



FAMILY HANDBOOK

2019-20 School Year

3908 Jenny Lind Road, Fort Smith, AR 72901

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(479) 646-7225

July 2019

Dear Montessori Families,

Welcome to the 50th year of Montessori education in Fort Smith! We are so pleased you have chosen our school for your child's education. A Montessori classroom doesn't just prepare children academically for their future, it prepares them socially and emotionally as well. Students leave our school with a skillset not provided in other forms of education.

In 1969, Sister Kevin Bopp founded St. Scholastica Montessori with a mission to provide a unique and effective education for families in Fort Smith. Her school started with an Early Childhood classroom that quickly grew. Over the past five decades, Sister Kevin's vision has expanded to our current offerings: 18 months – 9th grade.

To commemorate our 50th anniversary, we are rolling out new branding that better represents our school in the next half-century. Over the next couple of months, you will have an opportunity to purchase t-shirts, car stickers, and other merchandise to show your school spirit.

Like Dr. Maria Montessori, Sister Kevin was a woman ahead of her time. She understood that investing early in your child's education would pay dividends as they got older. To demonstrate how ahead of the curve Sister Kevin was, Nancy Rambusch, a Montessori pioneer, opened the Whitby School in Greenwich, CT, in the United States in 1958. Our school opened just 11 years later.

A Montessori education has the power to impact the world like no other. Google founders Sergey Brin and Larry Page; business guru Peter Drucker; chef Julia Child; Sims creator Will Wright; and NBA star Steph Curry, among many, many others, attribute their success to their Montessori foundations.

Montessori doesn't just teach children academics. It builds skills and traits in them that will serve them for a lifetime.

Please pay close attention to the school calendar – located on our website or via the weekly school emails you should already be receiving. There are many amazing community events and parent enrichment opportunities planned for this year. We know this will be the best one yet!

Thank you for entrusting us with your children and their education!

Jessica Hayes
Head of School

MISSION STATEMENT

The Montessori School of Fort Smith is a learning environment that encourages children to do their best and provides them with the tools to be successful in their endeavors.

LEGAL IDENTITY

The Montessori School of Fort Smith is a 501c3 organization, incorporated as Fort Smith Montessori School, Inc.

MONTESSORI PRINCIPLES

The success of a child in the Montessori classroom comes through the basic tenants of the Montessori approach.

- Observation and assessment of needs and tendencies
- The Prepared Environment
- The Integration of movement and cognition
- Children are motivated by intrinsic learning and not by extrinsic rewards
- Positive approach
- Grace and courtesy – respect for all and everything
- Individual learning – style, needs, interests
- Student-centered approach
- Conflict resolution and peace making
- Freedom of choice with responsibility
- Three period lesson – present, practice, internalize
- Control of error – self-correcting process
- Peer coaching and mentoring
- Re-teaching versus correcting
- Isolation of difficulty
- Care of self/Care of community
- Learning extensions/variations – creative applications
- Multi-age grouping
- Community Building
- Independent learning
- Spiritual preparation of the teacher
- Cosmic education
- Learning in Context
- Order in environment and mind
- Interest

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The Montessori School of Fort Smith does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, disability, religion, age, national or ethnic origin or any other class protected by law in its policies, procedures, or practices, including but not limited to admission of students, tuition assistance, or hiring of employees.

TRANSPORTATION

The Montessori School of Fort Smith does not have a school bus or van and so, relies on parents to assist in the transportation of children on field trips. Children are not allowed to attend a field trip without the prior authorization of parents. All chaperones must provide their driver's license and proof of insurance to the school office prior to the trip.

DRUG & ALCOHOL POLICY

The Montessori School of Fort Smith has a no-tolerance policy with regard to illegal drugs on campus. Prescription drugs must be in a labeled container and in the possession of the person whose name is on the prescription.

Children will not be put in the car with anyone whom the staff suspects to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT POLICY

The Montessori School of Fort Smith takes the safety and well-being of its staff, students, and their families very seriously. Anyone who feels they have been the object of sexual harassment or untoward advances should report the incident immediately to the Head of School. In a case where the Head of School is involved, the President of the Board of Directors should be contacted.

SCHOOL HISTORY

St. Scholastica Montessori School opened in the fall of 1969 under the direction of Sister Kevin Bopp. After the 1989 school year, the Sisters closed their school and Fort Smith Montessori School, Inc. was opened by a group of parents on September 5, 1989. After three years, the school outgrew the remodeled home, purchased a church building at 3908 Jenny Lind Road, and moved in November 1992. The newer, larger facility allowed for increased enrollment, which now includes toddlers, preschool, kindergarten, and first through ninth grades. The Montessori School has no governmental, religious, or ethnic affiliation.

OVERVIEW

The Montessori School offers an educational program for children age three through ninth grade. Developmentally appropriate programs are led by Montessori certified teachers. Mixed age classes allow children to be exposed to a wide range of learning possibilities. The younger children receive stimulation and are able to imitate, absorb, and internalize skills before ever

having the lessons. Older children provide leadership and reinforce their own learning by role modeling to the younger students.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

A nine-member *Board of Directors* comprised of parents and members of the larger Fort Smith community govern the school. The Board is responsible for establishing the overarching school policies, setting annual tuition rates, fiduciary governance, and supervising the Head of School. A Board committee, that includes two board members, the Head of School, and a teacher, awards financial aid each year based on applications received and the school's budget.

The *Head of School* manages the day-to-day operations of the school. Her responsibilities include admissions, hiring and supervising all teaching and non-teaching staff, managing the school's finances and budget, and implementing school policies.

The *School Administrator* carries out the day-to-day administrative operations of the school, including bookkeeping and all tuition and payment matters.

TEACHER TRAINING

Primary

Lead primary teachers (or co-teachers) complete the Early Childhood training course hosted by the Houston Montessori Center or another comparable program. This training course consists of more than 450 hours of in-person class attendance, a one-year practicum, and three visits from an HMC field consultant. In addition, teachers must complete and submit for approval a one-year project conducted in their classroom.

Lower/Upper Elementary

In addition to a 4-year Bachelor's degree, all elementary teachers are required to complete the Elementary I (Lower) or Elementary II (Upper) training course hosted by the Houston Montessori Center or another comparable program. This training course consists of more than 450 hours of in-person class attendance, a one-year practicum, and three visits from an HMC field consultant. In addition, teachers must complete and submit for approval a one-year project conducted in their classroom.

Middle School

To receive a Montessori certificate in Secondary I, a teacher must also complete the Secondary I training course hosted by the Houston Montessori Center. This training course consists of more than 500 hours of in-person class attendance, a one-year practicum, and, at least three visits from an HMC field consultant. Middle School teachers must also complete and submit for approval a one-year project conducted in their classroom.

CURRICULUM

The Montessori School of Fort Smith utilizes Montessori curriculum and teaching materials approved and endorsed by the American Montessori Society. Teachers participate in training courses hosted by the Houston Montessori Center or another on-site MACTE (Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education) accredited program.

TODDLER PROGRAM

(18 months through 36 months)

The toddler classroom is an expertly prepared environment that draws on the unique learning that happens in children at this age. Their growing desire for independence and curiosity about the world make this a ripe age for learning. Day to day activities are built around instilling independence – putting on their jacket, clothing, socks, and shoes as well as toileting independently. Like other Montessori classrooms, children always work at their level rather than the level of the class as a whole. The toddler curriculum fosters cognitive development, speech and language development, strengthening fine motor and gross motor skills, and introduces grace and courtesy lessons. It is a warm, rich environment that allows children to grow to their full potential while preparing them for the move to Primary.

PRIMARY PROGRAM

(3 through 6 years old)

The Primary classroom is a carefully prepared environment with materials and lessons that enable the child to practice and master day-to-day learning while building concentration, coordination, order, and independence. Our Montessori trained teachers offer guidance and lessons ensuring exposure to a broad range of activities while allowing each child to follow his/her own sensorial, math, language, and cultural studies. Practical life exercises help the child learn controlled, precise fine motor skills and recognize the concepts of order and sequence. Sensorial activities help the child refine the senses. Colors, shapes, sounds, dimensions, and gradation are some of the aspects of the environment to which the child is introduced. The use of the Montessori math materials assists the child in gaining an understanding of the concepts of number, symbol, sequence, and operations. Language includes oral language development, written expression, reading, and literature. Cultural activities are an integral part of the curriculum and introduce basic geography, history, life and earth sciences as well as music, art, and movement. Students participate in art, music, and grace & courtesy classes. The child/staff ratio in a primary environment is approximately 12:1.

During this first plane of development, children are egocentric and often unable to understand how their actions impact others. This is a normal phase of development. At this age, children may exhibit developmentally appropriate, but socially inappropriate, behaviors such as biting. The Montessori School does not believe in nor utilize disciplinary measures such as time-out that shame and exclude the child from their peers. Through the use of positive discipline and redirecting, most children quickly learn other ways to express their needs, frustrations, or wants.

ELEMENTARY PROGRAM

(Lower Elementary 6-9 years old; Upper Elementary 9-12 years old)

The elementary program builds on the foundations laid in the primary program. Academically, the curriculum is centered around the “cultural work” or “cosmic education.” Dr. Montessori believed that children should ask questions about their purpose on this earth. She felt strongly that they should learn about other cultures in order to promote peace and be good stewards of the world. The cultural curriculum encompasses zoology, botany, history, geography, and archeology. Students will also be exposed to chemistry, physics, human anatomy, and more. Throughout their time in the elementary classroom, students study the world in which we live from the creation of the universe to modern day. Art and music also play an integral part of the Montessori educational experience. Elementary children spend 1 hour each week in music and art. They also participate in Spanish and “grace and courtesy” lessons.

During the elementary years, children go through many developmental changes. Socially, they are learning how to interact with other children in an appropriate manner and build relationships. This is the age where most children first begin to develop a sense of empathy and become less egocentric in their thinking. Because these skills are so important, Montessori classrooms are structured in a way that provides them the ability to interact within the classroom. Group projects, group lessons, and working at a table or on the floor with another child provide students with opportunities to build relationships. From the age of 6-12, social interactions also include the need to work through differences and find a common ground.

Upper Elementary students take their learning outside the classroom through their “going out” excursions. Dr. Montessori believed that instead of showing a child a picture of a tree, they should go to the tree. Students regularly leave campus to further their studies and learn from the experts. Students also participate in overnight, off-site educational experiences that are an important component of the curriculum.

MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM

(12-15 years old)

The middle school program builds upon the layers of learning that children do in the primary and elementary programs. As children enter the third plane of development, they are beginning to gain a sense of themselves as being members of society. Adolescent children are building the capacity to form and sustain relationships. The middle school classroom is an environment that provides opportunities for creative exploration, honing critical thinking skills, exploring larger questions about the world and society, as well as investigating occupations and opportunities in the professional world.

The curriculum is taught in five cycles with an intercession between each cycle. Middle school curriculum explores math, language, literature, humanities, science, health and more. Practical Life experiences come through increased responsibilities within the Montessori community as well as real-world internships and volunteering.

GRADES AND ASSESSMENTS

The Montessori approach to learning focuses on lesson mastery, rather than memorization or recitation on a test. As a result, our elementary students do not receive grades and students within the same age span are often at different places in their learning. Those who learn quickly, have the ability to continue moving forward. Those who need more time to master a lesson can take the time they need to build a solid foundation.

Narrative progress reports that parents receive during conferences provide them with information about their child's academic and social development and progress.

Parent/Student/Teacher conferences are held four times a year – August, October, February, and May. Elementary children should attend with their parent(s). Attendance by primary children is encouraged in November and February, but not necessary in August and May.

Students in grades 3-8 take a standardized test each spring. This no-stakes test provides parents and school staff with a quantitative gauge of how well students are doing in a number of areas. The results are not used for anything other than as a reference.

ENROLLMENT PROCESS

To be eligible for primary admission, a child must be 3 years of age by August 1 of the admitting year and able to toilet independently. Applicants to the elementary program must be 6 years old by August 1 of the admitting year. The Montessori school does not discriminate based on race, color, faith, gender, or nationality.

Each year priority enrollment is given to current families and siblings. New families may apply for admission for the following school year as early as October 1 and be placed on a waiting list. They will be notified as spaces come available. Open registration officially begins in early February.

PROCEDURE FOR ENROLLMENT:

1. Prospective families tour the campus and meet with the Head of School
2. Elementary and Middle School aged students spend two days working in the classroom
3. Parent submits tuition contract, application, and pays the application fee
4. Primary students meet with a primary teacher for screening

Student records must be submitted and include birth certificate, up-to-date shot records (or waiver), and previous school records (if applicable) before a child can begin attending school.

Spaces will not be reserved for students until all paperwork is received by the school and any applicable registration fees are paid.

Enrollment is on a yearly basis. Students are not automatically re-enrolled the following school year without a signed contract.

TUITION/FEES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Montessori School is a private, non-profit school that is not affiliated with any organization or church. The enrollment and tuition contract is based upon a ten-month academic year. When you enroll your child(ren) in the school, you automatically enroll for the entire year and you are responsible for tuition for the entire ten (10) month period.

Payments should NOT be laid on a desk or table. Instead, please either deposit your tuition (in a labeled envelope) in the black boxes located by the front door on both campuses or hand to an adult in the carpool line.

School staff is not responsible for payments that are not labeled or placed in the appropriate locations. Please DO NOT send money in your child's Friday folder.

PAYMENT PLANS

Four payment plans are available to meet a family's individual need:

- Tuition for the school year may be paid in one payment due by July 1. A 4% discount will be given for this annual payment option.
- Tuition for the school year may be paid in two payments due by August 1 and January 1. A 2% discount will be given for this semi-annual payment option.
- Tuition for the school year may be paid over the ten-month school term from August to May.
- Tuition for the school year may be paid over an eleven-month period from July to May.

Tuition is not dependent up on the number of weeks or days within the month and is not waived for absences, vacations, or illnesses.

FEES

In addition to annual tuition, The Montessori School charges a series of annual fees. These are subject to change each school year as approved by the school's Board of Directors.

\$500	Admission Fee (one-time)
\$300	Building & Materials Fee (per family)
\$225	"Going Out" (Upper Elementary & Middle School)
\$50	Classroom Supplies (per student)
\$25	Nap Mat (Toddlers, toddlers, 3, & 4 year olds only)

TUITION LATE PAYMENT FEE

All tuition payments are due on the 1st of the month. **Accounts more than (5) days past the due date will be assessed a non-refundable late fee of \$25 per month.** Accounts 45 days in arrears, without previous payment arrangements with the administrator, will result in the student's non-admission to the school until the account becomes current. The tuition contract, however, will remain enforceable. Upon payment the student may be reinstated on a space available basis.

ANY ACCOUNT BALANCES NOT PAID BY FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2020 WILL BE ASSESSED A FEE OF \$250.

WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURE AND REFUND POLICY

If it becomes necessary for a student to withdraw from The Montessori School before completing the ten-month academic year, the family should carefully review their copy of the signed tuition contract and must schedule an appointment with the head of school.

After conferencing with the Head of School, should a family decide that leaving The Montessori School is their preference, a written request must be made to the Head of School.

The following policy applies for contractual releases:

- Before July 15, the family will be responsible for 50% of the total contract value.
- Between July 15 and September 1, the family will be responsible for 65% of the total contract value.
- Between September 1 and October 31, the family will be responsible for 75 % of the total contract value.
- After November 1, the will be responsible for 100% of the total contract value.

Should they wish to appeal this policy, a separate formal request in writing will be sent to the Head of School. If needed, a committee of the Board of Directors will make the final decision regarding appeals.

Families who make the decision to leave The Montessori School will not be eligible to re-enroll the departing students in the future. Our experience demonstrates that when families to choose to leave the school, they do so for reasons that are important to them. Returning at a later date does not change the original reasons for leaving.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

It is important for students to arrive on time for school each day. Arriving with the rest of his classmates will help your child adjust more easily to the school day and more quickly become a part of any activities that may already be in progress. To be successful, students must attend school on a regular basis. Excessive absences by students may jeopardize the student's progress in the classroom.

The State of Arkansas requires that all students age five and older attend school. All school absences, along with the cause of absence, will be recorded and kept current. If your child will be out of school or late arriving for class, please e-mail or call the school office by 8:00 a.m.

Elementary students may miss a maximum of (8) days per semester (August – December/January – May). When a student has been absent (6) times, the school will notify the family in writing. After the eighth absence, the school will schedule a meeting with the parents.

ARRIVALS AND DISMISSALS

Our campuses are one way only. For the Elementary/Middle School Campus, please enter campus from Jackson Street and exit onto Jenny Lind Road.

For The Children's House, please enter through the main parking lot of the Seventh Day Adventist Church (entrance on Jenny Lind), drive past the church, around the gymnasium and enter the portico in front of the school. The exit is from this parking lot onto Jenny Lind.

Parents are responsible for their child's transportation. **Driving speed in the parking lot is limited to 5 miles per hour.** Please do not pull around other cars in the carpool line. Drivers should remain in their cars in the line of traffic. Remember, getting in and out of the car during carpool is a sign of independence in our young students. Thank you for your patience as they learn and practice this life skill. **Cell phone usage is strictly prohibited in the school zone.**

ARRIVAL

- Primary, Elementary, and Middle School students may begin arriving at 7:45 a.m. Any student needing to be dropped at school earlier should be taken, by the parent, to Before School Care (additional charges apply).
- Beginning at 7:45 a.m. A member of the staff or an older student will greet Primary and Elementary students at the car. Parents should not walk their child to class.
 - a. Toddlers may arrive as early as 7:15 a.m. and should be walked directly to class. Families with older children who drop toddlers at this hour will need to pay for Before School for the older children if they also arrive at school at this time.
 - b. Middle School students may walk themselves to their classroom UNLESS they arrive during carpool, in which case, they will need to remain in the vehicle until the car door is opened.
- If you arrive after 8:00 a.m., you must park your vehicle and bring your child to the office door to sign them in for the day. To ensure your child's safety, do not leave your child until you have made contact with a member of the staff.
- Children arriving at 8:00 a.m. or later will be counted as tardy.

Classes begin promptly at 8:00 a.m. Students are expected to be in their classroom when the day begins. It is important for them to be prepared to begin work on time each day.

Toddlers may arrive and depart between 7:15 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. However, a consistent schedule is important, so please make every attempt to drop children off and pick them up at approximately the same time each day.

TARDY POLICY

Late arriving students struggle to settle in to their day and also disrupt the classroom as they enter. Therefore, students are allowed (5) unexcused tardies per semester (this does not include dental or doctor appointments, etc). After the exhaustion of all unexcused tardies, the head of school will contact the parents for a conference.

DISMISSAL

School dismisses at 3:10 p.m. Monday – Thursday and at 2:10 p.m. on Friday for elementary and middle school. The Children’s House dismisses at 3:00 p.m. Monday – Thursday and 2:00 p.m. on Fridays.

During afternoon carpool, members of the staff will help children into their cars. To keep traffic moving, drivers should pull around to the front of the school before helping children with seatbelts and car seats.

Students who have not been picked up by 3:20 p.m. will be sent to After School Care. A charge will be assessed for use of After School Care for students not enrolled.

On both campuses, students cannot be picked up between 2:45 p.m. and 3:15 p.m. (1:45 p.m. and 2:15 p.m. on Fridays) other than through the carpool line. If you have reason for your child to leave school early, it must be done prior to 2:45 p.m.

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE

This program provides care for any Montessori student from 7:00 a.m. – 7:45 a.m. and 3:20 p.m. – 5:45 p.m. Monday through Thursday (2:20 p.m. – 5:45 p.m. on Fridays) when school is in session. It includes snacks, outdoor playtime, work time, and activities. Breakfast is served in Before School for students who arrive before 7:20 a.m.

Parents who are late in picking up their child in After School will be billed \$1/minute beginning at 5:45 p.m.

EARLY DISMISSAL/ALTERNATE PICK-UP PLANS

If, for any reason, a student needs to leave school prior to 3:10 p.m., please fill out a parent instruction form during morning drop-off or inform their classroom teachers through Remind. Please give as much advance notice as possible. Except in emergency situations, refrain from waiting until you are on your way to pick-up your child to inform us you are coming and need your child ready.

If there is a change in drivers for carpool, we ask that you please notify the school by filling out a parent information form during drop off or contacting the school by phone or email. Again advance notice is greatly appreciated.

We rely on the transportation authorization form for names of anyone allowed to pick up a child. It is the school’s policy not to put a child in a car with anyone not on the transportation form.

Please do not email your child’s teacher about important pick-up information, use Remind to contact them. Teachers do not always check their email during the school day.

HEALTH POLICY

Each child admitted must have an up-to-date health record in the school office before the child enters school. If a child becomes ill or seriously injured at school, parents will be notified immediately so that the child may be picked up and given appropriate care. It is important that we have the most current information on how to contact you. Please e-mail all contact changes to the school office.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Arkansas Law 80-1548 specifies immunization requirements for all children admitted to public or private schools. No child shall be admitted to a public or private school of this state who has not been immunized from poliomyelitis, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, red measles (rubella), rubella, varicella, and Hepatitis B as evidenced by a licensed physician or public health department acknowledging the same (Acts 1967, No. 244 and 1973, No. 633). Waivers for immunization requirements may be obtained through the Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services.

SICK CHILDREN

Please do not send your child to school on days when any of the following symptoms are present:

- Fever over 100 degrees
- Rash
- Persistent Cough
- Diarrhea
- Sore Throat
- Vomiting
- Lice

If your child shows any other signs of illness, he should be kept home. Children must be fever-free for 24 hours without the use of Tylenol, Motrin, or other similar medication. If a child appears to be ill upon arrival to school, he will not be allowed to attend class. If a child is exposed to a contagious disease, parents should notify the school promptly so we can alert staff and other parents to watch for symptoms.

MEDICATION

If it is absolutely necessary that medication be given to a child at school, a parent may send the medication to the school office and complete the appropriate form giving vital information.

- Prescription medication may be administered with a signed/dated permission slip from the child's legal parent/guardian.
- Medication must be in the original prescription bottle. Your pharmacist will give you a second, labeled bottle in which to send only the amount of medication needed during school hours.
- Any and all medication to be given during school hours must be labeled with the child's full name.
- It is not acceptable to send medication in a child's lunchbox.

- It is the responsibility of the parent to make sure there is enough medication in the office. The school is not responsible when a child's medication runs out.

It is also helpful for teachers, in working with the children, to be aware of any medication a child may take in the home that impacts them in the classroom. Any such information will be kept in strict confidence.

CHILD ABUSE

As educators, the staff of The Montessori School is mandated reporters of child abuse – sexual, physical, emotional, and other. The Montessori School maintains a strict adherence to Arkansas laws and statutes governing the reporting of suspected abuse. In such cases, children may be subject to interviews by DHS licensing staff, child maltreatment investigators, and/or law enforcement officers without parental notice or consent.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

At The Montessori School, our goal is for our students to find success in their schoolwork. If a teacher has concerns about a child's progress, the teacher will discuss those with the child's parents. Together they will develop a plan to support the child, which can include outside resources when necessary. If a parent has a concern, he should discuss it with the teacher. The Montessori School will provide information on outside resources available to parents who may require more assistance and/or assessment for their child.

Children who require special services such as speech therapy or physical or occupational therapies, may receive them at school through the Fort Smith Public Schools. Staff at The Montessori School can assist with having children tested through the school district as well.

PARENT PARTNERING

The Montessori School, in alignment with the educational philosophy of Maria Montessori, believes strongly that the partnership between school and family is essential in helping a child develop to his or her full potential. We recognize that effective partnerships have these characteristics in common: open communication, mutual respect, and a commitment to working together with a shared vision for the realization of goals.

PARENT COMMUNICATION AND CONFERENCES

Four conferences per year are scheduled between parents, teachers, and students. Please see your school calendar for specific dates and times. You may schedule additional conferences with your child's teacher, but please respect that impromptu conferences in the hallway or classroom are not an effective way to meet. Please email your child's teacher to make arrangements to meet at a mutually convenient time.

PARENT FUNDRAISING EXPECTATIONS

The Montessori School of Fort Smith receives no support from outside organizations and has no church or governmental affiliation. The high cost of education means all schools – public and

private – rely on fundraising to meet needs outside the general budget items. There are several options for families to assist the school in meeting fundraising goals. Participation by families is key to the school’s success.

VISITING CAMPUS

Parents and visitors are welcome at The Montessori School anytime after the 6-8 week normalization period. The campus opens to visitors on October 1.

All guests, during school hours, must check in at the school office. Parents or visitors should not go to the classroom while classes are in session without prior approval of the office.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION GUIDELINES

We encourage observation in the classroom by parents, as this leads to a richer and fuller understanding of the Montessori approach and classroom philosophy. Classroom observations last one hour and must be scheduled at least 24 hours in advance. Because your presence in the classroom may have an affect on the behavior of the children, you will receive an Observation Guidelines Sheet prior to your visit.

Key items to note:

- Please schedule the observation date with your child’s teacher.
- Check in at the school office before proceeding to your child’s classroom.
- Please observe from the teacher-designated areas.
- Cell phones should not be out in the classroom during observations.
- Do not interact with children, including your own, during your observation period.
- **Please do not help your child work, visit with children in the classroom, or allow your child to sit in your lap/crawl on you. This is a time for you to be a “fly on the wall” and watch your child work.**

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Each year, the campus is closed for the first six to eight weeks of the school year. This period of adjustment allows children to learn the expectations and work cycle within their environment.

Dr. Montessori used the word “normalization” to describe the process she observed in working with children when development was proceeding normally. Normalized children work through a repeated three-step cycle which includes preparation for work such as gathering materials and focusing on the activity at hand, engaging in the activity with a deep level of concentration, and finally a rest period following the activity during which the child experiences a sense of satisfaction and well-being. All Montessori students are observed for signs of normalization, which include love of work, concentration, self-discipline, and sociability, throughout the year. The key is for children to continually make positive progress at the rate that is appropriate for them as an individual.

FIELD TRIPS

The school may schedule field trips periodically. To participate, each child must have a field trip permission slip on file. Classroom rules also apply outside the school and students must exhibit good behavior. State regulations require appropriate car seats for children age 6 or less or under 60 pounds.

“GOING OUT”

For our Upper Elementary and Middle School students, going out provides an opportunity to learn from the experts. At least once a month, students will leave campus to extend their studies into the real world. In addition, lunch trips to practice etiquette skills, and an overnight trip supplement their learning. Students are expected to participate in all going out excursions. It is a critical component of the classroom curriculum.

SCHOOL CANCELLATIONS

Inclement weather closings are listed on our Facebook page, through the Remind texting service, and on Channel 5 KFSM. We do not necessarily follow the same closings as the public schools, so please pay close attention.

PERSONAL ITEMS

Children should leave their personal items such as jewelry, purses, and wallets at home. In addition, toys and stuffed animals are not allowed on campus. If something particular is needed, such as to share with the class, a note will be sent home with the students.

Students do not need a backpack for school. Primary students will be issued a tote bag to carry their bedding back and forth. Toddlers should bring their diaper bag or a tote bag to be carried back and forth each day.

Each student will need:

- Non-skid indoor (only) shoes. Shoes must have a closed toe and a back. Slippers/scuffs/flip-flops are not indoor shoes. Socks will not serve as a replacement.
- Lunch box with handle (no long straps).
- Plastic water bottle that flips open and closed (no straps, please). Water bottles should be filled each morning with water only, no juice or Gatorade, please.

LUNCH

Studies have shown that children who eat nutritious meals have higher levels of emotional and intellectual capabilities. Parents are encouraged to provide a nutritious breakfast for their children.

Lunch is not available at school except on Fridays through Lunch Bunch. Parents are responsible for ensuring their child brings a lunch from home. If a child forgets his/her lunch, a parent may drop it off at the school office later in the morning. Food from fast food restaurants causes commotion, so please do not bring it to the school. The school provides milk for lunch each day. Soft drinks are not allowed, nor is gum or candy.

After the end of the normalization period, parents are welcome to eat lunch with their child, but please give the teacher notice at least one day in advance.

A child's lunch should include a healthy combination of protein, fruit/vegetable, grain, and dairy. Please do not send a high-sugar, high-carb lunch. Lunch containers should be such that children are able to independently open and eat their lunch with little assistance from school staff. This instills independence in their ability to care for themselves.

LUNCH BUNCH

Students may choose to participate in Lunch Bunch on Fridays for an additional charge. Vegetarian options are available. Please check with the school office for more information.

BIRTHDAY OBSERVANCE

Birthdays are a celebration in the life of each child. On their special day, a child will celebrate the day with their friends in the classroom. Parents are invited to attend and share this special time as your child journeys around the sun (candle) marked with the twelve months of the year.

A school tradition is for children to donate a book to their class library. This provides children an opportunity to experience the joy of giving as well as receiving. If you choose to participate, please remember to inscribe the gift with your child's name, date of birth, age, and the year. You may also include a photo of your child if you like.

Children may bring a small desert for their class (cookies, miniature cupcakes, or some other small treat) on their birthday. Children whose birthday falls on a weekend or during the summer will be able to choose another day on which to celebrate.

If you are planning a party for your child, you may send invitations to the school if the entire class is invited. If you wish to invite select friends, the school's policy is to refrain from distributing invitations on campus. Please mail these invitations personally. Also, please do not send gifts to school for other children.

DRESS CODE

To help provide a quieter and cleaner environment, children wear inside-only shoes in the classroom. We call this a shoeless environment. Indoor shoes must a back, closed toe, and firm sole (no "scuffs"). These will remain in the classroom each day. Any indoor shoes sent to school that do not meet the requirement will be sent home to be replaced with something more appropriate. If you have questions about the type of indoor shoe required, please ask your child's teacher or administrative staff. Photographic examples are available.

Children should wear weather appropriate clothing that they can easily manage. This is especially true for toddlers and primary children when using the restroom.

Clothing should be suitable for the classroom and not distracting to themselves or other children. Clothing should not be extremely tight or short. Shorts and skirts must be at the end of the fingertips when the child's arms hang to the side.

Shoes should be closed-toe and suitable for running and playing on the playground. Children without appropriate footwear will not be allowed on the playground. This includes open-toed sandals, flip-flops, high heels or pumps, and shoes without a back.

Toddlers and Primary children should bring three complete changes of clothing (including socks and underwear) to school, each in a gallon-size Ziploc bag labeled with their name, in case of accidents. When accidents occur and the clothing is used, it will be sent home to be washed and returned to school.

Children who are unable to tie their shoes independently should wear shoes with a Velcro closure or slip-ons that are closed on both the toe and in the back.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

We strive to create the safest place for your child both, physically and psychologically. In order to do this, we encourage each family to read, discuss, and agree to abide by our Discipline Policy.

The Montessori School utilizes "Positive Discipline" and the work of Dr. Jane Nelsen. We encourage parents to read her work and have copies available for check-out in the school library. Dr. Nelsen believes that a misbehaving child is a frustrated child. The first step to rectifying a disciplinary situation is to determine what is at the root of the behavior.

At The Montessori School, discipline means the development of self-control and a sense of responsibility. Each of us is a member of our community, and we hope to engender the spirit of cooperation in each person. Likewise, we do not want anyone to engage in behavior that would be hurtful to someone else.

In order to ensure the safety of everyone, we must have some expectations by which we all live. Many discipline problems can be avoided by the following proactive strategies practiced in every Montessori classroom.

The teacher will:

1. Provide a structured Montessori environment in which a child feels secure and confident to choose his/her work
2. Set behavioral expectations through classroom instruction, role modeling, and community meetings
3. Post and discuss Classroom Standards of Work Ethic and Behavior
4. Redirect a child and use conflict resolution techniques
5. Work one-on-one with children who need additional guidance.

CLASSROOM STANDARDS OF WORK ETHIC AND BEHAVIOR:

Work Ethic –

1. Participates in lessons in a mannerly way
2. Accepts correction when needed
3. Moves/works quietly in the classroom
4. Works in an organized manner
5. Uses class time effectively
6. Takes pride in work
7. Accepts responsibility for accomplishing goals
8. Concentrates on own work and respects concentration of others
9. Works without visiting excessively

Behavior –

1. Listens carefully
2. Handles materials carefully
3. Shows respect for classmates and teachers
4. Waits patiently
5. Plays only at recess
6. Stands/sits correctly and quietly at appropriate times
7. Uses inside voice

If a student is not meeting the standards of work ethic and behavior in the classroom, the following actions are taken:

1. Student is redirected
2. Student is moved closer to the teacher
3. Teacher consults with parents about how home and school can work together to help the student
 - a. Discussion of possible options to help student become successful
 - b. Documentation is created to include: date of consultation, agreed upon options with specific behavior goals, and stated agreed upon time frame for improvement
4. Conference with teacher, parents, and head of school
5. Determination is made whether or not Montessori is the optimal environment for student and family.

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIORS

A child's behavior becomes a problem when his/her actions disrupt the school environment. For the safety and well being of all individuals in the environment, the following are unacceptable behaviors:

1. Talking back and arguing
2. Intentionally disrupting the learning environment
3. Misuse of school materials or playground equipment
4. Intentionally not following directions in the classroom, lunch area, or playground

5. Encouraging others to misbehave
6. Disrupting or impeding the work of others
7. Showing rudeness or disrespect to others
8. Littering

SUSPENSION/EXPULSION POLICY

Behaviors that require immediate conversations about suspension or expulsion are as follows:

1. Using abusive language or threats of bodily harm directed at another student, staff member, or parent
2. Intentional abuse and/or vandalism to school property
3. Bringing on campus or viewing any pornography, explicit photography, or written material, or attempts to access such material via school computers
4. Physical harm to another person with the intent to do bodily injury, exhibited by, but not limited to hitting, stabbing, poking, pushing, slapping, or kicking
5. Bringing onto campus any illegal substances or prescription medications for unauthorized use
6. Stealing
7. Touching another person's private body parts or intentionally exposing oneself for the sole purpose of self-gratification or harming another individual
8. Bringing guns, knives, or any type of weapon used to intimidate or threaten another person

PARENT/GUARDIAN ROLES IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR

Modeling

A parent is the most important teacher in a child's life. Children observe and imitate the behavioral responses that are used by the significant adults in their environment. Parents who are respectful and kind to others, especially their own children, are likely to see that same behavior develop in their children. Demonstrating a variety of healthy responses to frustration and setbacks, as well as modeling effective problem solving techniques and non-judgmental communication are especially valuable to young children who are still learning to establish their own self-control.

Discussion

While children absorb a great deal by observation, discussing ways to show respect, build trust, show empathy, manage anger, and practice forgiveness can help a child build successful relationships.

Reinforcement

Montessori philosophy does not advocate external rewards for desired behavior, as this tends to reduce intrinsic motivation. However, acknowledging and encouraging positive behavior is always important and will help shape a child's behavior far better than criticism.

TEACHING VALUES

The Montessori School of Fort Smith is built on the concept of community. A community shares common values, while its members seek to give as much as they are able for the good of the whole. At The Montessori School, we value:

1. Respect for ourselves, others and the environment
2. Honesty
3. Courtesy and exceptional manners
4. Empathy for others and respect for differences among people and cultures
5. Accepting responsibility for personal decisions and actions
6. Working cooperatively with others, which includes listening, sharing opinions, negotiating, compromising, helping the group reach consensus, and taking a stand
7. Seeking one's share of the work load
8. Creating a balance between the needs of individual students and families and the needs of the school population as a whole
9. Pride in our school

All school behavior expectations and consequences continue to apply when students are involved in extra curricular activities, field trips, and other school related activities and events.

SOCIAL MEDIA

It is a policy of The Montessori School of Fort Smith that school staff should not interact with school families or students via personal Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or any other form of non-school social media. This is to protect and ensure a professional relationship between families and staff. Please feel free to contact staff via school e-mail, school phone, or through Remind.

The Montessori School uses Remind as a method of communication between school staff and families. It is critical that each family sign up as important messages and reminders are sent on a regular basis. The school and classroom codes will be e-mailed to all families prior to the start of school. If you need any help signing up, please ask for help.

Above anything else, the staff of The Montessori School wants each child to have a happy, productive, and successful school year. Each member of the staff is committed to helping in any way possible.

Please feel free to reach out to the school office with any questions or concerns:
(479) 646-7225.

Jessica Hayes, Head of School
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