

# Belle Meade Montessori School

*fostering creativity and independence*



*Handbook*

*2017-2018*

353 F.T. Valley Road  
Sperryville, VA 22740

(540) 987-8970

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# Belle Meade Montessori School

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**Belle Meade School is a 501(c)(3) organization.**



# Belle Meade Montessori School

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## **Mission**

Belle Meade Montessori School provides an exceptional educational experience that includes individual responsibility, social and environmental consciousness through experiential learning.

## **Philosophy**

Grounded in the ideals of sustainable living, Belle Meade strives to create an atmosphere where students can discover their passions, express their creativity, develop responsibility, forge meaningful relationships, and learn to be contributing members of a community. We teach our students to dare to care, dare to strive, dare to find their passions.

## **Admissions**

We welcome students from all backgrounds with or without prior Montessori experience.

## **Guiding Principles**

- Combines academic excellence and sustainable living. Students receive a well-rounded education and valuable life skills.
- Experiential learning actively involves each student in the learning process.
- Individualized teaching and learning maximize the scope and value of the educational experience for every student.
- Exploration and discovery, which are critical to the educational process, are encouraged.
- Content mastery is achieved without excessive drilling.
- Interdisciplinary, project-based learning actively engages students.
- On-site farm chores and animal care are part of each student's day. This instills a sense of responsibility and respect and value for animals and nature.
- Stewardship of one another and mentoring are fostered which encourage individual development and alleviate peer pressure issues.
- Students are empowered through learning to express themselves, speaking up for themselves, and becoming aware that the choices they make define their lives.
- A happy, friendly, and nurturing environment is provided. It is complemented by a pace that promotes maturation, growth, healing, and self-definition.
- Practicing communication skills with adults and students of all ages provides practical skills for real life.
- Care and respect for others, animals, nature, and our planet are woven into the daily educational experience.
- The daily morning and afternoon circles encourage students to get in touch with their feelings and express them and listen to and respect others' feelings.

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## School Year Calendar 2017-2018

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### Belle Meade Montessori School Calendar 2017 - 2018

**Aug. 21 Advisee Conferences (1-3 pm)**

**Aug. 22 Opening Gathering (5 pm)**

#### **Aug. 23—Nov. 24 First Trimester**

Aug. 23 First Day of School

Aug. 30, 31, & Sept. 1 Fall Canoe Trip

Sept. 4 *Labor Day Holiday*

Sept. TBD Shakespeare @ The Theatre in little Washington

**Sept. 23 Farm Tour and Fundraiser (10 am—5 pm)**

Oct. 12 DC Field Trip

Oct. 15 Fall Open House (1-3 pm)

Oct. 27 Masquerade Ball (6-9 pm)

Nov. 2 Writer's Eye Field Trip, Fralin Art Museum, Charlottesville

**Nov. 16 Trimester Dinner**

Nov. 17 Parent/Teacher/Student Conferences (NO SCHOOL)

*Nov. 20 — 24 Thanksgiving Break*

#### **Nov. 27 — Mar. 2 Second Trimester**

*Dec. 21—Jan. 2 Winter Break*

Jan. — Feb. Skiing on Thursdays

Feb. 16 Snow Ball (6-9 pm)

**Mar. 1 Trimester Dinner**

Mar. 2 Parent/Teacher/Student Conferences (NO SCHOOL)

#### **Mar. 5 — May 25 Third Trimester**

**Mar. 5 Staff Work Day - Students NO SCHOOL**

Mar. 8 Spring Performance Dress Rehearsal (6 pm)

**Mar. 9 Spring Performance**

**Mar. 10 Spring Performance**

Mar. 25 Spring Open House (1-3pm)

*Apr. 2-6 Spring Break*

Apr. 19 Shakespeare Theater, Staunton

May 9-11 Spring Camping Trip

**May 22 Graduation/Trimester Dinner**

May 24 Parent/Teacher/Student Conferences (NO SCHOOL)

**May 25 Last Day of School**

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## Curriculum Guide Course Descriptions

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### **Middle School Math**

Middle school mathematics emphasizes problem solving and assists the student in finding mathematical solutions. In addition to problem solving this course reviews and enhances the student's understanding of basic mathematical concepts. This class looks further into the order of operations, decimals, the metric system, basic geometry, data analysis, factors, proportions, ratio, integers, and algebraic equations.

### **Algebra**

Algebra is the study of numerical patterns and their abstract representations. Students represent and analyze these patterns using functions, operations, tables, and graphs. Students learn these concepts and skills in a cognitively rich context of problem solving and critical reading and thinking. Advanced algebra concepts involve more complex reasoning and functions, conic sections, trigonometry and modeling.

### **Geometry**

Geometry is the study of spatial reasoning. Students learn properties of two-dimensional and three-dimensional figures, classical reasoning, geometric construction, and Cartesian geometry. Students learn these concepts and skills in a cognitively rich context of problem solving and critical reading and thinking. Advanced studies in geometry can lead to trigonometry, the study of right triangles and their applications.

### **Natural Science**

This course uses problem solving to introduce students to the scientific method and to assist their growth in an understanding of the nature of science. This course includes hands-on experiments and explorations to discover the physical and biological properties of earth systems, atmospheric systems, and natural systems. Through explorations of the natural areas around the school—the ponds, pastures, gardens, forests and sky—we will come to understand natural communities and to see human beings as integral and indispensable participants. Activities include field trips, scientific experiments and ecosystem studies.

### **Biology**

This course uses problem-solving techniques to explore living systems. This course includes a variety of hands-on experiments and challenges students to explore basic life processes, cellular organization, mechanisms of inheritance, the dynamic relationship between organisms, and the change in organisms through time. As students explore these concepts they will be challenged to grow in their understanding of the scientific method and they will develop a greater sense of belonging to the community of life.

### **Chemistry**

This course uses problem solving to introduce students to the interaction between matter and energy. This course includes many hands-on experiments and investigations involving laboratory equipment, basic elements, compounds, and mixtures. In this class students ex-

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plore chemical reactions, writing chemical formulas, analyzing chemical equations, the gas laws, phase changes, and types of matter. The nature of this course requires significant understanding of basic mathematics principles and a good understanding of the scientific method.

## **Physics**

Students will cooperatively investigate and understand the interrelationships among mass, distance, force, and time through mathematical and experimental processes utilizing experimental design techniques. Through analysis and interpretation of data, students will determine that quantities including mass, energy, momentum, and charge are conserved, but that energy can be transferred and transformed to provide usable work. Additionally, students will study wave phenomena including an understanding that different frequencies and wavelengths in the electromagnetic spectrum range from radio waves through visible light to gamma radiation. Students will be able to use the field concept to describe the effects of gravitational, electric, and magnetic forces, and to diagram, construct, and analyze basic electrical circuits and explain the function of various circuit components.

## **English**

Middle school English classes strengthen students' reading ability and comprehension, composition skills, English usage, memory, critical and analytical thinking, and cultural awareness. As they study literature, students will focus on understanding and analyzing short prose passages and poetry using guided discussion and writing. Students will also complete independent reading of lengthier works, both classic and contemporary. Writing instruction emphasizes student achievement in style, organization, thinking, and usage through frequent informal and formal exercises in crafting sentences, paragraphs, essays, articles, letters, stories, and poems. Students will revise certain written assignments to further develop these skills. English grammar and usage are taught as tools for clear communication of meaning, both spoken and written.

In high school English, students will read more challenging passages, poems, and lengthier works. Literature instruction will continue to develop each student's ability to comprehend, recall, analyze, and enjoy prose, drama, and poetry. Composition assignments become more formal as students advance, requiring increasingly well-developed thinking, knowledge, organization, style, and usage. Students will often compose written reflections on assignments, discussions, and topics of interest. Improvement in content, style, and correct usage will be emphasized through required revision of certain long-term writing projects. Grammar instruction will focus on learning to identify and correct errors in English usage.

## **Latin I/II**

This class emphasizes the study of Latin as a conduit for vocabulary and grammar skills building in English, Spanish, and other language studies. Study of Latin also provides a scaffold for further study of history, culture, science, and literature. Students will learn to analyze the structure of words and sentences as they attempt to translate and analyze meaning; from the first lesson, students will explore Roman culture and classical mythology while learning to read Latin.

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## **Spanish Introduction and Spanish I**

Introduction to Spanish focuses on teaching conversational Spanish and includes grammar, vocabulary, written, and conversational Spanish. This class also introduces the student to Spanish and Latin-American culture. In Spanish I students begin to develop communicative competence in speaking, writing, comprehending and reading Spanish and expand their understanding of the culture of Spanish speaking countries. Our main goal in the class is to provide a *context* for everything we study. We give attention to grammar and vocabulary in a context of real-life situations, Latino cultures, and the language as a whole. The idea is to acquire a feel for the language, an appreciation of its beauty, and a degree of comfort and confidence in speaking it. Along the way, we learn a lot about the English language as well as Spanish.

## **Spanish II**

The study of reading, writing, speaking, and listening continues as more complex grammatical structures are introduced. With more communicative competence come deeper discussions in Spanish about Latino culture and students' own experiences. Immersion in the language continues as students learn circumlocution in order to hold conversations entirely in Spanish.

## **Spanish III**

The third year of Spanish continues development of listening, reading, writing, speaking, interpersonal communication and cultural awareness. Complexity and comprehension increase as students learn more vocabulary and grammar. Discussion in Spanish of Latino literature, culture, history and contemporary events is emphasized.

## **World Geography**

World Geography class teaches students how to use maps, globes, atlases, satellite images, photographs, graphs, and other geographic tools to study and understand the world's populations, national identities and geographic environments. Students will look to history for understanding of how geological factors affect civilizations and cultures and economic, political, and social development. By the end of the class students will be able to identify all the continents, oceans, many islands and nations, and understand that the world's population is a single community divided by geographic location.

## **World History**

The World History Part I course covers ancient civilizations. From the beginning of man's existence on the planet, through the evolution of villages into city-states and the cradle of civilization in the Fertile Crescent, we explore how man has interacted with his environment, set-up communities, built structures, and established governments. This course takes us around the globe to sites like the Roman walls throughout Europe, the Great Wall of China, and the sacred rivers of India. Students will gain comprehension of the history which led to governments, religions and wars, and which established the foundation of the Old World.

The World History Part II course is the second year of a survey of world history. Students will engage in a study of the political, cultural, social, and economic conditions from 1500 to

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modern times. Students will engage in study and analysis of important world events such as the Reformation, the Age of Discovery, the Industrial Revolution, World War I, World War II, the Cold War, and the independence movements of the 20th century. We will study the impact of these events on global trade, science, politics, economics and religion around the world.

## **U.S. History & Government**

We will study the original American's habitat and civilizations before the arrival of Europeans. Students will explore the early history of the United States to understand the ideas and hard work that built the union. They will also study documents, speeches and the constitution that laid the foundation of American ideals and institutions. The study of history emphasizes the intellectual skills required for responsible citizenship. The student must demonstrate understanding of the essential knowledge of the history of the United States of America.

## **Art**

Using traditional techniques and emerging technologies, this class emphasizes exploration, analysis, and investigation of the creative process. Students develop technical skills that empower them to communicate ideas visually, developing an understanding of and appreciation for the visual arts. Students explore various two-dimensional and three-dimensional art media, using different expressive and technical approaches. Students study the factors that distinguish artistic styles and that clarify the role of art in culture.

## **Instrumental Music**

The instrumental music program emphasizes basic musical skills for band and orchestra. Students study the elements of music, and how to create and to enjoy music.

## **Physical Education**

The physical education curriculum includes sports such as softball and kickball, which are played during the physical education class period, as well as hiking, swimming, canoeing, and skiing, which are done as group outings. Students can choose to participate in horseback riding lessons during the physical education class period.

## **Farm Chores**

Our daily chores sustain our farm, our school and our community. We all take part in this work twice a day: in the morning and again in the afternoon. General farm chores, gardening, keeping our building clean, kitchen duty, and harvesting from the farm and garden are among the activities at these times. In the process of doing this work, we learn about the needs of animals, about health and nutrition, how to care for trees and vegetable plants, how to maintain a household, and many other skills that we will rely on throughout our lives whatever our living situation. Students should come prepared to work outside every day in all weather conditions. A hat, good work gloves and boots are essential items that are kept at school.

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## Grading Criteria and Student Evaluations

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### Standards of Learning

Teachers review the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) for each subject while developing the curriculum. We use previously released SOL tests to make sure our students are adequately prepared for the next grade level; however, we do not “teach to the test.”

### Original Work

References are to be given for all research. All assignments must be each student’s original work. All sources must be synthesized, summarized or quoted (no “cut and paste!”).

### Parent/Student/Teacher Conferences

Conferences are held at the end of each trimester. Teachers are available to speak with parents by appointment at other times. Parents can reach our teachers by e-mail or telephone: 540-987-8970.

Parent/Student/Teacher Conferences are scheduled at the end of each trimester to discuss the student’s progress. Parents are encouraged to use this time to discuss any concerns with the teachers. Dates for conferences this school year are November 20, March 18, and May 27

### Grades

High school students will be evaluated in each course based on the following four-point grade scale:

Grade	Percentage	(Grade Point Average)
A	90% - 100%	(4.0)
B	80% - 89%	(3.0)
C	70% - 79%	(2.0)
D	60% - 69%	(1.0)
F	59% and below	(0.0)

Middle school students will be evaluated in each course based on the following scale:

- Course Completed (cc)
- Course Completed with Distinction (cwd)
- Course not Completed (nc)

Evaluations that include a grade and a written assessment of the student’s progress will be discussed at the end of each trimester during the parent/student/teacher conferences. A final grade for the course will be given at the end of the third trimester. Penalties for late or missed assignments are subject to teacher discretion.

### Graduation Requirements

Students must meet the following graduation requirements: four credits each of English, math, science, history, physical education, foreign language and electives. Two credits each of art and music are required. Community service requirements must be met.

### Community Service Requirement

The school community service requirement includes one hour of daily chores and two hours of weekly community workday except during the skiing season.

Middle school students (grades 6 through 8) are required to complete 5 hours of outside community service each school year. High school students (grades 9 through 12) are required to complete 10 hours per school year. Proposed service projects need to be approved by Belle Meade Montessori School. Documentation of work performed and hours completed must be signed by a supervisor.

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## List of Supplies

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Students should be prepared for school with the following supplies. Other supplies should be provided by each student to share with the group.

### **Individual Supplies:**

Lunch in reusable containers with ice pack or Thermos (ready to eat without use of kitchen)

- Refillable water bottle with name on it
- Mug with name
- Small three-ring binder for science labs
- One-inch binder for music with paper
- Pocket folders with brads for three-hole paper (6 folders)
- 5 Single Subject spiral notebooks
- 1 Spiral grid notebook for math
- 2 Packs of 3-hole grid paper for math (8½ x 11)
- Protractor
- Circle drawing compass for math
- Composition book for journaling
- Sketchbook for art
- Kneaded eraser for art
- 2 dozen pencils
- Colored pencils
- Portable pencil sharpener
- Pencil erasers
- Pens
- Sharpies
- Scissors
- Laptop
- Thumb drive (USB portable storage device, 4GB minimum)
- Plastic pencil box
- Rubber work boots
- Work gloves
- Indoor shoes
- Sports shoes for PE
- Change of clothes to be kept in locker
- Clothes for the weather
- Swimsuit and towel to be left at school
- Horseback Riding Apparel: boots (with heels) & riding pants (no jeans!)

### **Supplies for Communal Use:**

Box of band-aides

Two boxes of tissues

Two rolls of paper towels

Poster board 5 pieces



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## Field Trips

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Belle Meade Montessori School's educational field trips and experiential learning activities are a required and important part of the curriculum. We have easy access to Washington, DC and Shenandoah National Park, among other sites. Some of the trips planned for the school year include an overnight canoe trip, skiing in the winter, hiking nearby trails, and visiting Washington, DC. Parents are usually notified of the details of each field trip in advance. Certain outings will require a fee.

In the spring, students attend a drama performance by the American Shakespeare Center at Black Friar's playhouse in Stanton.

Some of our field trips involve hiking—mostly in Shenandoah National Park. Students are expected to wear appropriate clothing including hiking shoes or boots and to bring two large water bottles, a bagged lunch, and an appropriate backpack that can be worn on both shoulders.

Students learn basic canoeing and camping skills on the fall trip as part of our physical education curriculum. They need camping gear and “dry-bags” for clothes, hats and sunscreen as well as personal items. Details and packing lists are provided before the trip. This fun-filled canoe trip is an integral part of the community-building process and educational curriculum.

Like canoeing, weekly skiing is an important part of our physical education program. Students ski at Massanutten Resort every Thursday afternoon from mid- January through the end of February. A one-time fee includes six ski-lift passes, ski rental equipment, four ski lessons, and transportation. Skiing gives students an opportunity to reconnect with nature in the wintertime while enjoying the slopes.

## Computer and Other Electronics Policy

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Students are encouraged bring their own laptop computers to school for use in class under teacher supervision. School computers are available for student academic use during school hours only. Computers on school grounds, whether owned by Belle Meade School or by students, are not for personal use. The school has limited internet service and personal use of the service is not permitted.

Leave cell phones, iPods, tablets, Kindles, MP3 players, and other portable music, internet or gaming devices at home, as these devices interfere with our academic program.

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## Parent Participation

Parents are a vital part of our school. Parental participation is needed in the Belle Meade Montessori School community in several ways. Parents are required to participate 20 per school year or pay \$20 per hour in lieu of volunteering.

### Support of the Students

Parental support for the individual student is crucial. Each student needs to come to school well-rested with completed homework, appropriate clothing, a healthy lunch, and a reusable water bottle daily. Eating a healthy breakfast and lunch each day is important to maintain energy levels and stay focused throughout the day.

You are invited to share in the successes of each trimester at our potluck dinner and performance. These evenings are scheduled in advance and can be found on the school calendar. End-of-trimester dinners are an excellent opportunity for families to come together and support Belle Meade students.

### Support of the Community

Community work hours are on Thursday afternoons from 3:00 to 5:00. Students and faculty stay at school until 5:00 and are joined by families to improve and maintain the school and farm. Work activities include collecting firewood to heat the school, trail clearing, moving chicken houses, and weeding the vegetable garden. We ask that families sign up for at least two Thursdays per trimester.

Please share your skills and talents with us by signing up for one or more of the following leadership positions. The leader in each position will coordinate with staff and students as necessary. We are looking for help in the following areas during the school year:

Library Organizer

Firewood Gatherer and Organizer

Facilities Handyman (or Woman)

Advertising and Outreach Coordinator

Garden Helper

Farm Food Marketer

Community Events Coordinator

### Support of the Farm

Purchasing food regularly from the farm is an important part of parental support of the school. Buying, preparing, and serving food that the students have helped to raise is a strong validation of their efforts. Encouraging extended family, friends, neighbors, business associates, and the community to purchase food increases the farm's support of the school. Tuition, donations, and food purchases are all vital to our school's sustainability.

Regular e-mails keep families informed about what is available. To make an order please call 540-987-8970 or 540-987-9748 or e-mail [wendy@bellemeade.net](mailto:wendy@bellemeade.net). Orders can either be picked up at the farm or sent home with students. We now have a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program as well. More information about our farm products, including a list of meat prices, can be found at [www.bellemeade.net/farm](http://www.bellemeade.net/farm).



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## Parent Volunteer Sign Up Sheet

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Parents are required to volunteer 20 hours per school year or pay \$20 per hour in lieu of volunteering. Please choose one or more leadership position(s) and check the appropriate spaces:

<b>Leadership Position</b>	<b>Leader</b>	<b>Assistant</b>
Library Organizer	_____	_____
Garden Helper	_____	_____
Firewood Gatherer and Organizer	_____	_____
Farm Food Marketer	_____	_____
Facilities Handyman (or Woman)	_____	_____
Advertising and Outreach Coordinator	_____	_____
Community Events Coordinator	_____	_____

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### Days Available:

Mondays    Tuesdays    Wednesdays    Thursdays    Fridays    Saturdays

Times:    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_

Please note that the schedule is flexible and days/times can be switched.



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## Kitchen Use and Lunches

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### **Kitchen**

Belle Meade Montessori School has a commercial kitchen for special events. The kitchen is often used for school functions. The refrigerator is used to store fresh garden harvest. The kitchen is not available for lunch and snack preparation.

### **Lunch Time**

We ask that students

- bring self-contained lunch including ice packs or a Thermos as necessary to be stored in lockers.
- bring a non-glass refillable water bottle with name on it.
- eat downstairs in the lunchroom or outdoors as a community.
- clean up the lunch tables after eating and pick up all trash.

Students need to drink an adequate water and eat a nutritious lunch with protein and fruits or vegetables each day. It is important that students have a healthy breakfast and lunch in order to maintain energy levels and to stay focused throughout the day. Lunches can be eaten at tables in the tile room or outside on our picnic tables, weather permitting. Below are some suggestions to help choose a healthy lunch.

### **Healthy**

### **Not Healthy**

Water & 100 % fruit juice	Soda & high fructose corn syrup-containing beverages
Whole grain bread	White bread
Homemade	Processed
Whole fruit	Fruit roll ups
Fresh vegetables	Potato chips
Honey	Refined sugar
Natural dark chocolate	Hostess cupcakes
Banana	Energy bars
Real cheese	Kraft singles
Sliced turkey breast	Spam



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## Attendance and Snow Days

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### Attendance

The school day is 8:10 to 3:30 Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday and 8:10 to 5:00 on Thursdays. Arriving at the school at 8:00 gives the student time to store belongings and be ready for opening circle. Please call the school at (540) 987-8970 between 8:00 and 8:30 a.m. if your student will be absent. Please schedule doctor and dentist appointments outside school hours whenever possible. Let us know ahead of time when an appointment must be made during school hours.

### Snow Days

Teachers and directors will make a decision on road conditions and let families know by email when school is cancelled due to snow or ice. Closings are posted on the school Facebook and Web site ([www.bellemeadeschool.org](http://www.bellemeadeschool.org)) by 7:00 a.m.

## Coming and Going

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Please park in the lot and walk down the driveway to the sidewalk behind the building. We appreciate everyone using our sidewalks to help protect our lawn and plantings. Students enter the building at the tile room, where they store their belongings in the lockers. Here students change into boots for chores and into indoor shoes for class.

## Application, Admission and Enrollment Process

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Belle Meade Montessori School considers all applicants for grades 6-12 under a rolling admission policy. Applications are accepted and evaluated throughout the year. The school does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, color, or national or ethnic origin when assessing applications. We welcome students from all backgrounds with or without prior Montessori experience. Qualified applicants will display a desire to attend Belle Meade School and an understanding of the school's unique program through an in-person interview. Previous academic performance will also be considered when determining qualified applicants.

Please call Belle Meade Montessori School at (540) 987-8970 or e-mail [school@bellemeadeschool.org](mailto:school@bellemeadeschool.org) for an application form. The completed form should be sent with a check made out to Belle Meade School for \$50.

Annual tuition is \$14,500. Other expenses include an activity fee \$620 or three payments of \$210 each and skiing paid in December for \$185.

Host-family boarding tuition is \$16,000. The boarding fee for full-time boarding is \$9,500, and the 5 day boarding fee is \$7,500.

Some transportation to and from school is available for an additional monthly fee.

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## Faculty Biographies

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### **Administration**

Susan and Mike are the heart and soul of Belle Meade. They made the transition from Washington, DC to Rappahannock County in 1993, bringing their wisdom, expertise, and love for the outdoors.

### **Susan Hoffman, Head of School**

Susan is a dedicated and compassionate leader who provides inspiration and vision for the school program, working towards her goals with a determined passion. Susan cares about her staff and students, working hard to ensure that each person is valued and heard.

Susan Hoffman, A.B. Smith College, Ed. M. Harvard, Ed. D. Johns Hopkins University, has a diverse educational background. She has more than four decades of experience teaching, training teachers, and writing curricula. Her love of teaching and her love of the outdoors have merged in Belle Meade School. Susan's experience includes training teachers, developing mathematics curriculum, working as a mathematics resource teacher, classroom teaching, individual tutoring in mathematics and reading. She was twice the state level winner of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics Teaching. She also was awarded a Cafritz Foundation grant for studying mathematics in China and Japan. She teaches Mathematics and Latin and participates in many school and farm activities. She and Mike established Belle Meade Day Camp in 1994 and Belle Meade School in 2007.

### **Michael J. Biniek, Head of Farm**

Mike brings a love of nature, the outdoors, wildlife. His energy and wily sense of humor make working with him an adventure. He enjoys sharing practical projects with students.

Mike holds a B.S. in Biology from George Mason University. He practices sustainable, grass-based farming. He has both a theoretical and a practical interest in farming. Mike studies and practices ecological growing of food and animal husbandry. He created a heating system for the schoolhouse and the farmhouse using locally available wood. He is involved with the students as a teacher, as a mentor; he goes on trips with the school. Together Susan and Mike also manage Belle Meade Bed & Breakfast and Belle Meade Day Camp. In addition, Mike is serving his second term on the Rappahannock County Board of Supervisors.

### **Anna Maher, Administrator & Grant Writer**

Anna in her kind, caring, helpful manner supports the staff in a wide variety of ways, writing grants, publishing newsletters, pulling together students reports, keeping records.

Anna has a B.S in Sociology from George Mason University. She comes to Belle Meade with 18 years experience in Human Resources, and three years grant writing. Prior to moving to Rappahannock in 2005, she was the Recruiting Manager for Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in Alexandria, VA, and worked for other non-profits in Northern Virginia. While at Rappahannock County Public Schools, as grant writer, the most notable grant awarded under her direction was a large, tri-county, USDA Farm to School grant. Anna enjoys cooking, biking, hiking, kayaking, and swimming with her two daughters, and the family dog.

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## Faculty Biographies

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### Teachers

#### **Alexandra Campbell-Forte: English/Language Arts, Humanities, Languages, Equestrian**

Alex's energetic personality attracts people of all ages. Her enthusiasm for life includes teaching, traveling, competitive cycling, hiking, horseback riding, and learning different languages. She reaches out to the larger community to make connections. Alex engages with students outside of school in a variety of ways such as horseback riding, trips to New York, Latin America, Asia, and Europe. Alex has worked with horses most of her life, growing up on a horse farm and riding from a young age. She has experience working with all ability levels in a variety of settings both formally and informally. Alex loves the exhilarating feeling of freedom she has when getting on a horse and riding on the Belle Meade trails and through the countryside of Rappahannock County!

Alex's strong academic credentials include a B.A. in English from Dickinson College and an M.A. in English Education from New York University. Additionally, she holds an ESL/TEFL International certification and a USA Track & Field Level 1 Coaching license. She has taught for 14 years in a variety of schools both in the U.S. and overseas. After college, she spent three years teaching ESL in Japan and Thailand which contributed to her love for travel. For the past six years, Alex has lived in Virginia and taught English Language Arts at the elementary, middle, high school, and college levels. She has also coached middle and high school XC/TF and managed a cycling team. When not working, Alex enjoys engaging in a variety of activities from cycling, running, horseback riding, hiking, camping, and snowboarding to reading, writing, cooking, and occasionally gardening. She loves living and working at Belle Meade as every day is a new adventure.

#### **John Glass: Sciences, Social Sciences, Mathematics, Physical Education, Electives**

John is a man of all seasons. He interacts easily with people of all ages. His varied background means that he is comfortable in a wide variety of situations. He is patient, reasonable under challenging circumstances; he is an empathetic listener.

John has a B.S. degree from Brigham Young University in Education with an emphasis in Korean. He also studied construction management at San Diego State University. John has experience teaching multiple ages, kindergarten through high school including general elementary education, special education, science, history, and English in Virginia, West Virginia, Idaho, and Illinois. Other work has included military intelligence analysis, military instruction, farming, and writing short stories for publication. John is dedicated to student achievement and helping students reach their potential. He sees education as an exciting, continuing process that results in regular growth, an increasing ability to serve others, working for better ways of doing things, and a desire to learn even more. He enjoys reading, spending time with family, writing, science, and the outdoors.

#### **Kimber Herron: Mathematics, Sciences, Music, Garden**

Kimber's wisdom and intelligence make his participation in the school community invaluable. He is a gifted musician who sees the world through the lense of mathematics and science. His rapport with students comes from valuing their learning styles and creative insights.

Kimber has a B.A. in Liberal Arts & Sciences and a B.S. in Physics from Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University. He has taught math and physics in public high school, given private music lessons, and tutored university faculty and staff in various techniques of



# Belle Meade Montessori School

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## Faculty Biographies

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electronic information gathering during the early days of the web. Kimber has been employed as an electrical engineer and technician in the defense and music industries. He currently enjoys teaching mathematics, chemistry, physics and helping with gardening for the Belle Meade Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, as well as tending his family garden and farm in Clarke County. Kimber is the manager emeritus of the Clarke County Farmers' Market Association and a Board Member of the Clarke County Historical Association. His greatest enjoyment is playing music with his wife and son.

### **Alice Catlin: Mathematics**

Alice is a gentle, nurturing soul who is organized and earnest. She is a compassionate teacher who helps students set and meet their expectations.

Alice holds a BA in French from the University of Virginia, an MEd in Education from Loyola University, and an MEd in Special Education from Bridgewater University. She has worked in Montessori schools since 1995 as an elementary teacher, adolescent teacher, and administrator. She completed elementary teacher certification through Association Montessori International (AMI) and the Orientation to Adolescent Studies through the North American Montessori Teachers' Association (NAMTA). She has been a national consultant for AMI since 2009.

When not engaged with school activities, Alice enjoys being outside (in the garden, swimming, hiking, biking, walking...) and practicing yoga. She loves Montessori education, for which she has dedicated her professional life. Alice lives in Rappahannock County with her husband, two cats, and two dogs (who bark too much!).

### **Valerie Banks Amster: Spanish**

Valerie is a master organizer. She identifies a need and steps in with a plan ready to implement. Valerie is reliable and consistent. When she is on the job, you know you are in capable, caring hands.

Valerie has a Bachelors of Science in Journalism and a Masters in Education from Northwestern University. She has more than 15 years of experience teaching Spanish from elementary school through community college. The student publications she advised were routinely ranked at the top of the state and the country. Most recently, she has been the Assistant Head of School at Mountainside Montessori, obtaining a hands-on education as well as formal training in every aspect of independent school management, from staff development to building construction and everything in between. Valerie strongly believes that the role of the teacher is to show the student what he already knows, and her Spanish classes are explorations into the language and culture she has come to know and love. Valerie is also a freelance writer and editor for several local publications, a horse show announcer for a number of local and rated venues, a Past President of the Fauquier Jewish Congregation, a volunteer with A Little Magic miniature therapy horse team, a Reiki master, and a proud mom to two daughters, two dogs, and a horse. In her spare time, she enjoys photography, scrapbooking, travel, needlepoint, knitting, and gardening.



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## Faculty Biographies

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### **Becky Glass: Fine Arts**

Becky is a skilled full time artist who loves teaching. She has a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Herron School of Art and Design at Indiana University and is currently doing illustration.

As an artist, she chooses to produce work that lifts the spirit and that shows an appreciation for life and the beauty that exists on this earth. She likes to make a difference in people's lives with her work even if it is only for a moment. Her goal as an art teacher is to make art fun for everyone and introduce the students to a variety of art projects using different mediums including graphite, charcoal, pastels, watercolor and acrylic painting, and ink. She enjoys observing what evolves from the students' imagination! Becky is excited to be joining Belle Meade this year. You can see a sampling of her work at [It's the Nature of Things](#).

### **Maddison Hicks: Performing Arts (Music & Drama)**

Maddison is a born musician whose teaching style manages to be commanding, playful, inclusive, and efficient all at the same time. Students are drawn to her vivacious musical personality. A guitarist, singer, and songwriter with twenty years of experience, Maddison began lessons at age four, giving her a unique understanding of learning at all ages. Maddison joined Drum & Strum in 2015 after instructing guitar for a decade privately and in school as the music teacher of St. Luke's School in Culpeper, VA. She is known for her friendliness and exuberance, and adapts her teaching style to enhance each student's education and experience. Her passion is guiding her students to self-empowerment through self-expression. When Maddi isn't at Drum & Strum, she can be found teaching music at Belle Meade School in Sperryville or performing live music locally as Maddi Mae. *You can peruse some of her music is at [maddimaemusic.com](http://maddimaemusic.com).*

### **Wendy Smith: Garden Manager**

Wendy began in 2012 and revolutionized the garden. She has a background in horticulture and landscape design. In addition to herbs, flowers, and veggies in the garden, a hoop house was added in the summer of 2012. Wendy oversees the production and harvest of the garden to provide food for the Belle Meade School and Farm community supported agriculture (CSA) program for both a summer and three seasons farm share.



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## School Board

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### **Fred Catlin**

Fred has been involved in education since 1978 and as a head of Montessori schools since 1998. Before beginning Albemarle Montessori Children's Community, Fred was head for eight years at Thacher Montessori School. Thacher Montessori is a leading Montessori school in the Boston suburb of Milton, serving over 270 children from 15 months to 14 years of age. Previously, Fred was head of Montessori Community School in Charlottesville for seven years.

Two decades before that, Fred ran a consulting business, served as a university administrator at the University of Virginia, and worked as an administrator at a private high school in Pennsylvania. He has also taught history at the high school and college levels, and coached lacrosse from youth through high school.

Fred has a B.A. in History from the University of Virginia, an M.A. in History from the University of Pennsylvania, a certificate in executive education from the Darden School of Business at UVa, and two Montessori credentials: one as an administrator from AMS, the American Montessori Society, and the other as a 3-6 teacher from AMI, the Association Montessori Internationale.

Fred is originally from Albemarle County where his two children were born. One is a Montessori elementary teacher in Cleveland, Ohio and the other is in law school after completing an appointment with Teach for America in the Mississippi Delta. Fred's wife, Alice, works as a Montessori adolescent educator and consultant for AMI.

### **Kit Goldfarb**

Kit Goldfarb has provided communications and marketing services for 30 years. She has worked for major global organizations as well as small start-ups, primarily in the technology sector. During the tech boom, she established and ran KG Communications, a public relations and communications firm focused primarily on start-ups in the telecommunications industry. As president of KGC, she helped emerging companies establish and build corporate and brand leadership in their marketplaces. Through her work with technology companies, Kit began working with communications applications that would later become the foundation of social networking. In 2008, she switched industries and began working in global health and development, including living in sub-Saharan Africa and working in programs in areas including women's economic development, community health services, and HIV/AIDS. During her studies and field work, she became interested in the issue of food security and sustainability in both the developing and developed world. Earlier in Kit's career, she worked with programs focused on cooperation between Palestinians and Israelis through shared community and business activities. Kit and her husband moved to Rappahannock County in 2013. Kit has a B.A. in government from the University of Texas, Austin, and an M.P.H., with a focus on global health, from George Mason University.

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## School Board

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### Clare Lindsay

Clare Lindsay recently retired from EPA where she worked for 20 years on resource conservation issues. Ms. Lindsay led EPA's efforts to initiate the first-ever national dialogue on electronics product stewardship in the US. This initiative led to numerous states creating electronics take-back laws. She actively participated in development of many product stewardship initiatives for packaging, carpet, office furniture, and paint. Ms. Lindsay initiated a more coordinated EPA engagement in the development of sustainability standards for product design and performance. Ms. Lindsay was one of the primary authors of a road map for EPA leadership on sustainable materials management. Currently, Ms. Lindsay serves on the Boards of the National Center for Electronics Recycling and R2 Solutions (an organization that manages an international standard for electronics recycling practices). Ms. Lindsay also serves on the Steering Committee of a new organization that is being launched called the Sustainable Purchasing Council. Before going to EPA, Ms. Lindsay practiced environmental and energy law in the private sector. She has an undergraduate degree from Smith College and a J.D. with honors from George Washington University.

### Michael Amster

Dr. Michael Amster is a pediatrician in Warrenton, Virginia, and the owner of Warrenton Pediatrics. Coming to Virginia in 1999 from Chicago, Michael did his residency at Virginia Commonwealth University, and started with Union Mill Pediatrics in Centreville. After moving out to Warrenton, he established Warrenton Pediatrics, where he has been treating Warrenton's children for the last 10 years. A member of the Fauquier County School Health Advisory board, Michael has worked on sleep issues, nutrition, and recreation. He has also been a member of the Child Nutrition, INC board, promoting proper nutrition in the home daycare setting. Michael is also ImPact certified, serving as Warrenton's concussion expert, training the county school trainers and health care workers in recognizing and treating concussion. Active at Fauquier Hospital, Michael serves on the Peer review committee, and has worked to improve the nursery and the inpatient pediatric program. He attended Northwestern on an Evans Scholarship, served as an Emergency Medical Technician in Chicago for a year, and then obtained his medical degree from the University of Illinois @ Chicago. His daughter Alyssa has attended Belle Meade for the last two years.

### Tobey Wheelock

**Belle Meade School welcomes students and staff of every race,  
color, gender, religion, and national origin.**

