



2018-2019 Handbook

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

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

General Contact Information

School Landline	540-987-8970
Head of School, John Glass	school@bellemeadeschool.org
Financial Director & Board Chair, Susan Hoffman	board@bellemeadeschool.org
Admissions Director, Alice Catlin	admissions@bellemeadeschool.org
John Glass	john@bellemeadeschool.org
Kimber Herron	kimber@bellemeadeschool.org
Alice Catlin	alice@bellemeadeschool.org

School Year Calendar 2018-2019

Please see our website for the school [calendar](#).

Mission

Belle Meade Montessori School provides an exceptional educational experience that includes individual responsibility as well as 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.

Guiding Principles

Belle Meade Montessori School provides

- a combination of academic excellence and sustainable living
- 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
- an environment in which content mastery is achieved without excessive drilling
- interdisciplinary, project-based learning that actively engages students
- on-site farm chores and animal care as a part of each student's day
- opportunities to develop a sense of responsibility and respect and value for animals and nature
- an environment where stewardship of one another and mentoring are fostered which encourage individual development and alleviate peer pressure issues

- empowerment 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
- a pace that promotes maturation, growth, healing, and self-definition
- practice of communication skills with adults and students of all ages
- practical skills for real life
- a community that encourages care and respect for others, animals, nature, and our planet, all of which are woven into the daily educational experience
- daily morning and afternoon circles that encourage students to express their feelings while listening to and respecting others

What is Montessori?

Dr. Maria Montessori was at the vanguard of developmental psychology. Through her direct observation and interaction with children during the early 1900s, Dr. Montessori realized that children develop through stages, each one distinct and critical to children's unfolding as individuals and members of society. Over the past century, her educational approach has been proven to be successful both nationally and internationally and is reinforced by current scientific research about child development. At Belle Meade, we implement an educational environment that meets these developmental needs of the adolescent, both at the middle and high school levels.

Dr. Montessori recommended a farm setting for adolescents. At Belle Meade adolescents study and work on the farm, using their whole minds and bodies in real work because the adolescent needs real work and to feel that the work is worthwhile. The students must work collaboratively for the farm to be successful, and they work side-by-side with adults. The adults are not only teachers in a traditional sense, but also mentors. Students' social interactions with peers and adults provide inspiration, feedback, and validation that they are wonderfully unique individuals as well as integral and important members of a community.

Although at the adolescent level academic instruction is more structured than in the earlier years of Montessori education, it continues to be modified to challenge the individual needs of students. As Montessori teenagers age, they are not only academically prepared to pursue college or other interests, they become creative, collaborative, innovative, self-confident, emotionally mature, and socially skilled adults. We choose to be a Montessori school to provide students with the foundation on which to build a happy and meaningful life.

Daily Activities

Every day at Belle Meade provides students with opportunities to connect with each other and the land. Students begin and end each day with circle and farm chores. Circle is a daily time for reflection and sharing where students and staff express their ideas as equals.

Chores build personal responsibility, teamwork, and cooperation while fostering care for the farm and school. Chores include tending to horses, chickens, pigs, and turkeys; chopping and gathering firewood; gardening; and cleaning the school.

Our natural learning environment strives to connect students with nature, plants, animals, and the world around them. We interact with the farm animals on a daily basis and have furry friends who live and work on campus (dogs and cats). These animals act as companions for students and staff and are therapeutic additions to our school environment.

Sustainability is an integral part of the Belle Meade community. The farm and school operate hand-in-hand allowing students to practice a sustainable lifestyle. Students develop sustainable relationships through

acceptance of themselves and by building connections with others. We develop a sustainable foundation of learning and apply knowledge by doing, living, and experiencing on a daily basis.

Chores & Community Work

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. Every few weeks chores rotate so that students have the opportunity to experience each area of responsibility on Belle Meade campus, collaborating with different students and staff members. Feeding the animals, gardening, housekeeping, chopping firewood, and harvesting are among the chore tasks. 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, the value of community service and personal responsibility, and many other skills that we will rely on throughout our lives whatever our living situation. Students come to school prepared to work outside every day in all weather conditions. A hat, coat, good work gloves and boots are essential items that are kept at school for this purpose.

Every Thursday, we extend our school day in order to spend additional time engaging in various projects and long-term or large-scale community work throughout campus. On each of these days, students split into groups and work with a faculty or staff member on a specific activity that benefits the school or farm in some way. Depending on the season, time of year, and schedule, we may engage in collecting firewood, trail clearing, gardening & harvesting, moving animal houses, cleaning, mowing, and working on special projects (such as designing and building an adventure obstacle course). Community work day provides an opportunity for students and staff to interact on common footing, working together outside of the classroom, engaging in active, hands-on projects that contribute to the sustainability of Belle Meade campus.

Courses

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 explore 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 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.

Introduction to the Spanish Language & 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 & III

In 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 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 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.

Microeconomy (Middle and High School)

Students gain real life experience and develop independence as they engage in practical economics. Students learn economics by creating and running their own business. They learn economic terms, principles, manage inventory, design budgets and keep accurate accounts of income and expenditures. Students learn and practice working in different roles within a business.

U.S. History & Government

We will study the original Americans' 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.

Grading Criteria, Evaluations, and Graduation Requirements

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 (8 weeks) to discuss student progress. Parents are encouraged to use this time to discuss any concerns with the teachers. Progress reports are sent out midway through each trimester (4 weeks). Teachers are available to speak with parents by appointment at other times. Staff can be reached by e-mail or telephone: 540-987-8970. Please refer to the school calendar for conference dates.

Grades

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

Grade Percentage/GPA (Grade Point Average)

A = 90% - 100% (4.0)	A+ (98-100)	A (93-97)	A- (90-92)
B = 80% - 89% (3.0)	B+ (87-89)	B (83-86)	B- (80-82)
C = 70% - 79% (2.0)	C+ (77-79)	C (73-76)	C- (70-72)
D = 60% - 69% (1.0)	D+ (67-69)	D (63-66)	D- (60-62)
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 (CCD) Course Incomplete (CI)

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: 4 credits each of English, math, science, history, physical education, foreign language and electives; 2 credits each of art and music. Community service requirements must also be met. Belle Meade adheres to the Virginia Advanced Studies Diploma Requirements:

Advanced Studies Diploma Course Requirements (8 VAC 20-131-50.C)			
Discipline Area	Standard Credits: effective with first-time ninth graders in 2003-2004 through 2010-2011	Standard Credits: effective with first-time ninth graders in 2011-2012 and beyond	Verified Credits - effective with ninth graders in 2000-2001 and beyond
English	4	4	2
Mathematics [Note 1]	4	4	2
Laboratory Science [Note 2]	4	4	2
History & Social Sciences [Note 3]	4	4	2
Foreign Languages [Note 4]	3	3	
Health & Physical Education	2	2	
Fine Arts or Career & Technical Education	1	1	
Economics and Personal Finance		1	
Electives	2	3	
Student Selected Test [Note 5]			1
Total	24	26	9

Community Service Requirements

The school community service requirement includes one hour of daily chores and one and a half hours of weekly community work 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.

List of Supplies

Students should be prepared for school with the following individual supplies (communal 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
- Small three-ring binder for science labs
- One-inch binder for music with paper
- (MS) One-inch binder for Latin 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
- Ruler with standard and metric measurements
- 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
- 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: 4 metal forks and 4 metal spoons, 1 box of band-aides, 3 boxes of tissues, 2 rolls of paper towels, 5 poster boards, 1 ream of copy paper

Field Trips

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 require a fee.

In the spring, students attend a drama performance at the American Shakespeare Center at Blackfriars Playhouse in Staunton.

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, “dry-bags” for clothes, hats, sunscreen and any 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

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.

Kitchen Use and Lunches

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, 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 will 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

Homemade/Natural
Water
100% fruit juice
Whole grain bread
Whole, fresh fruit
Fresh vegetables
Honey
Dark chocolate
Nuts and Seeds
Real cheese
Sliced turkey breast

Not Healthy

Soda & high fructose corn syrup-containing
beverages
White bread
Processed
Fruit Roll-Ups
Potato chips
Refined sugar
Hostess cupcakes
Energy bars
Kraft singles
Spam

Attendance and Inclement Weather

Attendance

The school day is 8:00 to 3:45 Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday and 8:00 to 5:00 on Thursdays. Students should arrive by 7:50 to be ready for opening circle. If your student will be absent, please email the school at school@bellemeadeschool.org or call (540) 987-8970 as soon as you are able. Whenever possible, please schedule medical appointments outside of school hours. Let us know ahead of time when an appointment must be made during school hours.

Inclement Weather

Teachers and directors will make a decision on road conditions and let families know by email when school is cancelled due to weather conditions. Closings are posted on the school Facebook and Web site (www.bellemeadeschool.org) by 6:30 a.m.

Transportation

Bus

Students who ride the bus have the following schedule:

Location	Pick-up	Drop-off	Thursday Drop-off
Hackley's	7:10 am	4:30 pm	5:45 pm
Massie's Corner	7:25 am	4:15 pm	5:30 pm
Sperryville Schoolhouse	7:40 am	4:00 pm	5:15 pm
Belle Meade	Arrive: 7:55 am	Leave: 3:45 pm	Leave: 5:00 pm

Student Pick-up and Drop-off

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.

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 at the end of each term and can be found on the school calendar. 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 a trimester. This time counts toward parent volunteer hours (parents are required to volunteer 20 hours per school year or pay \$20 per hour in lieu of volunteering).

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:

Parent Volunteer Positions:

PTO Chairperson
Library Organizer
Garden Helper
Firewood
CSA Marketer
Facilities Handyperson
Community Events Coordinator
Emergency Substitute Bus Driver (Rarely needed!)

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-mailing keeps families informed about what is available. To sign up for a recurring Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) share or place an order please call 540-987-8970 or 540-987-9748 or email CSA@bellemeadeschool.org. Orders can either be picked up at the farm or sent home with students.. More information about our farm products, including a list of meat prices, can be found at www.bellemeadeschool.net/farm.

Admissions Policy

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.

School Board

Susan Hoffman, Board Chair

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 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. Susan served as Head of School from 2007-2018.

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.

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

Tobey Wheelock is a web developer with a great deal of experience in helping small organizations thrive. He is a former algebra teacher and farmer and is the father of two home-schooled young adults. He is also a board member of the Businesses of Rappahannock, an organization devoted to helping county businesses succeed. He feels that all of those experiences help him guide Belle Meade Montessori School as it navigates the intersection between education, agriculture, and sustainable prosperity. Tobey has a B.A. degree from Williams College.

Michael Biniek

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 served two terms on the Rappahannock County Board of Supervisors.

Erica Campbell

Erica Campbell has a B.A. with high honors in History from the University of Virginia, where she was an Echols scholar. She spent a year in Italy studying Art History at the University of Bologna. Eventually, she moved to Berlin and studied German in addition to traveling extensively throughout Europe with her husband. Some of her favorite memories include a bike ride from Gdansk to Berlin and a week spent walking from town to town through the Bohemian Forest in the Czech Republic. Her interest in Montessori education was sparked while working as a lab assistant in the Psychology Department at George Mason University, where she encountered Csikszentmihalyi's work on flow. Erica is a mother of two daughters and is currently home schooling her seven-year old.

Cherie Calvert

Cherie was born and raised in San Francisco, the land of gourmet restaurants and wonderful food markets. She acquired an appreciation for fine food at a young age. Professional studies include biological science and pre-med but her life took a turn to the restaurant business where she worked in all aspects of cooking, food purchasing and management for eight years in one of San Francisco's most popular Nob Hill restaurants. She brings many facets of her life experiences and enthusiastic interest in subjects such as food, nutrition, alternative health research, and healthy home restoration. Currently she is involved in the acquisition and renovation of old properties in the Washington, DC area where healthy house construction is now in demand. She has many eclectic interests including, but not limited to, the collection of cookbooks, antiques, china, crystal, and all books on food history.