



PARENT HANDBOOK

Updated: January 01st, 2025

I. WELCOME TO MAPLE HILL PRESCHOOL

WHO WE ARE

Maple Hill Preschool is a Parent Cooperative preschool. This means that as parents we are responsible for the successful management of the preschool. We, as parents, are responsible for everything from setting preschool policies, hiring teaching staff, providing snack, to cleaning the refrigerator. While some jobs are more time-consuming than others, no job is unimportant. It requires the cooperation of us all to run this school successfully. Your participation is important to both the preschool as a whole and to your child individually.

GOVERNANCE & BOARD MEETINGS

Administrative needs of the Preschool are met through the Executive Committee (or Board). The Board meets monthly at the Preschool to discuss business matters, policies, planning, and any other issues that may arise. Parents are invited to attend and provide input at these meetings. Meeting dates and times are provided on the school calendar and posted on the "Parents' Bulletin Board" in the entryway (Holding Tank). Attending meetings is a great way to stay informed and involved. Voting meetings regarding budgets, Board elections, and constitutional revisions will be well-publicized.

CONSTITUTION & LEASE

Maple Hill Preschool operates under the charter of our constitution. A copy of the constitution can be emailed upon request.

We lease space from The Sisters of The Resurrection, which includes use of the classrooms, grassy areas for outdoor play, and parking areas. Please treat the Sisters' home with respect—keep children from jumping on furniture, running in hallways, or driving/parking on the grass.

II. ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS & READINESS

AGE REQUIREMENTS

Children must turn the age of their enrolled class (3 or 4 years old) **on or by December 1st** of the school year they're enrolling in to be eligible for that program.

IMMUNIZATION POLICY

In accordance with New York State regulations, all children must have up-to-date immunizations to attend Maple Hill Preschool. A current immunization record must be submitted before the first day of school and will be kept on file.

Medical exemptions will be considered with a valid physician's note as outlined by state law. Religious exemptions are not permitted under current New York State policy for preschool-aged programs.

Failure to submit required documentation may result in delayed or denied enrollment until records are received and verified.

TOILET TRAINING POLICY

To attend Maple Hill Preschool, children must be fully potty trained.

Diapers and pull-ups are not permitted at Maple Hill Preschool. We understand occasional accidents happen—children should come to school with a full change of clothes, including underwear and socks, labeled in a bag.

Please speak with your child's teacher or PAL if you're unsure whether your child is ready or if you need support during the transition.

RECOMMENDATION: HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

We strongly recommend that every child enrolled at Maple Hill Preschool has current health insurance coverage. In the event of illness or injury requiring medical care, it is essential that your family has access to healthcare providers and coverage for services.

Maple Hill Preschool does not carry medical insurance for students and cannot be held financially responsible for medical expenses incurred as a result of accidents, illness, or emergency care.

If your child is not currently covered by health insurance, please contact your local Department of Social Services or visit <https://nystateofhealth.ny.gov/> to explore options for low- or no-cost plans available through New York State.

III. ORIENTATION & FIRST DAY PREP

ORIENTATION

We kick off the school year with a **“Parent Information Hour”** held on the first day of each designated program. Maple Hill Preschool begins the Monday following the start of the Schodack Central School District's academic year.

While the children spend time in the classroom with their teachers, parents gather separately for this important information session. During this hour, a Board Member or the Registration Chair will confirm receipt of required documents such as your Personal Data Sheet and Health History Form. We'll also review preschool policies, fundraising goals, and classroom jobs—and most importantly, begin building connections as a cooperative community.

Over the next ten months, the faces in this room will become familiar. Many lifelong friendships—for both children and parents—have started right here at Maple Hill Preschool. This is also a great time to ask about carpooling or aftercare arrangements if you're interested.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Each preschooler needs a backpack or tote bag large enough to hold library books, crafts, and a school folder. Please make sure your child brings this bag every day.

A school supply list will be emailed to all families prior to the first day of school. We strive to keep the list simple and affordable. Additional supplies needed throughout the year will be posted in the “Holding Tank” or via SignUp Genius. We ask each family to select at least one item to contribute. When it comes to cleaning supplies or similar items, please pay close attention to requested brand names—these are chosen specifically because we maintain SDS (Safety Data Sheets) for them.

Please also provide a complete change of clothes in a labeled plastic bag (including socks). While bathroom accidents are rare, snack spills and messy crafts can happen. It’s always easier on the child when they have their own familiar clothing to change into.

SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR

Maple Hill Preschool follows the Schodack Central School District calendar, including holidays and snow days. Early dismissals and conference days for Schodack do not affect our preschool schedule. Our school year starts the Monday after the start of the Schodack Central School District.

IV. DAILY ROUTINES & OPERATIONS

ARRIVAL PROCEDURES

Preschool begins promptly at **9:00 a.m.** Morning drop-off begins at **8:45 a.m.** All students must be signed in each day using Brightwheel—our secure check-in/check-out app. You may do this on your personal device or at our on-site Brightwheel kiosk using your unique code. This same process must be repeated at pick-up. More information about Brightwheel will be included in a separate section.

For safety reasons, you may not leave your child until two adults are present—this means both teachers, or one teacher and the parent volunteer, must be in the classroom

CHECK-IN

The doors of the preschool will be unlocked and children may start coming into school at 8:45 a.m.

1. First step is to check in utilizing Brightwheel
 - a. You can scan in with the QR code (or)
 - b. Enter your log in code into the Brightwheel Kiosk
2. When prompted please complete the required Health Screen and sign.
3. Locate the name tag/ hook for your child(ren) and help them hang up his/her belongings.
4. Accompany him/her to the bathroom to try to go potty and wash hands.
5. You can now proceed to the classroom.

DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

Our doors to the preschool will be locked while class is in session.

- The doors will be unlocked at 11:15 a.m. for parents to wait in the “Holding Tank”.
- At 11:20 a.m. one of the teachers will come out and do a debrief.
- After the debrief, at 11:30 a.m. the students will be dismissed.
- PLEASE REMEMBER TO CHECK OUT YOUR CHILD VIA BRIGHTWHEEL

Please note: If it is necessary to pick up your child earlier than the usual dismissal time, please advise the teacher(s) when you are dropping your child off.

- It is also asked that you write the information on the dry erase board outside the classroom door and/or send a note to the Teacher’s through Brightwheel.
- Additionally if someone other than the child’s parents or regular caregiver(s) is to pick up your child from school; the teacher(s) must be notified and the information must be written on the dry erase board and **that individual must have a NYS driver's license to prove their identity and if possible added to the child’s Brightwheel profile. There are no exceptions to this policy.**

We understand situations change, so if you need to contact the teachers, please call the school phone at; 518-732-4760.

PARKING

When picking up or dropping off your child, please follow these important parking guidelines to help us maintain a safe and respectful environment:

1. Do not drive through or around the cones.
 - They are in place to protect our children.
 - Please do not move or bypass them under any circumstance.
2. Do not park on the loop or on the grass.
 - The loop must remain clear at all times unless directed by a teacher for a field trip.
 - If the main parking lot is full, please use the far lot.
 - Do not park along the roadways or block the intersection—this is a designated fire lane.
3. Keep tires on pavement.
 - Out of respect for the Sisters and the grounds, avoid driving or parking on grass.
 - This is especially important in the spring when the ground is soft and easily damaged.
4. Need help with the far lot?
 - If walking from the far lot poses a challenge (e.g., due to mobility limitations, carrying infants, or wrangling multiple children), please reach out to your Parent-at-Large (PAL) to discuss accommodations.
5. **Ignore** the painted lines in the small lot.
 - Instead of parking diagonally, back your vehicle in and park perpendicularly.
 - This method improves traffic flow and adds two additional spots for our families.

CLASS SCHEDULE

- Time 9am-11:30am
- **4-Year-Old Program:** Monday, Wednesday, Friday
- **3-Year-Old Program:** Tuesday, Thursday

BRIGHTWHEEL

Brightwheel is the communication and operations software used by Maple Hill Preschool. It is a free to download for iPhones and Android. It serves as the platform for:

- Attendance check-in/check-out
- Daily updates, pictures, and newsletters
- Emergency alerts and reminders
- Accessing billing, statements, and tuition invoices
- Sharing important documents and resources

Each adult responsible for drop-off and pick-up must have their own free Brightwheel account. For safety reasons, **Brightwheel codes may not be shared between adults.**

Additional Brightwheel user guides are available on our website and posted in the Holding Tank.

V. HEALTH, ILLNESS & SAFETY

HEALTH INFORMATION & ILLNESS REPORTING

To protect the health of all children, families, and staff at Maple Hill Preschool, we ask that you **do not send your child to school if they are showing any signs of illness.** If your child becomes ill during school hours, you will be contacted immediately and asked to pick them up as soon as possible.

Please use the following guidelines to help determine if your child should remain at home:

Your child **must stay home** if they have:

1. A fever of 100.1°F or higher (taken orally)
2. Red or discharging eyes or ears
3. Vomiting and/or diarrhea
4. Skin rashes or blisters, particularly if the cause is unknown
5. Persistent cold symptoms: excessive tiredness, sore throat, significant runny nose, sneezing, or coughing
6. Sudden loss of taste or smell
7. Suspected or confirmed cases of lice or pinworms

Children should remain home for **at least 24 hours after symptoms resolve** and they are fever-free without the use of medication.

HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS ILLNESS

Please notify the Chair of the Board or the Chair of Administration through Brightwheel (any time of day or night) if your child is diagnosed with or suspected to have a **highly contagious illness**, including but not limited to:

- Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease
- Strep Throat
- Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)
- COVID-19
- Influenza (Flu)
- RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus)
- Norovirus or other gastrointestinal viruses
- Chickenpox
- Head lice

- Fifth Disease
- Scabies
- Impetigo

This information is essential so we can take the proper steps to reduce the risk of transmission. **Your child's name will remain confidential**, but a notification will be sent to the classroom families to help other parents monitor for symptoms and take preventive measures.

EMERGENCY CLOSURES & SNOW DAY POLICY

In the event of inclement weather or other emergencies, Maple Hill Preschool follows the **Schodack Central School District** schedule.

Weather-Related Closures

- If **Schodack Central is closed, Maple Hill Preschool is closed.**
- If Schodack Central is on a **two-hour delay**, our **morning session is cancelled.**
- If you are unsure whether your child's class will be held, please reach out to your **Parent-at-Large (PAL)** or the **Chair of Administration.**

Regardless of district decisions, we **encourage all families to use their best judgment** when traveling in poor weather. Your safety and your child's safety come first.

How You Will Be Notified:

- We will send out real-time "Alerts" through the Brightwheel app in the case of school closures, delays, or emergencies.

Please make sure your contact details—such as emergency caregiver numbers and work phones—are up to date at the start of the year so we can reach you if needed.

Other Possible Reasons For Closure: The Executive Committee reserves the right to close school under additional circumstances, including:

- Hazardous road conditions
- Widespread illness or epidemic
- Inadequate supervision due to staff absence or emergencies
- Power or water loss

In these cases, you will be notified promptly via Brightwheel and the telephone tree will be used as a secondary communication method.

CHILD SAFETY SEAT POLICY

To ensure the safety of every child in our care and compliance with New York State law, we uphold the following car seat policies:

- Children under age 4 must be restrained in a child safety seat, unless they weigh over 40 pounds—at which point a booster seat system may be used.
- Children ages 4 through 7 must use a child restraint system that meets federal safety standards and is appropriate for their weight and size.
- All children under age 8 must be secured in a child restraint system—this includes booster seats unless they have reached the height and weight limits that allow use of a regular seat belt safely.

If your child is riding with another parent:

- You or your child's caregiver must install your child's car seat into the other driver's vehicle.
- For liability and safety reasons, our staff and fellow parents are not permitted to install or adjust another child's car seat or restraint system.

MANDATED REPORTING POLICY

All Maple Hill Preschool staff members and volunteers are considered mandated reporters under New York State law. This means they are legally required to report any suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities.

Staff are trained to identify warning signs of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, as well as neglect or unsafe living conditions. These reports are made in good faith and in compliance with the law to ensure the safety and well-being of all children.

All reports are confidential and may be made without prior notice to the family involved.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Maple Hill Preschool is committed to maintaining the **privacy and confidentiality** of all children and families. Information regarding health, behavior, family circumstances, or special needs will only be shared with staff on a **need-to-know basis** to support the safety and learning of the child.

Any communication to the classroom or other families regarding illness or injury will **not include a child's name** unless explicit permission is given.

We expect all families and volunteers to respect the confidentiality of others and avoid discussing another child's behavior or family circumstances outside of school.

VI. NUTRITION & ALLERGY AWARENESS

ALLERGY & FOOD SAFETY POLICY

We are a **food allergy-aware preschool** and take steps to ensure the safety of all children with known allergies.

- Families should **not send snacks or lunches** that contain peanuts, tree nuts, or other known allergens if informed by the school.
- Your **Parent-at-Large (PAL)** will apply an **Allergy Safe sticker** to any snack or treat brought in that is safe for all children. If a food is not safe for everyone or unclear, an **Allergy Alert sticker** will be applied and the item may be restricted or returned.
- We ask that you label all food items clearly and check ingredients carefully.
- Teachers are trained in recognizing allergic reactions and using emergency medications such as EpiPens if required.

Please inform the school of **any allergies or food restrictions** on your child's Health History Form and update us immediately if new allergies are diagnosed during the school year.

SNACK DAY EXPECTATIONS

Snack Parents/ the Room Parents play a vital role in supporting our classroom and helping the day run smoothly. If you are assigned as the Snack Parent for the day:

- Please arrive promptly at **8:45 a.m.** to assist with setup and morning preparations.
 - If you are unable to attend on your scheduled day, you are responsible for contacting other parents in your class to find a substitute.
 - Notify the Room Parent of any changes so the teachers are aware of who will be present.
 - Additional expectations will be discussed at Orientation and sent home on the first day of school
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VII. TUITION & FUNDRAISING

TUITION POLICY

Tuition payments support the essential operations of Maple Hill Preschool—including staff salaries, rent, classroom supplies, and enrichment materials. We strive to keep tuition as affordable as possible while delivering a high-quality, play-based learning experience for our children.

Since tuition is the Preschool's only consistent and predictable income, it is critical that payments are made on time. Below is the current **Executive Board Tuition Policy**:

TUITION SCHEDULE & INVOICING

- Tuition is due on the **1st of each month**, from **September through June**.
- Your **first tuition payment is due September 1st**.
- Invoices will be sent via **Brightwheel 15 days before the due date**.
- You can easily access account statements and payment history through Brightwheel for your records and convenience.

LATE PAYMENTS & FEES

- If no payment is received by the 10th of the month, the Treasurer will contact you to remind you that your payment is 10 days late.
- If no payment is received by the 15th of the month, a \$5.00 late fee will be added, and a formal notice will be sent.
 - **First late payment:** Letter sent via First Class mail.
 - **Second or subsequent late payments:** Letter sent via Certified Mail, and the cost of postage will be added to your balance (\$5.00 + certified mail fee + tuition due).
- If no payment is received by the 25th of the month, your child will not be allowed to attend Preschool until the balance is paid in full.
- After a **third late payment** in a single school year, the late fee increases to **\$15.00 per occurrence** for the remainder of the year.
- All late fees must be paid in full. **Unpaid balances may prevent future enrollment** for your child or siblings at Maple Hill Preschool.

PAYMENT METHODS

Tuition can be paid using the following options:

- **Drop-off:** Place your check or money order in the locked Tuition box in the Holding Tank.

- **Mail:** Send payment to:
Maple Hill Preschool
Attn: Treasurer
35 Boltwood Avenue
Castleton, NY 12033
(Make checks payable to *Maple Hill Preschool*)
- **Venmo:** Pay via the Venmo app (@maplehillpreschool). Be sure to include your name and the month(s) you're paying for. *(Please note: Credit card payments via Venmo may incur additional fees.)*
- **Brightwheel Direct Pay:** You can link your checking account for monthly payments or sign up for autopay. A \$0.60 transaction fee applies to each payment.

ART SUPPLIES FEE

A \$50 art supplies fee will be charged bi-annually—once in September and again in January. These funds go directly into the teachers' classroom activity account to support creative and hands-on learning all year long.

If you have any questions regarding your tuition account or payment options, please contact the Treasurer at treasurer@maplehillpreschool.org.

FUNDRAISING POLICY

As a parent-run cooperative, fundraising is an essential part of how we keep Maple Hill Preschool running smoothly. Since tuition alone does not cover all operating expenses, fundraising allows us to supplement income, limit tuition increases, and cover any unexpected costs that arise during the school year.

Each family is asked to help us reach our fundraising goal of \$350 per little learner. The Fundraising Chair, with the help of volunteers, will organize a variety of fundraisers throughout the year to make reaching this goal as easy and fun as possible. Participation from every family is essential—our success depends on it!

To keep everyone informed and inspired, we'll send out 3–4 updates during the year showing our progress toward the overall fundraising goal.

We deeply appreciate your involvement and want to say a big THANK YOU in advance for helping support our preschool community! We're always open to new ideas or helping hands—please reach out to your Parent-at-Large (PAL) if you're interested in coordinating or assisting with an event.

FUNDRAISING BUYOUT

For families who prefer not to participate in fundraising events, we offer a fundraising buyout option. You can select at the beginning of the year to do a lump sum payment, two payments or monthly to buy out your goal.

Please note:

The buyout excludes you only from fundraising responsibilities. All other classroom duties and committee obligations as part of our cooperative model still apply

ANNUAL BUDGET OVERVIEW

Maple Hill Preschool presents its annual operating budget at the June Parent Corporation Meeting. All current and incoming parents are invited to provide input and vote. Monthly updates are given at the Board Meetings

VIII. PARTENT PARTICIPATION & VOLUNTEERING

PARENT PARTICIPATION OVERVIEW

On your child's snack/ volunteer day, you will be required to come to school with your child and spend the day. Caregivers are also invited into the classroom for special activities/presentations. Anytime you are in the classroom, it is important to remember to respect confidentiality where the students are concerned.

If you attend preschool as a visitor/ extra volunteer, please always keep in mind that any additional children you bring into the classroom are your responsibility. Siblings (and other children in your care) can only continue to be welcomed into the classroom if they are healthy and are not a disruption. ***Please understand that if the additional children you bring into the classroom prove to be disruptive and/or destructive, you will be asked to make other arrangements for your children for future visits.***

We ask all parents/ caregivers staying for the day to please avoid using their cellphone, unless absolutely necessary. In that case please step into the "Holding Tank".

CLASSROOM VOLUNTEERS

- **Snack/ Volunteer Parent-** Parents and/or Caregivers are required to join their child's preschool class on their snack day. If you are unable to come in as parent helper on your snack day, it is your responsibility to find a replacement (switch with another parent) and notify the room parent of any changes.
 - a. The classroom Phone Tree will be sent out to all parents before school starts and periodically updated as needed. Please make certain to keep your PAL or the Board Chair updated if your contact information changes.

It is the responsibility of the Snack/ Volunteer Parent to arrive 15 minutes early on your snack day. This is to help the teachers make certain the classroom is ready for the arrival of the other children and to be up to speed on the activities for the day.

You'll engage with students during free-play and circle time. Assist with setting up snack, following the daily snack calendar. Provide assistance to the students, as needed throughout snack. Afterwards, you'll wipe down tables and clean up around the area.

During story time, sit with the children and encourage participation. For art, the teachers will ask you to sit with a group of children and assist with a project. Encourage the students to be creative but do NOT complete the project for them. When we are outside, please help assist with helmets and keeping children safe. You'll then remain with the class until dismissal and help with coats and backpacks as needed at the end. If you have any other questions regarding Snack Day, please speak to the teachers or a Board member.

- **PARENT AIDE-** aka. Teacher(s) substitute

- A. Assume responsibility of Teacher's aide taking instruction from Teacher
- B. Remember the basic functions of the aide are to:
 - a. Lend an extra pair of hands for classroom activity
 - b. Keep preschool facilities and equipment in order
 - c. Assist the preschoolers with bathroom functions and apparel
- C. Avoid asking questions about the progress of the preschoolers
- D. Maintain confidentiality with the activities of all students

VISITOR & SIBLING GUIDELINES

Maple Hill Preschool values its open-door, cooperative environment and welcomes parents, caregivers, and siblings into the classroom. However, to maintain a safe and productive learning atmosphere:

- All visitors and siblings must be in good health to enter the classroom.
- Any adult who will be transporting a child or volunteering must be registered in Brightwheel under that child's profile. Each adult must have their own Brightwheel account; sharing access codes is not permitted.
- Siblings are welcome to join during volunteer days or special events. However, if a sibling becomes disruptive to classroom activities or prevents the Room Parent from actively assisting in class, the visiting parent may be asked to make alternate arrangements for future visits.

We love having families involved and appreciate your help in keeping the classroom environment respectful and focused on our little learners.

PARENT-AT-LARGE ROLE

Your classroom PAL is your link with the Executive Committee. He/she will keep you informed of upcoming meetings, relevant issues, and needs of the preschool. Likewise, if you have any questions or concerns that are not classroom issues, (we ask that you address those with the teacher) please direct them to your PAL. He/she will direct you to the proper person if they are unable to answer your question satisfactorily. Of course, all members of the Executive Committee are available to parents in the Cooperative.

IX. COMMUNICATION TOOLS

As we all know, the success or failure of a business (or any endeavor, for that matter) can be predicted by how well the involved parties communicate. Bearing that in mind:

- **Brightwheel-** This preschool communication app will provide us a streamlined approach to communicating and engaging between our teachers and what our little learners do each day.
 - a. Updates of the day and activities, including pictures.
 - b. Milestone tracking when/ where applicable.
 - c. Messages, reminder and alerts.
- **School Folders-** Your child's school folder will contain important information and should be checked each time your child returns home from preschool. Please be sure to send your child's folder with him/her to preschool each day.
 - a. Note, due to the current pandemic we will be working towards shifting our exchange of important information to being primarily electronic.

- **Newsletters-** There are two separate newsletters distributed by Maple Hill Preschool through the course of the year.
 - a. “Hot Topics” distributed by the Board Chair/ Co-Chair through the Brightwheel app.
 - Information will include: Board meeting highlights, reminders, fundraising and sick child policy updates, school closing/vacations and upcoming events.
 - b. The teacher(s) will also distribute a weekly newsletter wrapping up the in the classroom, upcoming important dates and classroom events. These may be sent home and/or sent through Brightwheel.
- **Bulletin Board-** The bulletin board in the entrance area is an avenue for both the teachers and the Executive Committee to communicate with parents.
 - a. A variety of information can be found there including but not limited to: extra supplies or volunteers needed, future fieldtrip details, sign-ups and notices of upcoming events, minutes of the meetings, the newsletter, fundraising notices and other relevant information.

Please advise all adults doing drop off and pick off that they should relay any information exchanged at preschool to keep you in the loop.

X. ENRICHMENT, EXTRA & END OF YEAR FUN

LIBRARY

A source of true enjoyment to our children, the Preschool’s library has grown over the years through purchases and donation of books. These books should be treated with respect. The covers and pages should not be marked or torn. If you receive a book in damaged condition, please report it to the Library Chairperson for your class so that it may be repaired.

Teach youngsters to enjoy literature and to respect personal property. If a book is damaged or lost, the cost will be passed on to you. If you have not already done so, now is an excellent time to get into the habit of reading with your child daily. The feeling of closeness as you read together can develop into a love of reading that will benefit your child throughout their school experience. Give your child that head start and read!

OUTDOOR PLAY

Throughout the year, the teachers bring the children outside as often as possible.

- In the winter, they will go outside if the temperature is above 30 degrees and weather conditions are good. Please make sure your child is dressed appropriately: hats, mittens or gloves, warm jacket, snow pants and boots as necessary. It is helpful if your child has clothes that he can manage independently. The teachers will work throughout the school year to develop each child’s dressing skills.

SCHOOL PICTURES & MEDIA POLICY

MHPS allows parents to come to the school and take pictures. These pictures can be used for the end of the year slideshow, however it is prohibited to post any photos of any children other than your own on any social media without their specific approval.

- Please feel free to tag Maple Hill Preschool in your social media posts.

GRADUATION & MOVING UP

It's hard to believe now, but that day will be here before you know it, and with it, Preschool Graduation. Each class has its own very special closing celebration to provide teachers, children and parents with the opportunity to celebrate the many accomplishments of the school year and to say goodbye to the friends they have made over the course of the year.

The Preschool will also have a separate Graduation/Moving Up ceremony for all classes and families at a central location on a day shortly after school ends.