

GENERAL INFORMATION

Mountain Road School is a private elementary school with a partial day and full day preschool program (ages 3 through 5), a full day or partial day kindergarten, and grades one through six. The class configurations vary from year to year depending on enrollment.

The school was founded in 1975 at The Abode of the Message, a spiritual community located in the historic South Family Mount Lebanon Shaker Community buildings. Since 1983 the school has operated under the auspices of the New Lebanon Public School District. It was incorporated under a New York State Charter on April 29, 1997, and is operated by a Board of Directors. In June 2000, after the first and long-term director retired, the school adopted a teacher collaborative form of administration, whereby the teachers elected a Teaching Director on a rotating basis and all shared in the decision making process. In June 2007, the school decided to return to the model of having a long term Director while retaining the collaborative decision making model. We are currently in the process of revising the school's by laws to reflect a change in organization which will include a Community Council, a monthly All Hands staff meeting and a weekly meeting of the Teacher Collaborative.

MISSION STATEMENT

Mountain Road School supports, challenges and empowers the whole child within a loving and collaborative community of parents, teachers and students.

A Mountain Road education fosters academic and creative excellence, ethical and spiritual development, engagement with the world, and creates a foundation for lifelong learning.

PHILOSOPHY

Mountain Road School's philosophy of education stresses the importance of nurturing all areas of human development in the child as well as the unique pace of each child's growth socially, emotionally, and academically. Small class sizes and flexible age groupings allow these needs to be met in ways that are not possible in larger groups. Communication skills - so important in personal growth and so vital to success in today's world - are given an opportunity to flourish. Children feel their importance within the group and are guided to be positive members of their school community. In this warm, supportive atmosphere each child's development is nourished, and each child's potential flourishes. This is what we mean by Heartfelt Education.

Giving a child a strong sense of self and of one's place within the community and in the greater world is key to our philosophy. As a small school, we can provide many opportunities for interactions among children of all ages and classes. Once a week an older child is paired with a younger "buddy" for activities of their choosing. School wide celebrations are frequent, as are school field trips. Every Friday the whole school gathers in the "Family Room" for Big Circle to share thoughts, feelings, stories, songs, dances, and experiences. Over the years we have devoted a number of school circle times to various character traits such as cooperation, respect, self-control, honesty, gratitude, acceptance, and caring. Each day the children have an outdoor recess - a time for noncompetitive games, tree climbing, dam/fort building, and snow sledding.

SCHOOL HOURS

School hours are 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. on Friday. After school care is available for all students until 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. New York State local school districts provide busing for children in kindergarten through sixth

grade who live in New York State within fifteen miles of the school. Depending on the school district, busing can sometimes be arranged for those living beyond the fifteen-mile limit.

STAFF & ADMINISTRATION

The faculty of the school is made up from the full time classroom teachers, specialist teachers in Art, French, Music, Sign Language, Theater and Nature and an After Care Teacher. The administration of the school is comprised of the Director, Administrative Assistant, Publicity Coordinator and Bookkeeper. On staff is also a cleaning person and a psychological services consultant. To see photographs or to find out more information about our faculty and staff, please go to the school's web site.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors is the legal entity responsible for the operation of Mountain Road School. The Board is composed of: the Director, elected members including a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer, and a teacher representative. Efforts are made to insure representation of Abode community residents as well. A complete list of board members with their home addresses is posted in the school office. Board meetings are held monthly and are open to the public (except for occasional executive sessions requiring confidentiality). The board meets for the most part on the third Thursday of each month.

ADMISSIONS POLICIES

Mountain Road School admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin, and they are entitle each student to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. The school does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, disability, religion, national or ethnic origin in administration of its admission policies, educational policies, work exchange policies and athletic and other school administered programs.

First priority is given to returning students. However, because of the commitment to small class sizes, it is not always possible to guarantee places to students who wish to return. In general those who make firm their commitment to return to Mountain Road earliest will be given first placement. We ask for a commitment from the parents by March 1st and a deposit by April 1st to hold a place for the following school year. Mountain Road endeavors to provide the best educational environment for all students and to meet the goals of its mission statement. Sometimes, however, that is not possible. Some students may need more special attention or a more structured environment than Mountain Road provides. If a situation should arise where we feel the needs of an individual child are not being well met or the child's needs are adversely affecting the rest of a class, the student may be asked to leave or not return for the next school year. The school will attempt to communicate such an observation with the parents as soon as it becomes obvious and will attempt to work with the child and parents to rectify the situation. However, in the best interests of all concerned, the school has the right to dissolve the relationship if it is not working. If the school determines that a student should leave the school, the school, at its discretion, may prorate tuition.

All new families to the school are required to take a tour of the school, meet the Director, fill out an application and submit a non-refundable application fee. Once admitted, a non-refundable enrollment fee is due with a deposit to hold the child's place for the upcoming year.

FORMS

The following forms need to be filled out for each enrolled child, given to the school by the first day of school, and updated when necessary:

- Emergency and Consent for Treatment of a Minor
- Immunization Records
- End-of-Day Form
- Parent Questionnaire
- Parent Participation Form
- Parent Service Directory
- Photo Release Form

A signed tuition agreement must be on file **before** a child comes to school.

TELEPHONE

Our telephone is 518-794-8520. The office is usually staffed from 8:00 to 3:00. If you call during these hours and get the voice mail, it means someone is on the line or temporarily out of the office. Leave your message; and, if necessary, someone will return your call. The school's fax number is 518-794-8623. In a **real emergency**, call the Abode Office at 794-8090, Abode Programs at 794-8095 or the Abode dining room at 794-7659.

Our teachers value and strive to create and maintain effective parent/teacher relationships. If you need to talk with the individual teachers, they will do their best to find a mutually agreeable time to discuss any questions or concerns you may have. Calling teachers at home will be at the discretion of the individual teacher.

E-MAIL/WEBSITE

The schools address is info@mountainroadschool.org. E-mail will be checked on a regular basis. For end-of-day arrangements or matters of urgency, please call the school instead of sending an e-mail. All teachers have their own school e-mail addresses for parent correspondence. These e-mail addresses will be sent out at the beginning of the school year and are the teacher's first name followed by @mountainroadschool.org. Our website address is <http://www.mountainroadschool.org>. Current information will be updated to the site as much as possible.

TELEPHONE CHAIN AND SCHOOL DIRECTORIES

We will send out an Emergency Telephone Chain diagram. Please keep it by your phone. The telephone chain will be used in calling for Emergencies, Last Minute Cancellations and for getting information out quickly when necessary. You will need to call the person after you on the list. If you can't reach that person, leave a message if possible and go on to the next name. The last person on the list needs to call the school to confirm that the phone chain was completed. We also provide a telephone list of all the students in the school and an individual class list with addresses.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

School begins at 8:30 a.m. In the case of an extraordinary circumstances where you need to drop off your child before 8:15, special arrangements need to be made with the school. Please contact either the office or your child's teacher. Teachers are on duty beginning at 8:15. Please drop your pre-schooler or kindergartner off directly into the care of a teacher.

There is an "End-of-the-Day" form for you to fill out which lets the school know whether your child is *usually* on the bus, picked up by you (or someone else), in

afterschool care, etc. **A dated note** from home is needed for any changes in busing, **pick-up or afterschool arrangements**. If we do not have a note, we will follow the regular routine. If anyone other than you is going to pick up your child we need a note specifying who has the authority to do so. If this will be happening on a regular basis, a blanket note will do. Any notes regarding busing or changes in end-of-the-day plans should be given to the teacher who will then post them on the bulletin board in the either the upstairs or downstairs hallways, depending on the child's class. If your child's going-home plans change during the day, call and let us know.

If your child rides the bus and will not be coming to school on a particular day or if he/she will not be riding the bus home, notify the bus garage as early as possible. Bus Garage telephone #'s: Berlin 658-2812; Chatham 392-1521; New Lebanon 794-8316x3019; East Greenbush 477-9288; Averill Park 674-7070.

Dismissal for **all** students is at 3:00 pm Monday-Thursday, and at 12:00 pm on Fridays. Children not picked up by 3:10 (or 12:10 on Fridays) will be placed in afterschool care.

AFTERSCHOOL CARE

We believe that children should be given time at the end of the day for unstructured play outdoors on the playgrounds, in the streams or woods. As a result, children cherish After Care as it allows them the freedom and flexibility to make up and decide their own play. We feel that too often, children nowadays aren't given such opportunities to be spontaneous and creative together. Afterschool Care fulfills this role in our community.

After Care begins with a snack and then generally goes outside during the first hour, sometimes staying later when the weather is particularly nice. Inside play may be in the Preschool, Kindergarten, Library, Family or Art rooms. When outside, a sign will be placed on the front door of the school indicating whether children can be picked up on the "little" or "big" playgrounds. Children with homework will be given the opportunity to work on it after outside time whether inside or outside. Children are responsible for helping to tidy and clean up the afterschool care play areas. Please allow some extra time when picking up to allow for this.

After Care is available Monday through Thursday from 3:00 to 5:30 and on Friday from 12:00 to 5:30. We are currently in the process of collectively working out an equitable system for After Care. Details in regards to cost and availability will be forthcoming.

LUNCHES AND SNACKS

All children each day need a snack, lunch (except on Fridays if they are not staying for after care) and a water bottle. We request that you do not send in sugary foods or sodas. For birthdays and parties in the classrooms, limit the number of sweet treats (no processed sugar snacks), be mindful of sugar use and please accommodate food allergies in the classroom as much as possible or provide options for those children who cannot consume certain ingredients. We encourage healthful snacks such as sandwiches, fruit, yogurt, popcorn, pretzels and nuts, rather than oreos, brownies, puddings, etc. We have found that most children have a hard time sitting still and concentrating after they have eaten a lot of sugar. Another snack is needed if a child is staying in afterschool. A list of food allergies (and any other health concerns) from your child's information forms will be given to the teachers at the beginning of the school year.

SNOW DAYS

Mountain Road is part of the School Closings Network that broadcasts closings or delays on local TV, radio and other media. On days of weather related delays, staff members are expected to be at school at their regular times as early as safe driving permits. Notice of delays or closings will also be on the school's Voice Mail message by 6:30 am whenever possible. School cancellation/delay announcements are broadcast on all local TV stations. They are also broadcast on WGY 810AM and other local radio stations. School closings are announced alphabetically or by County (Columbia).

There may be times when other school districts will be closed and we are open. Children may arrive from those districts, but there will be no buses. Parents should exercise their own judgment as to whether or not to transport children as local conditions vary. In the event that another district dismisses early, we will check to make sure someone will be home to meet the children who go on the bus. An emergency form should be on file in the school office indicating where each child should go in case of early dismissal. If we cannot reach anybody, we will keep children in school.

Classes may not start until the delayed arrival time at the discretion of the staff members that are present. Snow days are a good way to network with other parents and arrange care schedules or play dates with each other.

STUDENT PLACEMENT

Philosophy

Children grow along a developmental spectrum. Children take a shorter or longer time to mature at each stage. Not all children learn to speak, walk, or read at the same age. In the interest of the child, we as teachers and parents need to be aware of not just the chronological age of a child but of also their developmental age and readiness.

Emotional, social, and intellectual maturity are all part of this developmental readiness. Misplacing a child in terms of this developmental readiness impacts not only that child but also all of the children in the class.

Some children are "late bloomers." This is not a reflection of their inherent intelligence or lack of it. Children are interested in and practice needed skills when it is appropriate for them to do so. Asking a child to do things before he or she is ready sets a child up for failure and learning difficulties. There is evidence that misplacing a child cause's considerable stress as more is asked of a child than he or she has the resources to meet. They become acutely aware that everyone else can do it and they can't. Social needs are also determined more by developmental level rather than chronological age. Misplacing a child socially can be as detrimental to the child's well being as misplacing the child academically. We, at Mountain Road School, feel it is important for children to have time to grow at their own pace.

Policy

Mountain Road School assumes the responsibility for the placement of children in the appropriate class/grade level. For students transferring from another school, Mountain Road will look both to the recommendations of the previous school and of the parents. For students returning to Mountain Road School, the Director will look first to the recommendation of the child's classroom teacher and make a decision based on this recommendation and on discussion between the class teacher and the parents. If there is some question about placement for the following year, it will be discussed at the spring conference (before the final conference of the year).

In the event that a decision is not supported by the parent(s), the school will use the services of Mountain Road School's psychologist, the local school district psychologist, or another professional to administer appropriate academic placement or developmental screening tests in order to help determine the most appropriate placement for the child. The results of the tests will be taken into account and the final decision will be made by the school.

Class Configurations

Once an appropriate grade level placement is determined, there may still be a question of class placement. Because of its small size and the small class sizes, Mountain Road School must maintain the flexibility to determine class configurations based on changing enrollment figures. In any given year, it is possible that one grade level may be split between two classes (e.g., a 1st-2nd class and a 2nd-3rd class). Parents are invited to state preferences, but Mountain Road School reserves the right to place students in a particular class, taking into account the needs of the child and of the class group.

SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICY

The Mountain Road School Community places the highest priority on creating a learning environment that emphasizes mutual respect, peaceful conflict resolution skills, and emotionally and physically safe, socially inclusive classrooms and playgrounds for all. To this end, we implement the following procedure:

1. It is expected that teachers will actively monitor, be aware of and responsible for the social and emotional atmosphere of their classroom. Our goal is a harmonious, respectful, open and honest atmosphere throughout the school. Everyone is to treat each other and every thing with respect.
2. Teachers will take the time to listen and speak with all children involved in any incident. The teacher will support children in taking responsibility for their behavior. Conflict resolution skills using “I” messages will be facilitated during group meetings or in individual meetings with children. Children may use teacher support/coaching, especially during group situations.
3. Teachers will take all complaints of social cruelty seriously and will determine the seriousness of each complaint in a conference with the child. The teacher will take the time to listen carefully to the child. Children may need parental support to express themselves. If necessary, the teacher will follow up with a meeting with the child’s parent.
4. The teacher is responsible for attentive monitoring of the situation, including awareness concerning tone of voice, body language, and teasing, and by “checking in” with students involved. If monitoring reveals a serious or a continuing problem or if there is a second complaint, the Director and the parents of all parties are notified. Group conferences may be useful.
5. Consequences shall be applied to recurring incidences in accordance with the school’s discipline policy.

COMMUNITY COMPACT FOR UNDERSTANDING

At Mountain Road School we believe that education works best as a cooperative process among teachers, staff, parents, students and the community at large. Parents’ involvement in their children’s education contributes greatly toward their success and Mountain Road School relies on this cooperation to create the innovative and alternative educational environment that is at the core of our mission. As a result, we have initiated at the beginning of each school year, a

way of formally acknowledging this collaboration and the responsibilities of each member in the school community with a Community Compact for Understanding. Each member of the school community is asked to sign the compact within the first few weeks of school. This compact of understanding is a way of clearly stating our common commitment to collaboration in creating a learning community that nourishes and supports all of its members. If a situation ever arises in which the spirit or words of the compact is consistently not being met, all involved parties gather for a Compact Meeting to discuss and plan solutions. It is through this level of commitment and cooperation that we are able to successfully fulfill the school's mission and prevent misunderstandings and conflict before it arises.

The Student pledges to:

- Do my best to learn while in classes and when doing the home study I am assigned.
- Show respect, through my words and my actions, for my school, my teachers, people, other materials, and myself.
- Be inclusive of others and resolve conflicts in a positive, non-violent manner.
- Take responsibility for my actions and my safety.
- Believe that I am a person who can learn in many different ways.

I, _____, **Student**, will do my best to keep this agreement.
Date _____.

The Parents pledge to:

- Read the school handbook and abide by the policies and guidelines set out in it.
- To the very best of my ability give 2 hours of volunteer service per month or 20 hours per year (or a payment of \$15/service hour) that will benefit the school and help my child and others learn.
- Ensure that my child arrives at school on time (8:30 am) rested, well fed and ready to learn.
- Ensure that my child comes to school dressed appropriately for the weather and with a nutritious lunch, snack and water bottle.
- Help my child take responsibility for completing home-study assignments in a timely manner.
- Keep myself informed and up to date about events and issues at school by reading the notices in newsletters, e-mails, posted announcements and in notes sent home via backpack express.
- Attend all individual parent/teacher conferences and at least one community meeting per year.
- Help strengthen the school community by participating in events and discussions whenever possible.
- Show respect and support, through my words and actions, for my child, other students, the staff and the school.

I, _____ **and** _____,
Parent(s)/legal guardian(s), agree to do my best to follow through with the responsibilities listed above.
Date _____.

The Administration and Staff of the Mountain Road School pledge to:

- Provide a safe, cooperative and respectful environment for learning.
- Believe that all students can succeed and learn.

- Nurture each child’s innate creativity and encourage his/her self-expression using many modalities.
- Communicate and work with each family to support their child’s learning.
- Have challenging expectations for students and staff.
- Seek out and value parent participation and input in all areas of the school community.
- Respect and honor the cultural differences of student and their families.
- Seek to improve our program through an ongoing cycle of planning, evaluation and refinement.

We, _____,

Teachers and _____, Director

Pledge the school staff’s commitment to the above stated responsibilities and ideals.

Date _____.

To help students further understand their responsibilities for learning we share with the children the following:

The Student pledges to:

- **Do my best to learn while in classes and when doing the home study I am assigned.**

This means:

- No disruptive behavior in class: Interrupting, side conversations or physically distracting others.
- No refusing assignments in or out of class.

- **Show respect, through my words and my actions, for my school, my teachers, people, other materials, and myself.**

This means to show respect for:

- The authority of adults – respond to adult direction
- Each other – no teasing, put-downs or physically hurting others
- Equipment – no stealing, throwing or damaging objects
- Our community – no vulgar language
- Myself – taking care of myself, believing in myself and my capabilities, trying my best

- **Be inclusive of others and resolve conflicts in a positive, non-violent manner.**

This means:

- No threats or intimidation
- No hurting others – hitting, kicking, biting
- No exclusion

- **Take responsibility for my actions and my safety.**

This means:

- No lying
- No running indoors
- No leaving supervised areas
- No wrestling or inappropriate rough play

- **Believe that I am a person who can learn in many different ways.**

We want everyone to try – just give it a shot, even if it’s new!

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Teachers have a responsibility to set disciplinary standards within the classrooms. Our goal is to foster the development of self-discipline and self-motivation in the child along with an attitude of caring and respect for all beings. It is important that all members of the community—students, teachers and parents—are committed to and feel part of this process.

The school has adopted The Nurtured Heart Approach to assist in this process. The Nurtured Heart Approach lays the foundation for a healthy, positive and reciprocal relationship between adults and children. As a result of the approach, children will become adept at discerning what is in their best interest and, as a result, will learn to make better choices. Children begin to shift to an inner perception of success and prosperity. Through the creation of success experiences, Nurtured Heart accomplishes the mission of helping children develop inner strength to draw upon to deal with the daily conflicts they face in our world.

Various other techniques we use to assist in creating a healthy, positive school environment are: children having input into making class rules and consequences, class meetings, the use of peaceful conflict resolution, community council meetings, the Community Compact for Understanding and the use of role playing and other techniques to develop empathy. For major disruptions or other infractions students will be assisted through a problem solving process in which they are held responsible for their behavior and are given support to come up with their own solutions to the problem. Parents are considered as partners in the process and will be contacted for consultation in regard to their children's behavior.

Teachers and assistants may not use, or threaten to use, any form of physical punishment; nor may a teacher use shaming. The teacher is allowed to physically assist a child in performing appropriate behavior, if necessary. "Time out" should not be used in a punitive way, but only as a means of having a child "cool down" or "take space" if needed. Consequences could range from loss of privilege to suspension to expulsion depending on the seriousness and frequency of inappropriate behavior. In the case of a serious or frequent inappropriate behavior the Director and the parent are to be notified. Teachers are encouraged to share questions and concerns about students during faculty and child study meetings.

Teachers have the responsibility to notice changes of behavior that may lead to future disciplinary problems. Teachers will step in when they feel there is a threat of immediate physical or emotional harm to a child or staff member. In regard to exceptional behavior in a child, the teacher is required to always contact Director FIRST to discuss the situation, and then the parent to share concerns and propose collaborating on a behavior plan as needed. Any behavior modification plan needs to be explained to and approved by the parents of the child involved. An important piece of the evaluation process involves discussing a child's behavior/social development with the parents. In case of serious concerns and issues, the Director or school psychologist (if available) will be consulted and/or used on a regular basis to solve problems.

The Director should be brought into a discipline situation when:

1. The disruption in the class is too great.
2. More than one class is involved.
3. The teacher's strategies have not worked.

4. A very serious infraction is involved.

General expectations that apply to all the classes:

1. Respectful attitude toward others.
2. Walking in the halls
3. No throwing objects in the classroom
4. Quiet voices inside (some exception made for activity in the Family Room & preschool!).
5. Hold onto railing and walking quietly when going up or down stairs
6. Telling teacher when leaving the classroom.

HEALTH POLICY

Mountain Road School wants to provide a safe and healthy environment for all children. In order to do that there are some rules we ask you to follow:

- Please notify the school when your child is sick and will not be attending.
- If your child has any special health problems, such as allergies, or other situations, we should be aware of, please let us know. If a child is in need of medication during school time, a written note from you is required for it to be administered by a teacher or staff member. The medication should be in its original prescription bottle or package.
- The school is required to have a record of your child's immunizations signed by your doctor. If you have chosen not to immunize your child, we are legally required to have a letter from you stating your reasons – i.e. medical or religious -- or a note from your doctor.
- For the health of all, children with contagious diseases, e.g. flu, chicken pox, head lice, Coxsackie's virus, etc., are not allowed at school until the period of contagion has passed. If your child contracts one of these illnesses, please let the school know so that other parents may be on the look out for similar symptoms in their own children.
- Do not send your child to school if she/he exhibits the following symptoms: fever, diarrhea, vomiting, heavy coughing, sore throat, swollen glands, earache, or any unexplained rashes. Do not send your child to school with impetigo unless it is covered. If you are unsure whether to send your child to school, consult with your doctor. Please consider whether you would want other children in your child's class to be in school with similar symptoms.
- If your child has been out of school due to illness for more than five (5) days or has stayed overnight in a hospital for treatment, a note from your doctor to the Director is required before the child may return to school. The note must specifically outline any restrictions on your child's activities. If accepted by the school, these restrictions will be in effect until they are amended by another note from the doctor. No changes in a child's status may be made without direct contact with the doctor. Doctors may call the Director at: (518) 794-8520 or send a facsimile to: (518) 794- 8623. If the school does not feel it can adequately administer the restrictions, the child may not return to school until the school receives a new doctor's note that is feasible. In such cases, the Director will notify you and will work to help you develop an alternate schooling plan.
- If your child is found to have head lice, he/she will be sent home and may not return to school until the lice are gone.
- If your child becomes ill or injured during the day, the school will use its judgment as to the best course of action. This may include, but is not limited to: administering first aid, calling you or your proxy and asking you to pick up your child, driving your child to the

hospital, calling an ambulance. If the school cannot reach you, it will contact the person(s) listed on your Emergency Form. In the case that a hospital trip is necessary, the child will be taken to the hospital listed on the Emergency Form and Hospital Treatment Release Form. In the case of bumps or bruises that occur in the course of a normal day, the teacher will make note of what happened, if known, and will inform you when you pick up your child or by e-mail. Feel free to call the teacher if there is any worry or doubt about a specific bump or bruise.

NONVIOLENCE POLICY

Because of our desire to create a peaceful and respectful atmosphere in the school, we ask that you guide your child in what toys and books are appropriate to bring to school. We reserve the right to limit or ban certain toys or books in the school.

GRIEVANCE POLICY

At Mountain Road School we value each individual as a member of our school community. It is hoped that differences can be worked out one on one in a way satisfactorily to all. **We encourage everyone in the school to go directly to the person involved to resolve problems as they arise.** Parents with questions about the school and its policies may turn to the Parent Representative for help. In the event that a parent has an issue that is not being resolved in a satisfactory manner, we provide the following procedure:

1. A formal meeting is scheduled with the teacher to discuss and clarify the issue and to seek a solution. A formal log of the meeting noting date, time, information shared, and agreed solution is recorded, and is signed by all parties.
2. Teacher meets with Director within two days of meeting with the parent to present the formal log of their meeting and to present solution for approval by Director. At future meeting is scheduled for all concerned to assess the effectiveness of the solution.
3. Teacher communicates to parent regarding the meeting with the Director, and to schedule future meeting, preferably within three days.
4. All forms, letters, projected plans filed in child's folder.
5. Parent, teacher and Director meet as scheduled to discuss effectiveness of solution.
6. If the solution is not effective and/or there is no agreed upon solution:
 - a. Teacher Collaborative meets with parents and teacher
 - b. Secretary to be present to take notes
 - d. Written grievance from parents to be presented at beginning of meeting; written report from teacher to be presented at beginning of meeting
 - e. All formal logs of meetings are submitted
 - f. Director collects all information
 - g. The Board is notified of the grievance in process.
7. The Teacher Collaborative considers all points of view and through an informed decision creates an Action Plan. They have three days to accomplish this.
8. Director, Teacher, Parents, and recording secretary, meet within 3 days after Action Plan is created.
 - a. Parents and teacher sign an agreement to follow Action Plan;

b. Date is set to determine effectiveness of said plan.

If the grievance were with the Director rather than a classroom teacher, the parent would meet first with the Director and then proceed to 6 if no solution is reached.

It is hoped that through this process with all parties working in good faith, a satisfactory solution could be reached. In the unlikely and unfortunate event that the process does not produce a satisfactory result, it may be that there is no workable solution, although if all parties are willing it may be possible to seek professional mediation.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

Tuition can be paid annually, semi-annually (60% August, 40% January) or monthly. Failure to pay by the due dates will result in a \$25 late fee for every month overdue and a finance charge of 1.5%/month will also be added after the first month overdue. Please be sure to write on the check the name of the student and the time period for which the check should be credited. Checks can be mailed to the school or put in the brown plastic in-basket in the office. We would rather not accept tuition payments in cash if at all possible.

Any and all checks to the school should have the purpose for the check recorded on the memo line of the check. It is helpful when paying for multiple purposes to use separate checks. Checks for special events, and fundraising items should be made out to Mountain Road School unless otherwise specified. Book order checks should be made out to Scholastic directly.

The budgeted income for the school is based solely on tuition and fundraising. You are responsible for the entire year's tuition in event of early withdrawal, unless other arrangements are agreed upon with the school. If you contract for a set number of days in the Preschool and reduce the number, you are financially responsible for that number unless the slot is filled.

There is a one-time per child \$30 application and \$70 enrollment fee when you enroll your child. Please note that this does not apply to tuition. There is also a one-time \$150 student supply fee due at the beginning of the year. No child will be re-enrolled if there are outstanding charges from the previous year. No school records will be released until all contractual obligations are fulfilled. For students re-enrolling for the following year, a \$500 non-refundable deposit for each child is due by March 1st. It will be applied to the following year's tuition agreement.

FINANCIAL AID

The school expects each family's commitment to meet tuition obligations while understanding variable ability to pay. An award in one year does not guarantee any future award. Arrangements for tuition assistance awards are established at the discretion of the Board of Directors Finance Committee and approval by the Board based on the needs of both the school and the individual family.

Parents needing financial assistance are required to submit a school application, which can be obtained in the office, along with sending financial information to the National Association of Independent Schools Student Scholarship Service (NAIS SSS). Requests for the coming school year need to be submitted by April 1st of the current year. Priority will be given to returning students over new ones.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

Mountain Road is a small school, and we try to keep our tuition affordable. Because of this we rely on parent participation to accomplish many of the tasks that keep the school in good shape physically, spiritually, and financially. Twenty (20) hours per year of Parent Participation are required as a minimum and may be completed in any of the following areas below. Families are asked to keep track of the time they put in during the year on the yellow Parent Participation form provided in the Back-to-school mailing and submit the completed form into the school by June 1st. Families do have the option of paying \$15/hour in lieu of participating.

WORK DAYS

The school holds several work days a year, before school begins, and in the fall, winter, and spring. Various maintenance and school improvement projects are done, ranging from cutting brush, building sandboxes, painting rooms, building shelves, winterizing windows etc. etc. You may also volunteer to help with other needed physical plant projects at the discretion of your classroom teacher or Director at any other time. Both pre and post school-year help is always welcomed. All workday or special project hours count for Parent Participation requirements

FUNDRAISING

The Development Committee plans and coordinates fundraisers, the annual appeal, social events and some public relations for the school. If you have any ideas to share, be sure to contact the Development Committee. All fundraising hours count towards Parent Participation requirements

OTHER PARENT PARTICIPATION

Parents are also needed as Board of Directors members, participants on committees (Development, Retention and Recruitment, Hiring, Community Sunshine, etc.) helpers with Open Houses, to do Book Orders or coordinate Pizza Day, to help with website updating, publicity or outreach work, to assist in extra maintenance and cleaning projects, to provide staff in-service or parent programs, to facilitate activities or clubs in school or Afterschool Care, and in other ways that might not be listed above. This help and necessary supplementation to our school also counts toward Participation requirements.

PARENT HELPERS

There are certain activities that are necessary and vital to everyday school functioning that **will not count** toward the above. Every class needs a "Room Parent" to help the teacher plan and organize parties, field trips, etc. (A Room Parent serves for half or whole year.) Parents are also needed as field trip drivers and to provide refreshments for parties and events. We welcome parents to help plan and participate in all our holiday celebrations: at Halloween, Hanukkah, Christmas, Valentine's Day, Passover, Earth Day, and May Day. During the year all parents are welcome to attend special programs that the children present. And of course, you are welcome to visit the classrooms any time, although we ask that you let us know in advance that you are coming.

We also love having parents and friends come in and share their talents and interests with the children. Parents may also be able to run after school interest groups or clubs. Up to five hours of your participation requirements may count for approved classroom or after-school instruction. If you have something you would like to share with the children, please speak to either your child's teacher or the Director.

CURRICULUM NOTES

Mountain Road School prides itself on being a place of progressive education. We follow a child-centered, student driven curriculum rather than following a specified rigid curriculum structure. Class curriculum guidelines for language arts and math are filed in the office. In 2009-2010 we will be continuing with the all-school's curricular theme of "Sense of Place" for social studies and centering our science curriculum around the theme of the Earth. If you have any questions about the curriculum of a particular class, please feel free to discuss it with the teacher or the Director.

At our discretion, we administer standardized tests and informal assessments for elementary grades, which is required of all New York public schools but elective for private schools. We believe it is beneficial for the students to have some experience in test taking before they leave Mountain Road and that it can be a useful indicator for the teachers. We do not teach to the test, nor do we believe that the results are more important than daily indicators of classroom work. The areas generally tested are reading, writing, and mathematics.

We offer special instruction in Music, Art, French, and Sign Language by expert teachers once a week for each class, preschool through sixth grade and a comprehensive outdoor nature program for children in grades K-6 in collaboration with Flying Deer. Our renowned theater program takes place in the spring and includes planning, technique, and rehearsal sessions for our annual school play. Time involved varies with the scope and roles of classes and individuals participating. P.E. is taught by the class teachers and for the younger children is incorporated into their outside play.

CLOTHING

Because children inevitably have accidents or get wet or dirty (we believe in allowing children to freely explore their environment), it is important that your child have a COMPLETE labeled change of clothes left at school. This change of clothes should include:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| ___ two pairs of socks | ___ a set of underwear |
| ___ a short-sleeved shirt | ___ a long-sleeved shirt |
| ___ a pair of shorts | ___ a pair of long pants |
| ___ a sweatshirt or sweater | |
| ___ in winter: 2 pairs of waterproof mittens or gloves, and a hat | |

Please make sure all clothes are labeled, including slippers, shoes and boots. (No child ever claims lost underwear or socks!!) Each child needs a pair of slippers at school (please be sure they are not large and floppy such as many cute animal slippers—these are difficult for the children to keep on and potentially dangerous on the stairs). We do not wear shoes in the classroom. It saves on noise and dirt and is much more comfortable. Please make sure that your child can put on his/her own shoes and boots.

We go out every day, except those of extreme cold or heavy rain. **Please make sure your child is dressed for the weather. Children are required to have a full set of good rain gear including a raincoat, rain pants and rain boots.** These items are critical for your child to enjoy outside time and to be able to explore his/her environment fully. In the winter, **snow pants, a warm winter coat, a fleece or wool hat, waterproof mittens or gloves and snow boots** are a must. On Nature Wednesdays children are asked to wear layered clothing made from wool or synthetic materials to avoid being cold and uncomfortable and to prevent dangerous chilling (hypothermia). **Cotton loses all insulating value when wet.**

LOST & FOUND

We have a lost & found located in a barrel in the resource room. Please check it periodically. If you do not find a missing item, please send a note to the office describing in detail the missing item. We will pass the information on to all teachers and to the whole school via the next newsletter. We clean out the lost & found at Christmastime and at the end of the year with leftovers donated to charity. We welcome any hand-me-down outdoors gear as extra items for children who forgot theirs or who need a change of gear after playing on a wet day. These items are stored in the two wooden chests on the 2nd and 3rd floors.

PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION

At Mountain Road School we believe that establishing good parent/teacher communication helps create a strong partnership and such a partnership is always in the best interest of the child. Please let your child's teacher know if there is anything happening at home that might affect your child - i.e. illness or death of a family member or close friend, new baby, separation or divorce. It helps us in our dealings with the child and will be kept confidential.

Roughly each month there will be a school newsletter sent home via e-mail that contains pertinent information. Please read it. A hard copy will also be posted in the resource room for your convenience. Teachers are required to supplement monthly newsletters with frequent documentation from their classroom. There will also be other memos or correspondence sent home from time to time with your child via backpack express. We suggest that you establish with your child where paper "stuff" should be carried, and that you get in the habit of regularly checking to see if there are notes home. Preschool children will have their take home items clipped above their cubbies in the hall. If you have more than one child in the school, we will give the correspondence to the youngest child, since younger children's lunch boxes and backpacks are usually more frequently checked. If your youngest child is not in school on a day a notice goes home, then we will give your notice to his/her sibling.

If you have any questions or concerns about your child or the school, contact your child's teacher or the Director to discuss issues or to set up an appointment for a formal or informal conference. Good communication is essential and is everyone's responsibility.

PARENT CONFERENCES & ASSESSMENT

The first parent/teacher conference in October is a goal setting conference which includes your child (ren). We believe establishing learning goals collectively helps children foster a life-long responsibility for learning and also creates a learning community that nourishes and supports each other. The goal setting conference in October will allow you and your child to review their work, clarify questions and establish learning goals. Twice a year, in March and June, each teacher will provide a written evaluation of each child's academic, emotional, physical and social growth. We believe the narrative form of evaluation to be a valuable tool which follows the school's philosophy of looking at the whole child and allows for a comprehensive evaluation of each student's growth at every developmental level. Each teacher will send out an email sign up form before all scheduled parent/teacher conferences (October, February and June). If you are unable to schedule a conference, the evaluation will be mailed. The teacher will be available for any special conferences requested by the parent. The teacher can also request a special conference with the parents if he/she feels it is needed. The Director is available to sit in on any conference. Childcare will be provided for your conference time, only.

PARENTS' ABSENCE FROM HOME

If you are taking a trip out of town and someone else will be caring for your child/ren, please provide the following information in writing before you go:

1. Name of the person who will be responsible for your child's care. If care is to be away from home, please give the school this person's address and telephone number.
2. The address and telephone number of your destination or how and when you may be reached.

CALENDAR & VACATIONS

The school provides a calendar and events listings at the beginning of the year. We generally follow the outline of the local New York public school districts surrounding us. School begins, traditionally, on the Thursday after Labor Day and goes to the second Wednesday in June. We are closed on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years, Martin Luther King's Birthday, Good Friday, and Memorial Day. We have vacation holidays before and after Thanksgiving, two weeks around Christmas & New Years, and "energy saving" weeks in February and April. There is no school on our three Parent/Teacher Conference days in October, February and May and our Staff In-service days. Afterschool care is available every day we are open except the day before the Christmas/New Years holiday break and Acknowledgments day in June.

BIRTHDAYS AND HOLIDAYS

At Mountain Road School we seek to promote inclusion of all members of our school community by acknowledging special celebrations like birthdays and holidays. Affirmation of the individual plays a big role in the behavior we role model for the students at all levels. Taking the time to celebrate each child's birthday with a caring ritual is just part of what makes the Mountain Road School experience special for a child. The birthday child is honored in the classroom on a special day, either on or close to the actual birthday, or on a specially chosen day for summer birthdays. We celebrate each child's birthday with cards made by classmates and a special birthday crown made by the teacher. Parents are welcome to attend and are invited to bring or send in special non-sugary refreshments (honey and maple sugar ok) for the celebration, but it's not required.

At Big Circle on Friday, the birthday child accepts wishes from friends in other classes and is recognized by the whole school community as entering a new year of growth!

Please note regarding birthday parties outside of school: please distribute invitations at school only if *all* of the children in the birthday child's class are invited. It is, of course, not an expectation that all children be invited, only that if not, we request that you mail the invitations and specifically inform those who are invited not to promote it at school. In this way we hope to minimize the potential for hurt feelings or feelings of being left out.

We celebrate many holidays throughout the year. We believe that it is important to honor the holidays from various traditions as part of our spiritual and multi-cultural approach to education. Most in school celebrations when possible will occur at Big Circle on Fridays and parents and family members are definitely welcome. We celebrate International Day of Peace, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Christmas, Valentine's Day, Passover, Earth Day and May Day. Individual classes are encouraged to hold celebrations for other holidays throughout the year, and we are open to suggestions of other whole school celebrations. In addition we hold annual all school celebrations such as the Lantern Walk, the Empty Bowls Dinner, the Holiday Fair, French Night, the Author's Tea, Spring Concert, Spring Fling and usually a Spring Dinner Dance.

The Abode Lantern Walk - This is a wonderful family-friendly alternative—or addition—to traditional "trick or treating." We gather in the courtyard at dusk on the scheduled day usually right before or on Halloween and follow the path of lighted jack o'lanterns through the Herb

Garden, playgrounds and fields to the bonfire at the Abode's Sacred Fire Circle. Along the way you will pass magical, mystical and mysterious creatures who offer treats. Then at the bonfire you will be treated to hot cider, songs, and stories as we gather to celebrate the natural forces of Mother Nature and her change of season.

To help prepare for this event, we ask parents to bring in *lots and lots and lots* of carved jack o'lanterns, offer to be a person in costume for the trick or treat stations along the way (Remember to focus on nature spirits, woodland creatures, benign witches and wizards. Fantasy & story book characters welcome. No scary, gory or gruesome characters at this party, please.), to provide treats, goodies, cider and cups even if you can't "creature" a station, and/or help setting up the path, cleaning up after and, taking home jack o'lanterns.

Halloween - We celebrate Halloween with a party, usually on the Friday morning closest to Halloween. Children are encouraged to come in costume (or bring one to put on if they can do it without too much trouble). We begin our festivities with a whole school costume parade through the school and out into the courtyard. Parents are not only welcome, but also needed. Room parents are asked to organize volunteers for decorations, refreshments and party helpers. After the parade that culminates in some shared Halloween songs, the children rotate through the classrooms in class groups to play various games devised by each teacher. They then adjourn to their own classrooms for refreshments. Despite the emphasis at Halloween on an excess of candy and other sweets, we encourage snacks of a more healthy variety such as popcorn, pretzels, apples, healthy muffins, etc.

Although for much of our popular culture Halloween is all about the spooky and the macabre, because of our strong belief in non-violence, and because we have very young children at the school, we do not allow costumes of a gory, violent, or macabre nature. We have found you can have just as much fun dressing up in other ways! We encourage the children to come as a favorite book character, an animal or fantasy creature, or to use their creative imagination to design a one-of-a-kind creation!

Empty Bowls - Service learning is an important part of Mountain Road School. Our Empty Bowls Dinner offers children the opportunity to develop service learning in cooperation with Darrow School. Children create handmade ceramic bowls and prepare a simple soup and bread during school for a community dinner to help those who are in need of food both locally and internationally. Parents and community members are invited to attend and all proceeds from the dinner benefit a local food pantry and an international hunger organization such as Oxfam.

Thanksgiving – For Thanksgiving, we hold a general celebration around the theme of harvest and gratitude and usually includes recognition of Native American culture. Use of song, dance, poetry and storytelling may be included. Each classroom can offer its own contribution.

Hanukkah – At Hanukkah we look for a Jewish teacher, parent or relative to help us organize a party which generally includes the story of the Miracle of the Lights, the lighting of the menorah, playing the dreidel game, singing songs, and eating potato latkes. Parents are needed to help organize the party and make latkes. Sometimes a parent will have a story of the Maccabees to share. The school has a number of books with Hanukkah stories.

Kwanzaa – Kwanzaa is an African American and Pan-African holiday which celebrates family, community and culture. Celebrated from 26 December thru 1 January, its origins are in the first harvest celebrations of Africa from which it takes its name. The name Kwanzaa is derived from the phrase "matunda ya kwanza" which means "first fruits" in Swahili, a Pan-African language which is the most widely spoken African language. Each year we celebrate Kwanzaa with the

help of a parent or relative who celebrates Kwanzaa and understands its origins and importance in our culture.

Christmas - A Christmas Party is held on the last day of school before the holiday vacation. The party begins in the Family Room with the whole school singing Christmas carols and awaiting Santa's visit. Each teacher orders a small gift for each child in his/her class, which is placed in Santa's bag for distribution by Santa. We sing songs, have a reading of the Christmas story, and enjoy Santa's visit. The party then moves to the individual rooms for refreshments. The teacher also buys a class gift that is unwrapped in a game called "Pass the Parcel" in each classroom. The teacher or parent volunteers may organize some games for the children. The room parent is asked to arrange for refreshments for the class.

Valentine's Day - For Valentine's Day the entire school is absorbed in making Valentines for their friends and classmates, which are distributed during the week or so prior to the Valentine's Day party. To insure that all children receive some valentines names are drawn, although children are not limited to the names they draw. Children are encouraged to show caring for others in this activity. A "Valentine Box" is provided for the class's valentines, which may be decorated by the teacher, the children or volunteers. In the upper grades, children will have the opportunity to mingle with each other with hearts on their backs and write words of appreciation to each other, as an additional way to build love and friendship. Teachers or room parents may organize games, and room parents are asked to organize refreshments.

Mid Year Concert – This is an opportunity for the music teacher to showcase his/her work with the classes in a performance setting. The date is usually chosen to coincide with an Open House.

Author's Tea – Parents are invited to come to the school at night to listen to children read from their own writing. Children's published books can later be taken home to reread and appreciate.

Passover – We hold a "mini" Passover Seder with the whole school at Passover. Parent volunteers are needed to help organize the event, get the needed food items, and to help preside over the Seder and tell the Passover story. We sit down to long "tables" (on the floor) in the Family Room with matzoh, haroset, horseradish, hardboiled eggs, parsley and salt water and a roasted shank bone (or representation thereof). When there are school children that know the blessings and questions they are encouraged to recite them.

Earth Day /May Day–These events take place somewhere around the end of April – beginning of May. Both celebrations may take separately or be combined. They are intended to honor the Earth and continue the school tradition of a Maypole dance and celebration.

Shatford Park Day - An all school picnic and fun day is held at the New Lebanon town park adjacent to the high school sometime before the end of school. Traditional activities include a park cleanup, scavenger hunt, bike riding, roller blading, tennis, softball/kickball, "capture the flag" etc. If it's warm enough, there's a sprinkler pool for the children to play in. Wading boots and nets are welcome for catching tadpoles, crayfish, and frogs. Parents are encouraged to attend. We stay all day!

School On Legs Week – School on Legs is a week long experiential, multi-disciplinary and multi-age learning experience occurring annually at Mountain Road School the first week in June. It culminates our year long school wide thematic science study through hands-on opportunities on and off campus. Children have the opportunity to learn in different settings

with children of all ages. This year's topic is the Earth. Children will be able to choose one activity each day of the week to participate in depending on interest, age constraints and parental involvement. Children will participate in what interests them and will have the opportunity to learn using all their senses in exciting ways. At Mountain Road School, we believe that children learn best when they are interested and motivated. Each School-On-Legs activity is designed to be exciting for every level and take advantage of our local resources and the creativity of our teachers. Children also will get the opportunity to learn from different adults in our community. We believe learning can happen both inside and outside the walls of our school. We rely on parents to help drive on field trips. Your participation as a driver/chaperone on one or many of our outings is critical in order for this week to be successful. We do charge a nominal fee for each child to cover the cost of the week.

Beach Day – On the last Monday or Tuesday, the school spends the day at a local beach (often Queechy Lake). Everyone is invited to go, relax and have fun in the sun! Lifeguards are hired and we anticipate the weather cooperating.

Acknowledgments – Acknowledgments (Graduation) is held on the last day of school that is a half-day. Teachers present a certificate of achievement to each child that denotes something special about the child. There is also a small gift, usually a book, which is presented at the same time. Graduating children are encouraged to do some kind of presentation—reading poems or essays, singing, reciting, etc. Faculty, Staff, Board and parent volunteers are also recognized. The ceremony is followed by an ice cream social.

FIELD TRIPS AND CULTURAL ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

Through the year there will be field trips scheduled for the different classes. Permission must be given each time a trip is taken. Parents and teachers transport the children in their cars or the school hires a bus. If this is a source of concern for you, please speak to your child's teacher. Seatbelts (and car seats for children under four and booster seats for children under seven) are required. No in-school arrangements can be made for a child who does not go on a trip.

PARENT EVENINGS AND STUDY GROUPS

As a result of Mountain Road School's collaborative mission, we offer a few times a year parent/teacher workshops in the evenings and study groups, facilitated by an outside expert speaker or staff member. These evenings are a chance to enrich the lives of parents and provide an opportunity to learn and grow together. Sometimes a speaker will address the group on a particular topic, and parents then form a study group to share ideas. We are always open to topic suggestions.

Please keep this handbook as a reference throughout the year. We may be updating and revising it during the year. If you have any questions or concerns about your child or the school, please feel free to speak with your child's teacher or the Director. The success of Mountain Road School depends upon the efforts and involvement of all families. The resulting sense of community is one of our greatest assets.