm

**“Work in the country [has] wide social connotations of productiveness and earning power. The observation of nature has not only a side that is philosophical and scientific, it has also a side of social experiences that leads on to the observations of civilization and the life of men.”**

**-Dr. Maria Montessori**

Nature’s Way Montessori School is excited to continue developing the “farm” component of our Plan of Study and Work. Thanks to the generosity of Kevin Murphy of Murphy Springs Farm, the school has been in a land partnership since 2014 for educational and agricultural work.

Students also have an opportunity to tour the Murphy Springs Farm, which has several historic outbuildings (barns, springhouses, cabins) and a home constructed in 1847 that was recently renovated with accurate historical preservation in mind. The home has also been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Students may work both with the land and with Murphy Springs Farm to study local history, genealogy, and more.

On the Nature’s Way Farm (as it is now called), students will use the space as a “limitless field for scientific and historic studies” as described by Maria Montessori. This includes the cultivation of crops for sale to the community for the microeconomy and for use in Science Occupations and

Humanities classes. Students also use the farm as a learning environment for science topics, such as energy, genetics, and soil chemistry.

In addition to Murphy Springs Farm, the Southland Realty Group has given permission for the school to access its property, adjacent to the northern side of the nature preserve. White's Creek runs through this land, which also contains sinkholes, small caves, and other forms of Karst topography. Students have used this space for a number of Science Occupations classes.

## **Adolescent Community Plan of Study and Work**

**“This means there is an opportunity to learn both academically and through actual experience what are the elements of social life.”**

**-Dr. Maria Montessori**

The curriculum at Nature's Way incorporates both manual and intellectual components. Dr. Montessori stated that any approach to teaching adolescents, or what she called “Erdkinder” (“Children of the Earth”), must provide experiences with a wide variety of disciplines, social interactions, and practical life work. The following “Plan of Study and Work” guides the curricular approach in the Adolescent Community as described by Dr. Montessori.

### **Cycles of Work**

Each year there are four cycles of work and a short mini-cycle. A regular cycle is approximately eight weeks long, while the Mini-Cycle is four weeks long (see “Mini-Cycle”). Humanities and Science Occupations classes rotate every 3-4 weeks. Mathematics, Spanish, and Language Arts work is assigned weekly in every cycle of study; Humanities and Science Occupations do not take place during the Mini-Cycle. Please see the “Daily Schedule” below for a regular cycle of study.



# Weekly Schedule

## Adolescent Community Weekly Schedule - Fall 2022

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY			
8:30-8:45	Morning Gathering: 8:30-8:45							
8:45-12:30	Advisory Groups 8:45 - 9:15	Spanish Group 2 8:45-9:35	Open Work Cycle	Self Expressions 1 8:45-10:15	Community Service 8:45-9:15	Spanish Group 2 8:45-9:35	Open Work Cycle	
	Spanish Group 1 9:20-10:10	Break: 9:35-9:50			Spanish Group 1 9:20-10:10	Break: 9:35-9:50		
	Break: 10:10-10:25		Language Arts Group B 9:50-10:50	Open Work Cycle	Break: 10:15-10:30		Language Arts Group A 9:50-10:40	Open Work Cycle / Farm Available
	Language Arts Group A 10:25-11:25	Lit Circle 11:00-11:30	Self Expressions 2 10:30-12:00		Language Arts Group B 10:25-11:15	Open Work Cycle		
	Open Work Cycle / Farm Available		Community Meeting 12:10-12:30		Advisory Groups 11:20-12:05		Community Meeting 12:00-12:20	
12:30-1:00	Lunch 12:30-1:00		Lunch 12:00-12:30	Lunch 12:30-1:00				
1:00-1:30	Free Time 1:00-1:30		Free Time 12:30-1:15	Free Time 1:00-1:30				
1:30-1:45	SSR: 1:30-1:45		SSR: 1:15-1:30	SSR: 1:30-1:45				
1:45-3:15	Science Occupations / Humanities 1:45-3:15	Science Occupations / Humanities 1:45-3:15	Community Work 1:30-2:30	Science Occupations / Humanities 1:45-3:15	Science Occupations / Humanities 1:45-3:15			
			Farm Stand 2:30-3:15					
3:15-3:30	Daily Restoration and Dismissal: 3:15-3:30							

## Mathematics

“Mathematics are necessary because intelligence today is no longer natural but mathematical, and without development and education in mathematics it is impossible to understand or take any part in the special forms of progress characteristic of our times.”

-Dr. Maria Montessori

Dr. Montessori observed that mathematical thinking is a gift to humans at birth, as all humans possess mathematical minds. Early adolescents are developing their sense of self and their place in the world. Our mathematics program provides a safe environment for students to accomplish these endeavors through nurturing confidence, giving opportunities to explore and apply concepts deeply, and developing a problem-solving style.

The mathematics program incorporates the theoretical and applied study of arithmetic, algebra, geometry and measurement and is designed to meet the standards expected for this age by the state while preserving the applied, hands-on approach a Montessori student is accustomed to. Students explore the relationships between abstract concepts and may apply them specifically in math projects. Additionally, students apply mathematics knowledge during other academic classes and the microeconomy.

The Montessori mathematics methodology includes:

- the option for mathematics projects that explore math through topics of interest to the students
- activity- and discovery-based learning
- the history of ideas
- the use of hands-on materials
- individually paced and individually designed work and lessons
- math seminars aimed at developing math communication and problem-solving skills

Over a period of two years, students work through the curriculum at their own pace and level. Students have the opportunity to move through up to 3 levels of Integrated Math as they are ready, though most students will move through Level 2. When needed, assistance and/or extension activities are provided during individual or small-group workshops or tutorials.

## **Science Occupations**

Science Occupations are project-based science classes in which students learn scientific concepts through the lens of a problem or issue that affects our school, community, or region. Emphasis is placed on the application of adult-like scientific practice in a variety of occupations in order to make an authentic and meaningful contribution.

Students at Nature's Way have the opportunity to learn about core concept areas and have the opportunity to delve deeper into a related topic of interest to them. The courses also emphasize interdisciplinary skills that will be valuable in later educational settings such as note taking, conducting scientific experiments, working in teams, and scientific writing.

Science Occupations occur in four cycles. The course offerings incorporate several disciplines, such as studying chemistry through the soil, or genetics through the garden. Each cycle of study has a life, earth, or physical science as the core emphasis. Students at Nature’s Way will take four(4) life sciences, one (1) earth science, and three (3) physical sciences as shown in the table below. This structure also acknowledges the curricular requirements suggested by the Tennessee Department of Education.

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Cycle 1</b>	<b>Cycle 2</b>	<b>Cycle 3</b>	<b>Cycle 4</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>Cell Biology (L)</b>	<b>Forces in Nature (P)</b>	<b>Chemistry (P)</b>	<b>Ecology (L)</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>Genetics and Reproduction (L)</b>	<b>Earth Studies (E)</b>	<b>Motion (P)</b>	<b>Ecology (L)</b>

Please note that academic years A and B will alternate.

## **Humanities**

**“The study of the history of mankind...should be treated as far as possible as a complete whole, from which special periods can be chosen for individual study.”**

**-Dr. Maria Montessori**

The Adolescent Community’s Humanities curriculum spans the whole of human history each year. It tells the story of what it means to be human both thematically and chronologically, incorporating history, geography, literature, art, music, philosophy, and more. As students examine the creation of human culture throughout time, they are able to think critically about the past and work toward constructing their own selves for the future. Montessori concepts drive the curriculum and scope, as each study addresses the following key themes:

- History as a scholarly pursuit
- Self-expression through music, drama, and art
- Nature vs. supranature (humanity’s alteration of the natural world for its benefit)
- Elements of production and exchange
- Discoveries, inventions, and explorations

- Migrations and invasions

The class also acknowledges Tennessee state social studies standards and addresses world, United States, and Tennessee history accordingly. The Humanities curriculum is organized into four primary themes. All students receive the same key lessons on a given topic before engaging in individualized work. The themes, shown below, also include examples of specific courses that have been offered in the past. One or two topics may be available for any given cycle each year. These offerings are subject to change due to the needs and interests of the community.

Academic Year	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Cycle 4
<b>A</b>	<b>Early Agriculture</b>	<b>Classical Civilizations</b>	<b>Societies in Transition</b>	<b>Issues in Modern Life</b>
<b>B</b>	“ “	“ “	“ “	“ “

Please note that academic year A and B alternate; one is focused on the U.S. and the next focused on world.

**Early Agriculture** can include Egypt, Mesopotamia, Native Americans, the Maya, Indus Valley

**Classical Civilizations** can include the Aztec, the Inca, US Nationhood, Classical China, Classical Japan, Classical Rome, etc.

**Societies in Transition** can include Westward Expansion, the Middle Ages, Exploration and Colonization, US Civil War, WWII, World Religions

**Issues in Modern Life** can include the Labor Movement, the Civil Rights Era, climate change, immigration, global food issues, contemporary women’s issues, sustainability

## Language Arts

**"Actual writing is an external manifestation of an inner impulse. It is a pleasure that comes from carrying out a higher activity and not simply an exercise."**

**-Dr. Maria Montessori**

In our Language Arts class, students learn fundamental concepts pertaining to the study of language, such as mechanics of writing and speech, composition, grammar, vocabulary, and more. Students explore literature in book groups and refine literary analysis techniques together, as well as partaking in independent reading throughout the year. Additionally, the class allows students to collaborate on

projects related to current studies and share them with each other, while also exploring various modes of writing and researching.

Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Cycle 4
Literacy and Empowerment	Poetry	Drama	TBA

Previously, we have offered the following classes in Language Arts: Southern Literature, Personal Narrative, Folklore/Mythology, Rhetoric, Speculative Fiction, Shakespeare, Political Expression and many more!

## Spanish

**“In the past one language was enough, but today it is a social convention that education should include the ability to read and write correctly in several languages.”**

**-Dr. Maria Montessori**

All Nature’s Way students engage in the study of Spanish, with the Adolescent Community working towards a practical use of the language. The theme-based class involves both group activities and individual work focusing on interpersonal, interpretive and presentational communication skills. Vocabulary and grammar topics are incorporated throughout. Students also examine themes covered in other classes through the lens of the Hispanic world, gaining a broader perspective of the people who speak the language they are learning. In addition to fostering communicative competence, emphasis is placed on cultural understanding through the use of authentic texts, music and artifacts.

## Mini-Cycle

During the Mini-Cycle, students complete a research project based on the topic of their choice. These projects are designed to match the skills, abilities, and interests of each student. There is an opportunity to do intermediate or advanced level projects.

Students work with their advisors and parents to narrow down ideas and to pick a topic that is academically and developmentally appropriate. Each student is then responsible for conducting research, writing a research paper, and preparing visual aids to accompany each individual project.

During the last week of the Mini-Cycle, students share what they have learned by presenting their research to the class. Parents are invited and encouraged to attend the presentations.

## **Self-Expression Classes**

The self-expression classes nurture the adolescent's tendency toward creative work and provide activity and variety in the weekly schedule. The classes run for approximately nine weeks in three sessions: one in fall, winter and spring. Options include art, crafts, theater, music, physical education, writing, debate, and more. Students have the opportunity to choose self-expression classes based on their individual interests. Each class offered falls into one of the following categories: Musical, Physical, Creative, or Life Skills. Although students may express a preference for a specific class, they must take at least one class in each category over the course of their time in the AC.

## **Workshops**

Workshops are a time for committee meetings, managerial work, class-related workshop intensives, specific instruction on particular topics, and microeconomy tasks. This work is a critical component of the curriculum and offers essential opportunities for community growth and individual contributions. Students are also able to plan and lead workshop sessions.

## **Committees**

Students and adults form committees on an as-needed basis throughout the year to meet needs in the community. Committees may work on AC guidelines, plan for an upcoming event, coordinate service outings, or accomplish some task for the school or greater Knoxville community.

## **Literature Seminar**

Seminar is a chance for members of a group to share questions and insights about a text, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of each other and the content. Students learn the proper procedures for active listening, building upon and appreciating others' ideas, and sharing ideas in a group setting. Formal seminar discussions occur as literature circles and are also scheduled on occasion in academic classes.

## **Community Work and Care of the Environment**

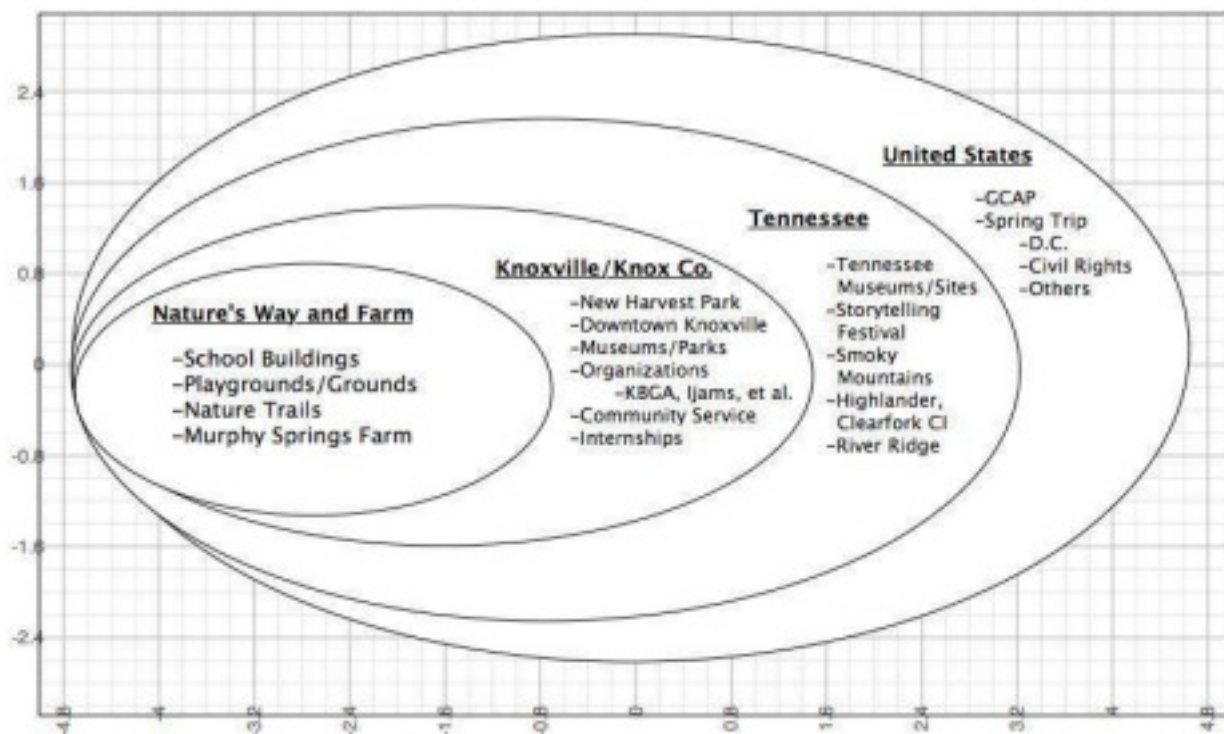
Adolescents have a developmental need to experience real, meaningful work in a wider social context. This involves both work of the head and the hand. Because of this need, manual work is an integral part of the Adolescent Community experience. Students learn directly that their contributions are essential to the successful functioning of the community.

While there is important work that needs to be addressed daily, Friday afternoons are set aside for “Community Work” in order to take on larger projects. These initiatives are wide-ranging and include such things as building projects, canning vegetables, clearing trails, cleaning out the chicken coop, planting, cultivating, harvesting, making crafts, writing newsletter articles, baking, and more. Each afternoon all students contribute to the restoration of the environment, which is necessary for keeping the classroom spaces clean and orderly. The students rotate through different jobs in all spaces throughout the year. Guides assist and encourage these jobs to be done with care and attention to detail.

### **Community Service\***

Adolescents are involved in community service at Nature’s Way and beyond. At school, students participate in a weekly community service program where they contribute to other classrooms and areas throughout the school. They work alongside guides to keep classrooms organized, to tutor younger students, and to help out with paperwork and class events. Students choose which classroom they work in by applying for several community service positions within the school. They maintain the same weekly position throughout the year.

Service work is important for adolescents; it allows them to become aware of their communities and the people in them, to feel valued for their services, and to work on a positive self-concept. Throughout the year the Adolescent Community participates in several service activities in greater Knoxville. These events are planned with input from the students.



Examples of students' involvement in various communities.

## Microeconomy\*

**“The essential reform is this: to put adolescents on the road to achieving economic independence.”**

**-Dr. Maria Montessori**

Dr. Montessori thought it essential for adolescents to participate in experiences of production and exchange as they prepare to enter society as adults. We provide for this activity through the Microeconomy. All students take part in the real, adult-like work of maintaining the garden, preparing animal byproducts (eggs), crafting, baking, and more. They also market and sell these products during afternoon pickup times and special events. Funds are generally re-invested into this aspect of the program or put towards enrichment opportunities as determined by the students.

In order to provide an economic experience that allows students to make real decisions and real contributions, the Adolescent Community Microeconomy exists separately from the overall school budget. The students have a separate bank account with First Tennessee to handle real-life financial



operations. Animal feed, seed for the garden, ingredients for products, and other materials and services necessary for the operation of the Microeconomy and its related businesses are paid for with sales of products made and produced on-site (as much as possible).

## **Area Managers and Project Managers**

All students will participate and contribute to the microeconomy, but some students may choose to take more of a leadership role. Students can either choose to apply to be a year-long area manager or a more short-term project manager of a particular project or event.

Area managers are responsible for the entire year for a particular area of the program, such as chickens or produce. Students who wish to become managers follow an application process. Area managers work with the guides as they assume overall responsibility for the operation of their respective areas. They also collaborate with classmates on financial and management decisions by bringing proposals to the stakeholders in their business at the community meeting.

Project managers may take on a smaller project that is more short term or smaller in scale. These positions are attached to a project and thus the manager needs only to bring the project proposal to the stakeholders at the community meeting, but is not required to go through an application process. Examples of projects are t-shirts, baked goods, growing particular plants to sell, etc.

## **Observation and Evaluation**

### **Advisory Program**

Each student is assigned to an advisory guide. The advisory program offers each student and guide a special advisor/advisee relationship. The advisor is an advocate for the student in academic, behavioral, and interpersonal matters. The advisor is also responsible for monitoring the overall progress of advisees throughout the year and is the main contact person for the student, parents, and staff.

Advisory meetings occur twice a week. They may include large or small group activities or individual work. Students use this time to work on organization, time management, character education, leadership skills, social development, and conflict resolution. Advisory meetings are also used to share stories, plan events, and make announcements. These activities focus on developing trusting

relationships between students and guides in order to enhance each student's sense of belonging, as well as provide academic and social guidance and support.

Advisees and advisors work together throughout the year to solve problems and resolve conflicts. If a student has a problem (academic, social, or personal), the advisor is available to help resolve the situation. Advisors will also conference with their advisees and parents throughout the year. All Nature's Way staff and students are asked to take responsibility for reporting any conflict with a student in the Adolescent Community to the advisor. This includes any inappropriate behavior, problems with peer interaction, or other situations that should be addressed. Issues can be reported by filling out and submitting a "Communication Form," emailing an advisor, or by scheduling a conference with staff. The advisor will review the report and work out an appropriate way for the student(s) to talk about possible solutions for the situation.

**The advisor is the main contact person for students, parents, and staff. If students or parents have questions, concerns, or need to share information, the student's advisor is the person to contact. Please notify the student's advisor and the office for early or late dismissal. Also, please schedule conferences through the advisor. Nature's Way staff will direct any concerns about a student in the Adolescent Community to that student's advisor.**

## **Planners and Organization**

Organization is critical to the establishment of an ordered life. As the adolescent assumes more responsibility with emerging social roles, practice with organizational skills becomes increasingly important.

To develop this skill, students fill out a planner to keep track of class assignments and compile their work into binders. Guides assist students with prioritizing, planning, and categorizing work if needed. Students should take time each day to organize, check their planners, and restore their personal spaces.

## **ThinkWave and Status of Work**

Students, staff, and parents use the ThinkWave online record-keeping program. This means that guides can track and record the status of work for each student on a rolling basis. Guides will

indicate whether assignments are complete, incomplete, missing, or need to be remedied. Parents and students can log in to the site and check the status of any work at any time for all core classes. Please check the Dashboard page of the website upon accessing ThinkWave first, for guides will post the time of their most recent update to class pages. Periodically, students and parents will receive an emailed summary of student progress. This is to help students see their progress as well as plan to complete any missing work.

Each 7th grade student will see corresponding classes labeled as “Work Status.” Although ThinkWave assigns percentages to an assignment’s individual status, **7th grade students should disregard any assigned grades or percentages.** All 8th grade students receive grades. Therefore, each 8th grade student will have a “Work Status” page showing the status of each assignment as well as a “Grade” page. **The “Grade” page, not the “Work Status” page, reflects the current letter grade of the student.** All AC guides adhere to the Knox County Schools grading system.

## Homework

Students have scheduled times each day that they are expected to use wisely to work on assignments, conduct research, and obtain assistance. Papers and projects are assigned often and typically require a student to spend time away from school conducting research, writing, studying, etc. It is reasonable for AC students to complete unfinished work and/or practice work at home. It may also be necessary to have weekend work. The time needed to complete work at home will vary from student to student based on individual study habits, skills, and abilities. When students organize their time well, they are better prepared for class, able to juggle outside activities with school work, and able to fulfill obligations inside and outside of school.

It is important that students learn how to discipline themselves to work at home after school. This is a skill necessary for high school and future learning. Students who use their personal work time at school appropriately may not have much homework. An hour to an hour and a half of homework each night is a normal average for this age. If a student is coming home with a disproportionate amount of homework, parents may want to schedule a conference to discuss the matter. Also, it is our expectation that parents provide an appropriate time, place, atmosphere, and the supplies necessary to allow the student to complete high-quality work at home.

## **End-of-Cycle Evaluation**

At the conclusion of each cycle, the AC staff will provide your child with several evaluations. Students will also compile folders with all work from each subject. Within each subject folder, guides place “Objectives for Evaluation” detailing the corresponding skills and concepts addressed in the class. Each end-of-cycle packet will include the following:

- An End-of-Cycle Evaluation is both a self-evaluation for the student and a way for the advisor to share his/her feedback on specific skills or qualities, including “responsibility,” “honesty,” “helping others,” etc.
- An Academic Summary is an evaluation of student work with the following categories: Engagement, Understanding Concepts, Skill Development, Work Management, and Overall Quality of Work.

The evaluations use a 1-4 numerical system to indicate the progress in specific areas. The AC staff provides an Academic Summary, comments on the End-of-Cycle Evaluation, feedback on work as it is submitted and returned, assistance for student-led conferences, and more as ways to provide a clear picture of the student’s development and progression. Guides are also available upon request for conferences to provide more qualitative feedback on student progress.

## **Standardized Testing\***

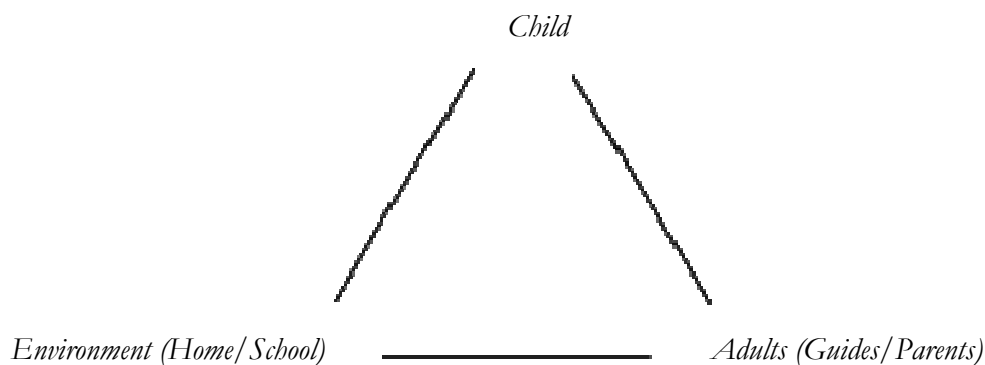
Nature’s Way uses the Stanford Achievement Test each spring to assess all students in third through eighth grades. This is the primary document used as a record of achievement for students who transition from Nature’s Way to another school. Although test-taking is one form of practical life education, the curriculum at Nature’s Way is not designed to teach to the test.

## **Family-School Partnership**

### **Parent Participation\***

A common belief in Montessori pedagogy is the importance of the “Triangle of Relationships” for the complete development of the child. It is clear that the child, the adults (guides and parents), and

the environment should be prepared adequately for the good of the child. All three parts of the triangle must have strong relationships to one another.



There are many opportunities for parents to be actively involved in the Adolescent Community. The staff strives to provide students with guest speakers; parents are encouraged throughout the year to talk to students about their professions or interests as they relate to activities in the community. Parents can also lead self-expression classes, which is a great way to share unique talents and interests with students.

Parents are invited to provide transportation, plan special events, and chaperone field trips when appropriate. If driving or chaperoning, please respect the educational and social environment and understand that there are expectations that we have of the adults who are in the presence of these young people. **Each parent chaperone/driver will need to sign a form acknowledging these guidelines, as well as submit a copy of their driver's license and insurance to the office once each year.**

Parent involvement in school life is essential for the success of the students at Nature's Way, and the staff is always grateful for parent contributions!

### **Parent-Guide Communication**

Frequent parent contact is an important goal for the Adolescent Community staff. The AC staff recognizes that the parent is the primary stakeholder in the child's education and works to facilitate a parent-led team. This parent-led team then becomes a formidable force in supporting the work of the child.

Email is a valuable means for parent-guide communication. The school email address is [natureswaymontessori@comcast.net](mailto:natureswaymontessori@comcast.net). The office will forward any email communication to an AC staff member; however, please feel free to contact the AC staff directly.

*Gar Secrist*

- *Adolescent Community Program Coordinator*
- *Science and Humanities Guide*
- *Advisor*

[gar.secris@natureswaymontessori.com](mailto:gar.secris@natureswaymontessori.com)

*Jimmy Waters*

- *Math and Science Guide*
- *Advisor*

[jimmy.waters@natureswaymontessori.com](mailto:jimmy.waters@natureswaymontessori.com)

*Laura Cox*

- *Language Arts and Humanities Guide*
- *Advisor*

[laura.cox@natureswaymontessori.com](mailto:laura.cox@natureswaymontessori.com)

*Isabel Zuniga*

- *7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Spanish Guide*

[isabel.zuniga@natureswaymontessori.com](mailto:isabel.zuniga@natureswaymontessori.com)

**Please remember that the advisor is responsible for overseeing the overall progress of advisees throughout the year and is the main contact person for students, parents, and staff.** If you have questions, concerns, or need to share information, please contact your child's advisor unless there is a specific question for another staff member relating to their academic specialty. Any general questions about Adolescent Community events or programming should be directed to the Program Coordinator.

The Adolescent Community sends out a newsletter quarterly in addition to posting updates and news on the school website and photos on Facebook and Instagram. The newsletter is a great way to share

highlights of the cycle, make announcements, and keep families updated on classroom events. It is important that you also read the weekly “News You Need” emails from the office. Please ensure the school has a record of your current email address. Those parents who are not already part of the Nature’s Way email group, please send a message to [natureswaymontessori@comcast.net](mailto:natureswaymontessori@comcast.net) to be added to the group. Also, if your address has changed from last year, please send an email with the new address.

**Note that the school office is the main point of contact for anything relating to Covid-19.**

### **Conferences (Guide-Led and Student-Led)\***

Conferences to discuss academic, social and behavioral progress will be available through Zoom on specified Staff Development Days throughout the year. These meetings may involve the student unless parents or guides need to discuss issues privately. Adolescent Community staff will request a conference when students are having trouble keeping up with the work or are dealing with repetitive behavior that needs attention. Also, some ongoing behaviors or concerns as detailed in the “Schoolwide Procedures for Addressing Behavior Incidents” section of the handbook may warrant a more immediate meeting.

When appropriate, guides will always discuss concerns about behavior with students before talking with parents. If a behavior is serious in nature or recurring, parents may receive an email or phone call documenting the incident. Please discuss this matter with your child and confirm that a discussion took place.

Twice a year students lead short conferences about their work. This is a great opportunity to hear student viewpoints and perspectives and to celebrate accomplishments. Students will select pieces of work or other projects to display and discuss with their parents. The discussion also incorporates elements regarding goal-setting, planning, work ethic, engagement with work, and other related topics.

### **Support for Parents**

Adolescents need more independence than elementary aged children, but they also need the guidance and support of adults.

**It's easy to dismiss ten- to fifteen-year-olds as moody, baffling creatures. Yet, these years are perhaps the most critical time in human development, a juncture at which unmatched physical and intellectual growth, expanding creativity, emerging moral sensibilities, awakening sexuality, and maturing emotions converge. Early adolescence is a time when girls and boys may need the help of parents most—yet it's often a time when they are most reluctant to accept it. And it may be a parent's greatest opportunity to effect positive changes in a child's life.**

**-Laura Sessions Stepp, *Our Last Best Shot***

Parenting early adolescents can be very challenging. Some parents might like more information on what is happening with their children and how they can continue to be a positive influence in their child's life. Parents can browse and check out the many books located in the staff/parent library adjacent to the office.

Staff are always eager to discuss a student's progress with parents in addition to the students themselves (when appropriate). Please contact the advisor for a conference at any point throughout the year.

## **Policies and Procedures**

### **Attendance\***

Absences are an unavoidable part of school life. Please notify the school and your child's advisor in the morning when your child is absent for that school day (unless for an extended absence).

Students who are sick need to remain at home until the condition improves. **If there is a planned absence, please inform the office and AC staff in advance.**

Daily attendance, including timely arrival and dismissal, is very important for all students. Please schedule family trips to coincide with school vacations. Students who have missed school due to family vacations can fall behind, miss important concepts, or let down group members for group projects in progress. If time out of school cannot be avoided, please contact the Program Coordinator as soon as possible. By giving advance notice, guides can work with the student to plan strategies to help deal with the workload.



For all absences, it is the student's responsibility to complete assignments that were missed and meet with other students and guides regarding collaborative work. Parents should assist their children with planning and catching up on missed work, if required. Please give advance notice that you want to pick up assignments for an ill child, and guides or students will strive to compile this. Guides will work with the student to modify assignments should the need arise due to illness.

All absences should be excused. A phone call or email detailing the reason will suffice. Again, please notify the office and the Program Coordinator in the case of an absence. **If a student has 10 or more absences or 15 tardies, parents will be e-mailed and a conference or phone conversation may be scheduled.**

## **Scheduling Appointments**

Due to the collaborative nature of our work, students often cannot make up for time missed at school. Therefore, we strongly discourage the scheduling of appointments during school hours. Please make every effort to schedule medical and dental appointments outside of that time. If an appointment absolutely must be scheduled during school, please notify guides in advance to plan for the week.

## **Assisted Arrival**

Our goal is to feel confident that students come to school healthy and leave school having practiced safe measures throughout the day. All students will be greeted and dismissed curbside in the car line.

- Arrival will be between 8:15 and 8:30 am. There will be no walk up arrivals.
- All individuals in the car ages 2 and older should wear a face covering during arrival.
- Lunch boxes, bags and all school items go on the floorboard of the car below the student's seat.
- Pull into the driveway. Proceed to an available health screening station.
- Students remain seated with their seatbelt on.
- A staff member will conduct the health screening.
- Your child will be invited to unbuckle the seat belt.
- Exit the drive through the middle lane.
- Students will sanitize hands and then proceed to their classroom.

- Screeners will sanitize hands in between each student's arrival.

**Late arrival** must be scheduled in advance with the main office:

- Contact the Main Office and give the exact time of your child's late arrival.
- Office Staff will notify the classroom community to make arrangements for receiving the child.
- Upon arrival, pull up to the curb and wait.
- A staff member will greet your child and conduct the health screening.

### **Early Morning Care (EMC):**

Assisted Arrival and Health Screenings for Early Morning Care will be between 7:30 and 7:45. The next available arrival time is 8:15-8:30. **We cannot accept students between 7:45 and 8:15.** Children in EMC will be outside whenever possible. On inclement weather days, they will be in the Extended Day space. AC Students in Early Morning Care may enter their classrooms between 8:00 and 8:15.

### **Assisted Dismissal**

- Dismissal for all students will be curbside. There will be no walk-up dismissal.
- All individuals in the car ages two and older must wear a face mask during assisted dismissal.
- Please pull up and park at an available designated location.
- Wait in your car and your child will come to the car when dismissed.
- Students will sanitize hands before entering the car.

**Early departure** must be scheduled in advance with the main office:

- Contact the Main Office and indicate the exact time of your child's early departure.
- Office Staff will notify the classroom community.
- At the pre-arranged time, please pull up to the curb and wait.
- A staff member will facilitate the dismissal.

**Extended Day (ED):** We are trying to keep overall numbers in our Extended Day low in order to safely group and distance students. As such, we are asking families to only use this option if they have work or family-related needs that necessitate enrollment in Extended Day.

Extended Day will be available until 5:30 p.m.. All AC students enrolled in ED will remain in their

stable classroom group until 4:00 p.m. either taking a break on the AC deck or working quietly inside. At 4:00 all remaining students will transition to the back playground area. Extended Day fees will begin to accrue for AC students at that time. Stable groups and physical distance will be maintained as much as is feasible after 4:00.

Dismissal from Extended Day will take place at the curb in front of the Middle Building. Students will be dismissed at half-hour intervals: 4 PM; 4:30 PM; 5 PM; 5:30 PM. **Pick-up time must be pre-arranged with the office.** Students will be brought to the dismissal area only on the half hour. Be ready to receive your child at the time you are registered for. Please ensure that every individual who will drop off or pick up your child is familiar with these procedures.

### **Release of Students to Persons Other Than Parents**

**Please leave written instructions with the office or advisor on the day that your child is to be picked up by someone who is not included on the student's Identification and Emergency Information form.** In the event you find it necessary to have your child picked up by someone else and you have not given written instructions, please make a telephone call to the office giving permission for your child to be released. You will be asked to give the individual's name and the approximate time the student will be picked up. Students must contact parents while at school if there is a change in plans and the person picking up the student is not on the Identification form. A guide or the office must speak to the parent to confirm this change before the student is released from school.

### **Emergency Closings**

Nature's Way Montessori School announces its own closings on local TV broadcast stations WATE (ABC), WBIR (NBC), and WVLT (CBS). If the announcement is not broadcast before 10:00 p.m., it will be broadcast before 6:30 a.m.. If school is delayed for an hour or closes early, then Early Morning Care and Extended Day programs will not be available. **Remember, the announcement for closings or delays will read *Nature's Way Montessori School.***

### **Medication**

Parents should notify staff of any major or minor health concerns. Also, parents should give any

medication that their child needs while at school directly to a staff person. It must be accompanied by a Medication Form. This form is available from the office and in every classroom. A copy is at the end of this manual for your reference. Please be reminded that you need to fill out a Medication Form if your child is taking a prescribed or an over-the-counter medicine, whether or not the medicine is given at school. **Students may not keep medication in their possession (pocket, backpack, purse, etc.) while at school, regardless of the type of medication.**

Prescribed medicines are given for various reasons, and common over-the-counter medications to help with allergies, colds, coughs, and other minor ailments on a regular basis or periodically often have side effects in children. Since observation is a critical component of a guide's role when working with students, it is important to know all medications taken by a child should a change in behavior occur.

**If a child is on a regular medication that is designed to affect attention or mood, please notify the AC staff of any change in dosage and/or the timing of doses.** Also, please ensure that the staff knows about any other medical conditions, including allergies. If you would like to give the AC staff permission to administer ibuprofen, acetaminophen, or other common medications, please indicate this on the designated form and submit it to the staff. Otherwise, an AC staff member will need to contact a parent before administering any medication.

## **Accidents and First Aid**

Accidents most certainly happen frequently during adolescence. The AC staff is prepared to provide necessary care to students at school and on field trips. All AC staff have some degree of first aid/CPR knowledge.

Should an accident occur, the staff will provide immediate care depending upon the situation. Minor cuts and scratches may warrant a band-aid or similar bandage; the staff ensures that students wash any cut with soapy water, dry the area with a clean cloth, and apply a clean bandage as necessary. Also, the staff can administer an antiseptic spray (Neosporin or equivalent) on a wound or provide an ice pack for bruises or sprains.

Furthermore, the AC staff will document all accidents requiring care or first aid, those where a head injury is possible, and those deemed noteworthy due to the situation. Students and parents will receive a copy of an Accident Report Form should an accident happen at school. The staff will also

call parents should an emergency or serious situation arise. Any accident that does not require first aid and shows no sign of emotional or physical trauma or damage, such as tripping and falling onto the ground without a cut or bruise, will not be documented.

## Supplies

At the beginning of each year, the AC staff sends a list of necessary supplies to each family.

**Students are responsible for purchasing and maintaining their own school supplies, including rain gear, work gloves, and boots for work on the farm.** They should not depend on other class members or guides to provide pencils, pens, or other needed materials. **Due to COVID-19, students may have limited access to an art cache or other shared supplies.**

Projects are an integral part of the AC program. During every cycle, students will complete at least one project designed to further their understanding of the cycle's material. Often students choose to work on projects at home; however, if they plan to do the project at school, they need to be responsible for providing their own supplies (poster boards, adhesives, etc.).

## Lunches, Snacks, and Drinks\*

AC students are expected to follow the same food guidelines as the other classroom communities at Nature's Way; pertinent information from the policy appears below:

Nature's Way Montessori respects each family's approach to food and nutrition and embraces the social and cultural eating practices of our students. Nature's Way Montessori encourages all children to eat foods that are healthy. We ask that you provide a healthy breakfast each school day and send nutritious lunches. Be creative!

We encourage you to talk to your child about the health benefits of the foods you include in their lunches and have your child actively participate in the preparation and packing of meals. Books on healthy food choices are available in our library. We find that desserts are quite distracting to children eating in a school group environment, and while we do not label these foods as 'bad,' **we do insist on a no soda and dessert policy at school.** We consider the following foods to be desserts: candy, chocolate, non fruit-juice gummies, cake, cookies, and drinks with less than 90% juice. Please reach out to us if you have questions about any

particular food item!

We allow children to consume as much or as little of their packed meals and snacks as their appetite dictates, and we encourage exposing them to a wide variety of foods- both for physical growth and self-awareness of their tastes, preferences, and hunger cues. All classes have a microwave oven, so please feel free to send items that need to be heated, if your child desires them.

We strongly encourage you to send foods in reusable containers- please avoid plastic bags and heavily packaged foods. For this reason, **canned beverages of any kind are not permitted at school.** Plastic or cloth containers for food and drinks are a sensible and sanitary alternative.

**AC students also need to have snacks that can be easily eaten at the designated snack time. Students who stay after school especially need to bring extra snacks. It is also essential for students to keep a personal water bottle at school for use throughout the day; there is not a water fountain in the AC space, but there is access to filtered water. Additionally, students must provide their own silverware and napkin with their packed lunch. Soda, coffee and other caffeinated beverages may not be consumed at school. Under no circumstances should gum, candy, or fast food be brought to school by students or parents, and no food should be shared.**

At this age, we strongly encourage students to be independent in packing their lunches and snacks for the day. Parents, however, should monitor their student's food and drink choices and reinforce the guidelines for nutritious snacks and lunches.

## **Dress Code**

Adolescence is a sensitive time where students are developing self-esteem and an individual sense of style. Adolescents use clothing styles as a means of expressing identity, an important characteristic of the age.

With this said, the dress code for the Adolescent Community is based on practical needs for daily work and respect for each member of the community. As members of the Adolescent Community are often working outside in all types of weather, each guide and student should dress appropriately

for this work. It is important that each member of the community take responsibility for making proper clothing choices. The school has provided guidelines (below) to assist families in making these choices.

**Due to the sensitivity of this subject with adolescents, it is best for parents to monitor their student's dress choices and reinforce the dress code guidelines. Staff will relay violations of the dress code to parents so that the family can discuss this together and assist the student with future clothing selections.**

**The following are guidelines for dressing for the school day:**

- Each student must wear a face covering at all times indoors and for all group meetings outdoors (see COVID policy).
- Students should refrain from wearing clothing or attire that inhibits or restricts participation in class activities or is a distraction to the learning environment.
- As students are often working outside in all types of weather, they must dress properly for these activities every day of school. If it is raining, a raincoat and rain boots are required in order to be outdoors during free time and after school.
- All clothing must adequately cover undergarments in all situations, including when sitting on the floor or engaging in physical activity.
- Clothing should not contain offensive pictures or writing.
- Shoes may be worn in the AC space. If students choose not to wear shoes, they must have something on their feet while at school (socks, sandals, slippers, etc.).

### **Field Trips and Outings\***

The Adolescent Community program requires involvement in activities outside of school throughout the year. **All field trips and outings are part of the curriculum, and therefore not optional unless otherwise indicated due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Students who miss these events may be required to complete alternative assignments.** Several activities away from school are planned each cycle. Field trips are scheduled throughout the course of the year to correspond to what is being studied in the classroom. While many trips are planned in advance, some are spontaneous in nature. These outings are local trips to secure supplies for community work

or visit a community asset for class or committee work. Please review and submit the permission form for field trips and outings at the end of this handbook.

Students also spend time away from the school to help in the community and to participate in cultural events. These generally take place during the school day, but some unique opportunities may occasionally arise on nights and weekends. Community building trips are also planned throughout the year and students are asked to participate in an annual three-day environmental education trip and a four-day spring trip planned by the entire AC community.

When practical, Knox County school buses, charter buses, or vans are rented for field trip transportation. Usually staff and parents will provide transportation for students in their personal vehicles. **Due to the critical role of social experiences in the Adolescent Community, the community needs parents to help transport students to these activities.**

## **Eighth Grade Year\***

The eighth grade year is a special time for Nature's Way students. For most of the eighth grade students, it marks the end of many years spent at our school. Because of this, we have several program components in place to aid in the transition to high school.

In the fall, the school staff hosts a meeting to share important information for the upcoming transition to high school. Guides are available to write letters of recommendation for students as needed. AC staff will also work with parents to make decisions about placement and to meet specific requirements for high schools. Additionally, a panel of Nature's Way alumni visit the school in the spring to field questions that current 8th grade students may have about high school.

## **Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution**

### **The Adolescent Community Approach to Problem Solving**

Conflict is an inevitable element of community life and working with others. Our Community Conflict Resolution Procedure is a tool available to help guides and students talk through emotionally difficult situations to reach a mutually agreed-upon solution. This is an opportunity for personal growth.

Often conflicts can be avoided by talking to students about respect and self-discipline. Adolescents



are working on defining themselves as they strive to understand the “rules” of adult society. Students are actively involved in running their community by using the Community Forum agenda to discuss issues crucial to running the classroom. In Advisory meetings students take part in SEL lessons designed to practice conflict resolution skills.

When conflicts do occur, students are encouraged to do three things:

- Take responsibility for their actions and their words.
- Go to the person with whom they have a problem.
- Learn to solve their own problems.

The school provides students with a supportive environment where they can learn from their mistakes and work out problems peacefully. We strive to have students engage in the problem-solving process and we provide a safe and supportive environment where students are empowered to become independently responsible for their actions. At times students will need their parents’ support for making appropriate choices about behavior. If a behavior becomes repetitive, students are asked to conference with their parents and/or guides to discuss the situation.

When students feel that they cannot handle a problem on their own, they are encouraged to ask a guide to help mediate the problem. This form of mediation involves a process using a neutral and impartial third person who walks parties through the conflict resolution procedure to resolve their dispute. It is a peaceful process intended to help disputants reach a win-win agreement.

Students are encouraged to use a Communication Form to request mediation or to report a problem that they are having with another member of the community. This is a tool that empowers students to take the first step in resolving a problem. A sample can be found at the end of this handbook.

## **Community Conflict Resolution Procedure**

1. Each party explains their perception about the conflict with an I STATEMENT that does not blame or accuse the other party.

Ex. “I feel angry because I feel insulted by your comments.”

Ex. “When you (name behavior) I feel (name feeling).”

2. Each party ACKNOWLEDGES the other party's perception or feelings by re-stating the other person's I statement.

Ex. "I acknowledge that you feel . . . "

Ex. "I heard you say that you perceived . . . "

Ex. "I understand that you feel . . . "

3. Each person should OWN THEIR PART in the conflict.

Ex. "When I spoke to you, I was really rude."

Ex. "I got carried away outside and I probably kicked the ball harder than I should have."

Ex. "It's true that I did...."

Ex. "I admit that I contributed by...."

4. All parties PROPOSE WAYS TO RESOLVE the conflict until everyone agrees on a solution strategy.

5. APOLOGIES should be offered voluntarily and should be stated sincerely.

6. Thank the other party for being open with you and EXPRESS CONFIDENCE that you will be better people for having talked the problem out.

Ex. "I feel better about this situation and thank you for working with me to find a solution that works for all of us."

Ex. "Thank you for sitting down with me to talk about this issue. I believe that we are going to be able to work together on our Humanities project now."

## Positive Discipline

Positive Discipline is a program of behavior management used by all staff at Nature's Way. Its criteria, concepts and tools complement the Montessori Philosophy and provide our school community with a consistent approach to all children. This gives parents the comfort of knowing that all staff will treat their child fairly and in the same careful manner. Positive Discipline is based upon mutual respect between adult and child. We encourage all parents to learn about and use Positive Discipline with their Montessori child. We have multiple Positive Discipline books and manuals in our school library that are available for parents to check-out.

### POSITIVE DISCIPLINE:

1. Is **Kind and Firm** at the same time (Respectful and encouraging; neither punitive nor

permissive)

2. Helps children feel a sense of **Belonging and Significance** (connection)

3. Is **Effective Long-Term** (punishment works short term, but has negative long-term results)

Teaches valuable **Social and Life Skills** for good character (respect, concern for others, problem-solving, accountability, contribution, cooperation)

5. Invites children to discover how **capable** they are and to use their personal power in constructive ways

## Schoolwide Procedures for Addressing Behavior Incidents

The focus of our problem-solving process is to help all people who enter this school feel a sense of respect for themselves and every other person within our school community. Students, staff, parents, and visitors are all important participants in the educational mission. Our problem solving process is built upon the following core expectation, which is fundamental to both Montessori and Positive Discipline. It provides a consistent thread and the basis of language used throughout the entire school community and nearly every expected and appropriate behavior fits within this core expectation:

*I will show respect for myself, others, and my environment.*

Expected behaviors are reviewed with students in each classroom and staff and students will collaborate at the beginning of the year to develop age-appropriate guidelines for their communities in order to uphold the behavioral and academic expectations that are consistent with our core expectation. All staff consistently model and teach respect through Grace and Courtesy lessons, Positive Discipline, and a monthly character development focus. Our goal is to foster our core expectation in each child and mitigate behaviors that negatively affect them, their peers, and the school environment.

We believe that:

- The learning environment should be protected.
- A misbehaving child is a discouraged child who is communicating a need through their behavior. At times, a student may need a break from their immediate surroundings in order to return to a social/emotional state that is conducive to learning and interacting positively with others.

- There should be a consistent process that we utilize when responding to behavior that does not uphold our core expectation.
- Parents should have the opportunity to collaborate with the school when their child is engaging in behaviors that do not support the school's core values.

Inappropriate behavior will be addressed in a respectful manner, focusing on teaching the skills needed for every student to be a part of the school community in socially useful ways. Teachers make decisions all day about how to respond to behaviors. Some interventions include:

- Ignoring behavior – it is isolated and/or intervention may exacerbate the behavior
- Connecting with the student before correcting behavior – acknowledge feelings or intent of student before attempting to correct behavior – look for mutually agreeable solutions
- Offering a break from the situation
- Using the class meeting agenda, asking other guides/staff members for advice, seeking assistance from administration
- Making classroom accommodations to meet individual needs
- Notifying and collaborating with parents

Although most students will respond positively, over time, to the clear, consistent use of these and other strategies, it is recognized that intervention outside of the classroom may occasionally be required for some students. To meet this need, a specific set of procedures for an office referral has been developed. When a break from the classroom becomes necessary, classroom guides will communicate with administration and an available staff member will bring the child to the office. When the student appears to have returned to a social/emotional state that is conducive to learning and interacting positively with others, the student will be integrated back into the classroom. A Communication Form describing the details will be completed. The form will be sent home for parents to review, sign, and return to the school. After three referrals within a given period of time, a conference between staff, parents, and the student (when developmentally appropriate) will be scheduled, during which participants will problem solve together to create an agreement for future behavior.

While we believe that students benefit most by being present in the classroom, in extreme cases a student may be asked to leave school for the day or longer, and in rare cases, permanently. This may occur if the behavior occurs frequently, is not resolved in a timely manner, and/or reaches an

intensity that is a danger to the student or others.

*The following document was created in a collaborative effort between (former) middle school students and staff in order to clearly define the term “bullying” as it applies to our community.*

## What is Bullying?

Bullying is when someone intentionally hurts another person (emotionally or physically) through repeated actions that harm the person being targeted.

Three key components of bullying are:

1. It is aggressive behavior that involves unwanted actions.
2. It involves a pattern of behavior repeated over time.
3. It involves an imbalance of power or strength.

Bullying can include but is not limited to the following examples:

- Making derogatory comments or calling someone unwanted names
- Social exclusion
- Physical bullying such as hitting, kicking, shoving
- Spreading lies and false rumors
- Taking someone’s property
- Making threats to someone
- Intentionally doing anything that you know bothers someone because they have asked for the behavior to stop

In the event a student is found to be engaging in bullying, a **Communication Form** will be completed, the student will meet to problem-solve the situation, and parents will be notified. A second incident of bullying or harassing may result in extended removal from school until a parent conference is scheduled to problem-solve the issue.

## **Guidelines and Civility**

### **Guidance in Civility**

Adolescence is a critical time during which the brain is undergoing a period of tremendous growth and change, second only to that of the toddler years. This rapid change brings with it unique opportunities and challenges for the adolescent, particularly in the areas of social and emotional life. Just as they are busy exploring new concepts in history or literature, adolescents are also engaged in the important work of learning new lessons in civility, morality, and self regulation.

The school recognizes that all children make mistakes. Mistaken behaviors represent an individual's best present knowledge of how to meet a legitimate need. Adolescent Community staff view mistaken behaviors as an important opportunity for guidance and growth. When mistakes are made, guides will dialogue with students, other staff, and parents, when appropriate, to learn from those mistakes. Guides work closely with students to help them acquire the behavioral knowledge and skills needed to achieve their individual goals as well as to support the shared work of their community.

### **Expectations for Civility**

The school environment must remain safe in order for optimal learning and development of the personality to occur. To assist with the preparation for adult life, the Adolescent Community staff will model and expect behaviors that are responsible and respectful. Students are also encouraged to take ownership of establishing community guidelines during the year.

### **Academic Integrity**

At Nature's Way Montessori School, we value and expect academic integrity, which we define as a commitment from faculty and students to demonstrate moral and honest behavior in regards to academics; therefore, any cheating or plagiarizing (attempts to pass off another's work as one's own) is unacceptable. If a 7th grade student is guilty of plagiarism or cheating, they will be required to retake the test or resubmit the assignment, parents will be contacted, and repeat offenders will require a parent-teacher conference. If an 8th grade student is guilty of plagiarism or cheating, they will receive a zero for the assignment with no opportunity to make up the work, parents will be

contacted, and repeat offenders will require a parent-teacher conference.

## Computers and Technology

The Adolescent Community is fortunate to have access to a variety of technology tools including computers, laptops, the Internet, graphing calculators, radio, DVD players, etc. Students should use these items responsibly and only for schoolwork. Guides reserve the right to view technology tools at any time to ensure that guidelines are being followed.

Students may use the Internet to research class projects and assignments. **They cannot use computers to access social media, play games, or for other personal projects without permission.** Students are expected to follow the technology guidelines posted in the Adolescent Community and in this handbook, including the provisions for student-owned laptops. Students must have their own laptops and chargers for work every day. Computers are available only during class times, personal work times, or designated committee work unless students receive permission from a guide. **Students must use their own computers** for work unless given permission by a guide to use the classroom computer, which is only available for assigned academic work.

Adolescent Community students also have access to a digital camera and camcorder that can be used for school work with permission. Students must have permission before bringing a personal camera or video camera to school or to use smart phones as recorders/cameras.

### Computer Guidelines

- Use computers responsibly and only for school work.
- Computers must remain silent, unless the student has permission from a guide.
- Computers are only available when approved by a guide.
- Liquids may not be placed at the same table as a computer.
- Computers may only be used indoors or on the AC deck.
- Students work individually at their own computers, unless they have permission from a guide to do group work.
- Due to limited charging spaces, students are expected to charge their computers before bringing them in the morning. Computers may not be charged during classes. During Open Work Cycle,

students may charge computers if their charging cable does not cross the floor where others may walk.

- Computers must be used according to all instructions given by guides.

**First violation:** Student redirected to appropriate use of technology, with a warning of the consequences of further violations.  
Communication Form submitted to advisor.

**Second violation:** Student redirected to appropriate use of technology.  
Communication Form submitted to advisor.  
Student may be assigned seating for one week.

**Third violation:** Loss of computer privileges for remainder of day.  
Communication Form submitted and sent home.  
Meet with advisor to find solution.  
Student may be assigned seating for one week.

**Fourth violation:** Loss of computer privileges for one week and parent contacted.  
Student may be assigned seating for two weeks.

**Fifth violation:** Loss of computer privileges for two weeks and parent conference scheduled.  
Student may be assigned seating for the rest of the school year.

### **Telephone/Cell Phone Guidelines**

Since cell phones detract from the learning experience, **students may not use cell phones or smart watches at school without special permission. If a student needs to carry a cell phone or smart watch, it must be turned off and stored out-of-sight in a backpack, purse, or cubby while at school during the day.**

Please try to work out personal details with your child during non-school time and avoid making telephone calls or texts directly to your child during the school day. Instead, please call the school if you need to talk to your child. Students may use the school telephone if necessary. The office



staff will deliver messages to students; if you or your child must have a conversation, this should take place during a break or free time (unless an emergency).

Students may use their cell phone with permission to call their parents to facilitate pick up. **Between 3:30-4:00 p.m., students may ask to call their parents or person picking them up to expedite the process. Personal cell phones may only be used in the AC space.** At 4:00, any remaining students at school must turn their phones off and put them away. Should there be a change in pick up as mentioned in the “Dismissal” section, a staff member must speak to the parent in order to release the student to someone unauthorized (not found on the Identification sheet). If a student uses a cell phone without permission, the phone will be taken by guides and parents must retrieve it at the end of the day.

## AC Communication Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Person Reporting: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of Student(s) involved:

---

---

Other student(s) present:

---

Location of Incident:

---

Type of Incident:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Positive interaction  | <input type="checkbox"/> Dishonesty/lying                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information report  | <input type="checkbox"/> Going outside of designated boundaries             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate or hurtful verbal and<br>non-verbal language* | <input type="checkbox"/> Unkind behavior*                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unwanted physical contact                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Cell phone use                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Defiance/noncompliance                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Technology violation: personal listening<br>device |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disruption  | <input type="checkbox"/> Technology violation: computer                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Property misuse   | <input type="checkbox"/> Dress Code violation                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Harassment*   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bullying*   |   |

Comments on Incident (Please type or write on additional paper if necessary):

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Would you like to be informed about the follow-up to this incident? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

**Finished form should be given to Gar (AC Program Coordinator)**

\*May include (but is not limited to) unwanted name-calling, comments that are sexist, racist or homophobic, or comments referencing sexual acts that are violent, immoral or illegal

**Communication Form: Follow-up Report**

Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student(s) involved in follow-up: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Submitted by:

\_\_\_\_ Student \_\_\_\_ AC Guide \_\_\_\_ Other staff \_\_\_\_ Parent

Recommendation for next steps:

## Medication Form

A staff member must receive all medications. Please do not send medications in lunch boxes. Medicines need to be in the original prescription container, labeled with the child's name and include the physician's directions for use.

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Medication \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of medication \_\_\_\_\_

Dosage \_\_\_\_\_

Time(s) to Administer \_\_\_\_\_

Prescription \_\_\_\_\_ Over-the-Counter \_\_\_\_\_

Special storage requirements \_\_\_\_\_

Possible side effects \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

*To be filled out by staff member administering the medication. Give form to parent with any unused medication.*

*Time(s) administered:*

M \_\_\_\_\_ T \_\_\_\_\_ W \_\_\_\_\_ TH \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_

*Initialed by staff* \_\_\_\_\_

*Date unused medication returned to parent* \_\_\_\_\_

*Parent's Initials* \_\_\_\_\_

*Noted side effects* \_\_\_\_\_

## Health Patterns and OTC Medications Permission

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we will be increasing our awareness of student baseline health conditions. Please help us by detailing below any health patterns that we may expect to see in your child.

The following are allergies (including seasonal), pain/cramping, headache, or other health trends that would be normal for my child to experience:

---



---



---

**Optional:** By checking the boxes, I give permission to the AC staff to administer the following medications as needed by my child without needing to contact me:

Tylenol  Ibuprofen  Benadryl  Dramamine

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

We will administer the dose recommended on the bottle of any OTC medication unless given specific instructions to do otherwise.

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

---

\*Note, medications will not be given for COVID-19 symptoms that are not normal for a child.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Parent or Guardian)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Skateboards, Roller Skates, Bikes, and Scooters (SRBS) Guidelines



- Students must have a completed waiver form on file in order to use SRBS at school.
- Students must wear a helmet at all times when using SRBS at school. It is also strongly recommended that students using skateboards wear elbow and kneepads and wrist guards.
- SRBS and accompanying gear must be stored neatly in the AC shed.
- Students may only use their own SRBS.
- SRBS may only be used in the driveway or bike path on the playground and only when supervised by AC guides or self-expressions teachers.

If a student commits a SRBS violation, a Communication Form will be submitted and the following action(s) will be taken:

First violation: Loss of privilege for one full day

Second violation: Loss of privilege for one full week

Third violation: Loss of privilege for one full month

Fourth violation: Loss of privilege for rest of year

## SRBS (Skateboard, Roller Skates, Bike, Scooter)

### Authorization/Release

I, \_\_\_\_\_, as a parent of \_\_\_\_\_ do hereby grant permission for my child to use the equipment checked below at Nature's Way Montessori School. I have read the SRBS Guidelines, and I understand there are inherent risks associated with these activities. I agree to check my child's equipment and send it to school in full working order. My child will use appropriate protection while engaging in these activities and will only do them in areas approved by Nature's Way staff. I assume all responsibility of any accident and/or injuries incurred by my child and agree to hold Nature's Way harmless in all regards.

Parent or Guardian's Name (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My child may bring to school and use the following:

- skateboard ▪ roller skates ▪ bicycle ▪ scooter

My child has permission to ride a bicycle on a guide-led trip across the street and through the Summer Rose subdivision. ▪ Yes ▪ No

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understood the SRBS guidelines and agree to follow them at all times, including wearing a helmet and staying in the designated boundaries.

Student Name (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# PARENTAL CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM FOR FIELD TRIPS

NATURE'S WAY MONTESSORI SCHOOL PARENTAL/GUARDIAN CONSENT FOR:

- Acknowledgement of Personal Liability
- My Child to Ride with Private Drivers (i.e. Parents/Guardians)
- My Child to Ride with Employees of Nature's Way Montessori School
- My Child to Ride in Professionally Operated Buses Hired by Nature's Way Montessori School

## BACKGROUND

Please fill in your child's name and initial on the spaces to the left of each statement below to acknowledge your acceptance of the following permissions.

My child, \_\_\_\_\_, has permission to participate in:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Planned field trips associated with classes. Information about these trips will be sent to parents/guardians in advance via email.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Spontaneous field trips. Since social experiences are essential to the social, moral, and academic development of the adolescent, these outings occur spontaneously due to class or community needs. These outings will be local in nature (within Knox County). Notification will NOT be sent to parents/guardians about these trips.

## TRANSPORTATION PERMISSIONS AND WAIVER

I also understand that, pending my written permission below, a teacher, an administrator, private drivers (such as the parent or guardian of another student), or a professional bus driver, may be used to transport students to and from the activities. For private drivers, the owner of the vehicle must carry bodily injury insurance. The school's insurance does not cover damages arising from any personal negligence related to the activities. Any damages/harm resulting from a parent/guardian/or other designated driver arising from the operation of a motor vehicle in relation to the above listed activities, is hereby waived.

Please initial on the three spaces to the left of each statement below to acknowledge your acceptance of the following permissions.



- \_\_\_\_\_ I give permission for my child to ride in a vehicle driven by a private driver (i.e. parent/guardian of another student) to and from the activities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I give permission for my child to ride in a vehicle driven by a teacher or an administrator to and from the activities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I give permission for my child to ride in a professionally driven bus hired by Nature's Way Montessori School to and from the activities.

I also understand that I have the ability to refuse to sign this Form. In addition, I understand that if I refuse to sign, my child will not be permitted to participate in the activities unless I personally provide transport for them to and from the activities.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PERSONAL LIABILITY AND WAIVER**

I also understand that this field trip may expose my child to some risks and I assume any such risk that may arise there from. I accept full responsibility for all medical expenses for any injuries that might occur to my child by reason of his/her participation.

**By signing this form**, however, I hereby release Nature's Way Montessori, administrators, officers, teachers, employees, and volunteers ("released parties") from and against any and all claims, demands, actions, complaints, suits or other forms of liability that any of them may sustain (a) arising out of any damage or injury caused by my child; or, (b) arising out of a parent/guardian/or other designated driver's operation of a motor vehicle in relation to the activities. I also agree to indemnify and hold harmless the released parties from the released claims, including any and all related costs, attorney fees, liabilities, settlements, and/or judgments.

**SIGNATURE**

I confirm that I have carefully read this CONSENT AND RELEASE and agree to its terms knowingly and voluntarily. I also confirm that I am the parent or legal guardian of the child or I am a student 18 years or older.

I have signed this CONSENT AND RELEASE this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 202\_\_\_\_\_. This consent and release form has been read and is understood by me.

---

Print Name

---

Signature of Student's Parent or Legal Guardian