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Information contained in this Montessori Preschool Family Handbook may be updated throughout the year. Families will be notified of any changes. This Handbook is not an all-inclusive list of school policies and procedures. We follow all state licensing regulations and guidelines.

# I. Our Philosophy

## Mission & Goals

We offer an individualized learning program based on the Montessori Method, a philosophy which recognizes that a child's physical, social, emotional and intellectual development are interrelated. We help children develop the habits, attitudes and skills that lead to a lifetime of active thinking. Our mission is to provide children with a rich and individualized education, tailored to support their future success in their local and global communities.

Our school and staff members hold themselves to high standards of ethical behavior, based on the shared belief that childhood is a unique and valuable stage of life and that each child, family member, and colleague should be respected for their unique qualities. We base our work on knowledge of how children learn and develop, and we recognize that children are best understood and supported in a context of family, culture, community and society.

We have an obligation to provide care and education in a safe, healthy and nurturing environment. Furthermore, we are responsible for communicating, collaborating and cooperating with each family to bring home and school together to foster each child's development. To meet the diverse needs of individual families, we cooperate with agencies responsible for child welfare and we assist families in gaining access to allied professionals.

By specifying standards of excellence for instruction and for the arranged learning environment, the curriculum helps children develop confidence in their ability to learn. They begin to develop self-understanding, self-worth and self-discipline. They also begin to gain an understanding and appreciation of the world around them, including individuals different from themselves.

Our goal is to provide a loving, safe environment and an exceptional educational program to help children develop:

- A healthy self-concept
- Social and emotional awareness
- Cognitive, physical and language skills
- Independence
- Sense of responsibility to self and others
- Security
- Feeling of accomplishment
- Trust in peers and adults
- Enjoyment of the learning experience.

We also strive to help parents by communicating:

- Realistic, age-appropriate expectations for their children
- Methods of child guidance and clarifying values
- Sensitivity to cultural differences
- Ways we can partner with each family for the benefit of their child

## Nondiscrimination

Our school does not discriminate in employment or the provision of educational services on the basis of race, color, religion, age, gender, national origin, disability, citizenship status, veteran status or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local law.

## II. Forms & Authorization to Pick Up

### Enrollment Forms

Parents must complete and submit all required paperwork, including application form, tuition agreement, emergency contact form, immunization record, and physician's form. These forms must be kept current throughout your child's enrollment. Registration paperwork and fees must be submitted annually.

Please refer to the Preschool Tuition Agreement and the current year Preschool Fee Schedule for all tuition policies and procedures.

### Authorized Pick-Up/Drop Off

It is very important that all students' emergency contacts are always kept current. If you have moved or have changed your home or work telephone number, please update the information in the Alma parent portal, and/or notify the office immediately. It is our responsibility to ensure we release a child only to those adults who have prior authorization. Please also review the list of emergency contacts for the child on the Alma parent portal and update as needed.

You must sign each of your children in and out daily when arriving and departing from school, using the iPad located inside the front entrance. Additional persons authorized to pick up your child must also sign him/her in and out using the same system. Over time, you will get to know teachers and other staff members at our school. While you are learning names and faces, it will be helpful to initiate introductions by greeting the teachers and clearly stating your name and your child(ren)'s name(s).

If someone other than the previously authorized individuals will be picking up your child, we must have verifiable written permission from the parent or guardian. Photo identification is mandatory for anyone unknown to the staff. A child will NOT be released without confirming the identity and authorization of the person picking up.

If there is a court order or signed parental agreement in place regarding who has responsibility for a child on certain dates and times, we will follow that schedule.

### Late Pick-Up

If a child has not been picked up within fifteen minutes of closing time and the child's family member has not contacted the school, the Principal or person in charge will attempt to contact all family members or emergency contact persons listed for the child. If the child remains at the center after thirty minutes, we will comply with local regulations for next steps. Fees may be charged for late pick-ups as described in the tuition agreement and fee schedule, and repeated late pick-ups may result in discontinuation of enrollment.

## III. Consistency of Care

When children are grouped in similar age levels, the maximum child group sizes and ratios of staff persons align with state licensing requirements. Lead and assistant teachers have primary responsibility for a single group of children. During the day, we stagger staff schedules so that children, especially infants, have as much time as possible with their regular teacher and classroom assistant.

To the extent possible, teachers stay with the same group of students for the entire academic year. Children transition to the next age group based on chronological age, developmental readiness, state licensing requirements, and space availability. Children who are moving up gradually spend more time in their new classroom over a period of a week.



# IV. Curriculum

## Montessori Philosophy

We provide a stimulating education steeped in the Montessori philosophy and infused with current instructional best practices. We provide students with a rich and individualized education, tailored to support future success in their local and global communities. Classes are led by caring, Montessori-certified teachers, and bring together children of different ages, allowing them to progress at their own pace.

The Montessori curriculum includes the following learning areas:

- **Language** - Children begin reading and writing using specially designed Montessori manipulatives. They learn to write with purpose and clarity, and read with fluency and understanding. Reading skills include vocabulary, literature and research. Writing skills include the writing process, punctuation, spelling and grammar.
- **Mathematics** - Students develop the ability to reason through problems rather than memorizing. Early skills include comparison of size and quantity, and classification and linear progression through use of concrete manipulatives. Older students study arithmetic, algebra, geometry, logic and statistics.
- **Science** - Children observe, gather information and solve problems using the scientific method. Science studies include botany, zoology, chemistry, physics, meteorology, geology and astronomy.
- **Cultural** - Cultural studies include geography and history, along with respect for and understanding of different cultures and people. Students explore physical geography, political geography, ancient civilizations, and American and state history.
- **Sensorial** - Montessori materials help children practice using their senses. Developing pattern and shape recognition eventually builds math and science skills as the child progresses.
- **Arts** - Children develop an appreciation for the arts and learn creative self-expression through music, art, theater and dance.
- **Practical Life** - Children develop fine motor skills by learning to dress themselves, tie their shoes and wash their hands. Students progress to caring for the classroom, serving food and being accountable for their own supplies and belongings. Older students participate in community service activities.





## V. Communications

We take parent communication very seriously. When parents and teachers work together as partners in a child’s education, the learning experience is richer and more meaningful.

### Links 2 Home

Links 2 Home is a quick and easy iPad-based application that helps us meet parents’ increasing expectations for electronic & mobile communications, and that helps make teacher’s daily communication and record-keeping tasks easier.

During the day, parents receive a photo email of their child engaged in learning. At the end of the day, parents receive a daily report which includes information about the child’s daily routine (meals, diapering/toileting, nap, etc.) as well as a photo and brief description of a learning highlight from that specific child’s day. The daily report may also include additional notes that might be helpful to parents. Parents also may email morning notes to the teacher through Links 2 Home.

### School Events & Activities

We strive to keep parents informed of upcoming events, activities and key dates. The overall school holiday calendar is on the school website, as well as the monthly calendar with all special events. We also issue a monthly school newsletter with calendar reminders, and send emails and alerts via Links 2 Home.

### Parent Reports

Teachers issue parent reports three times per year. The parent reports show how a child is doing relative to the skills and objectives of the program and provide a snapshot of the child’s learning profile. The information reflects assessments that have already been completed by the teacher in the classroom on a weekly basis. Teachers do not “test” the children in order to complete the parent report.

Teacher comments are based on objective observations, not opinions. Comments describe how the child is progressing, observations of skill mastery, what is being done to help the child develop skills, and a description of activities that support the rating. Parent reports include a cover sheet for confidentiality, as well as to allow parents an opportunity to respond to the report with questions or concerns.

# VI. Guidance and Discipline

## Behavior Guidance

Our behavioral guidance is constructive, age- and stage-appropriate and redirects children to appropriate behavior and conflict resolution. We approach discipline with a positive attitude, based on the premise that children respect and care for themselves and others. Our goal is to solve behavioral concerns by using modeling, redirection of behavior, and positive reinforcement through attention and praise. Positive classroom rules, structure and reinforcement help children understand expectations of behavior. Circle time and other group meetings incorporate time for children to give and receive praise for positive actions, to plan activities together, and to discuss class concerns and goals for desired behavior.

When necessary, staff work with family members and other support professionals to create a plan for resolution. The plan includes positive behavior support, and parents are kept informed of progress. In rare circumstances, and only after all other possible interventions have been exhausted, suspension or expulsion is necessary. We reserve the right to suspend or dismiss a child for harmful or inappropriate behavior in our sole discretion: 1) If we do not have adequate expertise or resources for the child’s educational, medical or other needs; 2) for violations of our policies; or 3) for any reason we determine to be in the best interest of the safety of students and the school. In these rare instances, we offer families assistance in locating assistance and alternative placements.

## Forbidden Methods of Discipline

The following actions are forbidden in our school. There is no circumstance in which any staff members may perform the actions listed below:

- Corporal punishment of any kind
- Threatened or actual withdrawal of food or treats, rest or use of the bathroom
- Withholding from children emotional responses, stimulation, food or the opportunities for rest or sleep
- Any type of abuse, endangerment or neglect of children
- Cruel, harsh, unusual, or extreme discipline techniques
- Verbal shaming or abuse of any kind
- Delegating children to manage or discipline other children
- Using physical restraints, prone restraint or restraining by any means other than holding a child for a short period of time, such as in a protective hug, so that the child may regain control
- Confining children in a locked room or other enclosed area (unless school is in “lockdown”); confining in cribs or high chairs other than for meals or specific supervised projects
- Punishing children for failure to eat or sleep or for toileting accidents
- Punishing an entire group of children due to the unacceptable behavior of one or a few
- Isolating or restricting children from all activities for an extended period



## Parental Conflict Resolution Procedure

We encourage open communications between parents and staff, so they may work together for the benefit of the children. Parents or legal guardians can interact with their child's teacher and other staff members daily during our school's normal hours of operation, subject to any applicable security of classroom management procedures. Parents or guardians may also interact with the school principal informally and/or by appointment. In almost all cases, parents and school staff can resolve any concern or conflict that arises.

If parents or guardians are not satisfied with the outcome of discussions with the teachers and principal, they are welcome to communicate by phone, email or in person with the Executive Director to whom the school reports. Beyond the Executive Director level, conflicts can be referred to the Regional Manager level, and ultimately to the company president if still unresolved.

## VII. Health

### COVID-19 Health Information

Our school has implemented safety protocols and training in accordance with relevant regulations to mitigate the risk of the spread of Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 ("COVID-19"). These safety protocols and training do not indicate that there is no risk of transmission, and there is still much to learn about COVID-19, especially its effects on the younger population.

Parents are also responsible for mitigating the risks that the student may present to his or her own health or the health of others at the school. Parents and legal guardians should consider the risks and their concerns with their pediatrician or other health care providers. More information on COVID-19 is available here: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/).

All students and their families must comply with the safety protocols and decisions made by the school. Should there be any need for accommodations to participate in the school programs with the safety protocols in place, please let the school leaders know as soon as possible.

The safety protocols implemented at the school may include, but are not limited to:

- Temperature checks before entering the school building. If the student has a fever of 100.4 or above, or shows other symptoms of illness, he or she will be isolated and must be picked up by a parent or authorized person within one hour.
- If a student is sent home, he or she cannot return to school until he or she is symptom-free without medication for 72 hours.
- Staff members are required to wear face coverings while in the school building. All students are encouraged to wear face coverings and the students in certain age groups may be required to wear masks.
- Class sizes are limited for all programs and indoor seating is spaced according to applicable distancing guidelines.
- Only staff members and authorized personnel are allowed inside the school. Pick ups and drop offs will take place outside of the school building.
- Frequent handwashing and/or hand sanitizer application are required throughout the day.

We reserve the right to modify safety protocols in its sole discretion in accordance with applicable regulations or current guidelines.

Parents/legal guardians are also required to monitor the student's health each day and keep him or her at home when experiencing a fever at or above 100.4 degrees, a cough, fatigue, and/or any other physical symptoms that require observation, health isolation, or medical treatment.

If a student or a family member residing in the same home has tested positive for COVID-19, come in contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19, or recently returned from air travel or a cruise trip, parents/legal guardians should communicate this to school leaders before the student returns to campus and comply with any school directives regarding returning to campus.

All financial and tuition policies remain in place while we provide educational services to students. If our on-site classrooms close temporarily due to orders from the federal, state, or local government, students ages 2 and up will enroll in distance learning and tuition for all students will continue at standard rates during our closure.

## Medical and Immunization Records

Prior to enrollment, all students must have an updated medical form on file, including a current list of vaccinations and the date of their last vision and hearing screening. All state required immunizations must be completed, unless parents produce the required documentation for medical or religious exemption. If a currently enrolled child or staff member has a medically compromised immune system, our school will evaluate whether a child who is not fully immunized may be newly enrolled. If a child is not fully immunized for a disease which occurs in the school, that child will be excluded from all activities until any danger of infection is past.

Only those directly involved with the care of your child or affiliated with state licensing, protective services or other government agencies will have access to your child's records. Others may access these records only with your written consent.

## Cleaning, Disinfecting and Sanitizing

We recognize the importance of clean and sanitary conditions for children's health and safety. Toys that have been in a child's mouth or otherwise contaminated are removed immediately, cleaned with soap and water and disinfected. This also applies to other surfaces in the classroom. We do not use toys that cannot be cleaned and sanitized.

To control odors, our school uses ventilation and sanitation rather than sprays, air freshening chemicals, or deodorizers. Any spills are immediately and thoroughly cleaned up, and surfaces are disinfected using a non-toxic diluted bleach solution or EPA-approved disinfectant.

All cleaners and other toxic substances are kept out of the reach of children in a secure locked cabinet.

## Diapering

Teachers check diapers every 2 hours, when a child wakes from a nap, and upon being soiled. The changing table is sanitized after each changing, even if paper covers are used.

## Food and Nutrition

Where offered, we provide children a nutritious lunch, and morning and afternoon snacks. We follow government child nutrition guidelines for the amount and type of food we provide children at snack times and meals. Menus are posted on our school website as well as in school for parents to review.

Staff discard any food not taken home by the parent at the end of the day, as well as food with expired dates. Fresh fruits and vegetables are thoroughly washed before serving. No plastic or Styrofoam containers, bags, plates or wraps are used to reheat children's foods or drinks.

Children with special feeding needs are referred to our ADA Compliance Officer for creation of a modification plan.

## Bottle Feeding

Bottles must be labeled correctly to be accepted by the school. If your bottle is missing information, you may be provided with the tape and a marker. To ensure children receive the correct bottles, we require the following labelling procedure:

- Label the bottle and cap with the child's first and last name, using the assigned colored tape for your child.
- Mark the current date on the bottle.
- All breast milk bottles must have red tape in addition to the assigned colored tape, and must be marked with the date and time the milk was expressed.
- After warming, breast milk or formula bottles may be out for no more than one hour before being discarded.
- Breast milk or formula bottles cannot be reheated or returned to the refrigerator after initial warming.

## Breastfeeding

We provide a comfortable area for nursing mothers to breastfeed their child. Please see your Principal for specific information.

## Illness

Parents assist us in maintaining a safe and healthy environment for all our children by keeping sick children at home. The purpose of our sick child policy is to:

- Reduce the spread of illness from a sick child to other children.
- Promote complete recuperation of the sick child.
- Prevent the constant spread of cold, flu and diarrhea that are so common among small children.

Parents must keep sick children at home until they have been symptom-free for at least 72 hours if they display any of the following:

- Fever of 100.4 degrees or more.  
Children must be free of fever for at least 72 hours, unassisted by fever-reducing medication before returning to school.
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Heavy nasal discharge requiring frequent wiping every 3-5 minutes
- Persistent, non-productive or "barking" cough
- Sore throat
- Fussy, cranky behavior unlike the child's normal demeanor
- Skin rash, including diaper rash
- Head lice
- Symptoms of a communicable disease such as pink eye, measles, chicken pox, mumps, or strep throat

We reserve the right to refuse admittance to any student who shows a sign of illness. Children who become ill at school will be made comfortable and parents will be notified to pick them up within one hour.

## Medication Administration

Whenever possible, prescription or over the counter medication should be administered at home or by parents who come to the school for that purpose. We encourage parents to ask their physician to prescribe or recommend medications in such a way that they do not need to be administered during the school day. If the physician determines that the medication should be administered during the school day, we will consider such requests in accordance with state and local regulations.

We agree to administer prescription or nonprescription medications, the parent must provide a note from a physician requesting us to administer the medication, with detailed dosage information, circumstances or schedule of medication administration, and any adverse reactions that could occur.

The medication must be in a new sealed container. Prescriptions must be in the original pharmacy container or box, with the official pharmacy prescription label securely attached. The prescription indicated on the label must be current.

School administrative staff must keep the medication and a copy of the physician's note stored in the locked medicine location. School administrative staff complete the dispensing log after each dosage, recording the name of the child, the medication and dosage given, the time and date, and signature of the person dispensing. Epi-pens and other emergency medications may be stored in either the normal locked medication cabinet or a secure location in the classroom. Note that children with life-threatening allergies requiring the presence of an Epi-pen must be referred to our ADA Compliance Officer to evaluate and approve, and to create a modification plan.

If the medication request is for any medication that requires specific skills or prior medical training to administer, parents must first make a written request for a modification and provide it to the school with the physician's note referenced above. We will submit the physician's note and request to the ADA Compliance Officer to evaluate and approve. Once the request has been approved and a modification plan prepared, we will notify the parents and follow the modification plan.

## Clothing & Personal Belongings

Children must wear comfortable, washable, seasonally-appropriate clothing and closed-toe shoes.

Parents must provide a labeled bag with a change of clothing (including socks) for their child to be kept at school for emergencies. Parents of infants and toddlers should provide two sets of clothing. All items must be labeled with the child's name.

We encourage children to bring a favorite blanket or stuffed animal for use at naptime. These items will be stored in your child's cubby. Candy, gum, toy weapons, jewelry and money are not permitted at school. Toys should only be sent on designated days.

## Sunscreen

Parents must provide written permission for school staff to apply sunscreen on their child. All bottles must be in the original container, labeled with the child's name.



## Allergies

Children's allergies are posted in the classroom as well as the kitchen. Some children may need immediate intervention for an allergic reaction which may include an injection device, such as an Epi-pen. The principal will provide the staff more training if an injection device is needed by any students in our care. Children with life-threatening allergies are referred to our ADA Compliance Officer for creation of a modification plan.

## Abuse and Neglect Reporting

All staff members are mandated by law to comply with the child abuse and neglect reporting requirement. The law requires any person working in a school or child care setting who has knowledge of or observes a child whom she knows or reasonably suspects has been the victim of child abuse or neglect whether within the school or outside of school, to immediately report it to the applicable state child protective agency.

Teachers and staff are responsible for monitoring their own behavior and the behavior of other staff members and must immediately report to the principal any observations of an employee violating either licensing regulations or company policies. In addition, upon starting employment every staff member is required to participate in training on sexual abuse and molestation prevention.

Those who in good faith report neglect or abuse by a family member or co-worker are immune from discharge, retaliation or other disciplinary actions for having made the report.

We take allegations of neglect or abuse very seriously. Once the allegation is reported, we will cooperate fully with any investigation conducted by law enforcement or regulatory agencies. To the fullest extent possible, but consistent with our legal obligation to report suspected abuse to appropriate authorities, we will endeavor to keep confidential the identities of the alleged victims and investigation subject.

# VIII. Security & Safety

## Building Access

Access to our building is limited to enrolled families, staff and registered visitors. There is a keypad lock on the front door and enrolled parents and staff are the only ones given the code. Do not share your code with anyone else, and do not allow people to enter behind you without using the keypad. The keypad code is changed on a regular basis.

Visitors other than enrolled parents cannot enter our school unless escorted by a staff member. All visitors, including vendors, applicants and family members are required to wait in the lobby/reception area until escorted by a staff member.

## Infant Sleep Safety

Safe sleeping practices are in place for all infants. These practices promote safe sleep when infants are napping and reduces the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) or suffocation death. All staff are trained on the consistent use of safe sleep practices, which include:

- If an infant falls asleep outside the crib, they are moved to the crib.
- Staff must place infants younger than 12 months on their backs to sleep. Once they can turn themselves over, infants may assume any comfortable sleep position.
- Crib labels with the child's picture and name must indicate whether the child is able to roll over on their own AND always indicate that the child must first be laid down in the crib on their back.
- Sleeping infants are directly observed by sight and sound routinely and frequently.
- A teacher must be present in the crib area if any infants are sleeping.
- Infants' heads will NOT be covered with blankets or bedding at any time.
- Cribs will not be covered with blankets or bedding. No loose bedding, pillows, bumper pads, etc. will be used in cribs. Sleep sacks may be used instead of a blanket.
- Toys and stuffed animals are not allowed in the cribs. Pacifiers will be allowed in infants' cribs while they sleep, but a pacifier clip is NOT allowed.
- Only one infant is in a crib at a time, unless we are evacuating infants in an emergency.
- All infants are given the opportunity to nap/sleep. No infant is forced to sleep, to stay awake, or to stay in the napping area.
- Infants are removed from the crib upon waking up. The crib is NOT treated as a playpen.

## Accidents & Injuries

The health and safety of both children and staff in our school are of paramount importance. All employees are responsible to assist in the prevention and control of injuries, illnesses and hazards and to ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. Staff members inspect their classrooms and outdoor play areas daily for potential hazards.

No matter how minor the incident, if a child experiences an accident, injury or possible injury, staff will report it to school administration and a written incident report will be provided to parents. Parents will also be immediately contacted if the injury needs medical attention. For any serious accident or incident, we will attempt to notify parents by a telephone call as soon as possible.

Staff members are trained in first aid and CPR. If a child requires medical attention, a report is filed and sent home to parents. In the event of a serious emergency, the school will secure immediate medical attention as described in the "authorization for medical treatment" section of the tuition agreement filed in the school office. Every effort will be made to contact parents, guardians, or authorized family members or friends during such emergencies.

## Fire and Other Safety Drills

As required by law, our school holds regular fire and safety drills. It is expected that all students on the campus at the time of such drills participate fully. If a drill must take place in inclement weather, all attempts will be made to ensure that children are properly attired. Should you find yourself at the school while a drill is taking place, please participate with your child, and take the time to review and discuss the importance of such drills with your child.

## Weather Emergencies

In case of severe or hazardous weather, we may have to close or delay school opening hours. We will make every attempt to list closings and delays on the school website and to notify parents by email and text alert whenever possible.

In the event of severe weather or other emergencies during the school day, it may be necessary to close school early. We will notify parents by phone, email and/or text to pick up their child before the designated emergency closing time. Where applicable, bus/van services will make independent decisions regarding inclement weather procedures. Parents or guardians will be informed of these decisions.

In an emergency, immediate decisions may be made. We will make every attempt to contact you, authorized family members, or specified friends. If you are going to be out of town, please notify your emergency contacts and let us know whom to contact in an emergency.

## Lockdown

If an emergency requires lockdown, we will notify parents as soon as possible. All entrances to the school will be secured. No one, including parents, will be allowed to enter or exit the building. The lockdown will be lifted when we receive notification from law enforcement officials.

## Vehicles on School Grounds

Because the safety of our children is of paramount concern to us, we require all parents to adhere to the following rules of the road while on school property:

- All vehicles must obey the 5 miles per hour speed limit.
- Pedestrians always have the right of way.
- Parked vehicles **MUST** have ignitions turned off and the keys removed.
- Children may **NOT** be left unattended in a vehicle at any time or for any reason.

Violations of these rules may result in a warning. If a violation is serious, or violations continue, school personnel are authorized to take a tag number to report to local police.

