

Highland Mill Montessori

Parent Handbook

Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District

2026-2027



Highland Mill
Montessori

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Dear Highland Mill Montessori Students and Families,

On behalf of the faculty and staff at Highland Mill Montessori, I am delighted to welcome you to a new school year! We are excited to partner with our students and families as we begin a year filled with learning, growth, discovery, and joy.

I hope your summer provided an opportunity to rest, recharge, and create special memories with family and friends. As we embark on a new school year, I encourage each student to approach every day with curiosity, independence, and a love of learning. At Highland Mill Montessori, we believe that every child has unique gifts and potential. Through meaningful work, perseverance, and a supportive community, our students develop the confidence and skills needed to thrive.

Our Montessori approach fosters independence, responsibility, collaboration, and a lifelong love of learning. Each day, students are provided opportunities to explore, discover, and grow academically, socially, and emotionally within a carefully prepared environment. Families are essential partners in this work, and we are grateful for your ongoing support and trust as we work together to help every child reach their fullest potential.

This Student and Family Handbook contains important information about our school's expectations, procedures, and student responsibilities. We encourage families to review the handbook together and discuss the guidelines that help us maintain a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment for all members of our community

At Highland Mill Montessori, we are proud to be a school community that values respect, responsibility, kindness, integrity, and a commitment to lifelong learning. By working together, students, families, and staff will continue to create a welcoming environment where every child feels seen, supported, challenged, and inspired to succeed.

I look forward to celebrating our students' growth, accomplishments, and milestones throughout the year. Thank you for being an important part of the Highland Mill Montessori family. Together, we will make this a wonderful year of learning and growth for every child.

With appreciation,

Andrea J. Mills, Ph.D.

Principal

Highland Mill Montessori School

2026-2027

Our Mission, Vision & Beliefs

MISSION

At Highland Mill Montessori we will create a Montessori culture of high academic standards in a peaceful learning environment that emphasizes strong moral values, a passion for life-long learning, responsible independence, celebration of diversity and positive contributions to the global community. We will build partnerships with families and the local community to extend our support network for students.

VISION

Highland Mill Montessori School fosters a peaceful and caring environment by embedding elements of grace and courtesy throughout the curriculum. We provide individualized, rigorous instruction that addresses unique learning styles and encourages curiosity and creativity while focusing on the Montessori curriculum to prepare student leaders for a changing global community.

HMM Shared Beliefs

- Our children will learn in a culturally diverse Montessori environment that is well prepared and is safe and orderly
- Our children will learn at the highest level when family, student, and community are in partnership
- Our children will develop socially and emotionally while excelling academically as a result of having well trained Montessori teachers

History of Our School

Highland Mill Montessori has a proud legacy that began in 1996 when Billingsville Montessori School opened on Skyland Avenue. Through the dedication of families, staff, and community members, the school grew into a thriving Montessori program. In 2002, the magnet program moved to its current location on Clemson Avenue and became Highland Mill Montessori, continuing a tradition of excellence and authentic Montessori education.

Today, Highland Mill Montessori is a full magnet Montessori school where children are encouraged to learn through exploration, discovery, and meaningful experiences. Our students develop independence, confidence, and a lifelong love of learning through hands-on lessons, multi-age classrooms, and individualized instruction. Just as important as academic success, we focus on helping children build character, practice grace and courtesy, respect others, and become responsible members of their community.

Our school's success is built on strong partnerships among students, staff, families, and community members. Together, we create a nurturing environment where every child feels supported, valued, and challenged to reach their fullest potential. Highland Mill Montessori's recognition as a Magnet School of Excellence and a Certified Magnet School of America reflects the dedication of our entire school community.

Montessori Quote Highlights

The teacher

Whoever touches the life of the child touches the most sensitive point of a whole which has roots in the most distant past and climbs toward the infinite future.

The child

It is true that we cannot make a genius. We can only give each child the chance to fulfill his potential possibilities.

Discipline

Discipline must come through liberty.

No one can be free unless he is independent: therefore, the first, active manifestations of the child's individual liberty must be so guided that through this activity he may arrive at independence.

The Environment

The first aim of the prepared environment is, as far as it is possible, to render the growing child independent of the adult. Our teachers thoughtfully prepare each classroom environment to support independence, collaboration, and meaningful learning. Students have opportunities to work individually, with partners, and in small groups throughout the day. Classrooms are orderly, inviting, and carefully maintained by both staff and students, fostering a sense of responsibility and community. Each environment is equipped with authentic Montessori materials that are organized,

accessible, and ready for student use. Teacher Assistants are assigned to classrooms in accordance with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools staffing allocations.

Motivation

What matters is not physics, or botany, or the works of the hand, but the will and the components of the human spirit which construct themselves in work.

Building Character

Character formation cannot be taught. It comes from experience and not from explanation.

Staff and Children Take Ownership of Managing Behavior

Montessori classrooms are carefully prepared to foster independence, responsibility, and a love of learning. Students are encouraged to make thoughtful choices, work with purpose, and demonstrate respect for themselves, others, and classroom materials.

At Highland Mill Montessori, we emphasize intrinsic motivation and help students develop self-discipline, confidence, and pride in their accomplishments. Through guidance, reflection, and meaningful learning experiences, children learn to make responsible decisions and grow as contributing members of our school community.

From an early age, students are given opportunities to develop concentration, independence, and problem-solving skills. As they mature, students are expected to demonstrate increasing responsibility, focus, and respect for the learning environment.

Children's Work Day and Uninterrupted Work Time

The first six weeks of school are an important time as students adjust to Montessori routines, expectations, and ways of learning. During this period, often referred to as normalization, teachers focus on helping students develop independence, concentration, responsibility, and respect for others and the learning environment. Students learn classroom procedures, practice making thoughtful choices, and build the habits needed for a successful school year.

To support this important process, families are asked to limit classroom visits during the first six weeks of school so students can establish routines and develop confidence within their learning community. The only exception is for birthday celebrations that have been scheduled in advance with the teacher.

Aug. 17 - 24	Teacher Workdays
Aug. 25	First Day of School
Sep. 7	Labor Day
Sep. 21	Teacher Workday
Oct. 2	Teacher Workday
Oct. 14	Early Release Day
Oct. 30	Q1 Ends (46 days)
Nov. 2-3	Teacher Workday
Nov. 11	Veterans Day
Nov. 25	Teacher Workday
Nov. 26 - 27	Thanksgiving Break
Dec. 9	Early Release Day
Dec. 21-Jan. 1	Winter Break
Jan. 18	MLK, Jr. Day
Jan. 21	Q2 Ends (42 days)
Jan. 22	Teacher Workday
Feb. 15	Teacher Workday
Feb. 24	Early Release Day
Mar. 24	Q3 Ends (42 days)
Mar. 25	Teacher Workday
Mar. 26	Good Friday
Mar. 29 - Apr. 2	Spring Break
May 31	Memorial Day
Apr. 28	Early Release Day
Jun. 9	Q4 Ends (47 days)
Jun. 10 - 11	Teacher Workday

- This calendar reflects the 2026-2027 academic calendar approved by the Board of Education on April 8, 2025. School makeup days will be used in the order listed. The superintendent may waive up to four makeup days. §5.L 2022-59/SB 671 authorized the use of Remote Instruction for emergency closures such as inclement weather. A regularly updated list of school closure and makeup days is available by clicking on the Calendar Quicklink at www.cmsk12.org.

JUNE 2027						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

June 9th Last Day of School

School Staff Roles

At Highland Mill Montessori, we value strong home-school partnerships. Your child's teacher is your primary point of contact and can be reached through ParentSquare, email, written notes, or the school office. In addition to teachers, administrators, counselors, EC staff, instructional support staff, social workers, and other specialists are available to support students and families throughout the school year.

Position	Staff Member	Role
Principal	Dr. Andrea Mills	Serves as the instructional leader of the school and oversees daily operations, student achievement, and school programs.
Assistant Principal	Constance Danner	Supports the principal in school operations, student support, scheduling, transportation, and other administrative responsibilities.
School Counselor	Christopher McIntyre	Provides counseling services, social-emotional support, and guidance for students while partnering with families and staff to support student success.
Resource/EC teachers, literacy and math facilitators, AIG/TD teacher, and MTSS Specialists	<u>Resource/EC Teachers:</u> Kate Baltes <u>MCL2:</u> Beth Leo <u>Math Master Teacher:</u> Tianna Legardye <u>AIG/TD Teacher:</u> Karen Ainsworth <u>MTSS Specialist:</u> Maggie Baldwin	Provides targeted support and specialized instruction to help students meet their learning goals in reading and math.
Multilingual Learner (ML) teacher	Maggie Baldwin	Supports Multilingual Learners (MLs) and their families by providing language development services and monitoring student progress based on WIDA and ACCESS assessment results.
Speech Pathologist	Tracey Cooks	Provides specialized support to help students with IEPs develop and strengthen their speech, language, and communication skills.
School Nurse	Nurse Sabrina & Nurse Joanna	Assists with student health and medical needs.
School Psychologist	Tiffany Howard	Provides mental health support, consultative services, and evaluations for students.
School Social Worker	Katrina Griggs	Connects students and families with school and community resources to support academic, social, and emotional success.
Data/Attendance Manager	Abigail Bailey	Maintains student records, scheduling, attendance, and data reporting.

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Attendance

A student must attend school for at least half of the day to be counted present (12:45 pm). This means that very late arrivals or early dismissals may result in your student being counted as absent even if they were present for part of the day. Please contact school staff if you note any discrepancies in your student's attendance record.

A school representative will contact parents/guardians when their child accumulates 3, 6, and 9 unexcused absences. After 10 unexcused absences, the principal's designee or attendance official will issue a 10-day letter stating that the student is in violation of the NC attendance law, that parents may be referred for prosecution, and that the Department of Social Services may be notified.

The absences listed below are considered **excused** once school personnel have received verification from the parent/guardian:

- Illness of student
- Death in the immediate family
- Quarantine
- Approved educational opportunity - Principal will approve 1 per year
- Doctor appointment
- Court or administrative proceedings
- Religious holiday (religious observances; must be approved in advance)

The absences listed below and all other absences not listed below are **unexcused**:

- Bad weather
- Missing the bus
- Car trouble
- Lack of heat, water, or electricity
- Shopping
- Lack of clothing or shoes
- Oversleeping

It is important that parents/guardians report all student absences to the school, regardless of the reason. You may report any absence by responding to the ParentSquare notification or emailing highlandmill@cms.k12.nc.us. Please include the reason for the absence and send documentation if applicable (i.e., a doctor's note). To code an absence as excused, the school must receive a notification from home within 2 days of the child's return to school.

The notification should contain the following:

- Date(s) of absence(s), student's name, and teacher's name
- Specific reasons matching "lawful, excused absences" as determined by Public School Law

- Signature of the parent/guardian

PLEASE NOTE: A written note from a parent does not automatically result in an excused absence. The reason for the absence must be one of those determined by Public School Law.

Educational Opportunity Request

An Educational Opportunity Request is a process that allows a parent or guardian to request that a student's absence be excused when the student will miss three or more consecutive school days for an educational experience. The request must be submitted and approved by the principal at least one week before the absence. School assignments that are missed while the student is absent will be received when they return to school. Students will have two weeks to complete and turn in missing assignments. The principal will only approve 1 educational leave each school year.

Accidents

Parents will be notified of accidents needing medical or immediate attention.

Parents must ensure that teachers and the office always have current emergency telephone numbers. Please return your child's emergency form by the first day of school.

After-School Activities Reminder

Many of our after-school activities are operated by independent organizations. These programs are not staffed or managed by the school, and school administration does not hire or supervise after-school activity staff.

If you have questions, concerns, or feedback regarding an after-school activity, please contact the organization's program leader directly, as they are responsible for program operations and supervision.

For student safety, families should ensure they understand the program's safety measures, dismissal and pickup procedures and maintain current emergency contact information with the provider.

AIG/Talent Development Program

The full continuum of services for gifted and advanced learners in elementary school centers around an inclusive framework and provides opportunities for nurturing, enrichment, extension, acceleration, and co-curriculars.

The NEAT (Nurture, Enrich, and Accelerate to Thrive) Framework is a flexible, inclusive approach designed to support the academic, intellectual, and social-emotional development of gifted and advanced learners in grades K-5. By focusing on three core components – Nurture, Enrich, and Accelerate – the program empowers students to reach their full potential through higher levels of rigor and creative thinking skills. This is achieved through co-teaching, collaborative planning, and intentional differentiation, ensuring instruction is tailored to each student's unique needs. From universal nurturing in 1st grade to specialized math acceleration, the framework provides a comprehensive environment where learning is both meaningful and challenging.

Arrival Procedures

Parents are strongly encouraged to use the school bus transportation provided by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. If you do provide transportation in the morning, have children prepared to quickly exit the car on the passenger side with all of their belongings.

Carpool Procedures

We believe in children working to gain their independence and confidence in the carpool line. Children will need to unbuckle their seat belts and open and close their car doors independently. Staff will assist children when needed. These arrival procedures will ensure safety and keep the traffic flowing in the morning. Carpool **begins at 8:50 am**. Students should not be released from the car until staff are present to supervise. **Children must arrive at school by 9:15 a.m.** After 9:15 am, the adult will need to walk the child into the building, sign in at the front office, and receive a tardy slip before going to class.

1. Refrain from using cell phones during pickup/drop-off.
2. Follow the traffic pattern (and posted traffic and directional signs) when leaving campus; **make a RIGHT TURN ONLY.**
3. All car riders must be dropped off in the carpool line. There is no drop-off/pick-up in the bus lot.

Walker Procedures

1. **Car Side Walkers:** Parents and students should wait for the bell to ring and stand behind the cones by the bike rack or under the tree.
2. **Dogs are not allowed on CMS properties.** This is a safety precaution to protect all students.
3. If your child forgets their water bottle or anything else, we can provide it at school; no need to make a special trip back up.



Behavior Expectations

HMM is committed to fostering a positive school climate that supports effective teaching and learning. Behavior and discipline are shared responsibilities between home and school. Our discipline model aligns with the [CMS Code of Conduct](#), a comprehensive document outlining expected student behavior on the bus, at school, and during school-sponsored activities. It also clearly outlines consequences for inappropriate behavior. Please review our [Behavior Matrix](#).

Bullying Preventions

Bullying and harassment are strictly prohibited in CMS. It is the policy of the Board

of Education to maintain learning environments that are free from harassment and bullying (Bullying Policy & Regulation S-BULLY). This includes, but is not limited to, freedom from harassment or bullying:

- based on an individual's real or perceived race; color; religion; ancestry; national origin; gender; socioeconomic status; academic status; gender identity/expression; physical appearance; sexual orientation; physical, mental, developmental, or sensory disability; creed; political belief; age; linguistic or language differences; height; weight; marital status; parental status; or
- because of an association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics.

Students who feel bullied, harassed, or intimidated—whether by another student or an adult—or who witness such behavior, should report the incident as soon as it is known. Bullying concerns should be reported through the [Say Something](#) platform, accessible on the main CMS website. Reports may be submitted anonymously or with the reporter's contact information. Retaliation for reporting is strictly prohibited under CMS Bullying Policy S-BULLY.

To view the Policy Code: S-BULLY Bullying please visit goo.gl/xtMe84

To view the Regulation Code: S-BULLY/R Bullying Prevention please visit goo.gl/9U8u9h

Birthday Celebrations

To support a consistent learning environment, birthday treats are not to be distributed to students during instructional time. Please reach out to your child's teacher for how to include birthday celebrations during circle time. Students are not allowed to receive flowers, balloons, or other deliveries at school. In lieu of these things, parents may:

- 1) Visit for lunch
- 2) Sign up for the Spirit Rock, [HERE](#)

Birthday invitations may be brought to the school only when every homeroom student is invited. No individual invitations may be distributed at school. School personnel are not allowed to distribute birthday invitations via CMS email or on school-sponsored sites. Nor are we allowed to provide you with the contact information of other parents.

Breakfast

Breakfast is offered at no cost to all students each day. Students will go directly to the cafeteria to eat breakfast, then proceed to their classrooms.

Bus Transportation

School buses will come to a complete stop at each bus stop. If a student is not in sight, the bus will continue on its route. Students should arrive at the bus stop at least 10 minutes before the scheduled pick-up time. To allow for uncontrollable incidents, such as traffic delays, students should wait at least 15 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time before leaving the bus stop. Parents are responsible for student safety at bus stops. Parents are encouraged to work together at bus stops to establish a phone tree for communication and to ensure that students have appropriate supervision while waiting for the bus. Students may not ride home with a friend on another bus. We will use Parent Square to communicate any major

delays or issues. Parents need to create a free AlphaPortal account using the following link: [AlphaPortal](#). This account is easy to set up and allows users to submit ridership, alternate, and unsafe stop requests. It also provides updates on the status of their requests via email or text message and tracks the bus location in real time. Step-by-step guides and tutorials can be found on the [Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools webpage](#). AlphaRoute (Tutorials and Instruction).

Bus riders will be placed on their afternoon bus unless we receive written permission is sent to highlandmill@cms.k12.nc.us from a parent or guardian to change afternoon transportation. All requests must be submitted by 3:00 PM.

Duties and Responsibilities of Students on Buses

Conduct of Students

- Pre-K-2 Students should ride in the front half of the bus (Pre-Kindergarten students closest to the driver).
- Obey the bus driver promptly concerning conduct on the bus.
- Students should remain seated at all times and keep hands and feet to themselves.
- Except with prior written permission from the principal, objects that are prohibited in school, as listed in the Student Rights, Responsibilities and Character Development Handbook, are also not allowed on the school bus
- Be at the designated location in the morning and afternoon, ready to board the bus before the time shown on the posted schedule. The driver is responsible for maintaining this schedule and will not wait for tardy students.
- Help keep the bus clean, sanitary and orderly and do not damage or abuse the cushions or other bus equipment. Students will be required to pay for damages. For the child's safety, eating is not permitted on the school bus.
- In case of emergency, ask the driver to stop the bus
- Do not use drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or profane language on the bus. Students are not permitted to use recording devices on the buses.

Safety Rules

- Stay off the roadway while waiting for the bus
- Wait until the bus has come to a complete stop before attempting to get on or off
- Leave the bus only with the consent of the driver
- Enter or leave the bus only by the front door except in case of emergency
- Do not lean out of windows. Keep head and hands inside the bus.
- When crossing a street at a bus stop:
 - Make sure the bus is stopped, the door is open and the stop signal is out
 - Look both ways and do not run across the street
 - Cross in front of the bus within sight and hearing of the driver. When safe, walk quickly and directly to board the bus

It is critical to note that being assigned to and riding a school bus is a privilege, not a right, in North Carolina. Rules and expectations regarding proper student behavior MUST be upheld on and around a school bus as they are on school grounds and in the classroom. In many ways, the bus is a direct extension of the classroom and remains part of the child's educational day. Failure to adhere to bus rules can result in disciplinary action.



Cafeteria Expectations

We expect our cafeteria to reflect a safe, respectful and responsible environment. Because of the large number of students gathered together, students are expected to display polite manners, use quiet indoor voices, and follow all cafeteria rules. ***While students are learning and practicing cafeteria expectations, parents may not eat lunch with their children for the first nine weeks of this school year. When visitors arrive at school, they must log in to our Raptor Security Platform and have their photo ID checked by front office staff.***

Cell Phones & Smart Watches

All cell phones, watches, and other personal technology **should be turned off upon entering the school building or school bus and stored in your child's backpack.** Smartwatches are not to be worn for communication and must remain in the backpack during the instructional day. Students may keep a cell phone in their backpack, but it must be turned off and may not be used during the school day. If a child has a phone out during the day, the teacher may take it to the office, where it will remain until the end of the day.

Change of Address or Phone Numbers

Please notify the office and your child's teacher if you move or change your telephone number during the school year. Please promptly notify the school office of your new address and provide updated proof of residence.

Character Education

Character Education is encouraged in developing and using character traits that promote a safe and healthy community. HMM emphasizes that students are responsible, respectful, empathetic, and compassionate; take initiative; show integrity; persevere; and have a strong work ethic. We use the character education initiative to reinforce these traits every day.

Child Custody

If there are special custody arrangements for a child, the parent(s) should notify the data manager (front office secretary), principal, and the child's teacher by providing a copy of the official court documentation/Custody Agreement to the main office. Otherwise, the school considers both parents to have equal access to the child.

Communication

Families will receive a weekly email, newsletter, or ParentSquare message from their child's teacher and the PTA each week. As always, please do not hesitate to

contact your child's teacher with any questions or concerns. We are committed to open communication and will respond to emails and phone calls within 48 hours on business days.

Concerns

If you have questions specific to your child's progress or a classroom issue, please contact your child's teacher or the appropriate staff member directly *before* bringing the concern to a school administrator. It is important to maintain open communication between parents and teachers to ensure the best education for your child.

Conferences

All parents are expected to participate in a scheduled parent-teacher conference at the end of the first quarter. These conferences provide an important opportunity for families and teachers to discuss student progress, celebrate successes, and collaborate to support continued growth and achievement.

Additional conferences may be requested throughout the year as needed. To protect valuable instructional time for all students, we ask that conferences be scheduled in advance.



Dismissal from School

Carpool Procedures

- PM dismissal on the car lot will be directed by a staff member. Student loading areas are indicated by cones on the sidewalk. Staff members will monitor students as they get into their cars; students will load the car on the passenger side and open and close their doors. Staff will assist students if needed. You must have your car tag in sight to help with knowing how to load students in the correct car.

Walkers

- Car side walkers: Parents should congregate outside the building when waiting for the students to be dismissed. Your child will be walked out the school by a staff member.
- Dogs are not allowed on CMS properties unless they are a trained therapy dog and have permission to be on campus. Any dogs arriving with families should remain in the vehicle. This is a safety precaution to protect all students. This includes all walker locations.

Unescorted Walker/Biker Procedure

- Parents must complete this form with the school.
- If your child will be an unescorted afternoon walker/bike rider, parents must sign a

waiver to allow your child to walk or ride their bike off campus alone without an adult. If we do not have this form signed, we will bring the student back into the building and call home to have a parent pick them up. Thanks for ensuring the safety of our students.

- Students in grades 3-5 are able to escort a K-2 sibling home if the parent signs the waiver for them to do so. If the older sibling is absent, a K-2 student may not go home alone on this day.

Transportation Changes

- At the start of each school year (usually at Open House), parents must complete a transportation form listing their child's regular morning and afternoon transportation arrangements (bus, walker, car rider, van rider, etc.). To help ensure student safety and a smooth dismissal process, we ask families to keep transportation routines as consistent as possible.
- Students will be dismissed according to the transportation plan on file unless the school receives written notification of a change. Any transportation changes must be communicated in writing to both the school office and your child's teacher before 3:00 p.m. on the day of the change. **For safety reasons, transportation changes cannot be made without written notice from a parent or guardian. Requests received after the 3:00 p.m. deadline will not be honored.** Parents should also notify the teacher of any permanent changes to transportation as soon as possible.
- These procedures are strictly enforced to ensure the safety and security of all students and to minimize disruptions to classroom instruction and dismissal routines.

Dress Code

- Students are expected to adhere to cleanliness and dress standards that support a productive and safe school environment. A student's appearance, mode of dress, or personal hygiene will not be permitted to disrupt the educational process or pose a threat to the health or safety of others.
- Appropriate dress helps set the expectations for learning at HMM. Please have your child adhere to the following guidelines to help keep the focus on the educational mission of HMM:
- Wear closed-toed shoes. The safest shoes are those that "hug" the whole foot. Tennis shoes are always a safe choice. Please do not have your children wear high heels, platforms, flip-flops, or Heely shoes. We expect students to run and play at recess and PE in safe shoes to prevent injury.
- Words on clothing must be appropriate and not cause disruption or offense of any kind. Logos must be appropriate for elementary school. This means no tobacco or alcohol advertising, no drug or sexual messages, direct or implied, and no profanity of any sort, including the word often used for one's bottom. In addition, clothing may not depict or refer to weapons (guns, knives, etc.) or death.
- Wear clothing that is neither too revealing nor too distracting, and that is safe. Midriffs should be covered at all times. Tank tops and spaghetti straps should not be worn unless worn over or beneath a shirt that covers the entire shoulder and back (even for our littlest Knights). Sheer material is not considered enough cover for tank tops or otherwise.
- Hats and hoodies should not be worn inside the building unless worn in

accordance with a religious belief and/or custom. Exceptions for religious beliefs include, but are not limited to, burkas, al-amiras, turbans, hijabs, etc.

- All pants, shorts, and skirts should be worn around the natural waistline. A belt is required for Knights who have trouble keeping pants from slipping below the waist. Baggy pants/bottoms that purposely hang below the waist are not allowed.
- Skirts/shorts should be a reasonable length. A good rule of thumb is to let both arms hang naturally by your side. The skirt (or dress) should reach the tips of your fingers. Please use discretion with trendy accessories, "body art," and articles worn. Case-by-case analysis based on the level of distraction from education will be applied and communicated as necessary. This includes, but is not limited to, anything inappropriate in the school setting (e.g., temporary tattoos, writing on skin, wild neon hair colors).
- Students who attend school with a dress code violation will be required to call home to have their parents bring appropriate clothing to wear. Repeat violators will have consequences as determined by the [CMS Student Code of Conduct](#).



Educational Opportunity Request

An Educational Opportunity Request is a process that allows a parent or guardian to request that a student's absence be excused when the student will miss three or more consecutive school days for an educational experience. The request must be submitted and approved by the principal at least one week before the absence. School assignments that are missed while the student is absent will be received when they return to school. Students will have two weeks to complete and turn in missing assignments.

Emergency Locator Cards

The school updates all contact information on the Emergency Locator Cards (Blue forms) annually. It is important that the information be accurate, as time and accuracy are essential in medical emergencies. Please be sure to complete all information on both sides of the Blue Card. **The school can only release a student to individuals authorized by the parent/guardian on the emergency card, and lunch visitors must also be listed on the Blue Card.** Please list multiple names so that, in the event of an emergency, you have options for who can pick up your child. This is very important because if there is a late bus and a parent wants a neighbor to take their child home, the neighbor is not listed on the emergency card.

End of Grade Testing (EOGs)

End-of-Grade testing is for students in grades 3 through 6. All students in North Carolina (including students with disabilities and students identified as English Learners) must participate in the testing program per state and federal requirements. To date, North Carolina does not allow students to opt out of required testing unless

extenuating circumstances are primarily related to serious health conditions. **The EOG testing window is assigned by the state and takes place during the last ten days of school.** The Beginning-of-Grade (BOG) state reading assessment will be administered to third-grade students at the beginning of their third-grade year.

Exceptional Children– Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires CMS to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to children who need special education and related services due to a disability.

The primary purpose of the Exceptional Children (EC) program is to help students with disabilities reach their academic, social, emotional, and physical potential through an individualized education program tailored to their unique needs in the least restrictive environment. Students who qualify for EC services receive specially designed instruction from certified special education teachers, along with related services as appropriate to their educational needs. The level of support varies by student and may range from consultative services to more intensive, full-time support. Eligibility for special education services is determined through a comprehensive evaluation process.

In addition, Highland Mill Montessori uses a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to identify and assist students who are not yet performing at grade level. Through MTSS, students receive targeted, data-driven interventions to address specific learning needs. Student progress is monitored regularly to ensure growth and close learning gaps. Parents will be informed and involved if teachers and academic support staff determine that additional interventions or support may be beneficial.

Parents' Rights

For a complete explanation about parental rights of students with disabilities, please consult the Procedural Safeguards: Handbook on Parents' Rights

- English:
<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/parent-rights-handbook/download?attachment>
- Spanish:
<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/parent-rights-handbook-spanish/download?attachment>
- North Carolina Department of Public Instruction www.dpi.state.nc.us

Differences between IDEA and Section 504

Both IDEA and Section 504 guarantee students with disabilities access to a free and appropriate public education. However, there are major differences between them, especially in the criteria used to determine eligibility and the definition of a free and appropriate public education.

IDEA provides specific categories of disabilities including hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, and specific learning disabilities.

For a student to receive exceptional children education services under IDEA, the

student's educational performance must be adversely affected by the disability and he or she must be in need of special education services (i.e., specially designed instruction). Students with a disability who meet specific IDEA requirements are also protected under Section 504 but do not need a separate service plan. Finally, IDEA applies only to individuals from birth through age 21.

Section 504 is not limited to specific disability categories and does not require evidence that the disability adversely affects the student's educational performance; however, the definition states that in order to be eligible for a Student Service Plan, the student must "have a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activity or bodily function." Students ineligible for services provided under IDEA may be eligible for accommodations under Section 504.



Field Trips

Field trips are an extension of the school's instructional program and provide valuable learning experiences that support classroom instruction. Written parental permission is required for each field trip; permission cannot be granted by telephone. For some non-required field trips, a fee may be requested to help offset transportation costs, including bus and driver expenses. No student will be excluded from participation due to an inability to pay.

All students are expected to travel with and remain with their class throughout the field trip. When parent chaperones are needed, the classroom teacher will communicate those opportunities to families. To ensure the safety and supervision of all students, younger siblings may not accompany parent chaperones on field trips.

Parents serving as chaperones may not transport their child to or from a field trip. Chaperones who wish to travel separately may follow the bus but must be approved CMS volunteers. All chaperones must complete the CMS volunteer screening process prior to participating. Please contact our Data Manager if you have questions about becoming an approved volunteer. <https://www.cmsvolunteers.com/>

Food Guidance

Recent changes in society and our environment necessitate that we use foods in the classroom with a measure of caution. Increases in food-borne pathogens that can cause severe illness and a significant rise in the number of children with potentially lethal food allergies dictate that care be taken with foods brought from home and eaten in school.

The following precautions are to be followed in all schools to protect the health and safety of children and staff:

- Any food shared during scheduled school-wide parties **must come from an**

inspected commercial facility and be labeled with its contents (e.g., Harris Teeter cupcakes with a printed list of ingredients from the HT bakery).

- Fresh fruit and vegetables may be shared, but must be thoroughly washed. Utensils used for cutting or serving should be thoroughly washed and dried between uses. Avoid using a knife that has been used to cut sandwiches with peanut butter, cheese, or meat. Cross-contamination could lead to allergic reactions or food poisoning.
- Products such as milk, cheese, or fruit juice that have not been pasteurized may not be shared in the classroom or at school activities.

Whenever foods are brought to school for snacks, low-sugar, low-fat options should be considered. The following are some healthy snack suggestions: Pretzels, Graham crackers, vanilla wafers, ginger snaps, carrot sticks, dried fruit, apple or banana slices, small pizza bagels, fruit yogurt.

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to provide information regarding a food allergy to the teacher, the school nurse, and School Nutrition Services. The school nurse will draft an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) with the parent and, after the parent has signed it, educate staff about the child's special needs related to severe food allergies.

Restrictive Diet

Child Nutrition Services accommodates any special diet for medical reasons. Please notify your child's teacher and the cafeteria manager if your child has a restrictive diet based on food allergies or other medical needs.



Health

If a child becomes ill during the school day, they will be sent to the health room, where the school nurse or office staff will assess the situation. Parents or guardians will be contacted if needed, and students may be sent home when appropriate. Children with a temperature of 101° must go home and not return for 24 hours or until the temperature is below 100.4° without medication.

If your child has a chronic health condition, such as diabetes, seizures, asthma, severe allergies, or another medical concern, please notify both your child's teacher and the school office so we can provide appropriate support during the school day. Parents will also be contacted in the event of a significant injury or if a child develops a fever while at school.

If a student is unable to participate in physical education, recess, or other physical activities for medical reasons, a written note should be provided to the classroom teacher. For ongoing restrictions, a note from a healthcare provider will be required.

As a general guideline, we assume that students who are well enough to attend school are well enough to participate in the full instructional program, including PE and recess, unless otherwise documented.

Homework

The purpose of homework in elementary school is to reinforce learning, develop responsibility and organizational skills, and strengthen the connection between home and school. Homework should not create undue stress for students or families but should provide opportunities to practice important skills and build independence.

At Highland Mill Montessori, we believe the most important learning that happens at home is reading. Students are encouraged to read or be read to every day and to discuss what they are learning with family members. Other recommendations: math fact practice, review of classroom learning, hand writing/cursive practice, family conversations about books, current events, and school experiences to build vocabulary and comprehension.

Grade	Suggested Time
K-1	10-15 minutes each night, which includes reading time
2-3	20-30 minutes each night, which includes reading time
4-5	30-45 minutes each night, which includes reading time



Infinite Campus

Infinite Campus is our statewide student information system that helps parents track their child's progress in school. Parents can view attendance, assignments, grades, and other data in any web browser or in the Infinite Campus Parent Portal for students in grades 3-13. This portal gives parents access to their student's academic world.

Additionally, parents can complete their annual CMS student forms online during our Annual Update period in the Infinite Campus Parent Portal.

Infinite Campus Parent Portal Instructions: [English Version](#) [Spanish Version](#)

Immunizations-Kindergarten or New to CMS

North Carolina state law requires that all students enrolling for the first time or

transferring must present a certified birth certificate, proof of address, and record of immunizations. If required immunizations are not presented at the time of registration, the parent/guardian is given thirty (30) days to fulfill this requirement. Otherwise, the student is not legally enrolled and must be excluded from school (coded as a suspension) until all records are in order. Kindergarten students must also have a CMS Health Assessment/Physical form completed by a physician before the start of school. Forms are available in the office. **Please use [this website](#) for information and vaccination forms. The immunizations required for school enrollment are:**

- Hep B – 3 doses – 3rd dose after 24 weeks of age; exact dose of first is required; “at birth” or at “hospital” is not sufficient
- 5 DTP/DTaP doses – 4 doses if last dose on or after 4th birthday
- 4 Polio doses – 4th dose on or after the 4th birthday
- 3-4 Hib doses – Not required after age 5
- 2 MMR doses – 1st dose given on or after the first birthday
- 2 Varicella doses

Inclement Weather

In accordance with CMBE policy [O-WTHR](#), CMS follows a structured process to assess and respond to inclement weather, ensuring decisions about school operations can be made by the Superintendent, who may decide to keep schools open, close schools, transition to remote learning, implement a delayed schedule, release schools early, or cancel after-school activities, athletics, and facility use.

Inclement Weather Communication Updates

The safety of our students and staff is our first priority. All decisions regarding school schedules during inclement weather are guided by one principle: the well-being of students, their families, and CMS staff.

How CMS Monitors Weather Conditions

Given the size and geographic diversity of Mecklenburg County, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) closely monitors weather forecasts and developing conditions across the entire district. Weather can be unpredictable and may change rapidly. While some areas may experience severe conditions, other areas may remain largely unaffected.

- CMS serves a 523-square-mile area, and weather conditions can vary greatly from one part of the county to another.
- Road conditions, timing of storms, and travel safety may differ significantly across communities.
- Because of this variability, decisions are made with careful consideration of conditions across the entire district, not just one area.

How will I know if the district will close?

CMS may take one or more of the following actions when weather impacts safety:

- Keep schools open
- Close schools
- Transition to remote learning
- Implement a two-hour delay
- Release schools early
- Cancel after-school activities, athletics, and facility use

Whenever possible, decisions will be made and communicated as early as possible so families and staff can plan accordingly.

If no announcement is made, schools will operate on a normal schedule.

Additional information can be found on the CMS website

www.cmsk12.org/operations/inclement-weather.

How Families Will Receive Updates

Families will receive schedule change announcements through:

- ParentSquare
- Text messages
- Email
- Inclement Weather Website at www.cmsk12.org/operations/inclement-weather



Lost and Found

The Lost and Found is located in the main lobby. It would be helpful if parents clearly wrote their child's name on all personal belongings. Items not claimed at the end of each quarter are donated to a charitable organization.

Lunch Boxes

We understand mornings can be busy, and items are occasionally left at home. If a parent brings a forgotten lunch box to the front office, it will be held there for the student to pick up on the way to the cafeteria. To minimize disruptions to instruction, students will not be called out of class to retrieve lunch boxes. If a student forgets a water bottle, there is no need to bring it to school. We will ensure that all students have access to water throughout the day as needed. We appreciate your help in supporting a smooth, uninterrupted learning environment for all students.

Lunch

Eating With Your Child

At the beginning of the school year, while students are learning and practicing cafeteria expectations, parents may not eat lunch with their children for the first 9 weeks. Please remember that anyone coming to eat lunch with his/her child must be on the blue emergency card. Only family and friends listed on the blue emergency card will be allowed to eat lunch with the student. If a friend or family member is not listed on the blue emergency card but would like to come eat lunch with your child, please let the school know the relationship to the student they are eating with. **When visitors arrive at school, they must log in to our Raptor Security Platform and have their photo ID checked by front office staff.** We will begin having visitors in the tenth week of school. At any time, only 1 friend is allowed to eat with your child. Special seating will be reserved in the cafeteria

for guests if there isn't enough seating at the assigned class table.

View Your Digital Menus with Nutrislice

School Nutrition Services uses Nutrislice to display digital menus for all grade levels. You can easily view the daily menu, see images and descriptions of food items, and access nutritional and allergen information. Our innovative, interactive site and mobile app make our menus more convenient and informative than ever!

Access any Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools' menu on a desktop or mobile browser at <http://cms.nutrislice.com> or get the Nutrislice App on your mobile device in 3 easy steps:

1. Download the Nutrislice App (from Apple or Android App stores)
2. Open the Nutrislice App—Search for Charlotte–Mecklenburg Schools—NC
3. Find your school name in Nutrislice to view specific menus

Online Meal Payment Service

Parents may pay for school meals using Visa, MasterCard or Discover by logging onto www.paypams.com. This requires a one-time registration process. Once you register, you will use the same login and password throughout your child's school years or until you discontinue the service. There is no charge to the parent for using this service.

Free and Reduced-Price Meal Applications

The meal application is a family application. Only one application needs to be completed for each household. Apply online for free or reduced-priced lunch by visiting our website or you may obtain a paper application from your child's school. If you are completing a paper application, please mail it to Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, School Nutrition Services, PO Box 668847, Charlotte, NC 28266-8847.

<https://www.cmsk12.org/operations/school-nutrition-services/apply-for-free-or-reduced-price-lunch>



Medication Policy

As a general policy, the school recommends that children receive medication at home whenever possible. If your child must have medication of **any** type given during school hours, **including over-the-counter medication**, you have the following choices:

1. You may come to school and give the medication to your child at the appropriate time.
2. You may take a *Medication Authorization* form to your child's doctor for

completion. The doctor and the parent must sign it. **The physician must complete this form for both prescription and over-the-counter medications (including cough drops).** Prescription medicines **must** be brought to school in a pharmacy-labeled bottle that contains instructions on how and when the medication is to be given. When the dosage or timing changes, a new pharmacy-labeled bottle must be obtained.

Over-the-counter medications must be received in the original container and will be administered according to the doctor's written instructions. Please instruct your child regarding his/her responsibility in taking medication at school. All medications **must** be brought in by the parent or designee. Students **may not** bring their own medication to school.

3. School personnel will not administer any medication to students unless:
 - a. A Medication Authorization is properly completed.
 - b. The medication is in a properly labeled container.

To ensure that medications are given to students in the safest and most effective manner, there will be no exceptions to this policy.

Mid-Quarter Progress Reports

Students are on a nine-week grading schedule. *Mid-Quarter Progress Reports* are issued midway through each nine-week grading period to inform parents of their child's academic progress before final grades are issued. We encourage you to talk with your child and the teacher if the report indicates any questions or concerns. Mid-Quarter reports may be viewed in Infinite Campus. These will not be printed.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

Highland Mill Montessori implements Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). MTSS is a tiered framework, which promotes school improvement through engaging, research-based academic and behavioral practices. North Carolina employs a systems approach, using data-driven problem-solving to maximize growth for all students.

So what does this mean for you and your student? It means that ALL students will be provided the instruction they need to make progress towards standards. All students will receive core academic, social-emotional, and behavioral instruction as well as expectations for core attendance. The school MTSS leadership team will check that the practices are being used effectively. When groups of students or individual students are not making progress, the school MTSS leadership or grade/content area teams will review instruction, curriculum, and environment to determine what changes are necessary to meet students' needs. Parents are a vital part of this problem-solving process. In addition to core instruction, some students will need supplemental instruction/intervention to support academics, attendance, behavior, and social-emotional needs. Based on a review of multiple data points, students who are not successful with supplemental support will be directed to the school's individual student problem-solving team to be considered for intensive intervention.

Benefits of a Multi-Tiered System of Support include, but are not limited to:

- Early screening of all students for the purpose of identifying problems that could impact learning
- Maximizing student achievement through whole-child problem solving, which is a method inclusive of parents
- Steady monitoring of student progress

- Increased communication regarding student progress and achievement
- Use of evidence-based instructional and behavioral interventions to meet student need



Nurse

HMM School Nurse is: Sabrina and Joanna

The Mecklenburg County Public Health (MCPH) School Health Program provides professional school nursing services to Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) students. All MCPH school nurses are Registered Nurses (RNs) who support the health, safety, and well-being of students throughout the school day.

School nursing services include:

- Conducting individual health assessments for students with medical needs.
- Developing, reviewing, and updating health care plans, including Emergency Action Plans (EAPs), Individual Health Care Plans (IHCPs), and health-related components of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and Section 504 Plans.
- Providing direct nursing care and health services to students.
- Training and supporting school staff in the care of students with special health care needs.
- Providing instruction and oversight for medication administration procedures in schools.
- Assisting with emergency preparedness, injury response, and health-related training.
- Promoting student health, wellness, and disease prevention initiatives across the school community.

Through these services, MCPH school nurses help ensure that students are healthy, safe, and ready to learn.

Chronic Health Problems or Conditions: Our goal is to keep our students safe, healthy, and ready to learn. If your child has a chronic health problem or any health condition that needs special assistance at school, please contact your school health nurse (examples include diabetes, asthma, allergies, seizures, sickle cell, etc.).



Observing in Classrooms

Classroom observations may be conducted only by the child's parent or guardian. To minimize disruption to instruction and maintain a productive learning environment, observations must be scheduled at least 24 hours in advance through the classroom teacher, principal, school counselor, or school psychologist.

To protect the privacy of all students, observations should focus only on your child and must not include observing or discussing other students. As a professional courtesy, teachers will be notified in advance of all scheduled observations.

During the observation, a school administrator, school counselor, or school psychologist will accompany parents and be available to answer questions about instruction, daily routines, grade-level expectations, and other school procedures.

Please remember that observation visits are intended to view classroom instruction and student engagement. To avoid interrupting teaching and learning, this is not the appropriate time to confer with the teacher. If you would like to discuss your child's progress or concerns, we encourage you to schedule a conference with the teacher at a mutually convenient time.



Payments to School

At times, parents will be asked to provide funds for a variety of items, including field trip fees, workbooks, lost books, and lunch money. **We ask that all payments be made online.** However, in the rare situation when you provide cash, it can be collected for field trips and fees or Scholastic Book Fairs.

Physical Education Guidelines

Attire for participation in physical education consists of appropriate clothing for safety, health, and motivational reasons. Elementary physical education requires students to wear tennis shoes ("sneakers" with closed toes and heels). Slip-ons, Crocs, flip-flops, heels, boots, and sandals are not safe or appropriate.

Parent Organizations: PTA and OPES Foundation

The HMM PTA is an organization that support students by providing opportunities such as open house, curriculum nights, and fundraising events. Please visit their websites for more information on ways to engage with these organizations.

HMM PTA:



Safety Response Protocol

As part of our ongoing efforts to improve and standardize our safety procedures, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools began implementing the Standard Response Protocol (SRP) during the 2026-2027 school year. This protocol, developed by the national non-profit “I Love U Guys” Foundation, is used by school districts across the country to create a predictable and unified response to any school-based incident.

What is the Standard Response Protocol (SRP)?

The SRP is an all-hazards approach that uses simple, clear, common language for all students, staff, and first responders. Instead of having dozens of different codes for specific scenarios, the SRP is based on five simple actions. When an incident occurs, a specific action will be announced, followed by instructions.

The five actions are:

- **Hold:** Students and staff stay in their classrooms or area and clear the hallways. This is typically used for situations inside the school, such as a medical emergency.
- **Secure:** Students are brought inside the building and all outside doors are locked. This is used when there is a threat or hazard outside of the school.
- **Lockdown:** All classroom doors are locked, lights are turned off, and students move out of sight. This is used to secure rooms and keep students safe during an immediate threat inside the school.
- **Evacuate:** Students and staff move from one location to another. This is used to move people away from potential danger, such as a fire.
- **Shelter:** Students and staff take cover for a specific hazard, such as a tornado or other weather event.

Throughout the school year, students and staff will be trained on these five actions. Just as we practice fire drills to build confidence and muscle memory, schools will conduct drills for these protocols. The goal of these drills is to ensure our students and staff are prepared to respond calmly and effectively in the event of an emergency. We encourage you to talk with your child about the importance of these drills and the need to always listen carefully to their teachers and school staff. Additional information about the protocol, including a “Parent’s Guide”, is available on the CMS website.

[SRP Parent Handout](#) [SRP Parent Handout \(translated\)](#)

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Section 504 is part of a federal civil rights law known as the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This law specifically prohibits discrimination against students with disabilities and guarantees them a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Discrimination, as defined in Section 504, is the failure to provide students with disabilities the same opportunity to benefit from education programs, services, or activities as provided to

their nondisabled peers. Therefore, schools cannot exclude or deny students with disabilities access to facilities, programs, benefits, activities, or services that are provided to students without disabilities. Schools must make sure that all students receive equal access to educational opportunities.

Definition of a “person with disabilities”

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 defines a person with disabilities as any person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities or bodily functions, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having an impairment. Major life activities include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working. Learning does not have to be the major life activity affected in order for an individual to be eligible for protections and services under Section 504.

Identifying Student Disabilities

Anyone may raise a concern about a student’s unique need for special help. Once a concern is raised, parents, teachers, and other staff members meet to discuss all relevant information about the student. The parents’ participation in this meeting is critical and helps to establish an accurate picture of the student’s medical condition and current needs at school. Based on the information received, the Section 504 team considers whether the student qualifies as an individual with a disability under Section 504. If the team needs more information, the team will obtain the parent’s consent to conduct an evaluation. If the team determines that the student has a disability, the team identifies what types of support is appropriate to meet the student’s needs. These accommodations will be described in a document titled the Section 504 Student Services Plan.

Section 504 Student Services Plan

A Section 504 plan describes the accommodations and services that the school provides to support the student’s education. The team that determined the student’s eligibility for Section 504 and identified the needed accommodations and services will create this service plan to provide clarity and direction to the individuals delivering services or making accommodations. A Section 504 Student Services Plan may be updated at any time to reflect changes and recommendations by the team. The plan should be reviewed on a yearly basis or updated earlier if the student’s needs or diagnosis/impairment(s) changes.

Role of Parents

Parents are their child’s first and most important teachers and advocates. If a parent believes their child has a disability or is having problems in school, they should contact the school principal, school counselor, school nurse, or their child’s teacher to discuss these concerns. Building a strong parent/school relationship begins with effective communication. Parents play a key role by providing important information to schools about their child’s needs, particularly for students with disabilities. As an added benefit, this involvement demonstrates the importance the parent places on education.

Role of Teachers

Teachers play an integral role in the development and implementation of a student’s Section 504 Student Services Plan. Teachers attend eligibility and review meetings, implement needed accommodations, and provide ongoing progress monitoring of the

accommodations listed on a student's plan. A teacher's ongoing communication with the student's parent/guardian and school staff ensures that the student's needs are being met. Teachers are required under Section 504 to make necessary accommodations as specified in the Section 504 Student Services Plan.

Addressing Issues with a Section 504 Student Services Plan

Ongoing communication between parents and teachers will help prevent disagreements regarding the implementation of a student's services plan. When parents' or teachers' concerns are not addressed to their satisfaction, they should contact the school principal or the site-based Section 504 Coordinator or school counselor. If the plan is not appropriate, it should be revised following the same procedures used to develop the original plan. Because situations change and students' needs change, flexibility in this process is key to assist everyone in meeting the student's needs.

Procedural Safeguards

Procedural safeguards are the procedures that schools and parents must follow when making decisions about services for students with disabilities. School principals should have information on procedural safeguards available to parents upon request.

Under Section 504, parents have the right to:

- consent to an initial evaluation
- receive notice regarding the identification, evaluation, and placement of their child
- receive prior notice when the school is changing or discontinuing services for their child
- review their child's records
- participate in an impartial hearing
- a review process

In addition, school districts must provide public notification of the following:

- policies of nondiscrimination
- grievance procedures
- contact information for the Section 504 Office and compliance manager

If you have questions about 504s please contact our 504 Coordinators: Christopher McIntyre.

Differences between IDEA (EC) and Section 504

Both IDEA and Section 504 guarantee students with disabilities access to a free and appropriate public education. However, there are major differences between them, especially in the criteria used to determine eligibility and the definition of a free and appropriate public education.

IDEA provides specific categories of disabilities including hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, and specific learning disabilities.

For a student to receive exceptional children education services under IDEA, the

student's educational performance must be adversely affected by the disability and he or she must be in need of special education services (i.e., specially designed instruction). Students with a disability who meet specific IDEA requirements are also protected under Section 504 but do not need a separate service plan. Finally, IDEA applies only to individuals from birth through age 21.

Section 504 is not limited to specific disability categories and does not require evidence that the disability adversely affects the student's educational performance; however, the definition states that in order to be eligible for a Student Service Plan, the student must "have a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activity or bodily function." Students ineligible for services provided under IDEA may be eligible for accommodations under Section 504.

Snacks

Students who participate in a classroom "working snack" should bring a **nut-free, healthy snack** from home each day. Snacks should attempt to be utensil free. To support student wellness and maintain a safe environment for all students, snacks should be low in sugar and fat. Healthy snack choices may include pretzels, graham crackers, vanilla wafers, ginger snaps, carrot sticks, dried fruit, apple or banana slices, small pizza bagels, or fruit yogurt. **Please do not send snacks that contain nuts or nut products.**

School Counseling

The fundamental role of school counselors is to implement comprehensive school counseling programs that improve student outcomes in the areas of academic achievement, student wellness, and college and career readiness. Counselors work collaboratively to lead, advocate, and promote equity and access for all students by connecting their comprehensive program with their school's and district's mission to foster a positive learning environment and support student growth. Through a comprehensive school counseling program, school counselors:

- Advise students, parents and staff on topics related to academic success
- Assist students in selecting appropriate courses to support their educational and career goals
- Provide brief solution-focused counseling (4-8 sessions) to students, individually and in groups, on normal developmental issues
- Facilitate core classroom lessons that aim to prevent issues and teach students skills that support academic achievement, student wellness, and college and career readiness, including district-mandated franchised lessons which increase equity across schools
- Help students transition from different grade levels
- Assist students and parents with attendance and behavioral concerns
- Facilitate parent-teacher communication as necessary
- Serve as liaisons and support to connect students, parents and staff with community resources and opportunities
- Serve as student advocates in the educational setting
- Appropriately advise students based on comprehensive academic data review, including local and state assessments
- Assist with and respond to students and families in crisis
- Provide prevention and intervention strategies to promote student success

- Complete suicide and mental health assessments and link families with appropriate community resources

School Messaging System

Parent Square will be the platform to communicate with the school. Messages will be sent to all HMM families to communicate important information and share upcoming events. It is important that you inform your child's teacher and our front office/data manager of any changes in address and phone numbers. For more information on setting up your CMS ParentSquare account, click [HERE](#).

School Supplies

A list of required student supplies will be sent in the back to school mailiers.

School Website

<https://highlandmilles.cmsk12.org/>

Spirit Rock

The Spirit Rock may be used to celebrate student or staff achievements, school-sponsored events and accomplishments, and birthdays of HMM students and staff. Eligible users include HMM students, parents/guardians, recognized clubs or teams, and staff. Reservations must be submitted at least 48 hours in advance, are limited to one reservation per month per individual or group, and run for one day from 5:00 PM to 4:00 PM the following day (school-sponsored event messages may remain for up to five days). Only latex or water-based paint may be used, all painting and cleanup must follow school safety requirements, and users must avoid painting surrounding surfaces. The principal will review requests on a first-come, first-served basis, and messages that violate Board Policy S-SFRS or other CMS policies may be denied, removed, or result in loss of reservation privileges. [Spirit Rock Reservation Request Form](#)

Students' Personal Property

- In keeping with our character standards, we ask that students be mindful of the following school rules regarding property:
- Respect all property, whether it is yours or not, at all times. The school cannot be responsible if valuable items are lost or broken. Additionally, the Code of Conduct should be followed at all times.
- Write your child's last name on clothing, lunchboxes, and other personal items so that if an item is lost, it can be easily identified and returned.
- Selling items is prohibited. Trading is discouraged.
- To help maintain a focused learning environment and prevent the loss or damage of personal belongings, toys, electronics, trading cards, and other special items should remain at home unless a teacher has communicated in writing that they are needed for a specific school activity or event.
 - Examples of items that should not be brought to school include Pokémon cards, sports cards, Squishmallows, fidget toys, toy cars, dolls, action figures, mini collectibles, electronic games, smartwatches used for communication, and other treasured personal items.

Student Transfer

If your family will be transferring to another school, please notify the school office as soon as possible. Advance notice allows us to prepare the necessary records and ensure a smooth transition for your child. We request at least one school day's notice so the teacher and office staff have adequate time to complete the transfer process. Before withdrawing, please return all school-owned books, technology, and instructional materials. Any outstanding library fines or fees should be paid online before departure. We appreciate your cooperation and wish your family success in your new school community.

Student Wellness

Student Wellness is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) identifies a framework with five core competencies to support learning and development, as well as four key settings where Student Wellness can be practiced, generalized, and supported. The CASEL core competencies can be taught and applied across developmental stages, from childhood to adulthood. It spans diverse cultural contexts to articulate what students should know and be able to do to achieve academic success, engage in school and civic life, support health and wellness, and pursue fulfilling careers. The Core Competencies are Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Responsible Decision-Making, Relationship Skills, and Social Awareness. The Four Key Settings are Classrooms, Schools, Families & Caregivers, and Communities.

- Self-Awareness: The ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts. This includes the capacity to recognize one's strengths and limitations with a well-grounded sense of confidence and purpose.
- Self-Management: The ability to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations. This includes the capacity to delay gratification, manage stress, and feel motivation & agency to accomplish personal/collective goals.
- Responsible Decision-Making: The ability to make caring, constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions in diverse situations. This includes the capacity to consider ethical standards and safety concerns, and to evaluate the benefits and consequences of various actions for personal, social, and collective well-being.
- Relationship Skills: The ability to establish and maintain healthy, supportive relationships and to navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups effectively. This includes the capacity to communicate clearly, listen actively, cooperate, work collaboratively to problem-solve, negotiate conflict constructively, navigate settings with differing social and cultural demands and opportunities, provide leadership, and seek or offer help when needed.
- Social Awareness: The ability to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts. This includes the capacity to feel compassion for others, to understand broader

historical and social norms of behavior across different settings, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and support.



Tardiness and Early Dismissal

We ask families to limit early checkouts whenever possible, as students miss valuable instructional time when they leave school before dismissal. Frequent early dismissals, like tardiness, can add up and negatively impact student learning. To support student success, please make every effort to ensure your child arrives on time and remains at school for the full school day.

Late Arrival Procedures (Tardy)

- The school day begins promptly at **9:15 a.m.**, and students arriving after that time will be marked tardy. We strongly encourage families to ensure that students are in their classrooms and ready to learn by 9:15 a.m. Regular, on-time attendance helps students maximize instructional time and develop important habits of responsibility, punctuality, and preparedness.
- **For the safety of all students, a parent or guardian must accompany any student arriving after 9:15 a.m. to the main office to sign them in.** Students will receive a tardy slip before reporting to class. Students arriving late due to a delayed school bus will not be marked tardy.
- Teachers are required to maintain records of student tardiness. Patterns of excessive tardiness may be reviewed by the school counselors and administrative team, and monitoring will follow district attendance guidelines.

Early Dismissal Procedures

- If an early dismissal is necessary, a parent or guardian must report to the main office, present a valid photo ID, and sign the student out. For safety, office staff will call your child from class once you arrive. Please do not ask your child to wait in the office before you arrive.
- To maintain a safe and orderly dismissal process, we request that all early dismissals be completed **before 3:00 p.m.** Late-afternoon dismissal changes can create confusion and increase safety concerns as students prepare for the end of the school day.
- Students will be released only to individuals listed on the student's emergency contact card. If someone not listed on the emergency contact card will be picking up your child, please provide written notification to the school by **12:00 p.m.** that day. The designated individual must present a **valid photo ID** before a student can be released. We appreciate your partnership in maximizing instructional time while ensuring the safety and security of all students.

Please utilize the technology services link above to assist with Student Internet Use and Network Access, Student Technology Agreement Form, and Device Care Resources

Title IX Information

In compliance with Federal Law, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools administers all education programs, employment activities and admissions without discrimination against any person on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, national origin, age, or disability. Inquiries regarding compliance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment, in education programs or activities, may be referred to the District's Title IX Coordinator at titleixcoordinator@cms.k12.nc.us or to the Office for Civil Rights, United States Department of Education.

This notice is provided pursuant to the requirements of Title IX and the Educational Amendments of 1972, 20 USC § 1681 et seq and its implementing regulations, 34 CFR Part 106.

Title IX: What Parents Need to Know

Annual Title IX Student Training:

- CMS is required by the Office for Civil Rights to provide Title IX training annually across all grade levels, at all schools. CMS allows parents the ability to opt their student out of receiving the training after being provided access to preview relevant training by grade level. Administrators will send home physical copies of the opt-out form on August 25, 2026, with a required return date of September 1, 2026, for grades Kindergarten-12. If you have more than one student in CMS, you will need to return an opt-out form for each student.
- Parents can also access grade-level opt-out forms below:
 - [Elementary Opt-Out-English](#)
 - [Elementary Opt-Out-Spanish](#)

Who and What Does It Cover?

Title IX protects all students, employees, and applicants from:

- Sexual harassment
- Sexual violence (fondling, rape, domestic violence, dating violence)
- Gender-based bullying or discrimination
- Unequal access to programs or activities based on sex

What is Sexual Harassment under Title IX?

The current 2020 Title IX federal regulations define sexual harassment as the following categories:

- Quid Pro Quo: A school employee conditioning an educational benefit or service (such as a higher grade or foregoing discipline) on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct ("this for that").
- Sexual Harassment-Hostile Environment: unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that is so severe and pervasive and objectively offensive that it denies the complainant equal access to educational programs and opportunities
- Sexual Violence ◦ fondling, rape, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking

Where does Title IX apply?

Title IX applies when the following elements are met:

- Alleged sexual harassment must occur in the district's education programs or activities.
- CMS must have substantial control over the alleged harasser and the context in which the harassment occurred. This may include events that occur off CMS property, such as athletic games/practices, student organization competitions/events, CMS-provided transportation, field trips, and virtual learning environments.
- Sexual harassment that may not initially occur in the district's programs or activities but results in further sex-based harassment in school. For example, sexual harassment may occur at a private party or on private social media and students begin showing videos at school regarding the event, reviewing the social media at school, or harassing or gossiping about students shown on the video at school. In that case, the additional harassment in school may trigger the district's need to respond.

What is not covered by Title IX?

- Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, disability, age or religion
- General bullying or misconduct not based on sex (these may be addressed under other policies)
- Issues occurring completely outside of the school's education programs or activities (schools will still offer supports)
- Sexual misconduct that does not fall under the sexual harassment definitions as defined by the 2020 Title IX Regulations (these may be addressed under Rule 27 of the Student Code of Conduct)

How To Report a Concern?

If you or your child experiences or becomes aware of any potential Title IX concerns—such as sexual discrimination or harassment— please report it promptly to: School Administration—Megan Bever is OP's Title IX Coordinator; The Title IX Office (980)-343-9900

Transportation Changes

- At the start of each school year, parents must complete a transportation form listing their child's regular morning and afternoon transportation arrangements (bus, walker, car rider, van rider, etc.). To help ensure student safety and a smooth dismissal process, we ask families to keep transportation routines as consistent as possible.
- Students will be dismissed according to the transportation plan on file unless the school receives written notification of a change. Any transportation changes must be communicated in writing to highlandmill@cms.k12.nc.us and your child's teacher before 3:00 PM on the day of the change. **For safety reasons, transportation changes cannot be made without written notice from a parent or guardian. Requests received after the 3:00 PM. deadline will not be honored.** Parents should also notify the teacher of any permanent changes to transportation as soon as possible.
- These procedures are strictly enforced to ensure the safety and security of all students and to minimize disruptions to classroom instruction and dismissal routines.



Visitors

Visitors are always welcome at HMM. For the safety of our students, all visitors must provide a **Drivers License or Passport** when ringing the front doorbell. Front office personnel will then provide access to our building. Visitors must sign in with the Raptor system before proceeding to a specific school location and must always wear their visitor badge while in and around our school property for easy identification..

Volunteers

Share your talent, time, and treasure with CMS! Serve as a tutor, mentor, lunch buddy, or proctor, or support your school's unique needs and requests. To encourage parent and community involvement while ensuring student safety, CMS has a volunteer screening policy. All volunteers are required to register and complete the volunteer screening process, which includes a criminal background check. Parents can register to volunteer online at www.cmsvolunteers.com. Returning volunteers must activate their volunteer status each year by accessing their registration page, making necessary updates, and selecting "Submit." Please contact your school and ask for the volunteer coordinator, or email volunteers@cms.k12.nc.us for more information.

Additional Links

[CMS Parent-Student Handbook 2026-2027](#)

[CMS Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook 2026-2027](#)