



Updated 10/9/24

High Meadow School Community Handbook 2024-2025

"The freest child is the child who is most interested in what he is doing, and at whose hands are the materials for his work or play." — Caroline Pratt, I Learn from Children

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Introduction

The High Meadow School (HMS) Community Handbook serves as an integral central document for all stakeholders at our school. In this document, you will find a comprehensive description of our school's educational approach, adopted policies, and procedures that help us to meet all of our students' needs. We hope you find all of the answers that you need here, but if you don't, please feel free to reach out to High Meadow staff members and we are happy to assist.

What is an Independent School?

An independent school, also known as a private school, is an educational institution that is not funded or operated by the government, and it is typically funded through tuition fees, donations, and endowments. These schools operate independently of the public school system and have more control over their curriculum, policies, and admission criteria.

Key characteristics of independent schools include:

- **Funding:** Independent schools are primarily funded by tuition fees paid by students' families, as well as through donations, grants, and sometimes endowments. They do not rely on government funding as public schools do.
- **Autonomy:** Independent schools have a high degree of autonomy in terms of their educational philosophy, curriculum design, teaching methods, and school policies. This allows them to offer specialized programs and a unique educational approach.
- **Selective Admission:** Many independent schools have selective admission processes, which means they can choose their students based on various criteria, including academic performance, extracurricular activities, and sometimes interviews.



While independent schools have a large amount of autonomy, they are still subject to oversight by local, state, and federal branches of government for providing educational programming that is substantially equivalent to a publicly funded school.

High Meadow School's oversight is coordinated through its membership with the New York State Association of Independent Schools (NYSAIS). NYSAIS is a voluntary association of 203 independent nursery, elementary, and secondary schools enrolling over 80,000 students. It is affiliated with the National Association of Independent Schools and the New York State Coalition for Independent and Religious Schools. Founded in 1947, the Association is chartered by the New York State Board of Regents and is incorporated as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.

Established originally to protect New York independent schools from obstructive legislation and regulation, the Association has added substantially to the range of its activities since its founding. These activities include:

- evaluation and accreditation of member schools
- professional learning for faculty, administrators, and trustees
- advocacy for independent education
- information on legislation, regulations, statistics, educational developments, and administrative practice

High Meadow School Board of Trustees

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- Ben Brown, Board Secretary
- Jay Goldmark, Board Treasurer
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I. Mission Statement

High Meadow School is a nursery through 8th-grade independent school that celebrates childhood, the joy of learning and play, and the power of community in a student-centered environment. We honor and welcome each child's unique voice, identity, and approach to constructing knowledge. Drawing on current pedagogical research, we center diversity, equity, civic engagement, nature, and the arts in the school's dynamic curriculum and culture. High Meadow students graduate with a strong academic foundation and a developed sense of self, ready to contribute their passions and values to building thriving, sustainable, and equitable communities.

II. HMS Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice Statement and Guiding Principles

- A. High Meadow School is committed to cultivating belonging, access, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (DEIJ). Together, we aim to practice approaches to undoing harmful systems, including racism and white supremacy, ableism, classism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, antisemitism, xenophobia, and other "isms", while supporting students to become justice-seekers and change-makers. This work is critical to the health and well-being of our students and our community. It also provides an important foundation so that everyone can learn and grow together while building on our commitment to democratic voice.

We seek to center DEIJ in our classrooms and curriculum so children feel seen, heard, and whole, while fostering an environment where our students, teachers, staff, and families are valued, respected, and included.

We seek to create opportunities for community-wide learning with the goal of deepening relationships across our differences. We are committed to deepening our anti-racist and anti-bias practices to remove barriers, reduce systemic inequalities, and create more transparency and accountability in all aspects of our school's operations. We will provide support for our teachers and students to ensure classrooms have the books, tools, and resources to reflect our students and teach about our diverse world of people, stories, and histories.

We will work to broaden community participation and engage feedback, building on our diverse lived experiences, cultures, and knowledge to create a more inclusive and equitable community. Ultimately, our goal is to create a school that includes and supports the diversity of identities and cultures of our global community.

The following guiding principles shape this work:

- **We acknowledge** the history of land dispossession in our area and the devastating impacts that colonization continues to have on the Munsee Lenape people.
- **We believe** that equity is a lens, and it is through this lens that we aim to approach all endeavors at our school.
- **We believe** in an anti-bias and anti-racist teaching philosophy and curriculum in which we are actively working to dismantle many of the harmful power structures that exist in society and that permeate education.
- **We believe** that restorative justice practices are necessary for transformational change. We approach mistakes and conflict as an opportunity for growth, not punishment. We strive for transparency and accountability, and commit to repairing harm when it happens.
- **We believe** that a person's identity is sacred.
- **We believe** all people's lived experience and recognize it as valuable knowledge. Our knowledge allows us to contribute meaningfully both as teachers and learners at every age.
- **We believe** in the collective power of solidarity, and as justice-seekers, we strive to listen to, celebrate, and learn from our community members who identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), People of the Global Majority, individuals with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those belonging to marginalized identities.
- **We believe** that our community has a responsibility to lead with empathy, listen with care, and stand up for ourselves and each other.

III. Pedagogy & Community Values

- A. When children are allowed to explore nature, the outdoors, and their relationships within their local community, their intrinsic drive to learn flourishes.
- B. Education should prepare students to participate actively in a free, diverse, and democratic society.
- C. Social and emotional development occurs when children feel like they are well known by the adults around them and they are in a safe environment where they can explore and embrace their and others' unique identities, build a sense of belonging through engagement with others, and participate in boundary setting, problem solving, and collective decision making.
- D. Play is an essential part of learning for all ages.
- E. Learning experiences should center the identities, learning styles, and learning or physical needs of the children in the classroom.
- F. Each child has an innate desire and ability to learn and question the world around them. Schools should honor the natural process of learning and allow students to inquire, experiment, research, and reflect in order to acquire knowledge.
- G. Every child's unique engagement with inquiry and topics that fascinate them should be honored through providing children with choice in their learning.

IV. Land Acknowledgement, School History, and Campus Information

- A. **Indigenous Land Acknowledgement:** A land acknowledgment is a statement that recognizes the Indigenous peoples who are the original stewards of the land on which we now live. Land acknowledgments are a necessary first step in preventing indigenous erasure from a place and honoring the original occupants of the land we are on now.

High Meadow School is situated on the ancestral homelands of the Munsee Lenape people, who are indigenous to this region. We acknowledge the painful history of land dispossession in our area and the effects that it had on the Munsee Lenape people. We will seek to educate our students on the rich history of this region that includes thousands of years of the Munsee Lenape story. We acknowledge and are thankful to Munsee Lenape ancestors past and present for being stewards of this land and honor today's Lenape communities, including those who belong to the Delaware Nation and Delaware Tribe of Indians in Oklahoma; the Stockbridge-Munsee Community in Wisconsin; and the Munsee-Delaware Nation, Moravian of the Thames First Nation, and Delaware of Six Nations in Ontario.

- B. **Our History:** Following the closure of the Nursery-Eighth Grade State University of New York (SUNY) New Paltz Campus School in 1979, families from the program set out to create a new school environment that incorporated elements of their former school community. One faction of families became interested in Rudolf Steiner's educational philosophy and broke off to found Mountain Laurel Waldorf School in New Paltz. Other parents, led by Mimi Labourdette, found the Waldorf program too prescriptive. Mimi and other families sought an educational philosophy that would be able to change with the times and be inclusive of all children's voices, identities, interests, and drives. The families envisioned a school with a more expansive education approach beyond core academic subjects. Community service, connection to the environment, social-emotional learning, democratic participation in a diverse community, and arts education were equally as important as reading, writing, and arithmetic. Using the work of John Dewey as a basis, Mimi guided the group of families to found a progressive school built on play, authentic learning experiences, nature, and learning by doing.

High Meadow School (HMS) opened its doors in 1984 at Brook Farm at the base of Mohonk Mountain. The families chose the farmhouse for its natural surroundings and affordability. The founding families negotiated free rent from the owner in exchange for fixing up the farmhouse on weekends and serving as caretakers. The first group of 9 students ranged in age from Kindergarten through sixth grade. The program expanded quickly, attracting 33 students by 1988 and 65 students by 1990.



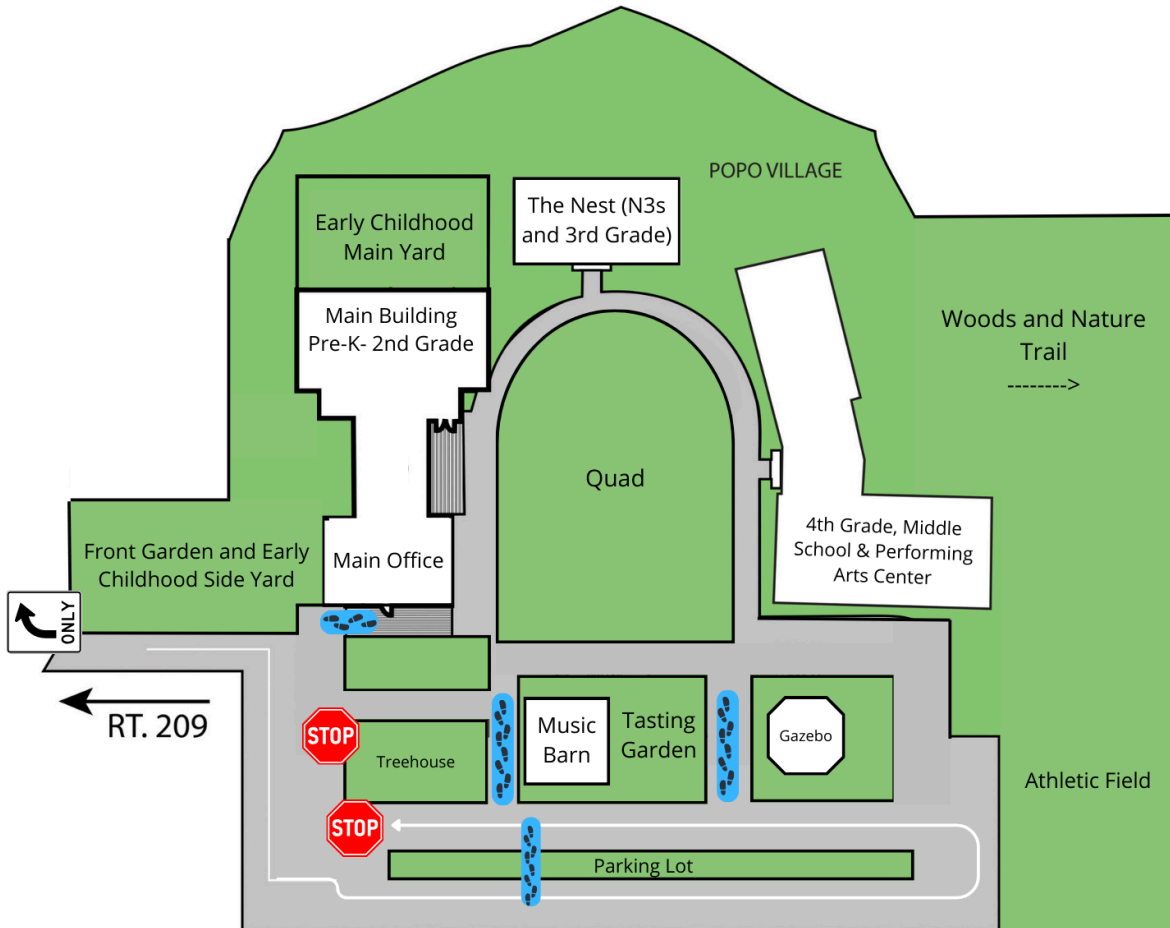
In 1992, having outgrown Brook Farm, the school relocated to its current location on Main Street in the small historic hamlet of Stone Ridge, NY. Beginning with the circa 1850 brick farmhouse and outbuildings, High Meadow expanded its school with an addition to the main brick building in 1993, the construction of “The Nest” building in 2001, and the Middle School and Performing Arts Center (PAC) in 2005. The school developed classrooms and art studios throughout the campus. The staff added beloved play and exploration areas, including the early childhood yard, the quad area, the natural play area called Popo Village, the gazebo, the treehouse, and the 2.5-acre “forever wild” nature preserve and trail.

Over time, HMS’s educational offerings have expanded, adding seventh and eighth grades in 2001 and the nursery and pre-K programs in 2009. The grade levels evolved into three distinct divisions: The early childhood program (Nursery-Kindergarten), the lower school (first-fourth grades), and the middle school (fifth-eighth grades).

As HMS has grown, it has added a robust after-school childcare and enrichment program and the Summer at High Meadow Day camp program, open to both HMS students and the public. All auxiliary programs are reflective of HMS’s progressive program and mission. While the school has shifted and changed with the times, its commitment to progressive education still holds true after 40 years.

- C. **Our Campus:** High Meadow School is situated on 9.4 acres just off of Main Street in Stone Ridge, NY.

1. **Campus Map:**



2. **Buildings:** High Meadow School is comprised of 4 separate buildings arranged around a central quad:
- The Main Building:** The Main building is the large brick farmhouse seen as you enter campus from the main drive. houses the school's main office, the HMS Health Office, and Pre-K through 2nd grade classrooms and bathrooms on the first floor, the administrative offices and adult bathroom on the second floor, and the Dance Studio and on the basement level to the rear of the building.
 - The Nest:** The Nest sits at the back of the quad area. It houses the nursery 3s classes and bathrooms on the top floor accessed from the quad and the third grade classroom and bathroom is on the basement floor, known as the burrow. It has its own basement exterior entrance located down a flight of exterior stairs.
 - The Middle School and Performing Arts Center (PAC):** The middle school and performing arts center are housed in our largest building that resembles a barn and

sits on the right side of the quad. The 4th grade classroom, 5th grade homeroom/5th-6th humanities room, and Performing Arts Center (PAC) are located on the top floor and can be entered from the quad. The PAC houses all school gatherings, dances, school events, and full-scale arts performances. It also doubles as the school's Physical Education space. The lower floor houses the visual arts studio, the science lab/6th grade homeroom, the upper school commons, the 7th grade homeroom/5th-8th grade math room, and the 8th grade homeroom/7th-8th grade humanities room. There is a large backyard area used for lunches, outdoor classes, and break time.

- d) **The Music Barn:** Our music barn is at the front of High Meadow's campus. All music classes and rehearsals happen in the music space.

3. **Play Areas:**

- a) **Early Childhood Main Yard:** This backyard area behind the Main Building is set aside for our early childhood division. Our youngest students play under the large oak tree, digging in the sandbox, exploring natural materials in mud kitchen and sand and water tables, swinging on the big swing, and playing in the play house.
- b) **Early Childhood Side Yard:** This side yard includes another sandbox for our little ones, eating areas for lunch, and two traditional playground structures, including the big pirate ship.
- c) **The Quad:** The quad is where lower school and upper school students tend to play. There are a range of large play structures around the quad, the campus's favorite mulberry tree, and a central fire pit where we gather for Fireside Fridays and all school gatherings. Flower gardens and planters surround the quad so children can observe the change of seasons in this space.
- d) **Po Po Village:** Po Po Village was established by HMS students when we moved to our current campus in the early 90s. The name Po Po comes from a popular Nintendo game character of the time period. Po Po Village is a space that the children fully create themselves, building structures from found materials, making the rules for the space use, playing out play scenarios that mirror real life, and figuring out how to build an ethical collective community.
- e) **Athletic Field:** The athletic field is on the far side of campus. Children utilize this space for PE, organized sports teams, and play.

4. **Natural Areas:**

- a) **The Nature Trail:** Behind the PAC building, HMS has an over two acre, state-recognized bird sanctuary established by the third and eighth grade in 2008. Students frequent the trail for learning experiences and guided nature walks.
- b) **The Gardens:** There are two gardens on campus: the front garden and the tasting garden. Students in the early childhood and lower school divisions participate in

gardening activities, including planting, harvesting, utilizing crops, feeding the natural ecosystem, and composting.

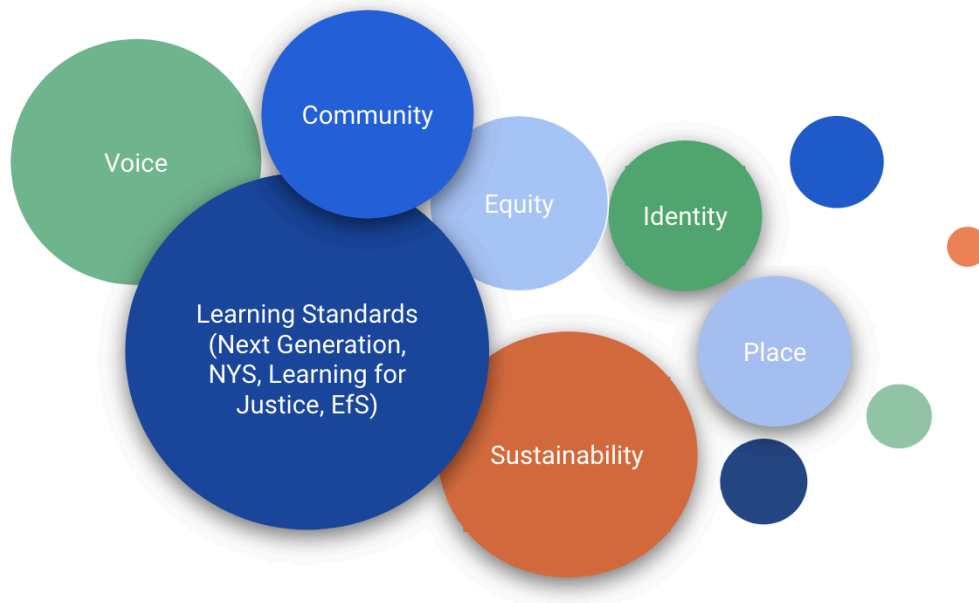
- c) **Gazebo and Treehouse:** Our gazebo and treehouse areas are favorites for outdoor classes, play, socializing, and eating lunch.

V. School Division Structure

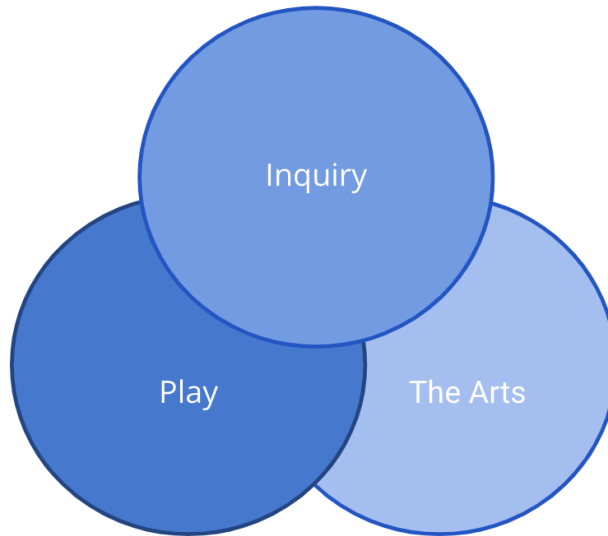
- A. Our school consists of 3 divisions:
1. **Early Childhood Division:** Nursery - Kindergarten
 2. **Lower School Division:** 1st - 4th Grade
 3. **Middle School Division:** 5th - 8th Grade

VI. Curriculum

- A. **Curriculum Pillars:** High Meadow builds its curricular approach utilizing the following guiding pillars. These pillars help to influence the intentional choices we make in developing learning experiences, practices, and structures across the school:



- B. **Curricular Vehicles:** We utilize the following vehicles to enhance the delivery of our instruction to students:



1. **Inquiry:** Inquiry-based learning is a major component of a progressive school model. This approach to learning is based on the natural process that humans engage in to learn; wondering, researching, experimenting, drawing conclusions, and coming up with new related wonderings to begin the cycle again. Inquiry-based approaches emphasize the student's role in the learning process. Rather than the teacher telling students what they need to know, students are encouraged to explore the material, ask questions, and share ideas.

Inquiry-based learning experiences use different approaches to learning, including small-group discussion, guided learning, play, problem-based learning, collaboration, experimentation, and explicit teaching. This allows them to build knowledge through exploration, experience, and discussion.

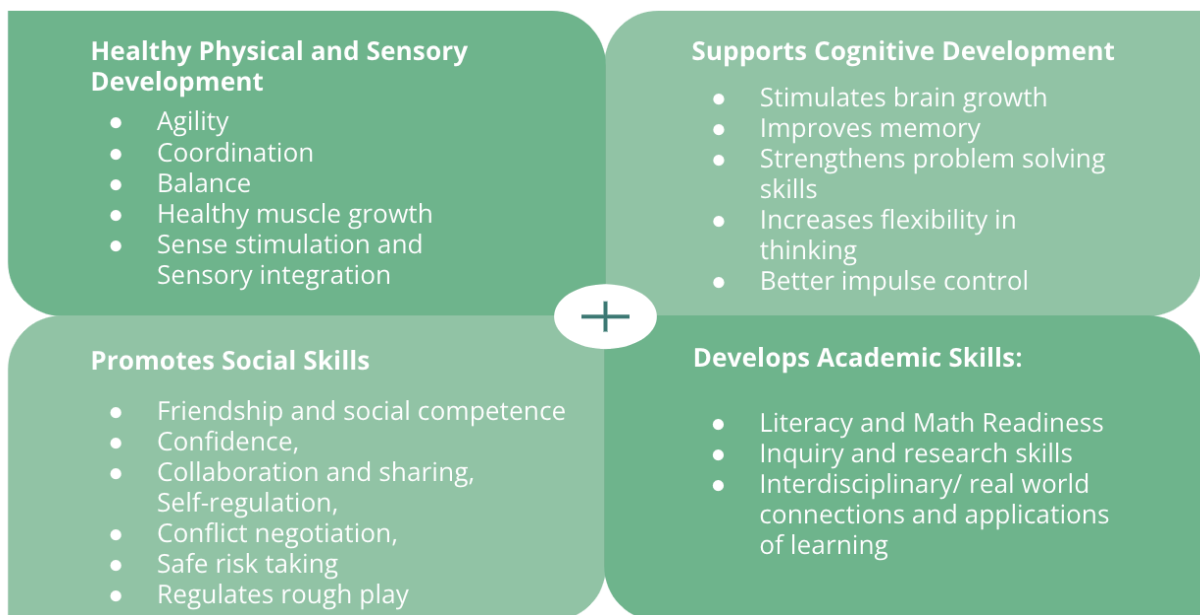
Inquiry is purposeful and authentic. The inquiry process builds capacity through student agency where voice, choice and ownership feature strongly. (Source: [Grade Power | ibo.org](#))

For a collection of inquiry-based educational resources, visit [Inspiring Inquiry](#).

2. **Play:** Our school sees play as the natural venue for brain development, learning, and experimentation in all of our students.
Our children engage in the following types of play:
 - a) **Free Play:** Play that is completely guided by the child's own interests, imagination, and intrinsic motivation.

- b) Structured or Guided Play:** Play that is partially directed by an adult, such as a math activity that is playful in nature, an experiment that illustrates a concept, an organized sport, or a simulation to illustrate a social relationship. Structured play frequently has a goal that is imposed on students.
- c) Peer and Cross-Age Play:** Our students play both with children in their own age group that spans about a year and they also have space in the day to play with others across nursery through 8th grade. Shared lunch and recess time, our multi-age play spaces, and our school's buddy program all constitute this type of play.

There are a wide variety of benefits and skills gained from a play-based learning environment:



To dive deeper into the science behind play, visit the [National Institute for Play](#).

- The Arts:** Humans have engaged in art creation since the beginning of our documented history. We believe that the arts are a crucial part of the human experience and something that all of us can naturally engage in doing. We give children the opportunity to engage in art making in a variety of ways, including in our arts-based classes as well as in our general curriculum.
- Physical Education and Health:** All students participate in physical education classes as a part of cultivating a healthy body and active lifestyle. Beginning in third grade, students begin to further discuss health, focusing on nutrition, mindfulness, healthy relationships, and sexuality education.

- C. **Standards-Based instruction:** HMS provides a unique curriculum that is distinctly different yet substantially equivalent to that of public schools. High Meadow utilizes the following standards frameworks to guide curriculum selection and design:
1. [The Next Generation Learning Standards for ELA, Math, and Science](#)
 2. [The New York State Social Studies Standards](#)
 3. [The Learning for Justice Social Justice Standards](#)
 4. [The Cloud Institute Education for Sustainability Standards](#)
 5. [New York City Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts Standards](#)
- D. **Curriculum and Assessment Resources:** HMS utilizes and adapts a variety of written curriculum sources to guide instruction across all divisions:
1. **ELA:** Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Units, Words their Way Phonics curriculum, Handwriting Without Tears, Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Reading Assessments and Leveled Literacy Intervention
 2. **Math:** Illustrative Mathematics, E-Math Instruction
 3. **Social Emotional Learning:** *Owning Up* Advisory Curriculum, *Responsive Classroom* Approach and Materials
- E. **Curriculum Design Process:** HMS teachers and staff engage in the process of creating their own curriculum resources unique to our school. This process is guided by the [Understanding by Design Framework](#), a process that focuses on creating enduring understandings and analyzing learning standards and benchmarks first to guide the creation of lessons.
- F. **Homework:** As a school founded on the ideals of progressive education we think about “homework” from a critical lens. If the goal of schooling is to increase a child’s intrinsic drive to learn, what does giving homework accomplish? According to extensive scientific research into the effects of giving homework, it decreases motivation to learn and causes dissatisfaction with schooling over time. However, we do believe that homework can be expertly assigned to provide organic learning opportunities during moments of inquiry for students. Homework is also often a way that teachers assess whether students are able to recall learning presented during the school day. Because of this, if students are assigned homework - which may be rare - they should be able to complete their work without much support from their parents and want to complete their work. As children move into middle school, homework assignments will increase in volume as they provide opportunities for students to strengthen their planning and self-management skills when negotiating long-term, multi-step projects.

If homework is assigned, please do not do work for your child. This takes away a chance to become comfortable with failure, an essential component to the learning process. With that being noted, if your child is showing consistent difficulty or resistance in negotiating homework tasks, we encourage you to reach out to your child’s teachers so that the faculty can partner with you on how to best meet your child’s needs. Our school will continue to review modern research on homework and its effect on learning motivation. We will also continue to view

homework in the lens of progressive rather than traditional education. Our goal is to create students who are open to learning rather than getting something done so they can move onto what they're really interested in.

We recommend that all of our children spend time reading books each night with family members or on their own in spans that are appropriate for their age.

VII. Inclusivity

Children learn best in environments in which their identities are known and honored, they have trusting relationships with peers and adults, and they feel that they are emotionally and psychologically safe. HMS aims to ensure that all students have a sense of belonging and radical acceptance of who they are at the current moment and who they will be at every point across their childhood.

- A. **High Meadow's Glossary of DEIJ Terms:** To see how we define the words utilized in this statement, please [click here](#).
- B. **DEIJ Strategic Priorities, 2023-2025:** Please see the [DEIJ page](#) on our school's website to view our school's strategic
- C. **Anti-Discrimination Policy:** In accordance with the [New York State Human Rights Law](#), as an educational institution, High Meadow School (HMS) strictly prohibits and does not tolerate discrimination against students, student families, or employees because of actual or perceived race; color; creed; age; religion; national origin; citizenship status; sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, and pregnancy-related medical conditions); gender (including gender identity, expression, and transgender status); sexual orientation; disability (which includes functional limitations caused by gender dysphoria); marital status; partnership status; familial status; status as a victim of domestic violence, stalking, or sex offenses; genetic predisposition; veteran's status; military status; or any other basis protected under applicable federal, state, or local laws, regulations, or ordinances. All High Meadow School employees, other workers, and representatives are prohibited from engaging in unlawful discrimination against students, families, or other employees/ workers/ representatives, and discrimination of any sort can lead to termination. If a student or family is found to be engaging in discriminatory behavior, this can lead to a suspension or expulsion from the High Meadow School community.
- D. **Support for Transgender and Gender-Expansive Students:** The guidance detailed in this section is informed by the New York State Education Department's guidance entitled "[Creating a Safe, Supportive, and Affirming School Environment for Transgender and Gender Expansive Students: 2023 Legal Update and Best Practices.](#)"
[Gender Recognition Act](#)

1. **General Support Practices:**

- a) **Gender Neutral Bathrooms:** HMS does not have gender-based bathroom assignments across its buildings. Children are encouraged to utilize the bathrooms closest to their classrooms when needed. There are single-use bathrooms placed throughout the campus and all bathrooms in our Upper School building have the ability to lock from the main entrance regardless of whether there are stalls so that students who would like to use a bathroom alone can do so.
- b) **Removal of Gender-Based Practices from the Classroom and School Day:** HMS faculty is trained on providing gender-neutral language and practices in their classroom spaces if there is not a clear pedagogical purpose for doing so. Some practices include:
 - (1) Modeling the sharing of pronouns preferences when introducing ourselves in person and in email for both students and families;
 - (2) Offering explicit instruction surrounding pronoun usage either when students enter lower school or when it comes up naturally in early childhood classrooms and creating a sense of normalcy surrounding name and pronoun changes;
 - (3) Encouraging students to introduce themselves with their preferred name and pronouns, especially in the beginning of the year or when someone new joins the classroom;
 - (4) Using gender neutral language such as “folks,” “friends,” or “students” instead of “boys and girls,” or “ladies and gentlemen”;
 - (5) Not assuming that a child is a certain way or will like something based on their sex assigned at birth or gender expression;
 - (6) Dividing into two groups by last name, counting off, or randomly instead of by boys and girls;
 - (7) Not having gender-based celebrations such as father-daughter dances;
 - (8) Not making gender-based stipulations for dress in our dress code or for special events such as concerts;
 - (9) Offering non-gendered Physical Education, Health, and Sex Education classes as well as extracurricular sports teams;
 - (10) Purposefully cultivating and encouraging opportunities for non-gendered play; and
 - (11) Briefing HMS Guest Teachers, Part-Time Staff, Volunteers, and other Visitors about our gender-inclusive practices.

2. **When a Student Comes out as Gender Expansive, nonbinary, or transgender at School:** When a student comes out as nonbinary, transgender or gender expansive at school, HMS will affirm the student and work to ensure that they are surrounded with a high level of support and acceptance from staff.

- a) **Student Rights Surrounding Name and Pronoun Changes at School:** Students are not required to obtain parental/guardian consent or a court-ordered name and/or gender change before being addressed by their affirmed name and pronouns. Therefore, the school will foster many opportunities to affirm that student's chosen gender identity while in school. The school will also allow the child to lead the way through this process, honoring their comfortability and sense of safety as they negotiate this change.
- (1) **Requesting a Name Change as a Student:** We honor a child's ability to choose their name and pronouns. If a student asks any HMS staff member to be called by a different name or set of pronouns, that staff member will affirm and ask if/what support the student needs. The staff member will ask the student if it is ok to let the Head of School and the Assistant Head of School know so they can ensure the school support protocols are followed. The school will honor their choice and ask a series of questions to gauge who knows about this change, whether they'd like this change to be honored across the entire community, and whether they'd like their name/pronouns to be utilized in documents that are shared with their family.
- (2) **Requesting a Name Change for a Student as a Parent:** If your child would like their name or pronouns changed at school and would like their parent/guardian to share them with the school, please email admissions@highmeadowschool.org. If you would like your child's school records changed, we will guide you through our process and share the information with all members of our staff.
- b) **Disclosure of Transition to Peers, Staff, and Families:** When an HMS student comes out as non-binary, transgender, or gender expansive, the staff member who they disclose this to will likely be someone they trust and feel safe being around. The staff member who receives this information will keep it confidential unless the student explicitly states otherwise and will ask a series of questions to gather further information about whether this student has shared or intends to voice this choice more widely, as well as what support they need at the moment. Questions with student's consent that HOS and Assistant HOS may ask in coordination with staff are:
- (1) Have you disclosed your gender identity to/at school, home, or the community?
 - (2) If so, with whom did you share this other than me?
 - (3) If you want to tell me, what was the reaction of those you told?
 - (4) Who else would you feel comfortable sharing your gender identity with?
 - (5) What can we do or say that this person does that makes you feel more comfortable?
 - (6) Are there people in school or at home you are not ready to share this information with?

- (7) Are there people at home or in school you are not ready to share your transition with? Why not?

The school may also choose to ask questions that assess the student's safety and wellbeing when necessary. Assessment of the student may include, but is not limited to:

- mental health status or thoughts of self-harm;
- child abuse or neglect;
- threats of violence/bullying at school; and
- risk of homelessness.

- c) **Gender Expression Transition Planning Meetings:** If a student wants the news of their transition to be publicly recognized across the school community, administration and the child's direct teachers will hold a Gender Expression Transition Planning Meeting. At this planning meeting, staff and faculty
- (1) discuss the school's role in supporting the student's transition;
 - (2) make resources available to the student to address questions or concerns;
 - (3) discuss, as appropriate, the timing of the transition, planning responses to questions from school staff and students, changing the student's information in school records, and any other relevant matters;
 - (4) put in place measures for supporting the student and creating a safe environment;
 - (5) update student education records with the student's affirmed name and appropriate gender marker, and not circulate records with the student's legal name to ensure consistency among teachers, school administrators, substitute teachers, and other staff (For more information see educational records.); and
 - (6) discuss with the student how the student should be referred to, e.g., appropriate pronoun use, in written communication to the student's parent/guardian.
- Schools will want to adopt a flexible approach, given that transgender students may not feel comfortable or safe being their authentic selves in all contexts.

VIII. Approaches to Democratic Education & Discipline

The goal for any HMS student is to continually grow in an environment that honors their unique voice while also remaining accountable to others in the community. We nourish, demonstrate, and require mutual trust and respect among all members of the community. A goal of the school is to guide students in learning how to balance their needs as an individual with the needs of the group. School rules and self-discipline are best internalized when children are involved in their creation, implementation and determination of disciplinary outcomes. When students are involved in the

creation of community agreements and discipline policies, they are more able to learn how to self-regulate and become self-determined, community-minded citizens.

Through the practices of community circles (Nursery-4th grade) and advisory (5th-8th grade), students work together inclusively to cultivate a sense of belonging and bond with their peers and teachers. This timeframe is also used as a block for social-emotional learning. In morning meeting or advisory, students also have time to solve any social/emotional issues or behavior incidents they may be facing as a group. This allows them to fully focus on the academic programs that follow the meeting and gives a consistent touch point for staff. There are regular Upper School meetings to provide a space for our 5th-8th grade community to determine and make rules, develop culture, and address any larger conflicts or issues collectively. There is also a Po Po Council where members of the K-4th Grade community meet to do the very same thing. We believe by modeling structures of day-to-day democracy students are better able to enter the world in which they actually live.

Please refer to the list below in order to get more specific information on our policies and pedagogy.

- A. **Developmentally Appropriate Response to Behavior:** When a behavior incident happens at our school, we believe that each situation needs to be treated based on the individual child or children and the circumstances that occurred.

When a behavior occurs that negatively impacts the community, teachers and staff take time to gather information so they can construct and assess the what occurred from the perspectives of all people involved. They consider questions such as the following to determine the next steps forward:

1. Who is/are the individual(s) involved, and what factors of their identity or life experience do we need to consider when looking at the behavior?
2. Is there a chance that implicit or explicit bias played into the perception of the behavior? What biases may arise in the process of assessing the situation?
3. What is the age of the child and what are the developmental issues at work here?
4. What rule is being broken?
5. Is it clear to the child what the rule/expected behavior is?
6. Has the rule/expectation been appropriately modeled for the student and has the student been given ample opportunity to practice the target behavior?
7. What problem is the behavior creating?
8. What will help to solve the problem?
9. What is the frequency and severity of the behavior occurring for this child?

Through this fact finding, teachers and staff will be able to determine the best path forward for addressing the behavior and repairing the harm.

- B. **Restorative Practices and Restorative Justice:** When people act out or make mistakes they inflict harm amongst their fellow community members. Traditional modes of discipline typically only address the offending party in a private setting away from the eyes and ears of those they have harmed. We believe this type of discipline provides the short term result of stopping the behaviors but lacks long term change and community building. Restorative justice helps an offending student to own what they did, make it right for those hurt or affected, and involves the community in helping both the victim *and* the offender. Restorative justice acknowledges that those who do wrong need healing as well. It empowers students to resolve conflicts on their own and in small groups. During morning meetings and circles teachers will use these practices to better our school community.
- C. **Restorative Conversations and Mediation:** This is a specific restorative justice practice where the offending party sits down with the victim(s) to address the harm that was caused. During mediation, students are asked to come up with solutions in order to ensure that the toxic behavior ends and the students can move forward in a more positive direction. Mediations are facilitated by trained staff members and may include trained Middle School students.
- D. **Logical Consequences instead of Punishment:** Within the mediation process, High Meadow students work with trained staff members or other students to come up with logical consequences to address behavior that negatively impacts their community. Logical consequences aim to directly address the harm of the behavior, helps students analyze their behaviors, and helps students consider the results of their choices while preserving their dignity as children. According to the Responsive Classroom Approach “Unlike punishment, where the intention is to make the child feel shamed, the intention of logical consequences is to help children develop internal controls and learn from mistakes in a supportive atmosphere.”

Logical consequences aim to repair the harm that was caused while punishment is often not directly related to the behavior. For example, if two children have a water fight at the water fountain and get water all over the floor, they might come up with solutions like cleaning up the water with paper towels or mopping up the spill instead of being suspended from school.

- E. **Restorative Breaks:** If a child escalates in school to a point where they are at a point of crisis, a student will often take an extended break outside of the classroom with an adult until they are able to fully de-escalate and reflect upon what happened so that they can return to class.

If a student continues to be in an agitated state after a crisis point or if the harm that was done to self or others needs additional time to be processed, High Meadow administrators may send a child home for the day so that they can fully decompress and return to school the next day in a state of calm.

- F. **Bullying:** [New York State's Dignity for All Students Act](#) defines bullying as "unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance." The intention of bullying is to harm, intimidate, or coerce. The behavior is repeated, targeted, and continues over time. Different types of bullying include: ignoring or excluding someone, physical abuse with the intent to harm, verbal abuse with the intent to harm, disrespect of someone's property, encouraging others to gang up on someone, circulating malicious rumors, active intolerance of differences, incitement or getting someone else to do any of the prior listed actions, and any other behavior where the goal is to intimidate or cause discomfort.
1. In cases of bullying, the school administration deals directly with the conflict and will not immediately follow the process of Restorative Justice/Mediation. We believe a professional needs to assess the situation to ensure the safety of all students. Bullying is against the ideals of social inclusivity and mutual respect that are the underlying principles of the basic social contract at HMS and will not be tolerated. If bullying does arise, the school administration will immediately step in once the behavior is reported to the school's DASA coordinator (Keri Zurlini) with the goal of stopping the behavior and also diffusing the causes or underlying social dynamics leading to it.
 2. If a child or parent/guardian expresses that there is a possible case of bullying to a member of the school's faculty, they are mandated to report the case to the DASA coordinator within one full school day of the verbal report being made. Faculty members will produce a written account of the verbal conversation within 2 full school days of the incident being reported. From there, the school administration will investigate the claim.
 3. Mediation and Restorative Justice circles will only be used if the victim, victim's family, and community feel safe addressing the person who was engaging in bullying behavior.
- G. **Suspension and Expulsion Policy:** High Meadow School Administration reserves the right to expel or suspend a student on any grounds, including but not limited to:
1. Harm done to themselves, others, or the classroom environment that needs extended time to be resolved
 2. Their behavior causes a serious danger to themselves or others
 3. Behavior that is consistently destructive to self, other students, staff, or the facility
 4. Enactments or threats of serious violence
 5. Behavior that violates the guidelines set forth in the [Dignity for All Students Act](#)
 6. Behavior that is consistently deleterious to the learning environment
 7. Unlawful behavior on or off school grounds, during or outside the school day
 8. An inability to build a partnership with parent(s) to support a child's learning or behavior

9. Student's parent(s) engage in behavior or communications that are disrespectful, harassing, or threatening towards students, staff, or other parents in the community
 10. A lack of up to date payment from the family and a lack of communication from the family to the school surrounding why payment is not up to date.
- H. **Technology Policy:** At HMS, we understand and acknowledge that students are digital natives. Our ever changing world demands technological ingenuity, and we understand the use of technology will only increase. We believe students should learn how to best use technology in the most organic way possible and be involved in determining expectations at the beginning of the school year as a democratic community. That being said, the school administration agrees that technology can also become a hindrance to all community members and poses risks to our community's security and health.
1. Our school prohibits students from using non-HMS personal technology devices, including cell phones, Apple watches, and any device that can connect to a data network on school grounds during the school day unless it is approved by the administration for a specific supportive use to the child. Only HMS devices will be utilized for academic purposes throughout the school day.
 2. We ask all community members to refrain from taking, posting, and tagging any digital material that includes our campus, its location, and/or our students' likenesses on the Internet.
 3. If you need to contact your child during the school day, please call our main office and refrain from texting or calling their personal devices, which can prove distracting.
 4. If a child brings a personal device to school, it is expected that they keep it silenced and completely out of sight for the entirety of the school day. In our middle school classrooms, there will be locked spaces provided where children can elect to turn in and store their personal devices. If a child uses a personal technology device during the school day without authorization, the device will be placed in a locked location (a storage area in class or the main office). The child's family will be contacted and asked to either elect to have their child turn their device in at the beginning of each school day or to not send their child's device to school.

IX. Student Support Services

The progressive education model seeks to individualize and differentiate the school environment and curriculum with each child's unique personality, strengths, and needs in mind. High Meadow welcomes students with disabilities into the school community and seeks to be a least restrictive environment for a large portion of the student population. Our school can accommodate a range of students with mandated services and medical diagnoses that require additional modifications to the learning environment.

- A. **What type of educational setting is High Meadow?:** High Meadow is classified as a general education setting. Our classrooms utilize a general curriculum taught by teachers who have general education degrees. In general education settings, usually at least 70% of the student population requires no additional support to access the grade level curriculum.

With that being said, High Meadow's general education setting differs from that of a typical public school general education setting in that we have a set small class size, a lower student to teacher ratio, ample time spent outdoors, a developmentally appropriate approach, and a range of individualized differentiated supports that we provide to all students so they can best learn. Because of our approach, we can sometimes be a best fit for some students who may be mandated for more supportive educational settings such as ICT.

Within the general education setting, our school also provides pull-out services for students with mandated service requirements through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). These services are provided at no additional cost through the Rondout School District.

- B. **What Happens When a Child is Struggling at School? Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Approach and Process:** The Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) model is a collaborative, evidence-based approach to differentiating and personalizing instruction and intervention, across academics, social-emotional learning, and behavior for all students—so that every student can achieve success in learning and living well.

The MTSS process is intended to prevent unnecessary special education placements by providing early and targeted interventions. It is a proactive approach to identifying and addressing learning and behavioral challenges to help students succeed in a general education setting.

1. **Tier 1 Support- Universal Instruction/Progress Monitoring:** In this tier, all students receive the same support in the general education setting. This universal baseline includes a welcoming, supportive classroom environment and culture, a built relationship between children and teachers, and high-quality, engaging, and differentiated instruction in the classroom setting. The curriculum and teaching methods are designed to meet the needs of most students in the room, taking into account the unique make-up of the student grouping. Before moving a child into Tier 2 support, we evaluate whether the environment and teaching quality is strong enough to support children in their learning. If it is not, administrators work with teachers to strengthen the environment and teaching quality before determining that students need more intensive interventions.

- 2. Child Study Team Meeting:** If the classroom environment and instruction is deemed as strong and supportive and a child is still struggling behaviorally or academically, High Meadow teachers will decide to take a closer look at how they can better meet an individual student's needs. The Child Study Team (CST) structure—also referred to as a Student Support Team, Pupil Personnel Team, Student Intervention Team, Child Assistance Team, or MTSS/RTI Team—plays an essential role in the student support process.

Members of a Child Study Team provide support to teachers regarding students who need additional learning or behavioral assistance. Child Study Teams recommend strategies to meet a student's needs and collaborate with caregivers on an integrated approach to their social, emotional, and academic well-being.

The CST meets when it is determined that a student is exhibiting difficulty in an academic, social, or behavioral area after some initial in-classroom modifications have been provided by a teacher for a period of time ranging from 2-6 weeks. CSTs are only called by teachers or administrators at school. The purpose of the meeting is to gather information about the child's strengths, current academic performance, and areas of concern so that more interventions can be thought of and implemented to achieve improved social, behavioral, and/or academic outcomes. These interventions will then be implemented and progress will be documented over the course of a 6-8 week period before assessing whether the child needs further support.

When a Child Study Team occurs, High Meadow teachers frequently notify families beforehand that this type of meeting is happening to include them in the information gathering process, checking in to see whether anything of note is happening at home that may be contributing to the difficulty. They will share with families afterwards the strategies being tried and observed, and what support from home may be beneficial. As the process moves forward, families will be kept informed of their child's progress.

- 3. Tier 2 Support- Targeted Intervention/Progress Monitoring:** After the CST meeting, the staff will move into a period of providing tier 2 support to the child. Tier 2 support is more individualized towards the child and could include targeted small group work, the use of specific sensory tools, or tools to help the child stay focused on their work and goals, such as a positive behavior support plan. For a period of 4-6 weeks, teachers will implement these strategies and keep notes that can assess how the intervention is working.

When the 4-6 week period is up, the teacher will bring all of the assessment notes for the CST to review in a Tier 2 Intervention follow-up meeting. In that meeting, the team will

determine whether the child is responding to the interventions or whether the interventions were ineffective.

If the child is responding to the interventions, those interventions will remain in place and will be reviewed for effectiveness in 6-8 week cycles across the school year and over time as the student grows, the interventions may be scaled back.

If the interventions put into place were done with efficacy and still failed to show progress, then the child will be referred to the Rondout School District Instructional Services Team (IST).

Families will receive a summary of the results of the meeting from the classroom teacher. If the child is being referred to the Rondout IST for more support, this will be shared with the family.

- 4. Referral to the Rondout Valley Central School District Instructional Services Team (RVCSO IST):** If the High Meadow CST is seeing no evidence of progress with the tier 2 supports put in place, they will request a meeting with the RVCSO IST. The RVCSO IST is a group made up of special education coordinators, teachers, and service providers within the RVCSO Committee on Special Education. The IST process is not part of the special education process, but is used as another tool for preventative support that may rule out the need for a special education evaluation.

In an IST meeting, an HMS lead teacher will present the child's strengths and areas of difficulty to the team. They will also present what interventions have been tried, how long of a period they were tried for, and data gathered on the success of the interventions. The IST team will then offer additional interventions to try with the child and will set the period of time that will be utilized to implement the interventions.

- 5. Tier 3 Support- Intensive Intervention/Progress Monitoring:** Tier 3 support is the most intensive form of support given in MTSS. These interventions could include one on one work, further individualized tools, or a referral to a one on one tutor or support provider outside of school.
- 6. IST Progress Meeting and Determination of Next Steps:** After the length of the intervention trial period is complete, if a child is not responsive to Tier 3 interventions, a referral to be evaluated for learning or behavioral disabilities is frequently made. At this point, the family will need to give consent to the Rondout School District to proceed with the referral for evaluation.

C. The Special Education Process

1. **What is Special Education?:** Special education means specially designed individualized or group instruction, special services, or programs to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities in schools.

Special education evaluations, services, and programs are provided at no cost to the parent if the child is determined as having a disability that may impede their academic progress.

2. **Referral to Rondout Valley Central School District (RVCS D) Committee on Special Education (CSE):**
 - a) After going through the CST and IST process without sufficient progress being made, a referral will be made to the RVCS D CSE. From there, the RVCS D CSE will initiate the evaluation process.
 - b) **Parent Referrals:** Parents always maintain the right to request, in writing, an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education support or services. School personnel have access to an integrated and systematic process for providing preventative interventions prior to requesting specialized evaluations via High Meadow's Response to Intervention approach and with the support of the RVCS D IST in the process. As a general principle to rule out an unnecessary referral, students should be given the well-documented Tier 1, 2, and 3 interventions of the RTI process prior to being referred for a more in-depth CSE evaluation.
 - c) **Notifying HMS of a Parent Referral:** While High Meadow supports any parent's right to request a referral for their child at any time, we request that you reach out to the school if your child has not engaged in the school's RTI process so that we can offer directions on how to make a referral as well as consult about whether a referral is the best route at this point. Please contact Assistant Head of School Keri Zurlini at keri.zurlini@highmeadowschool.org in the event that you are considering a referral.
 - d) For more information from the RVCS D CSE referral process, [please refer to this page](#).
3. **The Evaluation Process:** To begin the evaluation process, the RVCS D CSE will need to collect written consent for evaluation from the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student in order to proceed.
 - a) When an evaluation is initiated, the RVCS D will gather the following data to conduct a neuropsychological evaluation:
 - (1) Classroom observations and other general education/data collection
 - (2) Information from parents, teachers, and the student
 - (3) Report cards and other assessment data

- (4) Academic Intervention Services provided with data collection (RTI and progress monitoring)
 - (5) Social History
 - (6) Medical/Physical/Diagnostic information
 - (7) Related Service Evaluations (OT,PT, Speech, AT, TVI) if deemed appropriate.
 - b) **Evaluations by Outside/Non-RVCSD Professionals:** If the parent/guardian has evaluation information from other professionals such as a doctor or therapist when their child is referred to special education, the CSE Chairperson may request this information. To request confidential information from others, the school must obtain the parents signed, written consent. All evaluation information is confidential; only people directly involved with the student will see it.
 - c) For more information on the evaluation process, [please refer to the RVCSD evaluations page](#).
4. **Initial Eligibility Meeting and Determination of Eligibility**
- a) After a child goes through the evaluation process, an Initial Eligibility Meeting will be scheduled. [Click on this link for more information about the Initial Eligibility Meeting through Rondout School District Committee on Special Education](#).
 - b) **Classification:** During the eligibility meeting, a child will need to be classified as having a specific disability that impacts their learning at school in order to proceed with the writing of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). For information on special education classifications, [please click here to access the classification page for The Rondout School District](#).
 - c) **Writing of Individualized Education Plan (IEP):** The information presented at the Initial eligibility meeting will be used to write an Individualized Education Plan, or IEP. An IEP is a legally binding document developed for students who are eligible for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the United States. An IEP is a personalized plan designed to support students with disabilities and provide them with an education that is tailored to their unique needs. For more information about what is included in an IEP, [please refer to the "What needs to be in an IEP" page provided by the RVCSD CSE](#).
 - d) **Parental Rights in Eligibility Determination Meetings:** Parents are an integral part of the CSE committee. They have the right at any point to decline services and disagree with recommendations.
5. **Delivery of Special Education Services:** After the IEP is finalized, special education services will begin to be delivered. At High Meadow, we are able to provide pull-out special education services to students with IEPs. We cannot provide services that include a modified learning environment or assignment of a special education teacher to provide

support. For more information on special education services, see the [RVCS D Special Education Service Descriptions](#) and the [Continuum of Special Education Services page](#).

6. **Post-Classification Support:** After a student is in the special education system, there is follow-up to ensure that progress towards the child's goals is being made.
 - a) **Annual Review:** An annual review is a meeting held yearly by the child's Committee of Special Education, with core members of your child's special education team, to review your child's progress towards their goals and make recommendations for the following year regarding goals and continued placement. This is different from a parent-teacher conference, which you can request at any time with your child's classroom teacher, throughout the school year. In an annual review meeting, progress towards specific IEP goals are discussed.
 - b) **Program Review:** A program review is a meeting that can be held at any time to discuss possible adjustments or changes to the IEP or to review current placement. No changes (amendments) to the IEP can happen without parental consent.
 - c) **Triennial Evaluations** - Evaluations or testing performed every three years to determine progress and current level of functioning; triennial meetings can include a review or reconsideration of eligibility, classification, or placement as the child grows.

X. School Schedule, Arrival/Dismissal, and Attendance Policies

A. Length of School Day by Group

1. *Nursery 3s (N3s) and Pre-K:* 9:00AM - 2:45 PM
2. *Kindergarten (K)-8th Grade:* 8:45 AM – 3:05 PM

- B. **Arrival Times:** To accommodate our parking lot and drop-off procedures, HMS has staggered arrival times. Below are the arrival times for each grade. Children can be dropped off 5 minutes before their child's start time, but we ask that you do not drop them off before you see staff attendants out at the drop-off line or before your child's classroom door is open if you walk your child into school.

1. *Nursery 3s (N3s) and Pre-K:* 9:00 AM
2. *Kindergarten (K)-8th Grade:* 8:45 AM

C. Arrival Procedures:

1. K-8th grade drop-off begins at 8:40 am.
 - a) We ask families of students 2-8 to stay in your cars and drop off in the drop-off line. Staff will guide you through the drop-off procedures.
 - b) Families of students in K and 1 can park in the lot in front of the main building (brick farmhouse) and walk their children to the kindergarten classroom in the main building to meet their teachers.

- c) Nursery 3 and Pre-K drop-off begins at 8:55 am and the day officially starts at 9:00 AM. Families of Nursery and Pre-K students will be able to park in the lot in front of the main building (brick farmhouse) and walk their child to their classroom beginning at 9 AM.

D. Parking Lot Rules: Our school's parking lot is a very busy place. Please exercise the utmost care when you are driving or walking and make sure that your children are appropriately supervised.

1. **5 MPH, One-Way Loop:** The school parking lot is a one-way loop with a 5 MPH maximum speed limit, and slower is always safer.
2. **No Parking at Momiji or Black Dot Business Complex:** Parking in the Momiji parking lot during arrival, the school day, and dismissal will not be permitted, as there are significant blind spots around the corners and no good place for a crosswalk to be put in. A car or pedestrian accident for our school and their business holds significant liability that we'd all like to avoid. Please park in the HMS parking lot and enter through the school's main gate, or park in the handicapped designated spot next to the main building if that is a need for you. Also, please do not park in the back lot of Black Dot and walk over to drop off so that their business lot can stay clear.
3. **Use Designated Entryways and Crosswalks:** The school's parking lot was designed to have students safely enter through the main gates. [On the campus map in Section IV](#), we've designated the safest entryways to campus and the parking lot crosswalks in blue.
4. **Right Turn Only on Main St., 8 AM - 4 PM:** Please only turn right coming out of Acorn Way onto Main St. so that traffic can continue to move along. If you need to go Southbound, please turn around at another business on Rt. 209-Main St. (True Value, Gas Station, or the Roost are all good locations) or take Leggett Rd. to circle back to Rt. 209.
5. **Utilize the Driveway Between Black Dot and Funeral Home for Entries ONLY:** If coming from the south on Rt. 209-Main St., you are allowed to turn into the driveway between the Business complex where Black Dot is and the Funeral home and enter our school's parking lot. This is a one way entrance, and you are not allowed to exit this way. When exiting campus, please use Acorn Way.

E. Lateness Policy: It is critical that your child comes to school with time to walk to their class and unpack each morning. This is not only supportive to your child's classroom community, but also to help your own child transition well into their day. Advisory (5th-8th grade) and Morning Meeting (K-4th grade) periods for students in grades K-8 begin at 8:45 AM. We have many learning experiences to fit into our day, and every minute counts! These early morning blocks are critical times for the teaching of social and emotional development. HMS provides an experiential and group learning process which makes the contributions of each class member an important part of the learning of the whole group. The teachers have

established rituals and routines that engage and motivate the children for the day's learning and it is important for every child to be here on time. If your child's tardiness is chronic and directly impacts their ability to transition into the school day, it will warrant a meeting with the school to problem solve and discuss solutions for being on time.

F. **Pick-Up Times:**

1. N3 and PreK pick-up begins at 2:45 pm and ends at 2:50 PM.
2. Kindergarten (K) - 8th grade pick-up begins at 3:05 pm and goes until 3:10 PM.

G. **Pick-Up Procedures:**

1. N3 and Pre-K students will be picked up from their classroom or other designated area on campus by their parents.
2. Kindergarten and 1st grade students will be picked up at the main building's side porch.
3. 2nd grade will be picked up from the front porch of the main building.
4. 3rd grade students will be walked out to the fence along the school parking lot and picked up from their designated pick up areas by their parents.
5. 4th - 8th grade students will be picked up in a car pick-up line from the gate in front of the PAC/Upper School Building.
6. Children in Afterschool will be picked up and walked to their next location by HMS staff.

H. **District Bus Transportation:** Many of our children travel to school by bus. Each district in Ulster County is required to transport children to nonpublic schools if the family lives within fifteen miles of the school or is on a route provided by the district. If taking the bus, each district will contact you with information about your pick up time and driver. District buses are required to meet all NY State COVID-19 Guidelines. [Click here to utilize the transportation forms page from our website to register for bussing.](#)

District bussing occurs only on the days when district schools are in session. If your child takes the bus, please be aware of your home district's calendar and keep track of any weather-based closures so you can make alternative arrangements for transport when High Meadow is in session and your home district is not.

I. **Attendance:**

1. **Illness:** Please do not send your child to school if they are exhibiting symptoms of illness. If your child has displayed any symptoms related to illness, please do not bring your child to campus and contact our health department immediately for further instructions by calling our main office or emailing nurse@highmeadowsschool.org.
2. **Absence Communication:** If your child is going to be unexpectedly absent, please call the main office at (845) 687-4855 as soon as possible to let us know your child will not be in attendance at school. In the event of a planned absence, please email 1. your child's homeroom teacher or advisor and 2. the main office at contact@highmeadowsschool.org to let them know of the dates of planned absence.

3. **Late Arrival:** If your child will be unexpectedly dropped off late, please call the main office at (845) 687-4855 as soon as possible to let us know your expected time of arrival. In the event of a planned late arrival, please email 1. your child's homeroom teacher or advisor and 2. the main office at contact@highmeadowsschool.org to let them know of the dates of planned late arrival and the estimated time of arrival at school. Upon arriving at school, please bring your child to the main office for check-in and we will ensure that your child gets to class.
 4. **Early Dismissal:** If your child will be unexpectedly picked up early, please call the main office at (845) 687-4855 as soon as possible to let us know your expected time of pick up. In the event of a planned early dismissal, please email 1. your child's homeroom teacher or advisor and 2. the main office at contact@highmeadowsschool.org to let them know of the dates of planned early dismissal and the estimated time of pick up. Upon arriving at school, please proceed to the main office to pick up your child.
 5. **Extended Absence Due to Travel:** While we encourage consistency at school as much as possible throughout the academic year, the school understands that families may need to travel at times that do not coincide with school breaks. In the event of extended travel, please email 1. your child's homeroom teacher or advisor and 2. the main office at contact@highmeadowsschool.org to let them know of the dates of travel. For extended absences in which you'd like your child to engage in school work, please give your child's homeroom teacher or advisor at least two weeks' notice so that teachers have time to prepare work. When traveling, families must adhere to the most current COVID-19 travel guidance issued by the CDC and adapted by our state and county.
 6. If a child's unexplained absence or tardiness are so frequent that they impact the academic and/or social development of the child, the school will request a meeting with the family to discuss remedies.
- J. **Emergency School Closures and Delays:** In the event that the school needs to delay opening or close due to a weather-related emergency or other unsafe condition on campus, the school will alert families via email notification and push text notification. If the closure happens when children are already at school, we ask that families come immediately to pick up their children upon receiving the notification.

While High Meadow resides in the Rondout School District, our schools may be affected differently by emergencies or inclement weather and cause us to make different decisions based on factors such as power or the safety of campus. Please make sure to hear from us in the event of a suspected closure.

For students who take the district buses to school, please keep in mind that bussing may be affected in the case of a weather emergency even if our school remains open. Please make sure

to check your local district's closure status to determine whether bussing will be provided in the event of inclement weather.

- K. **Emergency Text Alert System:** All families will be automatically registered to receive emergency text alerts from the school, including delays, early closings, and closings through the FACTS Student Information System.

XI. Student Policies

- A. **Lunch and Snacks for Students:** For the 2023/ 2024 school year lunch and shared snacks will not be provided by the school. Please pack plenty of healthy food for your student(s). Food sharing is not allowed. If your child or a child in your student's class has a severe food allergy, the school holds the right to restrict what type of food is permissible to bring into your child's classroom. Families will be notified if this is the case prior to the first day of school.
- B. **Dress Code:** Clothing should be comfortable, easy to move and play in, and account for the weather. Learning and play is messy, and clothing worn to school should be able to get dirty. We require that children wear supportive shoes that have soles that can grip a variety of outdoor terrain. Children will go outside unless the weather imposes a substantial health risk (extreme heat or cold, thunderstorm, heavy rain, blizzard, etc.) . Students may not wear clothes that contain images or references to drugs or alcohol or display disparaging, expletive, or sexual language/logos.
 - 1. **PE Shoes:** To ensure the safest environment for your child in Physical Education we ask all of our students to come to class prepared to participate with appropriate athletic footwear. Wearing the wrong shoes can impact a student's safety and success during activities making even simple movements like running, jumping, and stopping difficult. Students who arrive in PE without proper footwear will still be able to participate in class, but will be given modified activities which promote physical fitness and health.
- C. **Birthday Celebrations:** HMS honors each child's special day in different ways. In the Lower School and Early Childhood divisions the class participates in a heart-warming ritual. During the ritual classmates and teachers are asked to sit quietly in a circle formation. While the birthday child sits with their back turned, we all give the child positive appreciation and affirmations. In the Upper School, children are recognized and celebrated during advisory periods. Please coordinate with your child's teacher beforehand if you would like to send in a special snack to celebrate your child's day.

XII. School Health Policies

- A. **Health Staff:** High Meadow school has a full-time nurse on campus 5 days per week. We have one nurse provided to us by the Rondout School District as well as a part-time nurse on our staff.

- B. **Health Examinations for Students Entering School:** New York State Education Law 902 requires a health examination for all students entering the school for the first time and when entering Nursery, Pre-K, K, 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th grades. These health exams are generally due by the end of September and are required to be submitted on the New York State School Health Examination Form. Health Examinations forms are due on September 30th, 2023. Failure to provide these records will exclude your child from being able to attend school.
- C. **Immunizations:** Per New York State Public Health Law 2164, all students must be compliant with immunizations requirements. Students aged 11 years and entering the 6th grade for the 2022-2023 school year are required to have received the Tdap booster immunization. Students aged 10 years and older, entering the 7th grade for the 2022-2023 school year are required to have received the meningococcal (MenACWY) immunization. Immunization records must be submitted to the school health office by September 30th, 2022. Failure to provide these records will exclude your child from being able to attend school. Vaccine information by age/grade are available here: <https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/2370.pdf>
- D. **Medication Dispensing at School:** All medications must be in the original container and include a dated note from your practitioner outlining the purpose, amount, frequency, and duration. This includes over-the-counter, homeopathic, and prescription medications. All medications will be collected on the first day of school by our school health staff. To discuss details about medication, please contact the School Health Office at (845) 687-4855 or nurse@highmeadowsschool.org.
- E. **First Aid Incident Report:** Any accident involving a student will be documented. Children who are injured are taken to the school nurse for first aid treatment. Anytime a child hits their head, they must visit the nurse to be checked. When a child visits the nurse, the nurse will contact the child's guardian. In the event that the guardian cannot be reached, the nurse will leave a message or send a written report home with the student.
- F. **Sunscreen/Bug Spray Policy:** We allow students to bring non-aerosolized bug spray and sunscreen for personal use on campus throughout the day. If your child will need assistance applying these products, we need written parental consent. Please send this consent to your child's classroom teachers.
- G. **SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) Policies:** HMS follows COVID-19 guidance that is issued by the CDC and adapted by the New York State and Ulster County Departments of health. COVID-19 guidance is subject to change throughout the year based on our area's COVID-19 risk levels and any new school guidance released by the governing bodies stated above. Currently, If a child or staff member tests positive for the COVID-19 virus, we will require that a student or staff member stays home for 5 days post-positive tests. A student or staff member's close contacts will be notified via email in the event of an exposure and taking an at-home test and masking indoors will be encouraged to reduce the spread of the virus.
- H. **Accommodations for Children with Severe Allergies and Medical Alerts:**

1. High Meadow holds the right to restrict allergens that come into our school facility based on the needs of our students.
2. Our staff is briefed on students they work with who have severe allergies or medical alerts at the start of the school year.
3. Applicable staff who work closely with children who have severe allergies are trained in Epi-Pen administration in the event of an emergency.
4. All of our classrooms are equipped with student rosters and go-bags that share severe allergies and medical alerts for students in the class in the event of an emergency.
5. In the event that we purchase and distribute foods, High Meadow will provide food that does not knowingly include allergens for students across the school.

XIII. School Safety Policies

- A. **Emergency Procedures:** At High Meadow, we consider the safety of our students and staff to be a priority within our day to day operations. Part of ensuring safety is the creation and practice of plans for a range of scenarios in which safety may be compromised. For children, knowing what to do and having ample practice through emergency drills can promote clarity and calm in the event that there is an emergency on campus.
1. **Emergency Drills:** Like all schools, High Meadow is required to train their staff on emergency protocols and conduct 12 safety drills throughout the school year, with 8 occurring before December 31st. Emergency drills include:
 - a) **An Evacuation** is used when a situation arises that compromises the indoor safety of campus facilities, such as a fire, gas leak, or burst water pipe. Evacuations could include moving students to a secondary location or early dismissal from outdoor locations on campus.
 - b) **A Shelter in Place** is issued in the event that all people need to be indoors in secure locations due to a weather emergency. Movement within the building and within classrooms is determined by outside conditions.
 - c) **A Hold in Place** is used in the event where the outside areas of campus need to be cleared for a safety purpose, such as a medical emergency, a missing child, a wildlife emergency, or a facilities emergency. Students are still permitted to move within their classrooms and continue with their activities.
 - d) **A Lockdown** is used when an immediate threat to life safety is recognized on or near campus grounds. Students and staff are instructed to secure themselves and hide in classroom locations or on rare occasions flee campus if danger is imminent and conditions are safe enough to escape.
 - e) **A Lockout** is issued to schools by local law enforcement authorities when exterior doors of campus need to be locked due to a possible danger in the surrounding area.

2. **Minimizing Impact of Emergency Drills for Students:** We strive to make emergency drills as positive for our students as possible, discussing procedures with students well in advance of each drill. We also discuss drills in developmentally appropriate ways that aim to help children understand what to expect, empower them to keep their community safe, and minimize fear. We also provide social-emotional support for individual students before and after drills on an as needed basis. If you sense that your child needs additional support with emotionally processing emergency procedures, please reach out to our Assistant Head of School, Keri Zurlini, at keri.zurlini@highmeadowschool.org.
 3. **Notifying Families of Emergency Drills:** Pursuant to [a change issued by the Board of Regents in July 2024](#), schools must inform parents and guardians of a drill within a week of it being conducted on campus. These notifications will not include the exact date and time of the drill but will allow you to prepare your child for the occurrence of one. We will ensure that these notifications are sent out to you a week before a drill is scheduled. High Meadow is required to hold one emergency dismissal drill that will occur no more than 15 minutes before the end of the school day each fall. We will make families aware of that date well in advance.
 4. **Emergency Contact Information:** The school has an emergency contact system that is orchestrated through the FACTS Student Information System (FACTS). We ask that families keep their most current contact information updated in FACTS and reinforce the importance of safety drills in their households with their kids. [Here is an article](#) that could be helpful in framing conversations surrounding school safety with your child at home that is similar to how we structure our conversations in school.
 5. **New York State School Safety Guidance and Mandates:** For more information, you can visit the [New York State Center for School Safety](#) or reach out to members of our school emergency response team, including myself, (headofschool@highmeadowschool.org) or our Operations Manager, AnneMarie Taylor (annemarie.taylor@highmeadowschool.org).
- B. **Mandated Reporting of Abuse and Neglect:** High Meadow School staff members are known as Mandated Reporters in compliance with state law. If a member of the staff suspects that a child is being abused or neglected, they are obligated to report their suspicion to Ulster County Child Protective Services (CPS)). Signs of abuse or neglect may include but are not limited to:
1. Patterns of lateness to school and absence from school;
 2. Late pick-up from school or the school bus;
 3. Consistently unkempt or dirty;
 4. Signs of physical abuse or neglect.

Should a Mandated Reporter at High Meadow School be required to make a report to CPS, High Meadow's Student Supports Coordinator will be available to provide supportive services to the

family and student throughout the process, and they will act as the ongoing liaisons between the family, CPS, and the school.

- C. **Search and Seizure:** To ensure the safety of students and staff, HMS maintains the right to search students and their property if there is reason to believe a school rule or state law has been violated. To that end, school administration may search the student storage area (cubbies), student coats, person, backpack, or other personal belongings.
- D. **Attending Campus Events:** Throughout the school year, families will be invited onto campus for meetings and special events. For these events, we ask that families adhere to all school rules and Health and Safety Protocols.
- E. **Visiting Campus:** If you are visiting campus outside of a school event for a meeting with teachers or staff, a volunteer opportunity, etc., please sign in at the main office and receive a guest pass. During a classroom or schoolwide event, families will be checked in at the gate to the parking lot.
- F. **Parking:** When visiting campus, please park in the school's parking lot only. Please observe the 5 mile per hour speed limit and refrain from using a cell phone. You may enter by the school sign off Main St. Please only make a right turn onto 209 from 8 AM - 4 PM.
- G. **Pets:** Pets are not allowed on campus. We welcome registered service animals to those who can offer registration documents and a doctor's verification for the need of daily assistance.

XIV. School Community: Calendar, Events, and Involvement

- A. **School Calendar:** The [2024-2025 School Calendar can be found here.](#)
 - 1. **The HMS Calendar of Events** can be found digitally on the Konstella communications platform. Additionally, a paper calendar was sent to each family detailing the events of the year.
- B. **Yearly Events:** We are a school that hosts many events for our student community, parent community, and surrounding community. Below are a few events that happen every year. There will be more to come!
 - 1. **Family Welcome Get Together, August 29th, 2024:** This event occurs a week before the start of school and is a moment for both new and returning families, students, and staff to come together and launch the new school year. Families and students will get a chance to visit classrooms, tour the campus, and eat BYO picnics together.

2. **Community Curriculum Night, September 24th, 2024:** On this night in late September, parents visit the campus and get a chance to meet with teachers and hear about our learning approach and what their child will experience this school year.
3. **Haunted High Meadow, October 19th, 2024:** Join us for a spooky good time on HMS's campus! Trunk or treat, crafts, and the middle school's time honored tradition of Halls or Terror, a student-led haunted house for older students and parents, will all help to put you in the Halloween mood.
4. **Fireside Fridays, Starting September 27th, 2024:** Fireside Fridays occur across the late fall, winter, and early spring. On these days, assigned grade levels bring in vegetables, a fire is lit, and the school prepares and cooks stone soup around a fire that stays lit all day. Children eat soup at their lunch times and the fire is enjoyed across the afternoon. Families are welcome to come to campus and join Fireside Fridays.
5. **AcornFest: HMS's 40th Anniversary Kick-Off, November 9th, 2024:** AcornFest is a celebration of fall and this year, kicks off a year of 40th anniversary celebrations. Enjoy a family fun day and carnival on our campus, with arts shares and many activities.
6. **Winter Solstice, December 20th, 2024:** On this day, we celebrate the shortest day of the year and the winter season. Students participate in a variety of activities across the school and gather around the fire to make wishes for the world in the upcoming year. Families are welcome onto campus to enjoy the fire, make wishes, and see special performances across the school day.
7. **Groundhog Festival, January 22nd, 2025:** The HMS mascot is the groundhog. Groundhogs have been inhabitants of our campus for many years and share our spaces, frequently sited coming out of their burrow under the main building's porch. Did you know that the first local hibernating animal to wake up for spring is the Groundhog? They tend to start their preparations for warmer weather in February. As a school we'll gather to celebrate this furried friend, as we have many local inhabitants, and have a festival outside to provide laughter and fun.
8. **HMS Variety Show, March 15th, 2025:** The HMS Variety Show is a time to celebrate all of the wonderful talents our students bring to the school.
9. **Earth Day, April 9th, 2025:** As a school that focuses on sustainability education and is grounded in Place-Based education methodologies, every year our school celebrates Earth Day in a unique fashion. Each division does an activity during the day - whether that is service or education related - and then the whole school gathers at the end of the day for a celebration.
10. **40th Anniversary Community Celebration and Benefit Concert, May 3rd, 2025:** Come celebrate our school's 40th year through music, community, and fun! Details forthcoming.
11. **Maple Games, June 5th, 2025:** This is High Meadow's very own version of field day. Students are placed on either the acorns or the mulberries and rotate through activities in an age-mixed team to help build a broader community. The teams rotate to different

activities - such as pancakes with homemade maple syrup, Dance Off, Water Balloon toss, etc. - in order to just have plain old fun. The goal of the Maple Games is to celebrate what the year had to offer and is considered one of our send offs into summer.

12. **All-School Gatherings and Cultural Celebrations:** Across the year, we gather as a student community to celebrate our school. Within these celebrations, we often highlight cultural months or celebrations that include the cultural identities of our students and happen on a national or global scale. Families are invited to some all school gatherings, but some are reserved for students and staff only. Consult the HMS calendar to see which ones families are invited to attend.
13. **Arts-Based Performances:** High Meadow will host a variety of performances throughout the school year based on what children would like to share with the greater community.

C. **High Meadow Parent Organizations:** Our parent organizations support families, students, teachers, and administration in realizing the mission of High Meadow. We encourage families and staff members to get involved!

1. **Parent Teacher Organization (PTO):** The main objective of the HMS PTO is to enrich our students' and parents' High Meadow experience through meaningful parental engagement and empowerment, facilitating communication between parents and the administration. PTO meetings are held monthly at the school. These gatherings are a great way to connect with other parents, have some fun, and support the mission and educational objectives of the school.

Quarterly meetings will be held in person on campus from 9:00-10:00 AM on the following Mondays: September 16th, December 16th, March 17th, June 16th

President: Hollie Saborido

Co Vice Presidents: Haris Silic and Elle Rivera-Satto

Secretary: Pia Kelly

Contact: pto@highmeadowschool.org

2. **Parents for Racial Justice (P4RJ):** P4RJ is a working group dedicated to cultivating a diverse, equitable and inclusive community that recognizes, analyzes and works to reduce racial injustice and systemic inequality. In partnership with administration, P4RJ works to support teachers, students and the school community in creating and using shared language, and advancing curricular goals and measurable outcomes around diversity, equity, inclusion and justice.

Contact: Anna Jacobs (taftjacobs@gmail.com) and Margaux Sanchez (mws@margauxsanchez.com)

- 3. LGBTQIA+ Families and Allies Group:** The LGBTQIA+ Families and Allies Group works to increase LGBTQIA+ visibility at High Meadow School and build an affirming school environment, because safe and affirming schools are life-saving for LGBTQIA+ young people. Working with teachers and administration, we promote curriculum and field trips that make queer life and history visible as well as developing inclusive school policies. We host social gatherings both on and off campus to strengthen bonds among queer families and families of queer students, and we connect with and educate allies in our community.

Contact: Amy Baracks (abaracks@gmail.com)

- 4. The BIPOC/PGM Parents Group:** The BIPOC/PGM Parents Group comes together to build a strong community for ourselves and our children, fostering an environment of inclusivity, support, and celebration for those who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color - people of the global majority (PGM). Through monthly working groups, we aim to generate ideas and initiatives that empower and amplify the voices of BIPOC individuals within our school community. In addition, we host family gatherings both on and off campus where we can build community, share in moments of joy and lift each other up while advocating for positive change.

Contact: Morgane Richardson (morgane.richardson@gmail.com)

- D. Volunteer Service Requirement:** Service is an essential value embedded in the philosophy democratic education. Through service, we practice being in community with each other and actively participate in supporting and showing gratitude towards the community. Every family is responsible for **25 hours of volunteer service** each school year.
 - 1. Types of Volunteer Opportunities:** Families can choose to participate in a variety of in-person or remote volunteer opportunities throughout the year, including event planning, community clean-up, participation in school committees or PTO meetings, donating food or supplies to events, etc. Volunteer opportunities will be highlighted in communications to families from class parents as well as in monthly communications from the school.
 - 2. Accounting for Volunteer Hours:** Families can log their volunteer hours inside of the FACTS Family Portal. These hours will be verified periodically by High Meadow's Director of Operations, AnneMarie Taylor. Please reach out to her if you are in need of assistance with logging your hours.
 - 3. Failure to Meet Volunteer Hours:** Families who fail to meet the 25 hour service requirement by the end of the school year will be billed for their outstanding hours.
 - 4. Exemptions for Volunteer Requirement:** Families can be exempt from volunteer hours in two ways:

- a) Those families who pay a fee equivalent to the monetary value of the 25 volunteer hours to the school.
- b) Those families who qualify for financial assistance with tuition.

E. **Class Parents:** All of our classes have a classroom parent to act as a liaison between families and the school. The class parent is a volunteer position and this role fulfills the full 25-hour volunteering environment.

The Class Parent's key role is as the head of communication for families in their class. The school relies on class parents to help keep group communication positive and solution-oriented, help spread accurate and timely information for the school and to be a point of contact for families who are unsure of who at the school to reach out to for what. In addition, class parents help with the following:

1. **Vidigami:** Letting parents know about our amazing photo/video sharing app that allows parents to tag their children in photos. Parents who participate in tagging on Vidigami will be gifted a "Your Child's Year at HMS" photo book at the end of the year!
2. **Monitor of WhatsApp or Other Group Threads:** Each class has a WhatsApp page as a way for parents to communicate with each other. If a class parent sees misinformation being shared, they can direct the group to the correct person to talk to clear up any issues or confusion.
3. **Classroom Volunteer Coordinator:** We are a community of creative individuals, all with our own gifts and talents. When parents share their talents, children become inspired, and it also helps to develop a sense of community. Class parents talk with other parents about their level of interest in participating in volunteer opportunities that support the school and fulfill the 25-hour family volunteering requirement.
4. **School Directory:** Class Parents can help direct parents to the right person at school to solve problems or answer questions.
5. **PTO Participation:** PTO is a way to increase parental involvement and education and build a strong HMS community. As members of the PTO, Class Parents serve as a good-will ambassador to the larger community and increase the accessibility of HMS missions in the region.
6. **Classroom celebrations, events, and field trips:** The class parent assists the teachers in event planning, disseminating important announcements, and getting classroom volunteers for a variety of reasons: field trips, birthday party coordination, project support, and more.
7. **Regular communication** with the Director of Admissions, Retention, and Outreach surrounding parent/school communication and partnerships.

XV. Auxiliary Programming

A. Afterschool Programming

1. **Afterschool Care Program:** High Meadow provides a childcare option to extend its day for Nursery-8th Grade students. Afterschool care runs from HMS dismissal until 5:00 PM. During Afterschool Care, facilitators supervise children at play, read stories, and use our beautiful seven acre campus as a classroom for discovery and investigation of the natural world. Please pack a snack for your student. Afterschool Care is:
 - a) Only offered to currently enrolled High Meadow students.
 - b) Available Monday through Friday on an as-needed basis as space permits.
 - c) Billed on a monthly basis (through FACTS).
 - d) A drop-in service - students are clocked in and out each time they attend aftercare.
2. **Afterschool Enrichment Classes:** High Meadow also offers a variety of enrichment classes to students as well as children from the public community in the hours after school up until 5:00 PM. Our unique offerings encapsulate a variety of arts, athletics, and interest-based activities. Because spots are limited for these specialized activities, families pre-register their student(s) for these classes at the beginning of each semester. Enrichment class semesters run from September through December and February through June.

- B. **High Meadow School Summer Camp:** Children have the opportunity to join us at our school through the entire year. High Meadow Summer Camp programming runs for 5 weeks and includes a recreational camp for ages 3-rising second grade and specialized camps for rising third through 9th graders.

XVI. School Communication

One of the main reasons that people cite for sending their children to High Meadow is the sense of caring they feel when they walk through the classrooms for the very first time. The teachers work hard to create a sense of collaboration and caring in their classes. When all adults at school model inclusiveness, openness, and empathetic communication, caring between children in school will be reinforced.

Like our students, our families travel in a close-knit group across their child's time at HMS. Families who enter nursery school and leave in the 8th grade can spend 11 years with one another. We encourage you to be open to and inclusive of all the parents in your children's class and to form a strongly bonded family community amongst the group that embraces and uplifts all of the children in our community. Our school is not only a place for kids to find their friends, but for adults to find their people as well.

- A. **Expectations for Communication:** We value the following expectations for adult communication at High Meadow:
1. Assume positive intentions.

2. Communicate with positivity and respect for each other in person, in email, and in text/phone communications.
3. Be community-oriented and take on other's perspectives to empathize while communicating.
4. Directly communicate with teachers and staff to avoid spread of false information.
5. Honor children's dignity and caring for them in all communication.

B. Community Emailing and Text Protocols:

1. **Email Length:** Emails and texts to other community members should be brief. If the email you are writing is longer than a few sentences, please instead use email to schedule time for a phone call or in-person discussion. This will minimize misinterpretations, build better relationships, and save time.
2. **Email and Text Tone:** Emails sent to each other should refrain from including gossip or negative emotional content to another HMS community or staff member for any reason. Ask for help in working through the conflict if there are issues with it being done face-to-face. Repeated violations of this rule by an adult community member could lead to HMS asking the family to leave the school.

C. Venues for Communication

1. **Classroom Newsletters:** Teachers will send weekly classroom news to share information relevant to your child's specific classroom. This will include units of study and upcoming events.
2. **Community News:** Monthly, families receive an electronic message from the HMS administration or faculty highlighting a theme, program, initiative, or other areas of community interest. This is also where people can find out about opportunities to donate to our school's program.
3. **HMS Website:** Our public-facing website also includes a section for current families where you can find information about our school calendar, FACTS portal, enrollment forms, and other information.
4. **Konstella:** For the 24-25 school year, HMS Staff will be using the [Konstella](#) school communications platform for all communications sent to families. On this site, you will be able to send messages to other adult community members, see a comprehensive school calendar, see current volunteer opportunities, and find a history of all communications sent by the school.
5. **Vidigami:** Vidigami is the photo storage platform that we use for our school. Families and staff have private access to all of the photos of the fun we have at school. Photos are organized by grade, special event, and can be organized by child if the parent chooses to tag their student. Families can also upload photos from school to share with us and other families.

Vidigami has the option to download photos to personal devices. We ask that families only download photos with their own child in them for personal reasons and **do not distribute or post photos from our school** via email, social media website, etc.

6. **Instagram and Facebook**: High Meadow posts photos and events on Instagram and Facebook. Please follow us on those platforms for news and announcements!
 7. **FACTS Information System**: Our school utilizes the FACTS Student Information System for enrollment, student information, family communications, emergency communication alerts, progress reporting, and billing. All families have a login to the FACTS system. **Our family portal access code is HMS-NY.**
- D. **Photo Consent**: Each year in the enrollment process, families are given the opportunity to consent to their child's photos being used within our school community, on Vidigami, and in our public-facing communications and marketing. If your preferences change throughout the school year, please contact AnneMarie Taylor at annemariet@highmeadowsschool.org.
- E. **HMS Faculty Directory**
1. Nuthatches (N3) Lead Teacher: Rachel Roozen (rachel.roozen@highmeadowsschool.org)
 2. Nuthatches (N3) Assistant Teacher: Reta Sorge (reta.sorge@highmeadowsschool.org)
 3. Chickadees (N3) Lead Teacher: Molly Parker-Myers (molly.parker-myers@highmeadowsschool.org)
 4. Chickadees (N3) Assistant Teacher: Sean Van Laer (sean.van_laer@highmeadowsschool.org)
 5. Pre-K Lead Teacher: Stacey Wenzel (stacey.wenzel@highmeadowsschool.org)
 6. Pre-K Assistant Teacher: Lexi Kandeel (lexi.kandeel@highmeadowsschool.org)
 7. Nursery and Pre-K Floating Assistant: Shanalee Figueroa (shanalee.figueroa@highmeadowsschool.org)
 8. Kindergarten Lead Teacher: Janine Louis (janine.louis@highmeadowsschool.org)
 9. Kindergarten Assistant Teacher: Tom Whalen (tom.whalen@highmeadowsschool.org)
 10. First Grade Lead Teacher: Bella Kosmacher (bella.kosmacher@highmeadowsschool.org)
 11. First Grade Assistant: Raquel "Rocky" Ortiz (Raquel.ortiz@highmeadowsschool.org)
 12. Second Grade Lead Teacher: Amy White (Amy.white@highmeadowsschool.org)
 13. Second Grade Assistant Teacher: Hollie Paynter (Hollie.paynter@highmeadowsschool.org)
 14. Third Grade Lead Teacher: Jamie Leidner (jamie.leidner@highmeadowsschool.org)
 15. Fourth Grade Lead Teacher: Peter Myers (peter.myers@highmeadowsschool.org)
 16. 5/6 Science and 6th Grade Advisor: Chris Bottomley (chris.bottomley@highmeadowsschool.org)
 17. 5/6 Humanities and 6th Grade Advisor: Emily Aptekar (emily.aptekar@highmeadowsschool.org)
 18. 5/6 Math and 5th Grade Advisor: Jack Milgram (jack.milgram@highmeadowsschool.org)
 19. 7/8 Math and 7th Grade Advisor: Jazmine Langlitz (jazmine.langlitz@highmeadowsschool.org)
 20. 7/8 Science and 7th Grade Advisor: Matt Helffrich (matt.helffrich@highmeadowsschool.org)

21. 7/8 Humanities and 8th Grade Advisor: Clay Drinko (clay.drinko@highmeadowsschool.org)
22. Dance: Lily Feldman (lily.feldman@highmeadowsschool.org)
23. Drama: Allyson Uzzle (allyson.uzzle@highmeadowsschool.org)
24. Music: Victor Lissabet (victor.lissabet@highmeadowsschool.org)
25. Physical Education and Athletics and Afterschool Programming Coordinator: Gordon Garrand (gordon.garrand@highmeadowsschool.org)
26. Early Childhood and Lower School Visual Arts: Kirsten Mcallister (kirsten.mcallister@highmeadowsschool.org)
27. Middle School Visual Arts: Amy Park (amy.park@highmeadowsschool.org)
28. Academic Interventionist: Maia D'Egidio (maia.degidio@highmeadowsschool.org)
29. Early Childhood and Lower School Counselor: Rania Sirdah (rania.sirdah@highmeadowsschool.org)
30. Middle School Counselor: Susan Steinberg (susan.steinberg@highmeadowsschool.org)
31. HMS Full-Time Building Substitute: James Meyers (james.meyers@highmeadowsschool.org)

F. **Expectations for Contacting Teachers:** Your child's teachers are the first people to communicate with at the school. All teachers have school email accounts and phone extensions in their classrooms. It is expected that all communication with teachers remains collegial, collaborative, and respects the confines of a regular workday (8:30am-5:00pm). If you are contacting a teacher outside of professional work hours, please be aware that this is their private time and you can expect a response the next business day. While some of our teachers are comfortable with families having their personal cell phone numbers and will decide to distribute it themselves, we do not require it. Please do not solicit any staff's personal cell phone numbers.

Failure to communicate with HMS teachers/staff in a way that values their educational expertise and honors their dignity may lead to disciplinary action by the school administration, up to and including dismissal from the school community. Should you have concerns about your classroom teacher's performance, please reach out to the school administration directly to set up a meeting.

G. **Communicating Student Progress**

1. **Family Conferences and Progress Reporting:** Family conferences occur at three points throughout the school year so that teachers and families can remain in partnership and close contact about each student's progress:
 - a) **Listening Conferences (just before the start of school):** At listening conferences, teachers meet with the parents/guardians of each child in their class. The family has a chance to tell the teacher all about their child from their perspective as primary caregiver and first teachers.

- b) **Fall (November) and Winter (March) Progress Reports and Conferences:** High Meadow will update families in writing about their child's progress. These reports will include both academic and social-emotional information. Progress reports will be used to frame the content of conferences and will be used to problem-solve and set goals between teachers and families.
- c) **End of Year Reports (Late June):** All students will receive an end of year progress report to summarize their progress over the course of the school year.

XVII. Tuition & Incidental Billing

Families have the option of paying tuition either in full, quarterly, or on a monthly payment schedule through FACTS Tuition Management. Tuition payments are automatically deducted from your chosen bank account on the 5th or the 20th of each month (May – February). Credit cards are acceptable, however, credit cards incur significantly higher FACTS usage fees.

- A. **Unexpected School Closure:** If for the 2024-2025 school year, HMS needs to switch to distance learning only for more than ten (10) consecutive days due to either a catastrophic issue to our facility that causes a lack of safety or a county or state health mandate:
 - 1. Grades K-8: would receive a credit of 10% of the tuition and facilities fees for the month affected by the closure.
 - 2. Nursery and Pre-K: would receive a credit of 40% of the tuition and facilities fees for the month affected by the closure (assuming three (3) days of remote learning).
 - 3. Remote learning will continue for all five (5) days if we are mandated to switch to this model for K-8.
 - 4. All credits would be applied to 2025-2026 tuition.
- B. **Incidental Billing:** HMS bills for afterschool care on an incidental basis. All incidental charges incurred must be paid through the FACTS system within 30 days of the date on which an invoice is sent. Incidental billing can be set for AutoPay and/or a credit card may be used for these charges.

XVIII. Student Privacy and Records

- A. **Access to Student Records:** Except for High Meadow School's health personnel and local and state health department personnel, no third party shall have access to information in or from a student record without the written consent of the student's legal guardian. When granting consent, the guardian shall have the right to designate which parts of the student record shall be released to the third party. Personally identifiable information from a student record shall only be released to a third party on the condition that they will not permit any other third party to have access to such information without the written consent of the student's guardian.
- B. **The Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act:** The Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA) is a Federal law designed to protect the privacy of a student's education records. FERPA

gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. Those rights include:

1. Parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and review all of the student's education records maintained by the school. For records including information on more than one student, parents will be limited only to information pertaining to his/her child. Schools are not required to provide copies of materials in education records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents or eligible students to inspect the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.
2. Student records or other identifiable information are maintained in a secure location to ensure confidentiality. Records that are no longer required or need to be disposed will be done so in a manner that ensures confidentiality and security.
3. Parents and eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records believed to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record commenting on the contested information in the record.
4. Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student before releasing any information from a student's record. However, the law allows schools to disclose records, without consent, to the following parties:
 - a) School officials with legitimate educational interest;
 - b) Other schools to which a student is transferring;
 - c) Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
 - d) Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
 - e) Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
 - f) Accrediting organizations;
 - g) To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
 - h) Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
 - i) State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.
5. Schools may also disclose, without consent, "directory" type information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow parents and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them. Schools must notify parents and eligible students annually of their rights under FERPA. The actual means of notification (special letter, inclusion in a PTA bulletin, student handbook, or newspaper article) is left to the discretion of each school.

C. **Procedure for Accessing Student Records**

1. A parent may request to review their child's student file. Any person requesting to review a student file must request it in writing and submit it to the Director of Admissions and Retention (admissions@highmeadowschool.org).
2. The Director of Admissions and Retention will review the request and determine whether to release the information to the requester. If the requester is not a parent or legal guardian, a Consent for Release of Student Information letter will be sent to the parent/guardian for permission. The parent is not required to give permission.
3. Once permission is granted to review a student's file, the requester must sign the Record of Access form in the student folder. If a student has an IEP, the requester must also sign the Confidential File Access Log form in the student folder.

D. Procedure to Amend or Appeal Student Records

1. If a parent or legal guardian believes the education records relating to the student contain information that's inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the student's right to privacy, they may ask that the record be amended. Parents or legal guardian may express the appeal in writing to the director containing the following information:
 - a) Information that's claimed to be inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the student's privacy rights;
 - b) Records in which the parent/legal guardian believes the information is contained
 - c) Basis for the claim (i.e., why he/she believes the information is inaccurate, etc.);
 - d) The parent's/guardian's proposed change.
2. The Head of School and Curriculum and Instruction Coordinators will review the request and make a determination within fifteen school days of receiving the letter. The Head of School and Curriculum and Instruction Coordinators will provide the parent/legal guardian with a written response to the request and explain the reason for his/her decision. If the action is warranted, the school may decide to remove, modify, or expunge the information in the record. Removing, modifying, or expunging an entry isn't an admission that the entry was improper or that any person acted improperly by including the entry on the record.
3. If the request is denied or no ruling is made in allotted time, the parent or guardian has the right to appeal the decision to the Board of Directors within twenty school days from the adverse ruling or failure to rule.
4. A hearing officer will be appointed by the Board of Directors. A hearing will be held within twenty school days after the parent/guardian files the request with the Board, and the parent will be given notice of date, place, and time of the hearing with sufficient advance notice.
5. A parent/guardian will be given the opportunity to present their appeal and may be assisted or represented by individuals of his or her choice or own expense. The hearing officer's decision must be based solely on the evidence presented at the hearing.
6. A written report containing a summary of the evidence and the reasons for the decision will be issued fourteen calendar days from the conclusion of the hearing. If necessary, the

hearing officer will direct the Head of School and Curriculum and Instruction Coordinators to amend the records accordingly and inform the parent in writing. The hearing officer's decision will be final. If the parent doesn't agree with the decision, the parent has the right to place a statement in the record commenting on the contested information or stating why they disagree with the decision of the hearing officer, or both.

7. If you have any questions regarding the procedure for accessing student records, please contact the school office at 845-687-4855.