MOUNTAIN LAUREL WALDORF SCHOOL
INSPIRED LEARNING

Family Handbook

Updated August 2026

Our highest endeavor must be to develop free human beings who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction to their lives.

— Rudolf Steiner

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Mountain Laurel Waldorf School
Mission Statement

Welcome to the Mountain Laurel Waldorf School Community! The life of this community depends on the active support and participation of our families. With this handbook, we hope to share with you a picture of the school and its community, the forms by which we ensure your children will have a rich educational experience, the channels available if you meet with difficulties, and the ways in which you can help support and develop the school. Mountain Laurel Waldorf School brings together families, teachers, alumni and supporters who are dedicated to the principles of Waldorf education and to creating a joyful and inspiring community experience.

SCHOOL MISSION

Mountain Laurel Waldorf School strives to build the foundation of a free human being. Guided by the educational philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, our teachers inspire independent and insightful thinking, empathy for all beings, and a love of meaningful work.

STATEMENT OF INCLUSIVITY & BELONGING

As a community of learning, Mountain Laurel Waldorf School actively welcomes children, families, faculty and staff of all races, religions, classes, origins, ethnicities, gender identities and expressions, sexual orientations and family cultures. We believe that this range of differences fosters a richer learning environment, instilling values of empathy and collaboration more deeply in each of us.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that at Mountain Laurel Waldorf School in New Paltz, New York, we are learning and gathering on the ancestral homelands of the Munsee Lenape people who are indigenous to this land.

The healthy social life is found
When, in the mirror of each human soul,
The whole community finds its reflection.
And, when, in the community,
The virtue of each one is living.

— Rudolf Steiner

Contact Information

Mailing Address

Mountain Laurel Waldorf School
16 South Chestnut Street
PO Box 939
New Paltz, NY 12561

Website Address:

www.mountainlaurel.org

Administration Hours

Monday - Friday
8:00 am - 4:00 pm

Individual staff members may not be available at all times during the day; please call ahead for an appointment.

Important Contacts

Department/Name	Phone	Email
General Office	845-255-0033	administration@mountainlaurel.org
Amy Hannes: Head Administrator	845-255-0033 x101	ahannes@mountainlaurel.org
Pedagogical Coordinator: Bevin Gill	845-255-0033 x108	bgill@mountainlaurel.org
Reception Office: Krysten O'Brien	845-255-0033 x104	reception@mountainlaurel.org
Office Manager: Lydia Pidlusky	845-255-0033 x107	lpidlusky@mountainlaurel.org
Business Director: Sue McKenzie	845-255-0033 x102	smckenzie@mountainlaurel.org
Admissions & Program Director: Anna Rockwell	845-255-0033 x103	ahannes@mountainlaurel.org
Fax	845-245-6533	

Groups / Committees

Executive Committee	executivecommittee@mountainlaurel.org
Care Streams Group	carestreams@mountainlaurel.org
VIE-Voices for Inclusion and Equity Group	VIE@mountainlaurel.org
MLWS Board of Trustees	board@mountainlaurel.org
Parent Council	parentcouncil@mountainlaurel.org

I. A Brief History of Mountain Laurel Waldorf School

In 1979, following the closing of the State University of New York (SUNY) New Paltz Campus School which served area children from nursery through eighth grade, twelve families came together looking for an alternative elementary school in the area. In 1980, Mountain Laurel School began as a preschool/parent play group which met at the Huguenot School in the Reformed Church education building. In 1983, parents interviewed representatives of several educational possibilities. One of the founding families, Barbara and David Clark, had spent a year living in Germany and were impressed with a Waldorf school they had visited there. Therefore, as part of their process they invited Joel Kolbran, former Waldorf teacher and editor of *The Threefold Review*, to speak about the philosophy of Waldorf education. As a result of presentations by Joel and others, and their own continued research, the parents chose the Waldorf curriculum. Concurrent with these events, an anthroposophical study group was meeting in Kingston, and eurythmy classes were offered in a dance studio in New Paltz. The input of the study group was influential to the pedagogy of the newly forming Waldorf School and many of the eurythmy students became its first enrollees.

By 1992, the school included a combined seventh and eighth grade and was renting a vacant public school building in Tillson, New York on Grist Mill Road. A parent in the school community placed $150,000 to be held in trust by the Rudolf Steiner Foundation allowing the school to purchase its own home in our current location in New Paltz. This took place in the summer of 1995. The school community embraced the move and began the process of renovating the building and grounds. The building, circa 1876, was built as a private home for a Huguenot family and boasts beautiful light-filled classrooms, a small performance area and administrative offices.

Since its inception, Mountain Laurel Waldorf School is well-established as a Pre-K through 8th grade independent school in the Hudson Valley, and is recognized by the Association of Waldorf Schools in North America (AWSNA) and the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America (WECAN).

In the summer of 2012, Mountain Laurel Waldorf School purchased the adjacent property at 6 Elting Avenue, which includes a large play yard for the kindergartens and early grades.

Through the vision of the Campus Expansion Committee and the enthusiastic support from the school community, in 2016, the school purchased the beautiful Victorian building at 7 Innis Avenue which includes a carriage house and gardens, to form a little campus on the hill.

In January 2020, the Administration Department moved into the Victorian building at 7 Innis. The vision for the Carriage House as the MLWS Arts Building was finally executed over the summer of 2022, to hold our sculpture and handwork studios, a private music lesson room and a conference room.

II. Supporting Children at School

School Hours

Sprouts (Tue, Wed, Thu).....8:30am - 11:30am

Nursery/Kindergarten.....8:15am - 3:00pm

Grade 1 - 8 .....8:15am - 3:15pm

School Bus drop off 8:00am

School Bus pick up 3:15pm

Aftercare Hours .....3:00pm - 6:00pm

Arrival at School

Children should arrive at school five to ten minutes before instruction begins at 8:15am, but no earlier than 8:00 am, as the front doors will remain locked until then. This timing allows for a gentle transition, and for greeting teachers and classmates. On-time arrival supports the smooth flow of the class. When parents and teachers are punctual, children learn reliability and respect for others.

Departure

At the end of the school day, children are dismissed with their teacher and class to the brick courtyard by the fenced gate. There are designated areas for buses, car pick-ups, and children walking with their parents/caregivers. It is important that children are picked up promptly by parents/caregivers or an authorized person. Families who consistently drop off or pick up their children late may be invited to meet with the Executive Committee to discuss solutions. **Students walking home after school must have a signed note from a parent/caregiver.**

After-School Care

Mountain Laurel Waldorf School offers a quality aftercare program for children from kindergarten through grade 8, providing continuity of care in a safe and familiar environment with MLWS staff. The program takes place every school day and begins immediately following dismissal until 6:00pm.

MLWS Traffic Safety Guidelines

With 140 children being dismissed daily, and our school located in a busy village area, morning drop off and afternoon dismissal can be rather challenging. In our ongoing efforts to dismiss your children in the safest and most thoughtful way possible, please heed the following traffic safety guidelines:

- Always approach the school from Route 208 via Innis Ave, not from Hasbrouck Ave, and drop off / pick up children at the fenced gate, following a one-way traffic pattern.
- During dismissal, children must check in with a designated staff member before leaving.
- Please, refrain from engaging faculty/staff members in conversation during the busy 15-minute dismissal window, as everyone needs to remain focused.
- Please, do not use the designated bus area for drop-off or pick-up.

Bus Transportation

Students whose school district lies within the required miles of the school are entitled to free bussing by their district. (New Paltz, Highland, Wallkill, Kingston, Rondout, Marlboro.) Bussing request forms are available from either your school district or the MLWS office and must be submitted to the district by April 1st for the following school year.

Parents/caregivers should notify their bus garage if their child will not be riding the bus on a scheduled morning.

Please note that some districts may not allow their bus drivers to transport students who live outside of the school district that they serve.

Repeated misbehavior by a student on the bus may result in exclusion from bussing privileges.

MLWS Bus Policy

Only children with a submitted "MLWS Bus Form" will be placed on the bus in the afternoon. Children registered to ride the bus will always be placed on it unless the office receives a signed, dated note from the parent/caregiver. Please, notify the school by 2:00pm of any transportation changes.

All changes should be communicated to both the class teacher and the receptionist via written note, email or phone.

Bicycles

Bicycles should be left at the provided bike rack outside the school gates. We highly recommend locking them securely. The school is not responsible for stolen bicycles or scooters. Bicycles may not be used during school hours unless part of a planned class trip.

Student Attendance & Tardiness Policy

Regular attendance is essential for learning and establishing healthy rhythms. Attendance is taken daily, and students arriving after 8:15am will be marked tardy. Absences and tardies are included in end-of-year reports.

Absenteeism in the Grades

Attendance is crucial for your child's progress at MLWS. Missing school means missing foundational lessons and social interaction. Teaching in the Waldorf classroom is immersive, and missing even a week can mean missing significant portions of a lesson block.

We expect all of our students to develop excellent attendance records, including arriving on time for the first class of each day. Excellent attendance shows a commitment to learning and a respect for the educational environment, and serves as a good preparation for meeting responsibilities later in life.

If your child must miss school, notify the school office at 845-255-0033 ext. 401 or email reception@mountainlaurel.org. For partial-day absences (e.g. doctor appointments) please schedule them after the main lesson ends at 10:15 am whenever possible.

New York State Education Law Regarding Attendance

MLWS follows New York State Education Law regarding attendance, and is required to adhere to truancy guidelines.

Excused Absences Include:

- Personal illness
- Medical or mental health appointments
- School-sanctioned events
- Religious observance
- Family illness or death

Unexcused Absences include:

- Shopping
- Vacations
- Oversleeping
- Hunting or fishing
- Missing the bus
- Personal celebrations

Excessive unexcused absences may result in consequences, including notification to the local school district and meetings with parents/caregivers.

- The Carestreams Group will set-up a Circle of Support in the event a student is not regularly attending school.
- **5 Unexcused Absences**: MLWS is required by New York State Education Law (Art. 65, Part 1) to report any child with 5 absences without adequate excuse to the student's local school district and to provide written notification to the parents. A written notice will be administered after each successive accumulation of 5 unexcused absences. These letters will be part of the student's permanent record.
- **10 Unexcused Absences**: The class teacher will hold a conference with the student's parents/caregivers with a member of the Executive Committee present. An additional report will be made to the student's local school district, along with another written notice sent to the parents.
- Excessive unexcused absences may impact continued enrollment.
- Chronic absenteeism is defined as 2 or more absences per month or approximately 10% of school days.

Punctuality in the Grades and Early Childhood

Consistent tardiness disrupts not only your child's education but also the life of their class. Each day in the Waldorf classroom is planned to provide a rhythmic, harmonious balance between activities that call for self-control and concentration, and activities that allow freedom and expression. To experience this daily rhythm, it is crucial that children arrive on time for the beginning of the school day. Punctuality shows respect for the child's experience, the class, the teacher, and the work that is being presented.

All grades children are to arrive by 8:10am each day for the Morning Lesson, which begins at 8:15am. Children in Early Childhood programs are expected between 8:15am and 8:30am.

Please note: if a student's bus is late, they will not be marked tardy but must check in at the office upon arrival.

Student Participation Policy

Students are expected to participate fully in all classes and activities of our school's curriculum, unless there are precluding medical or physical circumstances. These include work shares, music shares, class camps, Olympic games, class field trips, school festivals (May Day, Michaelmas, etc), games program, world language program, crafts program, eurythmy, farm trip.

Cancellation of Classes and Snow Days

MLWS has children attending from many different school districts. The fact that our students are dispersed over such a large area complicates the question of snow policy, (e.g. it may be raining in Warwick while New Paltz is having freezing rain and Saugerties is having snow).

Over the years we have developed the following protocol:

We will always be at least as conservative as the New Paltz Central School District (e.g. if New Paltz closes, we will definitely be closed). We follow this protocol because New Paltz makes their decision based on the highway department's judgment of the safety of the local roads and the bus companies will not transport children into the district when New Paltz closes.

Even if New Paltz is open and has no delay, Mountain Laurel may have a delay or closing. We make this judgment based on the other districts that we have significant numbers of children coming from.

Because we don't always go by the New Paltz Central School District, it is important that you listen for the report on Mountain Laurel rather than New Paltz. Also with changing conditions we may go from a two-hour delay to a full closing. Since we are basing our decision on the status of other school districts, we cannot control how long it will take to make this change.

In the event of a delay or closing, parents/caregivers will be notified via text and email by 6:00am.

We encourage families to use their discretion based on local conditions.

Health Policies

Waldorf education is concerned with the whole child. Because of the close relationship between health and learning, teachers are always interested in your child's health, including any past or current illnesses, sleep and eating habits, stresses, and rhythms at home. Please don't hesitate to share any health updates or concerns with your child's class teacher.

If your child becomes ill or has an accident at school, we will contact you right away. We rely on the Emergency Contact Form you fill out at the start of the year, so it is important to make sure this information is up-to-date. If any phone numbers change during the school year, please let us know.

We will contact you if your child shows any signs of illness such as:

- Unusual listlessness
- Red or draining eyes
- Skin rashes
- Severe coughing
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Persistent headaches, stomachaches, or sore throat
- Fever

Please keep your child home if they have:

- An illness that includes vomiting
- A virus (like the flu, Covid, RSV etc.)
- A temperature over 100 degrees
- Pink eye
- Diarrhea
- A parasitic infection (such as lice or scabies)
- Any contagious disease

Specific Communicable Diseases:

- **Impetigo**: Must have 24 hours of treatment, and no open sores.
- **Head Lice**: Your child must be completely lice and nit-free before returning.
- **Scabies**: Must stay home for at least 24 hours after treatment begins.
- **Scarlet Fever**: Must have had 24 hours of antibiotics before returning.
- **Chicken Pox**: Your child can return once all lesions are crusted over, with no new sores for 24 hours.
- **Ringworm**: Can return after treatment has started.
- **Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)**: Must have had 24 hours of treatment.
- **Mumps**: Must stay home until fever-free and facial swelling has gone down.
- **Measles:** Must stay home until fever-free and the rash is gone.

As a general rule, your child should be fever-free for 24 hours **without** the use of fever-reducing medications before returning to school.

Immunization Policy

New York State Law requires that all students have up-to-date immunization records. We cannot admit your child unless we have a certificate of immunization and a medical form showing a well-visit within the past year.

You can find the latest NYS Immunization Requirements by visiting www.health.ny.gov and searching for: N*ew York State Immunization Requirements for School Entrance*.

Please make sure that your child's immunization records are:

- Signed by your doctor or the health department.

- Complete with the exact date of each immunization.

Every time your child gets a new immunization, please provide us with an updated record. We are required by law to keep these records updated, and failure to do so could result in fines for the school.

Medication

If possible, avoid sending your child to school with medications. If medication is necessary, parents/caregivers must come to the school to administer it. **Staff cannot give students any medication including over-the-counter pain relievers like aspirin, Advil,or Tylenol.** For students who need an EpiPen for allergies (bee stings, peanut allergies, etc), we need:

- A letter from the doctor with permission and clear instructions on how to use the EpiPen
- Written permission from the parent/caregiver

Nutrition

Please pack nutritious snacks and lunches for your child as we do not provide lunch at school. We encourage wholesome, healthy foods during snack and lunch times. Please avoid sending:

- Sugary drinks (like soda)
- Cookies, candy, or chewing gum

The effects of sugar can make it hard for children to concentrate during the school day, so we ask that you save dessert for home. If only wholesome food is offered, only wholesome food is consumed. Of course, on birthdays, celebratory food is appropriate.

For younger students, please pack easy-to-eat food, like peeled or cut fruits, and make sure they have eating utensils if needed. **Please do not send knives.** This helps everyone enjoy a peaceful meal together.

School Rules and Guidelines

It's important for parents and caregivers to be familiar with our school rules, especially when a child might think certain behaviors or activities are allowed when they aren't.

- **School Hours:** Students should not arrive before 8:00am or stay after 3:15pm, unless they are supervised by an authorized adult.
- **Electronic Devices:** Cell phones and other electronic devices should not be brought to school. We also ask parents/caregivers, and visitors to refrain from using cellphones on school grounds or during school functions, including field trips. (See MLWS Electronic Device Policy below.)
- **No Gum or Candy:** Please do not send gum or candy with your child to school.
- **Eating During Class:** Eating is not allowed during instructional time.
- **Illness:** If your child has a contagious illness, they should stay home until the contagious period is over.

- **Money at School:** Children should only bring money to school if it is needed for a specific school activity.
- **No Selling:** Students are not allowed to sell goods or food to other students for personal gain unless it's part of an official school fundraiser.
- **Smoking:** Smoking is not allowed anywhere on school grounds or on school outings.
- **Bikes and Skateboards:** Bicycles or skateboards cannot be used on school grounds. Bikes should be locked at the provided bike rack during the school day.
- **Dogs and Pets:** Only certified service dogs are allowed on school grounds. No pets of any kind are allowed in classrooms.

MLWS Electronic Device Policy

Starting this academic year, a New York State law called the "Distraction-Free Schools" act will prohibit the use of personal internet-enabled devices—including phones and smartwatches—for all K-12 students during school hours.

This new law reflects values long held in our Waldorf community: that learning flourishes when students are fully present, engaged with each other, and free from digital distraction. Together, we can help our students:

- Discover with focus by engaging deeply with teachers, classmates, and the natural world.
- Build strong relationships through face-to-face communication and empathy.
- Protect well-being by creating a safe, screen-free environment.

In line with the new law, and to maintain the integrity of our vibrant learning environment, here are the protocols we'll be following:

- **No Personal Devices:** Students should not have personal internet-enabled devices, including smartphones and smartwatches, on their person during the school day.
- **Device Storage:** If a student needs to bring a phone for after-school arrangements, it must be dropped off and kept in the reception office.
- **Emergency Communication:** In an emergency, please call the main office at (845) 255-0033. We will make sure to get any urgent messages to your child right away.

A Note on Exceptions and Consequences

There are exceptions for students who require a device for documented medical needs or as specified in a formal plan like an IEP or 504. If a student qualifies for this exception, the device is only to be used by that student.

In the spirit of our community, we will handle policy violations with a supportive, clear approach:

- **First Offense:** The device will be held in the reception office until a parent or guardian picks it up. We will ask a parent then to meet with us to discuss the policy and the importance of cooperation.

- **Second Offense:** The offense will be documented and we will schedule a formal meeting with parents/guardians to meet with the Executive Committee to address the repeated issue and discuss the next steps.
- **Further Offenses:** Will result in disciplinary action, up to temporary suspension, which is in line with our student code of conduct. This helps us all maintain a respectful and safe community.

Accident and Incident Reports

If a significant event happens involving your child during school, staff will complete an accident or incident report. This includes injuries, altercations between students or violation of behavior expectations. The report will be given to the school administrator and to you as the parent/caregiver. If a supervising staff member is not the class teacher, the teacher will also be informed.

Email Policy

Email is our main way to share important information with parents/caregivers, so it is expected that everyone has an email address. We use email and Constant Contact for most communications - **please do not unsubscribe**.

For specific concerns, we encourage in-person conversations. Big decisions and conversations leading to decisions must be made in person or facilitated by an appropriate group.

- Email addresses are private. Please, keep them within the school community.
- Keep in mind that not all families check email regularly, so time-sensitive info should be shared another way.
- Be courteous in email communication to avoid misunderstandings.
- The school does not support email communication with students.

Safety and Civility Guidelines

During community events such as the Winter Fair, Parent Council Potlucks etc., parents/caregivers are responsible for supervising their children. Please make sure your child is supervised at all times.

Students should only bring items needed for school activities.

Not allowed at school:

- Knives, lighters, or any kind of weapons (this includes pocket knives or multi-tools)
- Obscene or rude language
- Throwing sticks, stones, mud, snowballs, or other objects that may injure others
- Vandalizing school property

Students who violate these rules may be suspended, and parents/caregivers may be held responsible for damages.

Student Dress Code

We strive to surround the children in our care with what is beautiful and true. Our teachers consider this principle before bringing any object or activity into the classroom in order to help foster a reverence for life and a truly caring attitude toward the earth and other human beings.

Because clothing is part of the class environment, we expect our dress policy to help create an atmosphere conducive to learning, focusing attention on the children and not their clothing. With this in mind, the following requests will help us create a warm and caring atmosphere.

For Early Childhood

We feel it is important in this age when children are rushed too soon out of childhood, to do all we can to protect that beautiful time of innocence and goodness. One way we can protect our children is to strive to dress them in simple, well made, natural fiber clothing that is free from advertisement, cartoon characters, and pictures and styles that imply an adolescent sensibility.

Please, send your child to school in clothing that is comfortable as well as seasonally and otherwise appropriate for play, both in the classroom and out-of-doors. Children from Nursery through 5th grade are required to wear snow pants to engage in snow/ice activities.

In the Nursery / Kindergarten and lower school, it is suggested that you dress your child in layers to accommodate changes in the day's temperatures. Rubber boots and hats, raincoats and pants are essential on rainy days. Rubber boots and treaded shoes are not allowed in the classroom. Please, provide your child with a pair of "indoor shoes" that stay in school all year.

Grades 1-8

To create a suitable environment for learning, it is important that the children participate in managing their own habits of dress and behavior. Children should always be prepared to play outdoors with clothing appropriate for the weather. All clothing should allow for full movement and play: comfortable waistbands, nothing too baggy or too tight, and fabrics that allow skin to breath. Ripped clothing can impede movement. Functional, comfortable clothing that provides good coverage is best so children can move freely and get dirty. Children's clothing should not have corporate logos, suggestive logos, advertising, media images, media characters or writing.

Concert Dress

For assemblies and performances children should wear their best clothes. Dignity in dress reflects the children's appreciation both for themselves and those around them. Students in 4th to 8th grade should wear white collared shirts and black pants or skirts (knee length or longer). No t-shirts or turtlenecks, please.

General Dress Guidelines

- Clothing should fit well and be age appropriate – not so large that it extends over hands or feet. All clothing should allow for full movement and play.

- Since outdoor activities are a regular part of the school curriculum, students are expected to come to school with gloves, hats, warm outdoor clothes and footwear appropriate for the season.
- Label your child's clothing with their name, especially outerwear.
- Shoes should have non-slip soles and be sturdy for vigorous outside play. Closed-toed shoes are recommended for games and athletic activities. No flip-flops, shoes with lights and wheels, or high heels are allowed.
- Shoes must be worn at all times on school grounds and during field trips.
- Hair must be kept off the face so that the teacher can look in the child's eyes.
- Underwear should not be visible.

The faculty reserves the right to decide if dress and appearance are disruptive to learning. If necessary, parents/caregivers will be asked to bring a change of clothes for their child.

Photography Policy

The school arranges for individual and class portraits through a professional photographer in the Fall or Spring of each year. The school yearbook photographer will also take photographs during school events.

Our **Tuition and Enrollment Contract** includes a clause allowing the school to use photos of your child for promotional materials unless you have opted out in writing.

We ask that parents/caregivers refrain from taking pictures or videos during school events as this can distract children from their experiences and work against the effects that the faculty is trying to achieve. We appreciate your help in allowing children their own firsthand experiences and the joy of the moment. We also suggest that parents/caregivers experience these gatherings directly.

MLWS requests that parents/caregivers refrain from taking pictures or videotaping (including cell phone cameras) of the Rose Ceremony, the Winter Spiral, the Lantern Walk, Music and Work Shares, May Day and other festivals. Teachers will make every effort to provide photo opportunities before or after such significant events.

Students who take photos (including outside of school) and circulate them through social media without permission from the student in the picture may be suspended.

Discipline

Most behavioral difficulties are a natural part of a child's development and can be addressed in the classroom by the teacher. However, when problems persist or put the well-being of the class or school community at risk, we follow a step-by-step process to address them.

Our goal is to provide a warm, safe, and welcoming environment for all students. Some behaviors are considered especially serious, and we take immediate action when necessary.

- **Immediate Suspension or Expulsion:** The school may immediately suspend or expel a student if they intentionally harm another student or staff member. Students who use extremely inappropriate language will also be sent home right away.
- **Serious Incidents:** If an action is harmful or dangerous to the school community, we will move directly to step 3 of our discipline process (outlined below).

Discipline Process

1. **Notification:** In order to ensure that parents/caregivers are aware of developing behavioral problems, the teacher will send home a note describing the difficulty. You will need to sign this note and return it to the teacher when your child returns to school. The teacher may also call you to discuss the issue.

2. **Parent-Teacher Meeting:** If your child continues to have difficulties after three discipline notes have been sent home, the teacher will arrange a meeting with you to discuss how both you and the school can support your child. Your child may be invited to attend part of this meeting. Another staff member may also attend to take notes on any agreements made. The child (where age appropriate), parents/caregivers, and teacher will sign copies of this agreement.

3. **Carestreams Group Meeting:** If problem persists or the terms of the agreement are not followed, a meeting with the Carestreams Group will be held. Parents/caregivers may attend part of this meeting. Together with the teacher, the group will discuss:

   - The nature of the problem and what has been done to address it.
   - The effect the behavior is having on the health of the class and the school.
   - Whether the school can meet the needs of the child and help resolve the issue.

   Based on this conversation the Carestreams Group and the teacher will develop a plan to address the behavior, including clear consequences if expectations are not met. Suspension and expulsion are possible outcomes of this meeting if necessary.

Class Trips

Field trips at Mountain Laurel Waldorf School are an essential part of the educational experience, enriching the children's experience and helping them develop physical capacities. Teachers will provide at least one week's notice before a trip, and may request parent assistance with transportation.

- **Walking Trips:** Parents/caregivers must sign an *Off Campus Permission Form* at the beginning of each year, covering all local walking trips within the village.
- **Longer Trips:** For extended trips, parents/caregivers will be asked to sign a permission slip for each trip. Children will not be allowed to participate without a signed form.

Overnight Class Trips

- **Supervision:** For overnight trips without structure, at least two MLWS staff members (one male and one female) will accompany the students. If the class size is 15 or larger, two additional adult chaperones are required, with parent chaperones playing a key role, especially on the 8th grade trip.
- **Educational Value:** Overnight trips will align with the educational values and curriculum, except for the 8th grade class trip.
- **Costs**: Family contributions for trips may not exceed 5% of the annual tuition. Any additional expenses may be covered by fundraising, up to another 5%. Fundraising or donations can subsidize families with financial need as we want to encourage a culture of sharing, but this must be decided by all class parents. Financial matters for the trip must be settled at least four weeks in advance and the school will not act as an intermediary in these financial arrangements, nor will the school cover any shortage of funds.

Fundraising

As with many independent schools, Mountain Laurel relies on gifts to bridge the gap between tuition revenue and the full cost of education. The **Annual Giving** campaign is a key part of this, and all members of the school community are encouraged to contribute.

- **Class Fundraising:** Specific grades may fundraise:
    - 3rd grade for their farm trip at Hawthorne Valley
    - 6th grade for introduction to business math
    - 8th grade class for their graduation trip
- **Community Fundraising Events:**
  Fundraising events such as the Winter Fair, during which children and adults make candles, wreaths and many other items to be given away at holiday time, provide an opportunity for families, friends, faculty, and children to work together toward a common goal, profiting all those involved.

All fundraising and advertising proposals must be submitted to the school administrator, who will direct them to the Executive Committee as appropriate.

Addressing Your Questions and Concerns

- For questions about curriculum, discipline, homework, schoolwork, progress reports, and so on, contact your child's class teacher or the relevant subject teacher.
- For questions about class trips or class social functions, speak with the class teacher.
- For questions about school policies or procedures, speak to the school administrator.

III. Home Life

Supporting Waldorf Education at Home

Parents and caregivers at Mountain Laurel Waldorf School want the education of their children to be successful and to have an important and positive impact on their lives. Here are some ways to support and strengthen your child's learning.

- **Familiarize yourself with Waldorf Education.** A deep understanding of the Waldorf approach to child development enhances your ability to support your child's education. Engage by reading, attending lectures, and joining study groups.

- **Attend class meetings.** These provide valuable insights into how teachers are working with the children and are essential for the social fabric of the class. Regular attendance is important for staying informed and involved.

- **Follow Daily and Seasonal Rhythms.** Aligning home life with the rhythms of the seasons and school festivals supports your child's experience. Establish daily rituals, such as a morning verse, mealtime blessings or bedtime poems. Small gestures such as bringing candlelight and a verse to mealtime and bedtime can change these times from being chaotic and draining to being calm and healing. Simple routines like regular meals, bedtimes and daily chores create a sense of well-being.

- **Encourage Creative Play:** Provide opportunities for your child to play imaginatively using natural materials for building and pretending, both indoors and outdoors.

- **Create a Work Space:** Designate a quiet area for schoolwork without distractions like music or television, especially for older children.

- **Prepare for School the Night Before:** For younger children, setting out school items the night before helps ease the morning routine and leads to a more peaceful start to the day. Many children, initially tired and nervous at school, will settle down and gain focus, as well as grace of behavior, as soon as you make a commitment to early bedtime, early rising and avoiding all haste in the morning.

- **Communicate with Teacher:** Keep the class teacher informed about any extracurricular lessons your child takes, such as music, dance, or sports, to ensure a balanced schedule.

Media Guidelines

Early Childhood

MLWS is dedicated to nurturing children's capacities for imagination, healthy feeling, independent thinking, and active willing. Because we recognize the debilitating effects that media can have on the development of those capacities, we ask that parents/caregivers of our students eliminate screen exposure from the daily experience of the young child.

- **Support with Media-Free Transitions:** Teachers are happy to assist with transitions toward a screen-free environment, and welcome conversations with parents/caregivers. If a teacher has concerns about a child's experience of media or screen time, the parent/caregiver should expect, and be willing to engage in, a sincere conversation about the topic. A media-free childhood is a true gift, and one that our school values highly.
- **Cell Phone Use:** We ask parents/caregivers to refrain from using cellphones during pickup and drop-off time. The transition between home and school is an important one for the young child, and it is wonderful if, for that short time, they can have the full and present attention of the adults around them.

Grades

In support of a distraction-free learning environment, we strongly encourage continued limitation of media and technology throughout the grades.

- **No Screen Time on School Days:** At a minimum, the children should not have screen time on any school day, including the night before (e.g., Sunday). If screen time is allowed on weekends or holidays, it should be limited and purposeful.
- **Cell Phones at School:** Students are not permitted to use cell phones on campus, at school events or trips. (See MLWS Electronic Device Policy on page 14.)
- **Adult Cell Phone Use:** Adults should also limit the use of electronic devices on campus, particularly during pick-up and drop-off times and while walking through the school and grounds.

Summer

When the school year ends, the children are ready to leave the life of indoors for a life of outdoors. They are awakened to the outer world and revel in the warmth of summer and the vitality of nature, putting aside their schoolwork so it can be absorbed and digested. Although summer has a very different quality than winter, children still need some predictable daily activity.

- **Summer Routines:** A framework for the long summer days is especially important for young children. Projects, and quiet moments in the day are both restful and engaging. Summer is also a time for reading with a sense of leisure not always available during the school year.
- **Outdoor work for Older Children:** Older students may find joy and purpose in farming, gardening or helping local farmers. Feel free to speak with your child's teacher for guidance on summer activities that best suit your child.

IV. The School Year

Calendar

The MLWS school calendar lists all holidays, vacations, festivals and major events throughout the school year. To avoid scheduling conflicts, please consult this calendar when planning vacations, parties, and other social occasions. The calendar is available on the MLWS website.

Daily Activities

MLWS Early Childhood

Mountain Laurel Waldorf School offers early childhood programming for children from birth to 6 years old, providing a nurturing environment for growth and learning. Our teachers create a warm, home-like setting with natural light, handmade furnishings, and carefully selected playthings that encourage creativity and imitation.

In every classroom you will find:

- **Creative, child-led play** with simple, beautiful toys made from natural materials.
- **Healthy snacks** made with organic whole foods prepared daily.
- **Songs and fingerplays** to learn and take into your family life to enhance rhythm and joy.
- **Puppet shows and storytelling** to create wonder and joy, and lay a strong foundation for developing literacy.
- **Social skills development** through a gentle introduction to work and play with others.

MLWS Grades Program

Philosophy and Approach

Waldorf class teachers bring learning to life through vivid stories, active inquiry, and absorbing hands-on experiences that heighten the students' curiosity and engage their feelings, motivation, and intellect. An eagerness to learn unfolds and evolves as students fine-tune their self-discipline and self-expressive abilities. Through this holistic approach, teachers encourage and inspire students, helping them to develop imagination, emotional depth, will, and a sense of service, so that they can meet the challenges of the world as caring and productive adults.

Morning Main Lesson:

Each day, core academic subjects are presented in the morning's main lesson. Movement, verse, and song preface each lesson, helping to foster social and physical awareness and to make minds and bodies agile and receptive for learning. Rather than using textbooks, children create their own main lesson books, first with colorful crayons and later with colored pencils. A morning snack and recess provide a necessary break, or "breathing out" after the main lesson.

Afternoon Subjects:

In the afternoon, children participate in subject classes whose themes are integrated in the main lesson curriculum. For example, 5th graders studying Greek mythology in their main lesson, practice ancient Olympic games during movement class, culminating in a Greek Pentathlon event with other area Waldorf Schools. Other subject classes include Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, chorus, string ensemble, handwork, sculpture, and Eurythmy or world dances.

Grades Curriculum Overview

All Waldorf students, beginning in the first grade, explore the essential subjects of reading, writing, and mathematics. The rich and classical academic curriculum includes the following:

Grade 1: Pictorial and phonetic introduction to letters, form drawing, writing as an introduction to reading, cursive handwriting, qualities of numbers, introduction of the four processes in arithmetic, fairy tales, folktales, and nature stories.

Grade 2: Reading through writing and recitation, basic elements of grammar, solidification of the processes of arithmetic, multiplication tables, form drawing, nature study through observation, stories of heroes and heroines, tall tales and legends, and animal fables, class play.

Grade 3: Reading, spelling, original composition, form drawing, higher multiplication tables, weights, measures, money, study of practical life – farming, housing, and clothing – and history beginning with ancient Hebrew stories, class play.

Grade 4: Composition, reading, letter writing, grammar, local geography, map making, local history, study of the animal kingdom, fractions, decimals, Norse mythology and sagas, class play.

Grade 5: American geography as related to vegetation, agriculture and economics, composition, grammar and spelling, arithmetic, decimals, ratios, and proportions, botany, Greek myths, and ancient civilizations including India and Egypt, class play.

Grade 6: Roman history, the Middle Ages, geometry, mineralogy, astronomy, expository and narrative writing, physics, world geography, class play.

Grade 7: Age of Exploration, Late Middle Ages, the Reformation, pre-algebra, perspective drawing, creative writing, physics, chemistry, human anatomy, world geography, class play.

Grade 8: American history, algebra, geometry of solids, grammar, meteorology, physics, chemistry, world geography, class play.

Grades and Reports

The **year-end report** for the grades students is completed with great care by both the class teacher and all subject teachers. It provides a comprehensive picture of the child's development, academically and artistically, as well as in character and personality. It is intended to be read by parents and generally should not be read by the child before sixth grade.

In addition to this end-of-the-year report, parents/caregivers are asked to meet with their child's teacher twice during the year to review the child's progress. Attendance at scheduled **parent-teacher conferences** allows you to become aware of how your child is doing by understanding the class as a whole.

Festivals & Celebrations

Festivals mark the passage of time and change of seasons underlying our sense of place in the cosmic order of events. Our thoughts and feelings often mirror nature's rhythmic changes. At Mountain Laurel Waldorf School the festivals play an important part in the education of our children. Many of the festivals we celebrate have roots that reflect the underlying spiritual forces expressed in the seasonal transformation of the Earth's countenance. We celebrate these festivals in a manner intended to give the children a meaningful experience.

In the Fall, as the light begins to wane, we celebrate **Michaelmas**. This ancient festival of courage and right action, gives our children an image of inner strength, rightfully applied, that they can understand and identify with.

In November, as the natural world darkens, the inner light of humanity wants to shine forth. During our annual **Lantern Walk**, this light appears as the flame enclosed in each child's lantern. Many cultures and religions celebrate themes of caring for others and carrying the light into the darkness at this time of year.

The MLWS curriculum includes Spanish instruction twice per week for all children starting in first grade. We celebrate **el Día de los Muertos**, with a traditional ofrenda in the foyer of the school where the children have an opportunity to honor their departed relatives.

Likewise, with the grades children receiving Mandarin instruction twice weekly, **Chinese New Year** is celebrated during the school day, with festival decorations, a traditional cleaning of the school by the children and a dragon/lion dance.

As winter approaches and the days are shorter, our **Winter Spiral** presents a picture of the brightness brought by the human spirit into the world. In the Winter Spiral, each child takes an inward journey to find the source of light and then carries it out to the world. By the end of the evening, the room glows with the light of many candles.

At the time of the Winter Solstice, when the nights are the longest, we fully experience the darkness, which allows the birth of new light to occur. The **Winter Gift Making Fair**, held in December, is a merry gathering of friends and families in the community, enjoying good food, seasonal craft making, music, candle dipping, a puppet show etc.

In February, as the light returns, we celebrate the message of hope by recognizing the teachings of **Martin Luther King Jr**.

In March and April, we celebrate the rebirth of life in nature and in our souls, and in May we celebrate the budding and flowering of life. We welcome the Spring season with a lively **May Day** celebration filled with song and dance. Our traditional Maypole is decorated with brightly colored ribbons. Families and friends gather for flower crown making, followed by Maypole dancing, singing and live music performances. A much anticipated and joyous event.

Our celebrations are inclusive and reflect the diverse cultures within the school community, including past celebrations of Losar, Diwali, and Chinese New Year.

Community Events

Many of the events at Mountain Laurel Waldorf School are accompanied by assemblies to which the families, and often the community at large, are invited. Singing, choral recitations of poetry and speech, eurythmy, instrumental music, and plays all show the progress the children have made in school and the gifts they can offer to the world.

At the **Rose Ceremony**, on the first day of school in September, the grades students gather to welcome the new first grade children. During the ceremony, which includes singing by the faculty and a story told by the 1st grade teacher, the first grade children will in turn take the pathway over the Rainbow Bridge where they are greeted by an eighth grade student and a rose. On the last day of school in June, the Rose Ceremony is meant for the eighth graders, who will this time receive a rose from the first grade students, as the school sends them with love on their journey to high school.

Two much anticipated **Music Shares** are held during the school year; one on the last day of school before the winter break in December, and another one in May. The students in grades 1 through 8 will share songs, recorder, choral and orchestra music, a thriving part of the curriculum at MLWS. The Music Shares are typically held at 7pm in the New Paltz High School auditorium, where there is plenty of room for parents/caregivers, family and friends to enjoy the children's wonderful performances.

Work Shares are an opportunity for families to see what the children have been working on during the semester. It includes but is not limited to poems, circle, songs, skits, recorder playing, recitations, world language songs or poems and Eurythmy. Handwork and sculpture items from each grade are displayed at the end of the year for families and children to view prior to the class performances. The first work share is held on the Tuesday before the Thanksgiving break in November, and the second one is held on the last day of school. Both are typically held at the St Joseph's Church Hall at 34 South Chestnut Street.

Over the course of the school year each grade performs a **Class Play** for the school and the community. The themes of the class plays are taken from the language arts curriculum for each grade, and are often written by the class teacher. The class plays are generally performed in the morning for the school children, and in the evening for the parent community.

Parent Engagement and Volunteering

Mountain Laurel Waldorf School was founded by – and to this day is sustained by – a strong, involved, vibrant, and creative parent body. We are grateful that parents/caregivers bring a rich array of talents and experiences to support the life of the school, and thereby help to create wonderful experiences for our children.

Certain parent engagement is expected throughout your tenure at Mountain Laurel. This includes faculty nourishment, All School Meetings, parent-teacher conferences and class meetings, class plays, Work Shares and Music Shares, the annual Winter Fair and Annual Giving.

Other expected parent engagement varies year-to-year. For example, the 3rd Grade parents have historically run a community-wide clothing sale to raise money for the 3rd grade farm trip, and the 8th grade parents have solicited yearbook ads for the 8th grade class trip and organized a "Gratitude Tea" for the teachers at the end of their 8th grade year.

There are also additional opportunities to help out as parents/caregivers are interested and their skills and time allow, for example in a classroom, on field trips, festival planning, fundraising, Parent Council, and the Board of Trustees.

We are grateful for the support and involvement of the parent body, without which the school could not run. We hope that engagement with Mountain Laurel not only engenders positive altruistic feelings of being of service to the community, but that our children witness their grown-ups being generous with their time and talents, being of service, and being involved in their school world.

Parent Council

The mission of the Parent Council is three-fold in its intention:

First, that it supports communication among the faculty, administration, board and parent body. The Parent Council works with a class teacher as a liaison between the Parent Council and the College. In addition, the Parent Council meets periodically with the Executive Committee to ensure that parent initiatives are closely aligned with the needs of the school.

Second, that it organizes and utilizes the gifts and energies of the parent body to enrich the life of the school community. The initiatives of the Parent Council are developed based on our discussions with the Executive Committee and insights gained from the College and the parent body, and these initiatives change over time. Parents are invited to join one of our ongoing initiatives or come forward with other ideas they feel passionate about to advance our mission.

Third, that it encourages and supports strong parent understanding of Waldorf education by inspiring and facilitating learning opportunities. As Parent Council gains momentum, we hope to invite faculty speakers to Parent Council meetings and other Parent Council-sponsored events to help engage parents, to encourage the study of relevant topics and to broaden parents' perspective on Waldorf education. As these areas of interest, questions and concerns are identified and our understanding deepens, parents will be better able to support their children, the class teachers and the school community as a whole.

For more information, and to find out how to get involved, please send an email to parentcouncil@mountainlaurel.org.

V. Organization of the School

Governance Overview

As a self-administered institution, our school is organized around the anthroposophical impulse which gave rise to the first Waldorf School. This means that the individuals working most closely with the children are responsible for the pedagogical decisions and policies of the school, without outside interference. To effectively achieve this goal, the faculty, administration, Board of Trustees and the Parent Council work together on behalf of the students; each group acknowledging and supporting the expertise of the other.

The overall responsibility for and authority over Mountain Laurel Waldorf School is shared by the College and the Board of Trustees. The College is fully responsible for pedagogical issues; the Board is responsible for financial and legal issues. Much of the authority of the College and Board has been dispersed through the body of the school by means of a system of mandate groups. These groups have been given authority to act on behalf of the College and the Board.

Mountain Laurel Waldorf School Grievance Procedure

When a parent/caregiver has a concern regarding a teacher, the Executive Committee directs the parent to the teacher and encourages both parties to speak directly to each other.

In the event of a communication breakdown, the Executive Committee (EC) serves as a bridge between parents/caregivers and faculty. The EC receives parental concerns and complaints and mediates with parents/caregivers and teachers as needed. The EC refers parents/caregivers to and schedules meetings with the appropriate groups.

1. When personal conflict arises, the first step is for the parties involved to speak directly to each other.
2. If conflict persists, a letter from one or both of the parties describing the conflict and the desire for further assistance and mediation must be submitted to the EC. Upon receiving the aforementioned letter, the EC will conduct a meeting with both parties within one week. If the conflict involves a legal or financial issue, the EC will notify the Board of Trustees in writing. If both parties do not agree to meet, the process immediately moves to step three.
3. After meeting with the EC, if conflict persists, an outside mediator will be chosen by the person and mediation will be conducted within three weeks of the meeting in step two.
4. If conflict persists, the EC will make a decision with a report to the Board of Trustees. Possible decisions include nullification of Tuition and Enrollment contract.

VI. Inclusivity and Belonging

Mountain Laurel Waldorf School endeavors to acknowledge and celebrate the diversity within our school. Doing so, we hope that our students may learn from one another, to see themselves in their peers and become citizens of the world, enabling them to understand and appreciate varying viewpoints and ways of being.

Voices for Inclusion & Equity (VIE) emerge where diversity is present. “VIE” - meaning “life” in French - embodies our commitment to fostering a vibrant, thriving community for our children, neighbors, and ourselves. If anyone in our school community is interested in joining the work of the VIE Group, please send an email to VIE@mountainlaurel.org .

Inclusive Community of Learning

Our teachers recognize the value of including a variety of cultures, experiences, opinions and life stories in each classroom. We strive for lessons that are filled with world perspectives, preparing the students to be conscious citizens and empathic leaders of the future. As a part of professional development, the school is working with Alma Partners (*Fulfilling our Promise: Building Inclusive Waldorf Communities, Contextualizing our Curriculum).*

We seek:

- to have all learners, families and staff feel a sense of belonging and true inclusion. The Waldorf pedagogy stands on principles that embrace our common humanity.
- to understand and appreciate differences, work through implicit biases, and make conscious the undermining and systemic messages about others.
- honest communication, authentic listening, and openness to new perspectives in order to find common ground in our humanity.
- ongoing practice of courageous self-reflection, organizational development, and individual inner work.
- to catalyze and support meaningful transformation in critical areas of inclusion and belonging.

At the foundation of Waldorf education lies the mission of social renewal. The MLWS College studies and draws inspiration from the insights of Rudolf Steiner’s Anthroposophy and acknowledges that some of Steiner’s early writings are unacceptable. We separate ourselves and our school from such outdated, misguided and harmful influences. Steiner’s own thoughts and beliefs evolved dramatically over the course of his life. He planted many seeds knowing that future generations would nurture and lead his initiatives, morally, toward their most upright realization. We therefore embrace Rudlof Steiner’s evolution, self education and later appeals that:

> *“We must seek to unite people of all races and nations, and to bridge the divide and difference between the various groups of people. Anthroposophy does not exist to send people off to sleep, but to make them really wide awake. We are living at a time when it is necessary for people to wake up.”*
>
> *— Rudolf Steiner - The Universal Human Lecture*

Appendix: MLWS Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy

MLWS prohibits any and all forms of discrimination and harassment which includes behaviors commonly recognized as bullying, hazing, sexual harassment, and sexual abuse/assault. Discrimination includes acts of discrimination or harassment based upon actual or perceived religion, race, color, national origin, gender, physical or mental abilities/disabilities, physical traits, academic achievement, grade level, gender identity socio-economic status, neighborhood/area of residence, sexual orientation, personal characteristics or beliefs, or any other basis protected by federal, state, or local law. Discrimination and harassment can take place in person or in writing and can be physical, verbal, demonstrative, or electronic. Regardless of its form, MLWS prohibits it.

Non-Discrimination Policy

As per New York State Human Rights Law (Executive Law, Article 15), Mountain Laurel Waldorf School does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation, military status, sex, disability, domestic violence victim status, or marital status in admissions, employment, policy, or in any other aspects of school activities.

To Whom this Policy Applies

This Policy applies to all MLWS students, their parents/caregivers, all MLWS employees (faculty, administration and other staff, whether full-time or part-time), MLWS volunteers, employees of contracted service providers, and independent contractors working at MLWS.

Where the MLWS Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy Applies

The MLWS Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy applies to the physical school itself; to all school-sponsored and affiliated activities and events, whether in school or out of school, including, but not limited to, special events, field trips, overnight trips, sleepovers, sporting events and practices; to all forms of transportation used by MLWS personnel and students to come and go to school and school-affiliated activities; and to all forms/use of technology.

Furthermore, because students' and employees' behavior, whether inside or outside of school, reflects on MLWS and can have a significant impact on life at school, there are times when it is appropriate and important for MLWS to respond to incidents that occur outside of school and beyond school hours. Therefore, MLWS reserves the right to discipline those who engage in discrimination or harassment of MLWS students and employees at any location and at any time if such discrimination or harassment causes a substantial disruption to the MLWS community.

No matter where one is located, whether inside or outside of school or in cyberspace, any use of technology whether personally or school-owned must comply with this Policy, and any other policies set forth in the MLWS Student and Employee Handbooks.

Definitions and Examples

"Bullying." Definition: Any form of physical, verbal, demonstrative, or electronic harassment that one should reasonably expect would demean, threaten, or physically or emotionally hurt its victims. It can be of a sexual nature or otherwise. It can take place in person, over the phone, in cyberspace, or through an online communication, or any other means that communicates such harassment. It can be one-on-one or group-based. Both adults and children can be bullied or be the bully.

Examples (include, but are not limited to):

- pushing, elbowing, poking, tripping, sitting on, kicking, or hitting;
- threatening another with physical harm;
- taunting others because of their physical traits including, but not limited to, age, voice, height, weight, athletic skill, or any other personal characteristic;
- demeaning others intellectual ability, academic performance, or grade level;
- taunting others about their social skills, e.g., making jokes at the expense of someone socially awkward;
- taunting others either verbally or using gestures about their actual or perceived sexual orientation;
- taunting others either verbally or using gestures about their actual or perceived gender identity;
- taunting others about their actual or perceived race, color, or national origin using derogatory terms to refer to someone's race or ethnic background;
- excluding someone from a group or activity purposely to hurt them, e.g., refusing to let someone sit at a particular table;
- damaging, hiding, taking of property;
- calling someone offensive or demeaning names;
- making jokes involving offensive stereotype;
- posting on any online social networking site, mean, offensive, demeaning, embarrassing, or threatening comments or images;
- texting, whether individually or as a group, mean, offensive, demeaning, embarrassing, or threatening comments or images;
- creating fake web pages or fake profiles or assuming another's identity in any social media context to create content likely to cause embarrassment or concern;
- spreading mean and hurtful rumors verbally or online; or
- creating offensive graffiti.

"Hazing." Definition: Any activity expected of someone joining a group (e.g., athletic team, co-curricular activity, student publication), grade, or the school itself or expected of someone to maintain any status in a group, grade, or the school that: (1) humiliates, (2) degrades, or (3) risks emotional and/or physical harm or embarrassment to the individual or the MLWS community, regardless of the person's willingness to participate and regardless of its intended result or effect. MLWS administration does not consider hazing activity to be harmless pranks or comical antics aimed at developing bonds of brotherhood or sisterhood among young people. Such behavior will not be tolerated.

Examples (include, but are not limited to):

- requiring someone to: drink alcohol or use drugs;
- consume any vile or hazardous substance, or allow such a substance to be smeared on the body;
- endure any physical striking, beating, burning, branding, or to engage in self mutilation or requiring one to commit such acts upon another;
- endure acts of sexual abuse/assault;
- be subjected to abusive and demeaning speech;
- participate in acts of personal servitude;
- proceed through any type of gauntlet;
- suffer sleep deprivation;
- restrict personal hygiene;
- engage in indecent exposure;
- participate in any illegal activity;
- participate in physically dangerous activities such as exposing oneself to extreme weather conditions without appropriate protective clothing;
- submit to being tied up, abducted, or blindfolded;
- engage in any degrading or humiliating act, or any activity that violates any aspect of MLWS codes of conduct.

"Sexual harassment." Definition: Any unwelcome or unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal, physical, demonstrative, or electronic conduct or communication of a sexual nature when:

1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or educational experience; or
2. Submission or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for an employment, academic, or school-related decision;
3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or

academic performance or participation in a school program or extra-curricular activity; or

4. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working, learning, studying, or school environment.

Any type of sexual advance, request for sexual favors, or other verbal, physical, demonstrative, or electronic conduct or communication of a sexual nature made by any MLWS employee, volunteer, employee of a contracted service provider, or other adult towards a student, whether welcomed by that student or not, is sexual harassment and a violation of this policy.

Sexual harassment may occur in a single incident or be a series of incidents. It can occur between two adults, an adult and a student, two students, a group and an individual, or people of the same or different gender.

Examples (including, but not limited to):

- intentional touching of a sexual or other private area of a person's body, e.g., grabbing, patting, poking, or slapping the breasts, buttocks, or groin area;
- supposed inadvertent contact with the sexual or private parts of the body, e.g., brushing up against someone's leg with one's groin area and acting as if it was unintentional;
- full body hugs;
- sexually-oriented verbal kidding, teasing, or joking made to or in front of someone who finds it offensive;
- making suggestive comments about physical characteristics or appearances;
- making offensive gender-based remarks, e.g., saying that a male is too feminine and that a female is too masculine;
- commenting or asking questions about someone's sexual experience or abilities;
- spreading rumors of a sexual nature;
- exposing another person to the display of sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cartoons, or posters, e.g., showing another person pornography;
- photographing, videotaping, or making any other visual or auditory recording of sexual activity or the sexual or intimate parts of a person's body without their knowledge and consent, and, in addition, if the person being photographed or recorded is a student, doing so even with their consent, as such images may constitute illegal child pornography;
- sending via electronic means images of sexual activity or sexual or intimate parts of the body, i.e., "sexting".

"Sexual abuse/assault." Definition: Physical contact with a sexual or intimate part of the body without consent engaged in for the purpose of sexual gratification or to degrade or abuse. It includes various forms of sexual intercourse as well as lesser forms of sexual touching.

Sexual or intimate body parts include, but are not limited to: Breasts, buttocks, genitals, the groin area, the mouth and upper thighs.

Lack of Consent: Occurs when one is physically or verbally forced or intimidated into doing something sexual or submitting to a sexual act, or when one has explicitly indicated a lack of consent, or when the circumstances make it obvious that consent has not been given. Circumstances that make it obvious that consent has not been given include, but are not limited to: (1) being too intoxicated to say "no" or resist, (2) being asleep and therefore unable to consent, or (3) situations in which someone is deemed to be physically or mentally incapable of giving valid consent whether due to the use of intoxicants or any other reason. Children under 17 years of age cannot legally consent under New York State Law to having sex or sexual conduct with an adult.

Examples of sexual assault or abuse include, but are not limited to:

- touching, grabbing, pinching, rubbing, or fondling another person's buttocks, breasts, or genital area, whether over or under clothing, without consent as defined herein and engaged in for the purpose of sexual gratification or to degrade or abuse;
- rubbing one's genital area up against another person, whether over or under clothing, without consent as defined herein and engaged in for the purpose of sexual gratification or to degrade or abuse;
- touching another person with one's genitals without consent as defined herein and engaged in for the purpose of sexual gratification or to degrade or abuse;
- engaging in sexual behavior with someone too intoxicated to give informed consent;
- physically or verbally intimidating someone to engage in a sex act or sexual contact, whether done so expressly or implicitly.

Response to Violations of the Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy: Desired Immediate Response

This section details the immediate MLWS response when an incident of discrimination or harassment is occurring. The section below, "Reporting Protocol," details how and when such an incident should be reported after the incident has occurred.

Victims: MLWS strongly encourages anyone who feels that they are a victim of discrimination or harassment, whether a student or an adult, to tell the offender to cease the offensive behavior and thereby make it clear that the behavior is offensive and unwelcome. Confronting someone in this manner has been shown to be an effective way to end such actions. However, MLWS understands that not all victims will feel comfortable confronting their offender in this manner and, therefore, wishes to be perfectly clear that there is no requirement that a victim do so in order for MLWS to address a reported violation. Reported violations of this policy will be handled by the school in the same manner regardless of whether the person victimized confronted the harasser directly.

Witnesses: Prevention of harassment is the responsibility of the entire MLWS community. MLWS expects its students, employees, volunteers and other adults to demonstrate a sense of responsibility and respect for all members of the MLWS community. Therefore, upon witnessing harassment, students are **encouraged** to intervene by telling the harasser to stop the offensive behavior and by thereafter reporting the violation. All MLWS employees and volunteers are required by this policy to intervene in this manner and then report the violation. It is important to note that failure of any such

adult to intervene on behalf of a victim upon observing the harassment often emboldens the harasser to increase the harassing conduct, while making the victim of harassment feel more powerless. For this reason, all MLWS employees and volunteers are **required** to intervene and tell the harasser to stop the offensive behavior upon witnessing an act of harassment.

Reporting Protocol

MLWS believes any violation of this policy is a serious matter requiring immediate attention and a thorough investigation as it is a threat to the safety and well-being of a member of our MLWS community. Students, their parents and guardians are strongly encouraged to report such violations. MLWS employees, volunteers, employees of contracted service providers, and independent contractors working at MLWS are required to do so. This should be done no matter who the suspected harasser is.

Students, Parents/Guardians & Other Concerned Non-MLWS Employees & Volunteers Reporting Protocol

Students, parents/guardians and any other concerned individuals not working for MLWS who are aware of a violation or suspected violation of this policy should tell any member of the MLWS faculty or staff with whom they are comfortable speaking about the suspected violation. MLWS encourages reporting incidents of harassment as soon as possible; however, there is no time limit on when such a report may be made. The faculty or staff member who is informed about an alleged violation is obligated to report the suspected violation to the MLWS administrator.

If for any reason, a student, parent/guardian or other concerned individual who does not work at MLWS is uncomfortable reporting the violation to a MLWS faculty or staff member or a member of the MLWS Administration, they may instead report directly to one of the following outside individuals:

Designated Non-Vested MLWS Board Member

Should any MLWS student, their parent/guardian or other concerned non-MLWS employee wish to report a violation of the MLWS policy anonymously, they may do so. Regardless of how a violation is reported, it will be addressed and investigated to the extent possible given the limitations inherent in investigating anonymous reports. Such an anonymous reporter may decide to reveal their identity at any later time which will greatly increase MLWS' ability to deal effectively with the reported violation.

MLWS Employee, Volunteer, Employee of Contracted Service Providers and Independent Contractors Working at MLWS Reporting Protocol

Promptly upon learning of a possible violation of the Policy, whether as a victim, witness, or recipient of such information from someone else, MLWS employees, volunteers, employees of contracted service providers and independent contractors working at MLWS **must report** the possible violation to one of the following people: 1) Executive Committee/Administrator, 2) Care Streams Group, 3) the MLWS College. If anyone other than the Executive Committee / Administrator is notified, that person must promptly inform these two of the report so that the school is always made aware of all possible violations. Once the Executive Committee/Administrator is notified, they must also notify the MLWS College.

If the report involves either the Executive Committee/Administrator, the report should be made directly to the MLWS College. If for any reason, a MLWS employee or volunteer is uncomfortable

reporting the violation to one of the above denominated individuals, they may instead report directly to the Designated Non-Vested MLWS Board Member: Livia Vanaver, livdance@gmail.com.

Retaliation against anyone who in good faith reports a violation or suspected violation of this policy, or who participates in the investigation of a complaint, is strictly prohibited. See Retaliation section of this policy.

When Report Must be Made by MLWS Employees, Volunteers, Employees of Contracted Service Providers and Independent Contractors

All MLWS employees, volunteers, employees of contracted service providers, and independent contractors working at MLWS who have reason to suspect that a violation has or may have occurred are under an obligation to promptly report this information or suspicion to the indicated persons set forth above in this policy. A "reason to suspect" may be predicated upon being told directly or indirectly that a violation has occurred, overhearing talk that a violation has occurred, or observing behavior which gives rise to a suspicion that a violation has occurred. The obligation to report is mandatory regardless of whether the alleged violation involves another MLWS employee, volunteer, an employee of a contracted service provider or a student, as the victim or the offender. When in doubt of whether you have sufficient reason to suspect a violation has or may have occurred, always err on the side of caution by reporting what you know or suspect.

Special Reporting Requirements for Reports of Sexual Abuse/Assault

In cases of sexual abuse/assault, due to the heightened seriousness of such allegations, reports must be made by MLWS employees, volunteers, employees of contracted service providers, and independent contractors working at MLWS immediately upon coming into the possession of the information that such an act has or may have occurred and that such an act has or may have occurred and the person so notified, must immediately ensure that the other designated individuals are made aware of the report. The MLWS Board should be told about the report as soon as practicable.

Mandatory Reporting to State Authorities

There are circumstances in which a MLWS employee may be required to report to State authorities their reasonable suspicion that a child has been abused or maltreated. See, sections regarding Mandatory Reporting to the New York State Hotline.

Protection of Reporter's Identity

The reporter's identity and the information they report will only be shared with those necessary in MLWS' judgment and discretion to appropriately address the situation. Retaliation of any kind against a person or persons who have made such a report will not be tolerated and will subject anyone who engages in it to disciplinary action which may include expulsion or termination. (See, "Retaliation Prohibited" below.)

Amnesty Provision

MLWS has a strict policy about the use of alcohol and other drugs by its students. MLWS will not tolerate alcohol or drug use among its students. It is absolutely forbidden at any time, on any part of the MLWS campus, and at any school-related function, including the bus ride to and from school. Under normal circumstances, if a student possesses or uses drugs or alcohol, the student's

parents/guardians are notified and the student may be expelled. However, because the health and safety of MLWS students is the school's paramount concern, to minimize any hesitation a student may have to report a violation of the MLWS Non-Discrimination and Anti Harassment Policy, while not overlooking a violation of its drug and alcohol policy, the school will place great weight on the positive impact of reporting an incident in deciding if any action is appropriate for the reporter's breach of this policy.

Retaliation Prohibited

Retaliation against anyone who in good faith reports a violation or suspected violation of this Policy, or who participates in the investigation of a complaint, is strictly prohibited. Any person who engages in such retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action including, but not limited to, expulsion, if a student, or termination, if a MLWS employee, volunteer, an employee of a contracted service provider or an independent contractor. Prohibited "retaliation" includes, but is not limited to: threats, intimidation, harassment, any other adverse action threatened, expressly or impliedly, or taken against anyone who reports a violation or suspected violation of this Policy or who participates in an investigation of a complaint. Any MLWS student, their parent or guardian, or other non-MLWS employee who either observes or becomes aware of such retaliatory behavior is strongly encouraged to report it to School authorities. All MLWS employees, volunteers, employees of contracted service providers and independent contractors working at MLWS are required to do so.

Intentional False Reports Prohibited

MLWS considers any allegation of harassment to be a serious matter. Therefore, if it is determined at the conclusion of an investigation that a reported violation was intentionally falsely made or that false information was knowingly provided regarding the complaint, MLWS will take appropriate disciplinary or other action against such individual.

Investigation of Reported Incidents

After a report is made, MLWS will direct that an investigation be conducted by appropriate individuals who will be selected based upon the nature of the report and the individuals involved. This investigation may be conducted by MLWS personnel, or by counsel and/or by an outside investigator, depending on the facts and circumstances of the report. MLWS recognizes that reporting a violation of the policy will often involve discussing matters of a sensitive nature. Therefore, MLWS and any outside investigator it retains will bear this in mind and use the utmost discretion when conducting the investigation in order to minimize the chances that information about the matter will become known by unnecessary individuals.

As part of any investigation conducted pursuant to this policy, the reporter, the alleged victim (should that be someone other than the reporter), and the alleged offender will be interviewed separately about the reported facts. They will be advised of the prohibition against retaliation for making such a report and/or cooperating with an investigation. Furthermore, others who may have relevant knowledge may also be questioned, and they too will be reminded of MLWS' anti retaliation policy and the need for discretion. Given the fact that these investigations help to preserve the safety of our community, MLWS expects all members of the community to cooperate in an investigation if requested to do so. All MLWS employees, volunteers, employees of contracted service providers, and independent contractors working at MLWS are under a duty to cooperate. MLWS will try to be as discreet as possible during the investigation and confidentiality will be maintained to the extent

possible given the facts and circumstances of the complaint and the need to do a fair and thorough investigation.

Nothing in this Policy is intended to limit the options of any person who believes that they have been subject to unlawful harassment or discrimination. Such a person may at any time in addition to participating in the MLWS Policy procedures pursue their rights with an outside agency, governmental entity, or legal counsel. At the conclusion of the investigation, and after the decision regarding what, if any, disciplinary or remedial action is to be taken has been made, the alleged victim and alleged offender will be informed about the disposition of the matter. If either party is dissatisfied with the outcome, remedy may be sought by contacting the Executive Committee. Communication of any information regarding the matter to other members of the MLWS community, whether that be faculty, staff, the student body, or parents/guardians, will be decided on a case-by-case basis with all due consideration being given to issues of privacy, confidentiality, and the emotional and physical well-being of all those involved.

Disciplinary decisions will be based on the facts and circumstances of each case and will take into account the offender's prior conduct and the wishes of the victim, although the latter will not be the controlling factor as MLWS must act in the interest of protecting the entire school community as well as the victim. In addition to being disciplined for engaging in an act of prohibited harassment or retaliation, MLWS employees may also be disciplined for not following all aspects of this policy, including but not limited to, the reporting protocols.

Possible disciplinary outcomes for **students** include, but are not limited to: a verbal warning, parental notification, loss of privileges, counseling, sensitivity training, probation, suspension, expulsion, dismissal, and/or notification to local or state authorities. MLWS has the sole discretion as to appropriate discipline and can expel/dismiss, in appropriate situations, when no prior discipline has been taken.

For certain offenses, expulsion/dismissal may be the first and only disciplinary step taken. Any disciplinary step or steps may be skipped at the sole discretion and judgment of MLWS after investigation and analysis of the total situation. Although expulsion/dismissals generally include prior notice to the affected student, MLWS reserves the right to bypass any notice.

Possible disciplinary outcomes for **employees** include, but are not limited to: verbal coaching, verbal warnings, written warnings, sensitivity counseling, probation, suspension with or without pay, termination and other appropriate discipline. MLWS has the sole discretion as to appropriate discipline and can terminate employees, in appropriate situations, when no prior discipline has been taken. For certain offenses, termination/dismissal may be the first and only disciplinary step taken. Any disciplinary step or steps may be skipped at the sole discretion and judgment of MLWS after investigation and analysis of the total situation. Although involuntary terminations/dismissals generally include prior notice to the affected employee, MLWS reserves the right to bypass any notice.

In addition to disciplinary action with regard to the accused, MLWS will consider what, if any, remedial actions should be taken with regard to the School as a whole to prevent similar offenses from occurring in the future.

MLWS will keep records of all such investigations and such records will include, but not be limited to, information about the allegation as gathered from the reporter, the alleged victim, the person accused, and others interviewed. In addition, the decision reached regarding appropriate disciplinary

action and any other relevant followup action engaged in by the School will be documented. Documentation of harassment investigations is necessary to provide an accurate record regarding the reported violation and how it was handled, one that does not have to rely on the recollections of people whose memories may become inaccurate over the passage of time.

Mandatory Reporting to the New York State Hotline

Under Section 413 of the New York State Social Services Law, all school officials, including, but not limited to, administrators, faculty, guidance counselors, and health care professionals employed by MLWS are "mandated reporters" and have an affirmative duty to report when they have "reasonable cause to suspect" that a child has been abused or maltreated by a parent or legal guardian or someone else legally responsible for their care and such information has come to the school official's attention in the course of his or her official or professional capacity.

"Mandated reporters," as defined above, must call the New York State Central Registry ("SCR") at 1-800-635-1522 upon having such "reasonable cause." This is the **personal** duty of the person who has such reasonable cause and is not satisfied by telling a supervisor at the school. Consulting with a supervisor at the School before making such a call, however, is allowable, and indeed advisable, but the consent or approval of such supervisor is **never** a requirement for making a call to the SCR.

This reporting duty applies to knowledge obtained during the course of any out-of-school activity, as well as when on school premises, and indeed to any knowledge of abuse or maltreatment of a child "coming before them in their official or professional capacity" at any time or place. Thus, even if a MLWS employee learns of reportable abuse or maltreatment while on a retreat or a trip, or anywhere else outside of the School, a report must be made to the SCR.

MLWS employees are reminded that the MLWS administrators are always available to discuss such situations, offer advice and support, and be present should a call to the SCR need to be made. Oral reports to the SCR Hotline must be followed up within 48 hours with a written report using form LDS-2221-A which can be obtained from the New York State Office of Children's Services (OCFS) website at www.ocfs.state.ny.us.

Penalties for failure to report: Failure to report a suspected case of child abuse or maltreatment perpetrated upon a child by a parent, legal guardian, or someone else legally responsible for the child's care, as defined in the New York State Family Court Act above, is a class A misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in jail and/or a fine of $1000. In addition, it is a violation of MLWS policy and is therefore an offense for which an employee may be terminated.

Immunity from liability for Mandated Reporters: Under New York State Social Services Law, any school employee who in good faith makes a report to the State hotline has immunity from liability, civil or criminal, which might otherwise result by reason of such action.

Reminder: required reporting to MLWS administration

In addition to the requirements of New York State law, as set out above, pursuant to the MLWS policy, all MLWS employees, volunteers, employees of contracted service providers, and independent contractors working at MLWS, as well as other adults have a duty to immediately report their suspicions of child abuse or maltreatment committed by **anyone**, not just a parent, guardian, or other person legally responsible for the child's care, to one of the appropriate MLWS administrators set forth in the Reporting section of this policy. This internal report must be made regardless of whether a call has already been made to the State Hotline listed above.

Penalties for failure to report: Any person violating the provisions of Title 9, including the failure to report an act of child abuse having reasonable cause to believe that an act of child abuse has been committed is considered a "disorderly person" and faces criminal penalties. In addition, it is a violation of MLWS policy and is therefore an offense for which an employee may be terminated.

Immunity from liability for Mandated Reporters: Anyone acting pursuant to this act in the making of a report under this act shall have immunity from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed. Any such person shall have the same immunity with respect to testimony given in any judicial proceeding resulting from such report.

Reporting to state or local law enforcement

While recognizing that it is under no legal duty to do so, if MLWS has *reasonable cause to suspect* that a MLWS employee, volunteer, employee of a contracted service provider, or any other adult at MLWS has committed a physical or sexual assault, as defined by the New York State Penal Law, against a MLWS student, MLWS will report this information to State or Local law enforcement authorities.