

# Family Handbook

2021-2022



## Northeast Iowa Montessori School

418 West Water Street

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[www.neim.us](http://www.neim.us)

# Northeast Iowa Montessori School

## **Welcome!**

Welcome to Northeast Iowa Montessori School (NEIM)! The staff and Board of Directors are pleased to invite you to become a part of our school. This handbook is provided as a ready reference of the most commonly referred-to policies at NEIM. Please feel free to address any questions about content in this handbook to the NEIM Head of School, staff, or Board of Directors. We are proud to have you join the NEIM community.

## **About NEIM**

Northeast Iowa Montessori School, located at 418 West Water Street in downtown Decorah, Iowa, serves families with children ages 3 years to 12 years old in daily preschool and elementary programming and after-school care. NEIM follows the Montessori philosophy of learning.

NEIM is currently licensed by the Iowa Department of Human Services to provide a full or part time learning environment in compliance with the Iowa Administrative Code 641, Chapter 109, and is a certified collaborative partner with the Decorah Community School District. NEIM adheres to the Iowa QPPS (quality preschool program standards) and maintains a 4 out of 5 star rating under the QRS (Quality Rating System) system issued by the Iowa Department of Human Services.

NEIM is an equal opportunity provider. Applications for enrollment are considered without regard to race, religion, color, gender, national origin, disabling conditions, or any other basis prohibited by law. NEIM will follow the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) as required by law. NEIM will, to the extent possible, provide full opportunities for meaningful participation of families with children with limited English proficiency and families with children with disabilities, including providing information and school reports in an understandable and uniform format and in alternative formats on request, and, if possible, in the family's preferred language.

## **Mission Statement**

*The mission of NEIM is to provide a nurturing environment that cultivates each child's intellectual and creative potential while instilling a sense of individual and global responsibility. NEIM directly follows the philosophy, principles and methods of Dr. Maria Montessori.*

## **Montessori Education**

Montessori education was founded in 1907 by Dr. Maria Montessori, one of the first women in Italy to become a physician. Through her scientific observation of children's learning processes, Dr. Montessori developed an educational philosophy, methods, and materials. She theorized that children have sensitive periods of development early in life during which they have the special ability to learn through interaction with their environment. She called this stage from birth to age six the 'absorbent mind.' Based on the premise that children teach themselves, Dr. Montessori designed a 'prepared environment' (or 'Children's House') in which children could choose from developmentally appropriate materials to fulfill their natural drive to discover and learn.

Today, Montessori educators continue to design classrooms following Dr. Montessori's core educational philosophy to provide an environment in which children are free to respond to their tendencies to explore and discover. Children's innate desire to do meaningful work is supported through opportunities to engage in spontaneous, purposeful activities with the guidance of a trained adult. Within a framework of order and freedom within limits, children develop concentration and joyful self-discipline, and progress at their own pace and rhythm according to their individual capabilities.

The Montessori method is now well-known throughout the world, and Montessori schools can be found in over sixty countries. In the United States, there are over 5,000 private Montessori schools with an additional 200 Montessori programs operating within public schools.

Montessori schools vary greatly in their scope and structure. A Montessori school is recognizable by its adherence to basic Montessori principles and by the leadership of a Montessori-trained teacher. The most commonly found Montessori school is the 'Children's House' or 'primary' level, serving ages 3-6 and including kindergarten. There are also Montessori schools for infants and toddlers, Elementary I (6-9), Elementary II (9-12) adolescent and high schools with full diploma options.

## **Montessori at NEIM**

In NEIM's carefully prepared Montessori learning environment, the children are exposed to materials and experiences through which they develop critical thinking skills as well as physical and psychological abilities. The program is designed to help children with their task of inner construction as they grow from childhood to maturity. The multi-age classroom provides a family-like environment in which older children reinforce their own learning by helping younger children, and younger children enhance their own learning by observing and interacting with others.

NEIM offers children a variety of educational experiences, including exercises for motor development and self-mastery, and programs in language, reading, math, culture, sensory experiences, practical life, geography, science, nature, music and art. These early learning experiences lay a foundation for future success by developing focus and determination, and instilling within each child a profound sense of accomplishment and inner joy related to learning.

Although much emphasis in the NEIM program is placed on academic development, the school also recognizes the importance of social development in young children and includes curriculum to support social growth. Throughout the day, collective group activities and free-play times provide children with both structured and unstructured social situations in which to build social skills and practice living and working peacefully in a community with others.

### **NEIM Community**

NEIM recognizes that children thrive when immersed in a safe environment guided by nurturing and thoughtful role models. We provide support for families in meeting the challenges of raising children by fostering a community of caring adults and children concerned with the well-being of each individual member.

NEIM families, staff, and board members share a passion for and long-term commitment to Montessori education and cultivate the friendly connections of a committed community. All members of the NEIM community participate in the life of the school, together building a strong cooperative spirit that supports the growth of each child within it. Family members are encouraged to become involved in school activities such as field trips, picnics, potlucks, fundraisers, and special events. Volunteers at the school are most welcome. Please contact the Head of School if you have an interest in sharing your time and skills with NEIM.

### **NEIM Organization**

The NEIM program was created in 2003 by a group of parents in Northeast Iowa interested in developing another option for supportive and creative education in the area. NEIM is a private non-profit agency with 501(c)3 status. The school operates under the direction of a volunteer Board of Directors made up of parents of current and former students and external community members. The Board of Directors is responsible for the strategic vision and management of the school and meets on a monthly basis. The Board welcomes comments and ideas from NEIM families. If you are interested in serving on the Board or would like to nominate someone for the Board, please contact the Head of School.

**PROGRAMS AT NEIM-due to COVID-19 Children’s House and Cosmic Explorers classrooms will not mix.**

**NEIM Children’s House**

The NEIM Children’s House, or primary Montessori environment, is a multi-age classroom of children ages 3 years to 6 years old. The NEIM Children’s House is recommended as a three-year program, with children entering first grade upon graduation. Because a child builds on previous years' experiences and mastery of materials, the three-year program facilitates growth toward independence and increased self-confidence. The three-year program also supports the development of leadership skills by allowing older children the opportunity to teach, guide, and serve as role-models for younger children in the program.

**NEIM Children’s House Entrance Requirements**

The NEIM Children’s House environment is dedicated to children ages 3 years to 6 years. All children within this age range need to be **fully potty trained**. Potty trained is defined as **consistently using the restroom independently with minimal assistance.**

**NEIM Children’s House Program Options**

NEIM offers a Full-Day Children’s House Program and a Morning Children’s House Program. Consistency and routine are important elements in the Montessori curriculum, therefore both programs follow a five-day-a-week schedule.

<b>Full-Day Children’s House Program</b>	<b>Morning Children’s House Program</b>
8:15 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Monday-Friday	8:15 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Monday-Friday

**Elementary**

This Montessori experience is for our 6-12year old students. This translates to the traditional classroom grade level of 1st through 6th grades. Elementary is a multi-aged program to allow for growth of the human tendencies by learning through exploration and observations. This program operates Monday through Friday, 8:15-3:00 p.m., and is a full day program.

**Enrollment**

We strongly encourage prospective families to visit the school before enrolling. **At this time due to COVID-19 no in person tours will be given.** We request that you arrange for a tour and observation appointment with the Head of School to maximize your visit time and minimize disruption to the classroom. This 21/22 academic year only staff and students are allowed in the building this is due to COVID-19.

Enrollment is based upon interviews with lead guides and the HOS and openings that may be available in the program. If no openings are available, those wishing to be placed on the waiting list must submit a pre-registration form. Enrollment of children on the waiting list will be taken in order as classroom ratios allow. Siblings of children already in the program will have first priority on the waiting list.

For the safety of all the children in our school and to comply with Department of Human Services regulations, the following forms must be completed, signed, and returned **prior** to the first day of attendance at NEIM:

1. **Enrollment Agree**
2. **Child Intake Information**
3. **Consent and Release**
4. **Emergency Medical Treatment Authorization**
5. **Child Immunization Records or Exemption Card**
6. **Child Health Care Examination Form**
7. **Food Allergy/Exemption Form (as needed)**
8. **Permission for Giving Medication (as needed)**
9. **Form A, Competent Private Instruction Report (Elementary only)**

All records and files of children are confidential. Only those NEIM staff directly involved in the care of your child have permission to access forms containing personal information. Certified licensing consultants and Public Health Nurses may also review children's files as needed.

### **Ratios**

NEIM complies with the Iowa state regulations for minimum ratios of staff to children. At most times, NEIM maintains a much higher staff to child ratio than required by state guidelines, allowing a great deal of personal attention to children when needed.

<u>Ages of children</u>	<u>Minimum ratio of staff to children</u>
3 yrs.	1 caregiver to every 8 children
4 yrs.	1 caregiver to every 12 children
5 to 10 yrs.	1 caregiver to every 15 children

### **Observing at NEIM - *This is not an option for the 21/22 academic year due to COVID-19.***

NEIM welcomes parent observers, and we appreciate your interest in your child's education. Observation is the cornerstone of the Montessori method. Scientific observations by Dr. Maria Montessori allowed her insight into the true nature of the child. At NEIM, we believe that observation of the children is the most important role of the trained adult in the prepared environment. Only by careful observation can the adult appreciate and thoughtfully guide the development of the young child.

Please consider the following when planning an observation at NEIM:

- Parents are always welcome to observe at NEIM. However, we request that most formal observations in the Children's House programs be scheduled after November 1. This gives children two months at the beginning of the school year to build their community and become confident and comfortable in their learning space.
- Please arrange observations in advance with the Head of School.

- As with all visits, please check in with the Head of School or one of the guides when you arrive. You will be guided through the observation protocol.
- To help make your observation fruitful and enjoyable, please come with an open mind. Try to be objective, unobtrusive, patient, and humble.
- During your observation time, please minimize interaction with the children and guides so that work is not disrupted.
- Please remain in the observer's chair to help the children respect your place as an observer and allow you a more productive glimpse into the activities happening in the Children's House.
- We recommend that you write down your comments or questions and discuss them with a guide after your classroom visit.

### **NEIM Staff 2021-2022**

#### Head of School: Rachael Buresh

- 29+ years of business administration experience, including non-profits, school, and child development centers.
- National Administrators Credential
- New Staff Orientation Director
- Youth and Mental Health Credential
- ECERS-3 Certified
- The Center for Guided Montessori Studies Fundamentals graduate
- BA, North Dakota State University in Fargo, ND

#### Lead Guide: Heather Vilardo

- Center for Guided Montessori Studies Lead Guide
- AA degree from Waldorf College
- BA degree in Elementary Education from Luther
- MA degree in Special Education from Grand Canyon University
- Director of a child care center
- Head Start - Decorah

#### Assistant Guide: Jenny Lenehan

- AMI Assistant Training at Montessori Training Center of Minnesota
- BA, Upper Iowa University in Elementary Education with Early Childhood and Reading Endorsements

#### Assistant Guide: Claire Tebbenhoff

- AMI Assistant Training at Montessori Training Center of Minnesota
- BA Luther College, with emphasis on Early Childhood and Special Education

#### Elementary: Jane Busch

- AMI Elementary Training at Montessori Training Center of Minnesota
- BA University of Northern Iowa, in Elementary Education with an endorsement in Middle School education
- MA Loyola University, in Montessori Education

#### Assistant Guide: Gabriel Surovy

Mentor and substitute guide: Christine Gowdy-Jaehnig

After School Care Program Supervisor: Claire Tebbenhoff

Luther College Student Helpers: ***This is not an option for the 21/22 academic year due to COVID-19.***

Rotating\_NEIM collaborates with Luther College to employ qualified student workers as helpers in our programs. Luther College student helpers assist with lunch, rest time, after-school care, and transition times. Luther College student workers must pass background checks and follow NEIM policies to be employed at NEIM. Luther College students employed at NEIM historically have had outstanding integrity and have contributed greatly to the quality of our program.

All NEIM staff members meet or exceed Department of Human Services requirements and are Red Cross certified in First Aid, CPR, and Blood-borne Pathogens. All staff members and volunteers are required to follow the school's policies and procedures. All staff members must pass background checks and sign statements that they are free of communicable disease or other health concerns that could pose a threat to the health, safety or well-being of children. Staff members are regularly observed, supervised and evaluated by the Head of School.

Parent/Guardian Participation - ***Not an option for the 21/22 academic year due to COVID-19.***

Dr. Montessori meant for the prepared Children's House environment to be a supplement, not a substitute, for a child's home environment. She recognized that parents and guardians are the main educators for their children and that educators are in a partnership with parents and guardians. It is our responsibility to communicate openly and honestly with parents and guardians so that we can work together to meet the needs of the children.

We strive to provide parents and guardians with meaningful ways to participate and help with the environment, while respecting the important work being carried out by the children. We are careful to not interfere with the independence, work cycles, and presentations taking place.

Some of the ways in which families can participate at NEIM include:

- Assisting with the care of the environment (laundry, cleaning, recycling, library returns, shoveling, maintenance work)
- Making materials
- Helping out on field trips
- Sharing your special interests or talents
- Celebrating your child's birthday in the environment
- Attending and participating in fundraisers
- Attending parent education events



**Volunteering - *Not an option for the 21/22 academic year due to COVID-19.***

Individuals who wish to volunteer in the classroom will be asked to complete a background check through the Department of Human Services and sign a statement that they are free of communicable disease or other health concerns that could pose a threat to the health, safety, or well-being of children. Volunteers are required to maintain confidentiality regarding personal information about children and families.

**Parent and Guide Communication**

Enrolling your child at NEIM begins a relationship - a creative partnership. Your involvement in your child's education provides your child with security and continuity and supports our efforts to provide an extraordinary learning experience. Our staff is available to respond to questions from parents or guardians, and to act as a resource and support to them. Regular, private communication with your child's guides is highly encouraged.

- Miss Jane: [greenfields@mabeltel.coop](mailto:greenfields@mabeltel.coop)
- Miss Heather, Miss Jenny, or Miss Claire: [neimguides@gmail.com](mailto:neimguides@gmail.com)
- Head of School, Rachael Buresh: [neimontessori@gmail.com](mailto:neimontessori@gmail.com)

Much of the correspondence regarding school happenings and ongoing opportunities will be communicated electronically.

A hard copy of this Family Handbook is kept in the Head of School office. Should a parent or guardian need assistance accessing information or clearly understanding content within the handbook, the Head of School will arrange for appropriate accommodation.

**Grievance Protocol**

If you have a concern about any aspect of our programs, we ask that you contact the Head of School, Rachael Buresh. We encourage you to voice your opinions frankly and constructively.

**Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse**

All NEIM staff are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse. All staff will maintain updated certifications on the procedures for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect and are required to follow these procedures.

**Referrals and Services**

NEIM believes that families should be supported in making decisions about the services that their children may need and will provide access to services available in the community for extended needs (i.e. hearing/vision screening, speech services, etc.). Through the child empowerment agency, HAWC, and Northeast Iowa Community Action, we will do everything we can to help families find the services they need to achieve support for their families.

## **Licensing**

NEIM is currently licensed by the Iowa Department of Human Services to provide full or part time participation and child care, in compliance with the Iowa Administrative Code 641, Chapter 109.

## **Insurance**

Northeast Iowa Montessori holds an insurance policy necessary for basic liability insurance coverage.

## **Agencies involved with NEIM**

***Department of Human Services (DHS):*** This agency is a state agency that provides licensing for child care centers and preschools. Our license is reviewed every two years by DHS.

***Iowa Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R):*** This agency sets standards that childcare centers voluntarily follow to demonstrate increasing levels of excellence. The ***Quality Rating System (QRS)*** was developed to raise the quality of childcare in Iowa, to increase the number of children in high quality childcare settings and to educate parents/guardians about quality childcare. While NEIM is a preschool, we do offer extended day programs that put us in the category of also being a childcare center. We follow the best practices of QRS and have a rating of a Level 4 star out of a 5 star system. We have worked hard to reach this level of quality for your child.

***Quality Preschool Program Standards (QPPS):*** This is a system developed through CCR&R for quality assurance in preschools. Since we have a preschool curriculum in place at NEIM, we follow the QPPS standards developed by the Department of Human Services.

## **Home School Assistance Program (HSAP)**

The Decorah School district provides a certified teacher to families who choose to Homeschool their children. This program checks in with NEIM Elementary students as part of a requirement of the Department of Human Services. The Elementary Guide also holds an Iowa teaching license.

**OPERATING PLAN for the 21/22 Academic year due to COVID-19 -This Operating Plan is fluid and will have many changes throughout the 21/22 academic year. If you have any questions please reach out to the Head of School.**

## **Meals and Nutrition**

As per our requirements for licensing through the Department of Human Services, NEIM participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

All students will bring their own lunch and snacks for the day - this includes snacks for the After School Care Program. While not mandatory, we encourage parents/guardians to purchase organic products when possible and choose products that do not contain high fructose corn syrup or artificial flavorings or colorings.

A microwave oven is available for warming up food, and a refrigerator for keeping foods cold. Milk is available for all children at lunch time. Please prepare fruits, eggs and vegetables at home, as much as possible. Ex. hard-boiled eggs should be peeled, fruit peeled and sliced as needed.

Provide your own table service with these lunches, which includes a container for whatever the food is, plate/bowl, silverware.

Lunches sent from home must meet the CACFP guidelines and contain items from 4 main food groups. CACFP guidelines require that at lunch, children have access to a minimum of:

- 1 serving of milk (NEIM supplies pasteurized cow's milk)
- 2 servings of fruits and/or vegetables
- 1 serving of grain or bread
- 1 serving of meat or alternate protein

Food Group	CACFP examples of appropriate serving sizes for children ages 3-6
Dairy	1 serving = 1/2 cup milk
Fruits and Vegetables	1 serving = 1/2 cup fresh fruits or vegetables, 1/2 cup pure juice
Grains and Breads	1 serving = 1/2 slice bread, 1/3 cup dry cereal, 1/2 cup noodles or grains
Meat and Proteins	1 serving = 1.5 oz. meat, poultry or fish, 1.5 oz. cheese, 1 egg, 3/8 cup beans or peas, 3 Tbsp. peanut or other nut butter, 3/4 oz. nuts, 6 oz. yogurt

Exceptions to CACFP nutrition guidelines may occur only in cases of food allergies, medical conditions, or religious practices. To help NEIM comply with licensing regulations, parents must provide written documentation to NEIM stating the reasons for the food exceptions for their child.

If the lunch of a child under the age of 5 does not meet the nutritional guidelines of CACFP, NEIM will provide the missing food item(s) in order to provide the child with adequate nutrition for that meal. NEIM staff members are required by law to notify the parent or guardian of a child if they observe non-nutritional lunches regularly being sent with the child.

Please ***do not*** send cookies, desserts, candy, or junk food in your child's lunch. NEIM promotes healthy food choices for everyone and it can be difficult for children to understand why they cannot have certain foods in their lunch when they observe another child with sweet treats in theirs.

### **Live 5-2-1-0**

Is a health focused initiative that is nationally recognized. It is a proven, scientific method that helps keep kids healthy by focusing on the importance of good habits. We start by encouraging the kids to eat and play the right way. Try to eat **5** servings of fruits and veggies a day, **2** hours or less of screen time, **1** hour or more of physical activity and **0** sugary drinks and more water. NEIM does it's best to educate the children on the **5** strategies.

### **Rest Time**

Children in Children's House will be offered a daily rest/nap time. Following lunch, children will transition into rest time by listening to a few books read aloud to them by a staff member. They will be required to rest quietly on their personal rest mats and bedding for 30 minutes while listening to soft music. Rest mats are provided by NEIM. Children who fall asleep are allowed to sleep for as long as needed unless otherwise directed by parents. Following Montessori philosophy, napping will be encouraged, but not required. The goal of rest time is for each child to learn to self-regulate and respond to their personal need for rest.

During rest time, children in age 5-9 will be invited to go outside, listen to chapter books read aloud by a guide in a separate area. Children may rest, draw or do handwork, such as sewing or knitting, during this time.

### **Toileting Policy**

NEIM understands that toileting is a time of learning for children and all children must be treated respectfully and sensitively when using the toilet. NEIM aims that toileting is a positive experience while a high standard of hygiene is promoted at all times.

NEIM will create awareness and understanding of good hygiene practice, staff will emphasize the importance of self-care. Ex) flushing toilet, washing hands, etc.

Soap and one time use washcloths will be available.

Child will be treated in a sensitive manner when toileting accidents occur, reassuring and emotionally supporting the child.

Respect the child's privacy at all times.

Ensure a consistent schedule is in place for cleaning of bathrooms.

**NEIM After School Care Program** - this program is for **registered NEIM students only**. ASC runs from 3:15p-5:30p and is \$12 a day per child. A separate invoice will be emailed on the 5th of each month for the total of your previous month's ASC.

**WALKING SCHOOL BUS - *No walking school bus for the 21/22 academic yr- DUE TO COVID-19***

## **Financial Policies**

### **Registration Fee**

An annual \$100 per family non-refundable registration fee is required at the time of registration for the upcoming school year.

### **Tuition**

Northeast Iowa Montessori School is reliant on tuition payments to fund operations for the entire academic year. ALL payments will be made regardless of child attending or not attending. This will also remain true if families take vacations and leave due to J-Term or a family's choice to take extended time away from school. Therefore tuition levels have been set on an annual basis to ensure consistent funding throughout the year. Costs incurred in operating NEIM are not lessened by the absence of individual students. Families have the option of making the annual tuition payment in full at the beginning of the school year or through monthly installments.

### **Children's House**

3 year old - am (8:15-11:30) M-F \$3555 annual/\$395 a month

3 year old - Full (8:15-3:00) M-F \$5805annual/\$645 a month

4 year old - Full (8:15-3:00) M-F \$2610 annual/\$290 a month\*

\* Northeast Iowa Montessori is a partner in direct participation with the *Iowa Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for 4-year-old Children*. NEIM receives funding for 12 hours of instruction in the morning portion (M-Th) of their child's enrollment.

5 and 6 year olds - Full (8:15-3:00) \$4635 annual/\$515 a month

### **Elementary**

5-12 years of age - Full (8:15-3:00) \$4635 annual/\$515 a month

### **Discounts**

**Sibling:** A 5% discount will be given to families with more than one child. This discount will apply to the siblings with the lowest tuition rates. This discount of multiple siblings does not apply to the After School Care Program rates or the annual registration fee.

**Lump sum:** 5% discount off total tuition due if the total tuition is paid on or before September 1st, 2021.

### **Payment Schedule**

Payments are scheduled on a 9 month basis.

First payment is due on September 1, 2021.

Full year and monthly (academic year) payments accepted.

Payments may be made via automatic withdrawal, cash or check.

Failure to make payments in full on time will be brought to the attention of the NEIM Board of Directors. NEIM is committed to working with families. Repeated late payment will result in termination of services. If balance for tuition is not received within 10 days after the due date, the matter may be referred to a collection agency and you may be liable for additional charges and costs of collection as provided by law.

Limited tuition assistance may be available to those who qualify. Please talk with the Head of School.

### **Withdrawal, Leaves of Absence and Vacations**

We understand life events happen and should the need to withdraw your child occur, the annual tuition amount will be prorated accordingly. Full payment is due for the final calendar month in which the child is in attendance for any portion. Any remaining payments for the balance of the school year will be waived. If full payment was made at the beginning of the year, a refund will be issued equal to the amount paid less the value of the regular monthly payments that would have been required to that point in time. A two-week notice is required.

We feel children benefit the most by having consistent attendance for the entire school year, however we realize absences and vacations may occur. If an extended absence or vacation is required, the full annual tuition amount will still be due.

Should a family withdraw their child/ren and then wish to re-enroll in the same academic year, the full annual tuition will be due. Upon re-enrollment, any monthly payments not made during the child's absence will be due prior to the child returning to school. Example: If a family withdraws their child/ren in March, the full March payment is due. Should the family re-enroll in May, both the April and May payments would be due.

Under rare and extenuating circumstances, the school board may consider exceptions to this policy at their discretion.

### **Fundraising Policy - *Changes will be made due to COVID-19 - the Board of Directors will keep families and school updated.***

Annual tuition and fee amounts do not cover the full per-student cost incurred by NEIM to operate our academic program. NEIM holds fundraisers throughout the year to supplement income and keep tuition as low as possible. We sincerely hope that families will participate in all fundraisers, but we realize that timing of events and busy schedules often prevent involvement.

By enrolling your child in NEIM, you agree to assist with or financially contribute \$50 to each of the following major fundraisers:

1. United Nations Around the World in Five Plates Dinner/Silent Auction (October)
2. Family Fun Night (February)
3. Driftless Discovery Trail Run (June)
4. Nordic Fest

Families unable to assist with fundraisers have the option of paying \$50 at the time of each missed event or \$200 at the beginning of the school year to cover all events. Please note that your active participation in fundraisers or contribution in lieu of participation is largely on the honor system.

The NEIM Board of Directors welcomes additional suggestions for fundraising opportunities and welcomes anyone interested in helping plan and organize events to serve on the Fundraising Committee.

### **School Calendar**

The NEIM academic year calendar will be provided to families prior to the start of school each fall and is available on the NEIM website [www.neim.us](http://www.neim.us). NEIM follows the Decorah Public School District calendar for major holidays and **some** in-service days off, but our calendars do not match exactly.

## Northeast Iowa Montessori School 2021-2022 School Calendar

August 23-31	Guide work days in the environment
August 25	Parent Orientation meeting 6p-7:30p in Children's House.
August 26 and 31 REQUIRED	Elem NEW Student Intro to classroom systems from 8:15a-11:30a
August 30 and 31 REQUIRED	Children's House NEW student orientation from 9a-11:30a.
September 1	First Day of School (NEIM)
September 1	First Day of After School Care - for registered NEIM students only
September 6	Labor Day - No School
October 18	NO School - Staff Professional Development
November 2,3,4	Parent/Guide Conferences
November 5	No School/Staff Comp Day
November 12	No School/Staff Professional Development
November 25-26	Thanksgiving Break - No school/No ASC
Dec. 23-Dec 31	No school - Holiday Break
January 3	NEIM Classes Resume
January 17	No school/ Staff Prof. Development
February 5	NEIM Open House TBD
February 18	No school/Staff Comp day
February 21	No school/Presidents Day
March 19	Family Spring Potluck TBD
March 22,23,24	Parent/Guide Conference
March 25	No School/Staff Prof. development
April 15-18	No school/Spring Break(used as make-up storm days if needed)
May 27	Last Day of School (NEIM), Family Picnic at Phelps Park TBD

***\*\*This calendar is subject to change at any time.***



## **Behavioral Code**

NEIM staff and Board of Directors have set a Behavioral Code for the purpose of ensuring that all students learn in an orderly, efficient, safe, and caring learning environment. The effectiveness of these policies requires the positive and voluntary cooperation of all concerned.

NEIM believes that each student, parent or guardian, and staff member participates in creating a disciplined environment in which all persons are appreciated, feel safe, and are free to learn. The Montessori environment and philosophy encourages choice and freedom within an atmosphere of love and positive guidance which helps the child to create an inner guide and develop their own self discipline. The staff, in coordination with the school administration, is responsible for ensuring implementation of and compliance with the school's behavior standards. Staff expects and appreciates parental support when a child experiences behavioral issues.

### **Parents or guardians are strongly encouraged to discuss the following behavior expectations with their child prior to school admittance.**

The guide is responsible for establishing and maintaining a safe, disciplined environment. Each student will be held accountable for his or her behavior in keeping with the NEIM community's behavior expectations. We seek to lead students to cooperative behavior and membership in a productive, loving and caring classroom community, as well as the playground and the larger community of Decorah.

Each classroom gives lessons on grace and courtesy to model polite and respectful behavior. Role-playing of the expected behavior is encouraged in all classrooms in order for students to practice these life skills of cooperation with other people. Children are treated with respect and in turn are expected to be respectful to others.

At NEIM, we expect the children and adults to observe the behavior standards referred to as the **Life Rules**.

The Life Rules are:

- 1. Love for self.**
- 2. Love for others.**
- 3. Respect for materials, tools, and equipment.**
- 4. Respect for the environment.**

Actions which violate the Life Rules will be individually addressed with the child and brought to the parent's or guardian's attention as needed. Guides and children will explore problem solving and alternative behaviors, particularly in conflict situations. Circumstances surrounding the behavior will be discussed with the child. The guide will offer positive guidance techniques to help the child evaluate his or her actions and quiet energies and emotions. Children will be taught acceptable alternatives to problem behavior, redirected toward a constructive activity, encouraged to address a wrongful action, and will receive forgiveness.

## Unacceptable Behavior

The staff at NEIM will provide directly related, appropriate, and immediate consequences for unacceptable behavior when it occurs with any child. This may range from positive guidance to having a child shadow the guide for a period of time to separation from the group. If a child is separated from the classroom environment due to misbehavior more than four times in one week, a conference with the family will be scheduled to address these issues and to determine an appropriate course of action for the improvement of the unacceptable behavior.

Unacceptable student behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Personal injury, bullying, fighting, name-calling, violent/aggressive behavior (hitting, biting, kicking, spitting, or excessive teasing), and/or demonstrations of threatening behavior (verbal or physical)
- Possession of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco
- Possession of a dangerous weapon
- Lying, cheating or stealing
- Persistent unacceptable classroom behavior, including:
  - Refusal to cooperate
  - Refusal to engage with materials in environment
  - Impeding another child's ability to work

Students who demonstrate behavior that disrupts the learning atmosphere and/or violates the community standards of respect are subject to disciplinary actions, which include but are not limited to:

- Administrative conference with parents
- Individual Learning Time. Child will remain in a separate location within the classroom with one-on-one adult supervision.
- Break from the School Environment for a definite period of time (3 days). Parents will be called to come and pick-up the child immediately.
- Break from the School Environment for an indefinite period of time. Parents will be called to come and pick-up the child immediately. The Head of School will schedule a conference with the Parents/Guardians to determine if the child may continue at NEIM.

Disciplinary action will be determined by the Head of School in consultation with the NEIM staff member who witnessed the incident or aided in redirection. NEIM staff and the Head of School will work in partnership with the parents to help facilitate improvement in behavior through recommendations and support. **If progress toward managing the unacceptable behavior(s) is not made after a reasonable amount of time and effort (no more than 30 days of dedicated effort), NEIM reserves the right to rescind the enrollment contract of the student.**

## **Biting Policy**

NEIM understands that intermittent biting by young children is normal in early childhood development. However, since biting and other such behaviors have the potential to harm others, NEIM has established the following biting policy to help manage this behavior.

On a regular basis, guides introduce appropriate ways that children can deal with feelings of frustration and anger through grace and courtesy lessons. Emphasis is placed on using words and language rather than aggressive behaviors. Any incident of aggressive behavior, including biting, will be used as an opportunity to reinforce appropriate behavior.

Upon observing a biting incident, the guide will first attend to the bitten child, comforting the child and cleaning the area of the bite gently with soap and water. If bruising occurs, ice will be applied for a short time period. The guide will also remove the child who bit from the setting in which the biting occurred. In an age-appropriate manner, the guide will explain to the child that this behavior is not acceptable. The guide will not reward the biting child by immediately giving that child extra attention.

A guide who observes aggressive behavior such as biting will document the behavior on an Incident/Accident form and report the incident to the Head of School and the child's parents. Parents must sign and return the form before the child may return to school the next day. The names of the children involved will not be released, nor will any medical or other information.

If biting occurs a second time, the parent of the biting child shall be re-notified of the biting and will be asked to work with the NEIM staff in creating a plan to change the behavior. NEIM staff will provide information and guidance to parents about how to discourage such behavior.

NEIM staff will make all reasonable efforts to monitor the child while at school and try to prevent repeated biting episodes. The Head of School will ensure that the NEIM staff and parents of the biting child are communicating regularly about the behavior. If the child bites three times in one day, the parent will be asked to pick up the child from NEIM.

**If, however, progress toward managing the unacceptable biting behavior(s) is not made after a reasonable amount of time and effort (no more than 30 days of dedicated effort), NEIM reserves the right to rescind the enrollment contract of the student.**

## **Intruders on Premises**

NEIM staff will approach anyone who is on the property of the center without their knowledge to ask what their purpose is. If staff is unsure about the reason given they will contact management staff to get approval for the person to be on site. If it becomes a dangerous situation, staff will follow the "intruder in the center" procedures. Non-agency persons who are on the property for other reasons such as maintenance,

repairs, etc. will be monitored by paid staff and will not be allowed to interact with the children on premise.

A sex offender who has been convicted of a sex offense against a minor (even if the sex offender is the parent, guardian, or custodian) who is required to register with the Iowa sex offender registry (Iowa Code 692A):

- Shall not operate, manage, be employed by, or act as a contractor or volunteer at the child care center.
- Shall not be on the property of the child care center without the written permission of the Head of School, except for the time reasonably necessary to transport the offender's own minor child or ward to and from the center. The Head of School is not obligated to provide written permission and must consult with their DHS licensing consultant first. If written permission is granted it shall include the conditions under which the sex offender may be present, including:
  - 1) The precise location in the center where the sex offender may be present.
  - 2) The reason for the sex offender's presence at the facility.
  - 3) The duration of the sex offender's presence.
  - 4) Description of how the center staff will supervise the sex offender to ensure that the sex offender is not left alone with a child.
  - 5) The written permission shall be signed and dated by the Head of school and sex offender and kept on file for review by the center licensing consultant.

#### **Intoxicated Parent or Pick-up Person**

If anyone authorized to pick up your child (including a parent) arrives intoxicated or Staff deems this person a potential risk to the child, NEIM has the right to refuse to release the child to this person. The child can be released to a different person provided that they are on their pick-up list. If the parent refuses to authorize another designated person, Staff members have the right and will inform the police and a child protection agency in the interest of the safety of the child.

#### **Missing or Lost Child**

In the event that a child should become lost or missing, NEIM Head of School and all available staff will conduct a full search of the building and surrounding perimeters. If necessary we will then call the police. In this event, parents of that child will immediately be notified to come directly to the school or specified location.

#### **Hand Washing Practices - QPPS 5.8**

Frequent hand washing is key to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Guides teach children how to wash their hands effectively. Each sink displays posters of children using proper hand washing procedures. NEIM follows these practices regarding hand washing.

Staff members and those children who are developmentally able to learn personal hygiene are taught hand-washing procedures and are periodically monitored, all staff, volunteers, and children require hand-washing when hand-washing reduces the risk of

transmission of infectious diseases to themselves and to others and staff assist children with hand-washing as needed to successfully complete the task.

Children and adults wash their hands upon arrival for the day, after diapering or using the toilet, after handling body fluids, before meals and snacks, preparing or serving food, or handling any raw food that requires cooking, after playing in water that is shared by two or more people and after handling pets and other animals or any materials such as sand, dirt, or surfaces that might be contaminated by contact with animals.

Adults also wash their hands before and after feeding a child, before and after administering medication, after assisting a child with toileting, after using the restroom personally and after handling garbage or cleaning.

In situations where sinks are used for both food preparation and other purposes, staff clean and sanitize the sinks before using them to prepare food.

### **First Aid Kit - QPPS 9.13**

A first aid kit is located in the preschool classroom in the Practical Life area. It is inaccessible to children, but readily available for adult use. It is fully equipped according to guidance from Healthy Child Care Iowa. Following each use of the first aid kit, the contents will be inspected and missing or used items replaced immediately. The first aid kit will be inspected monthly. A first aid kit is taken to outdoor play areas as well as on field trips and outings away from NEIM. First aid kits are also available by the back door to the play-space and in the Elementary classroom.

### **Illness**

Your child's health is a matter of importance to all of us. Before your child may attend NEIM, a copy of the physical health form must be completed. A current record of immunizations (or an exemption from immunizations card) must be kept on file at the school. Please keep the school updated as changes in your child's health occur. (i.e. allergy is developed, immunization update, etc.).

**If your child has had any of the following conditions in the previous 24 hours on any day of school attendance, please keep child home until the condition improves:**

- A fever of 100.4 or above Fahrenheit within 24 hours of attending school.
- Uncontrolled diarrhea within 24 hours of attending school.
- Vomiting within 24 hours of attending school.
- Symptoms or signs of possible severe illness such as unusual lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, inexplicable irritability or persistent crying, difficulty breathing, wheezing, or other unusual signs for the child.
- Mouth sores with drooling unless a health care provider determines the condition noninfectious.
- Blood in stools not explainable by dietary change, medication, or hard stools.
- Tuberculosis until 24 hours after treatment.
- Strep throat or other streptococcal infection until 24 hours after initial antibiotic treatment and cessation of fever.

- Pertussis until 5 days of appropriate antibiotic treatment has been completed.
- Skin sores that are open and draining (including such things as impetigo, etc.) The child may return to school when the drainage ceases and the sores begin to heal and medication has been administered for 24 hours.
- Chickenpox until 6 days after onset or rash or until all sores have dried and crusted.
- Mumps until 9 days after onset of parotid gland swelling.
- Hepatitis A virus until 1 week after onset of illness or as directed by the health department when passive immunoprophylaxis has been administered to appropriate children and staff.

**Your child should also be kept home if the illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in the activities planned or the illness results in greater care needs than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the children.**

Please inform staff of any infections your child may have. In the event of a communicable disease outbreak, such as strep throat or chickenpox, a sign will be posted outside the classroom.

### **Physical Examination Report**

All Children's House and Elementary children are required to have a signed physical health exam from a licensed medical doctor (MD), doctor of osteopathy (DO), physician's assistant (PA) or advanced registered nurse practitioner (ARNP). The required form is included in the enrollment packet. The form must be submitted within 15 days from the beginning of the school year. School age children need to have a health form on file but may sign a release stating they have seen a physician in the past year.

### **Sick at School**

The staff has the authority to identify whether a child is too ill to attend school. If your child should become ill during the day, while attending NEIM, he/she will be isolated and allowed to rest on a cot in the office. The parent/guardian will be contacted to pick up the child. If parent contact cannot be made, then the next emergency contact person will be notified to come and pick up the child. We ask that you try to pick up the child within one hour of receiving the notice. Appropriate health records will be kept while waiting for the child to be picked up.

### **Medications**

Whenever possible, we request that medication be given at home. If a child needs to receive medication during the school day, the following procedures must be followed.

- Your child must have a completed Medication Request form on file before NEIM staff may administer medication.
- All medications must be given directly to a staff person by the parent/guardian.
- All medications given to the school MUST have a physician or other health care prescriber's instructions printed on them and be in their original containers.

- Non-prescription medicine will be allowed at NEIM only if clearly labeled in the original containers and accompanied by a written note signed from the child's doctor or parent with clear instructions on the dosing of the medication.
- A qualified staff member will administer medication and complete the log on the Medication Request form at the time of administering the medication. Any staff administering medication will have attended the Medical Distribution training offered through Winneshiek County Public Health each year.
- All medication will be stored away from the reach of children.

### **Infectious Disease Control - Universal Precautions**

All staff will be trained in a one-hour course annually in the proper handling of body fluids, which may be considered infectious. Each classroom will have a supply of nitrile non-powdered gloves for staff to use in the event that a clean-up of bodily fluids is necessary.

### **Medical and Dental Emergencies**

Every effort will be made to notify parents immediately in case of a medical or dental emergency. The school will administer emergency medical and/or dental care and/or treatment as required until professional assistance is available. Parents agree to pay all costs and fees associated with any emergency medical and dental care for the child. Families will be required to complete the Medical and Dental Emergency authorization form upon enrolling their child.

In the event that a child should require emergency medical/dental care, NEIM staff will carry out the following steps:

1. Administer basic first aid as needed to the child
2. Remove the child from the area, only if it does not further injure the child.
3. Make an emergency phone call to parent/guardian as directed on the child's emergency medical/dental card in the child's file.
4. In the event that no emergency contacts can be reached, NEIM will call the family's preferred medical or dental center as listed on the emergency medical treatment authorization form.
5. If a child requires immediate emergency services 911 will be called immediately following step 1.
6. NEIM staff will ensure that other children are tended to as needed.

### **Dental Emergencies**

In the event that a dental emergency should arise, the emergency dental contact information will be used to contact the dentist listed on the emergency card.

Staff will carry out the following steps:

1. Determine if 911 services are required.
2. Administer basic first aid, only if it does not cause further injury to the child.
3. A broken tooth will be washed with clean water and placed in a plastic zipping bag with cold milk. The bag will be placed on an ice pack and delivered to the dental office with the child. If the child is calm enough, the tooth, once cleaned

- with water, can be placed back into the socket while traveling to the dentist office.
4. Parents will be contacted immediately after it is determined that the first aid needs are met.

### **Accidents**

NEIM staff members are trained in Red Cross First Aid and CPR procedures. In the event of minor injury (scratches, abrasions, etc.), first aid procedures will be administered to the child as needed. The injury and first aid procedure administered will be documented and reported to the parent or guardian in writing. In the event of serious injury, the parent or guardian will be contacted immediately. Every effort will be made to reach parents or guardians in an emergency situation. If the parent or guardian cannot be reached, the school will contact the authorized person(s) or health provider/facility listed on the Emergency Release Information form. The school retains the right to contact local paramedics and/or use ambulance transportation as deemed necessary.

### **Cleaning and Sanitization - QPPS 9.11**

The facility will be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition. When a spill occurs, the area will be made inaccessible to children and the area will be cleaned immediately. Toys that have been placed in a child's mouth or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretion or excretion will be removed immediately and disinfected after they are cleaned with soap and water. This also applies to other surfaces in the classroom.. Toys and surfaces will be disinfected using a non-toxic solution of one tablespoon household bleach to one quart of tap water made fresh daily. To disinfect, the surfaces will be sprayed until glossy. The bleach solution will be left on for at least 2 minutes before it is wiped off with a clean paper towel, or it may be allowed to air dry. Machine washable cloth toys that have been placed in a child's mouth or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretion or excretion must be laundered before another child's use. Toys that cannot be cleaned and sanitized will not be used. **QPPS 5.24**

Staff will be trained in cleaning techniques, proper use of protective barriers such as gloves, proper handling and disposal of contaminated materials, and information required by the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration about the use of any chemical agents.

Routine cleaning will be supervised by the guides and will follow the Cleaning and Sanitation Frequency Table in Section 111, page 47 of the QPPS manual. A checklist will be completed as indicated in the table.

Facility cleaning requiring potentially hazardous chemicals will be scheduled when children are not present to minimize exposure of the children. All cleaning products will be used as directed by the manufacturer's label. Non-toxic substances will be used whenever possible.

### **Smoking**

Smoking and the use of tobacco products are prohibited in the NEIM building, outdoor play area, and in vehicles driven for school purposes.



### **Firearms**

The use and possession of firearms are prohibited on the NEIM premises. If weapons are suspected, the staff will call 911 immediately.

**Note: Toys that resemble weapons are not allowed on the premises.**

### **Pets**

Animals at NEIM will be kept in good health with no evidence of disease, be of such disposition as to not pose a safety threat to children, and be maintained in a clean and sanitary manner. Documentation of current vaccinations shall be available for any cats and dogs visiting the environment. No ferrets, reptiles, including turtles, or birds of the parrot family shall be kept on site. Pets will not be allowed in the kitchen or food preparation areas.

### **Other Emergencies**

Tornado and fire drills will be practiced monthly as required by the state. Signs indicating correct evacuation routes will be posted in the classroom. Please talk with your child about these drills at the beginning of the school year to help answer any questions they may have and to alleviate any fears they may have about this. Each classroom will practice these drills on their own, announcing to the children that this is just a practice. However, NEIM is required to practice some drills which are unannounced, to indicate what it would be like if the drill were real. Guides will talk with the children about this early in the year. This is a policy regulated by the state.

### **Weather**

In the case of inclement or questionable weather, we will follow the decision to hold, cancel, or delay the start of school, **based upon the Decorah Public school district**. These cancellations and late starts will be announced on KDHK 100.5 FM, KVIK 104.7 FM radio and websites. Television stations are KCRG and KWWL. On days school is announced as starting 2 hours late, NEIM will start at 10:00am. NEIM will not dismiss early or cancel school due to heat as NEIM is comfortably air-conditioned, therefore we will not dismiss early due to heat.

### **Inclement Weather Days**

NEIM allots for 2 cancellation days. If school has to be postponed additional days due to inclement weather or other factors, there are two days allotted at the end of the school year for make-up days if necessary.

### **Blizzards**

In the event of a blizzard such that staff and/or children are unable to return home for the evening, all persons will be provided food, water and a place to sleep. Quiet games and stories will be read to entertain the children. Children will be allowed to sleep on their rest mats with their blankets. Upper Education children will sleep on the carpeted areas of the classrooms and made as comfortable as possible. Staff will sleep in the

same area as the children to provide supervision as needed. Utilizing snacks from the storage cupboards, food will be provided to all persons. Water is available for washing so that proper personal hygiene can be made available to all.

### **Birthdays**

Birthdays are an important part of a child's life. Each child's birthday or half birthday is celebrated in a special way at the NEIM Children's House and Upper Education. The celebration involves the child holding a small globe and taking a turn around the sun (represented by a small yellow candle) for each year of life. This physical act represents the number of years they have been a part of this Earth! Parents will be asked to join the group on their child's birthday or half birthday and to present a completed "Celebration of Life" timeline for the group. Photos of the child at various ages are encouraged. The children love to share with one another the stories of their lives with visual representation.

With the growing number of diet restrictions and allergies we recommend that the child who is celebrating their birthday not bring food treats. Please consult with the Head of School if you have questions.

**Walking Field Trips -On Hold due to COVID-19.** Our location on Water Street in downtown Decorah allows for frequent walking trips to the Decorah Public Library, Vesterheim Museum, ArtHaus, John Cline Elementary Playground, and many other nearby locations. Please complete the Consent and Release form for your child to participate in these regular excursions. When children are away from the school, a note will be posted on the parent board inside the back entry near the cubby room stating the location of the group and estimated time of return. A contact phone number will be listed in case of emergencies. A staff member accompanying the group will carry a cell phone, children's emergency contact information, and the first aid kit. We will follow DHS recombined staffing ratios when outside of the building grounds. If a medical emergency should arise during a field trip, 911 will be called and appropriate emergency vehicles will be dispatched to the site of the field trip. All children not directly involved with the emergency will be cared for in a safe location.

### **Elementary Going Out-On Hold due to COVID-19.**

Extended research within the community

### **Parent Education - On Hold due to COVID-19.**

Parent education events will be offered throughout the year. We encourage you to explore the NEIM website [www.neim.us](http://www.neim.us) for more information about our program and links to valuable resources.

***We are glad you are a part of Northeast Iowa Montessori School!***