

**THE MONTESSORI**  
SCHOOL OF FORT SMITH

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BUILDING BRIGHT FUTURES SINCE 1969

# 2024-25 Family Guide

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# About The Montessori School

## SCHOOL HISTORY

St. Scholastica Montessori School opened in the fall of 1969 under the direction of Sister Kevin Bopp. Sister Kevin moved to Minneapolis in 1986 for a two-year sabbatical, but made the decision to stay permanently. After the 1988-89 school year, the Sisters of St. Scholastica closed St. Scholastica Montessori. A group of parents who understood the power of a Montessori education incorporated the 501c3 Fort Smith Montessori School, Inc. and reopened the school in a house on Duncan Road on September 5, 1989. After three years, the school outgrew the remodeled home, purchased a church building at 3908 Jenny Lind Road, and moved into the new campus in November 1992. The newer, larger facility allowed for increased enrollment. Today, The Montessori School of Fort Smith educates children ages 3 - 12 years of age. The Montessori School has no governmental, religious, or ethnic affiliation.

## OVERVIEW

The Montessori School offers an educational program for children age three through eighth 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. Younger students 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 *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.

The *Head of School* implements school policies. Their responsibilities include admissions, hiring and supervising all teaching and non-teaching staff, managing the school's finances and budget, and discipline when it rises to a level that needs to be addressed outside the classroom.

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

## ACCREDITATION

The Montessori School is a full member of the American Montessori Society. As such, our school follows the Code of Ethics, guidelines and principles set forth by AMS. Our staff regularly participates in professional development, the AMS annual conference that brings together thousands of Montessorians from around the world, and other enrichment opportunities. Our relationships with and participation in AMS, teacher training programs, and other Montessori networks provide us with opportunities to bring nationally known educators, trainers, and child development experts to our campus for staff and parent programs.

Currently, The Montessori School is an AMS accreditation candidate on Step 6 of a (10) step process to become the second accredited Montessori school in Arkansas. The school is participating in a self-study to complete the accreditation process. We are one of four member schools in the entire state.



The following tenants outline the beliefs of the Board of Directors and staff of The Montessori School. School and classroom leadership is committed to following these guiding principles developed by Dr. Maria Montessori.

- 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

## WHO WAS DR. MARIA MONTESSORI?

The Montessori approach to education was developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, one of the first female physicians in Italy, in the late 1800s. Born in Chiaravalle, Italy on August 31, 1870 to parents who placed a high value on education, Dr. Montessori graduated from medical school in 1896.

Her interests in psychiatry, education, and child development put her on a path to revolutionize the way children were taught. For several years, she co-directed a training institute for special education teachers. The gains made by the students inspired her to continue her work and in 1907, she was asked to open a childcare center in San Lorenzo, an inner-city district of Rome.

Using materials she created to work with different needs students, Dr. Montessori continued to hone her methods. Word of the school's success quickly spread as educators around the world learned of her work. The first Montessori school in the United States opened in Tarrytown, NY in 1911.

Throughout her career, Dr. Montessori traveled the world training teachers, giving lectures, and advocating for women and children. She was nominated three-times for the Nobel Peace Prize. Having lived through two World Wars, Dr. Montessori saw education as the only vehicle towards peace. Incorporated throughout her curriculum and within the foundation of her method is the importance of helping children to understand that we are all different, but that is what makes the world truly remarkable.

Dr. Montessori died on May 6, 1952 in a friend's garden in Amsterdam.

*"If help and salvation are to come, they can only come from the children, for the children are the makers of men." - Dr. Maria Montessori*



## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Our mission is to cultivate a joyful learning experience that empowers students to be independent learners and creative problem solvers.

## **VISION STATEMENT**

To build a diverse and inclusive community of families and staff who understand the power of a Montessori education and the value of investing in the future of our children, while transforming traditional ideas about how students learn.

## **LEGAL IDENTITY**

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

## **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 and 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 HARASSMENT 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.

# Classrooms and Curriculum

## TEACHER TRAINING

Classrooms in The Montessori School are led by Montessori teachers who hold a certificate from a MACTE (Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education) accredited training program. Currently, our staff has trained in Houston, Memphis, and Boulder. These programs consist of more than 400 classroom hours, a year-long practicum, classroom visits by a field consultant, and a year-long project.

## CURRICULUM

The Montessori School of Fort Smith utilizes Montessori curriculum and teaching materials approved and endorsed by the American Montessori Society.

## 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 no greater than 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 are also 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.



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 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

*(12-14 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.

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).

Students in grades 3-6 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. It also helps classroom teachers to identify areas where more emphasis may be needed in teaching.



# Commitments

As members of The Montessori School community, families and school staff commit to working together for the good of their children.

## Parents commit to:

- School schedule: Arriving on time so that the child(ren) is on campus and in their classroom before 8:00 a.m. each day.
- Attendance: Being at school on a regular basis
- Preparedness: Ensuring that your child(ren) arrives with everything they need for the day.
- Independence: Recognizing and allowing your child(ren) to do the things they are able to do, i.e. walking in and out of the building, carrying their things, putting on their own shoes, etc.
- Asking questions: If you are unsure of something, please ask! You should always start with your child's teacher for any questions/concerns about the classroom. If they are unable to help or the issue is not resolved, please contact the school office..

## School staff commits to:

- Transparency: We will always be open and forthright about school, classroom, or behavioral issues.
- Support: We commit to providing resources and suggestions to support you in your parenting.
- Availability: Teachers and administration will respond to Remind messages and emails in a timely manner. We will also make time for in-person meetings when scheduled ahead of time.
- Communication: The Montessori School works to communicate in a clear and concise manner with parents. We want you to have all of the information needed at your fingertips. You will receive a weekly e-mail with updates, upcoming events, calendar dates, and more. Please let the school office know if you are not receiving these emails.
- Answering questions: We commit to answering your questions in an honest, open, and transparent manner.



# 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.

Each year priority enrollment is given to current families and siblings. New families may tour the school as part of the enrollment process as early as October 1 prior to the year they wish their child to begin. Open enrollment officially begins in mid January.

## **PROCEDURE FOR ENROLLMENT:**

1. Prospective families tour the campus and meet with the Head of School
2. Parent submits:
  - A. tuition contract
  - B. application
  - C. immunizations
  - D. birth certificate
  - E. enrollment fee
3. Elementary aged students spend two days working in the classroom
4. Primary students meet with a primary teacher for a classroom visit (July)

**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/FEE 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.

Tuition payments are made solely through Tuition Management. Please do not send tuition payments to the school. Other items such as t-shirts and lunch bunch will also be billed through Tuition Management.

Any money brought to school for other reasons should be in a **labeled envelope** and placed in one of the four locked boxes on campus.

## **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 upon 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.

\$650	Enrollment Fee (one-time)
\$400	Building & Materials Fee (per family)
\$250	"Going Out" (Upper Elementary)
\$75	Classroom Supplies (per student)
\$35	Nap Mat (3 & 4 year olds only)

## TUITION LATE PAYMENT FEE

All tuition payments are due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month. **Accounts more than (5) days past the due date will be assessed a non-refundable late fee of \$65 per month.** If two tuition payments are late more than 15 days: 1) the child will not be admitted into the school until the account is current and 2) the remainder of that semester's tuition will be due in order for the child to return to school. **Any account with an outstanding balance on the last day of school 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 family 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.



# Attendance Policy

It is important for students to arrive on time for school each day. Arriving with the rest of their 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. **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.**

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.

Please note that every (5) tardies will equal one absence.

## **ARRIVALS AND DISMISSALS**

Our campus is one way only. Please enter campus from Jackson Street and exit onto Jenny Lind Road.

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 and Elementary 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 students at the car. Parents should not get out of the car.

Children must be signed in through Transparent Classroom upon arrival to campus. Please do not sign them in from home nor on the way to school. You may pull over to the side of the driveway, out of the line of traffic, while you do this. **Children should be ready to exit the vehicle, on the passenger side, when their door is opened.** This means they should have gathered anything they need for the school day including lunch and water bottle.

## **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).

## **TARDY ARRIVALS**

If you arrive between 8:00a and 8:15 a.m. (and there is not an adult outside), you will:

- Park your car
- Sign in your child(ren)
- Walk them to the main entrance to be met by a staff member.

**DO NOT let your child out of the car and drive away.** There will be days when an adult is not immediately present in the office. Be sure your child is signed-in and then make contact with a staff member at the door to the main entrance, before going on your way.

**After 8:15 a.m., the entrance and exit gates will be closed.** If you arrive after the gates are closed, you will need to:

- Park in the lot on Jenny Lind and
- Walk your child through the garden (after signing them in), down the sidewalk to the main entrance to be  
Meet a staff member at the main entrance.

**The garden door is not an entrance, so please do not ring the doorbell. It will not be answered.**

## **DISMISSAL**

School dismisses at 3:00 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Friday dismissal is at 1:00 p.m. Students who have not been picked up by 3:15 p.m. (1:15 p.m. on Friday) will be sent to After School Care. A charge will be assessed for use of After School Care for students not enrolled.

The Jackson Street gate will open at 2:30 p.m. (12:30 p.m. on Friday) to allow parents to get in the carpool line. If you choose to arrive before the gate is open, please wait for a staff member to open the gate.

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

If you need to pick up your student early, you must do so before 2:45 p.m. (12:45 p.m. on Friday). Students must be picked up in the carpool line between 2:45 p.m. and 3:15 p.m. (12:45 p.m. and 1:15 p.m. on Friday). If you have reason for your child to leave school early, they must be picked up prior to 2:45 p.m.

When arriving to pick up your child at any time other than during carpool, or arriving after morning carpool, please park in the Jenny Lind parking lot and walk through the garden, down the sidewalk to the main entrance. If picking up early, please call ahead so that your child may be ready for departure when you arrive.

## **BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE**

This program provides care for any Montessori student from 7:30 a.m. – 7:45 a.m. and 3:15 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. (1:15 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. on Friday) when school is in session. It includes snacks, outdoor playtime, and activities. *If your child is enrolled in aftercare and you would like to pick them up during carpool, please go to the aftercare door. Do not get in the carpool line.*

**Parents who are late in picking up their child in After School Care will be billed \$1/minute beginning at 5:30 p.m.**

Please use the “garden doors,” for dropping off or picking up your child in Before/After Care. These are the only time that these doors will be used to enter/exit the school.

## **EARLY DISMISSAL/ALTERNATE PICK-UP PLANS**

If, for any reason, a student needs to leave school prior to afternoon carpool, please inform the school office via a phone call or 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 office via phone or Remind. 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 unless the office is notified in advance.

The office handles all carpool procedures. Please do not email your child's teacher about important pick-up information, contact the school office instead, including utilizing drop-in aftercare (please tell the office, not the teachers). Be aware that last minute emails may not be seen.

## **SCHOOL CANCELLATIONS**

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





# 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. Let us know if you need to edit this information in Transparent Classroom.

## 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
- 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 48 hours without the use of Tylenol, Motrin, or other similar medication. This is 48 hours AFTER your child stops running fever.** 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.

## COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

If your child exhibits any symptoms of being ill, please keep them at home and notify the school office as to why you are doing so. Likewise, if we believe a child is ill or otherwise not feeling well, we will notify a parent to pick them up from school.

COVID - 19 Situation	Action to Be Taken
If you have symptoms	Take a test as soon as possible.
Student or staff member tests positive	Isolate regardless of vaccination status. Tell people if you think they have been exposed.
Close contact with COVID-19 (indoors, >15 minutes)	Monitor for symptoms for 10 days.
Positive COVID-19 in classroom	School will monitor for symptoms   in school testing (as needed)

\*These policies will change if needed based upon local, state, and/or federal guidance.\*

If your child is exhibiting any of these symptoms, please do not send them to school:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

If mandated by the state, a licensing agency of the state, the Federal Government, or upon recommendations from the Center for Disease Control or another similar agency, The Montessori School of Fort Smith will institute regular temperature checks and screening questionnaires if mandated by either the State of Arkansas.

*As a small community, it is imperative that we not only consider ourselves, but the impact our choices have upon the rest of the school. If your child does not feel well, please keep them home - regardless of COVID test results.*

### **Closure for COVID | Distance Learning**

If it becomes necessary to close the school or a classroom, The Montessori School will immediately shift to distance learning. The school will supply parents with the tools and materials students will need at home and will provide supplemental support.

### **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 signed/dated permission from the child's legal 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.**

# Services for Students

At The Montessori School, our goal is for our students to find success in their schoolwork. If a teacher or parent has concerns about a child's progress or development (social, emotional, academics), a meeting will be scheduled to discuss options and to formulate a plan. If requested, the school can provide recommendations to outside services.

Children who require extra services, such as speech therapy or physical or occupational therapies, may receive them at school through the Fort Smith Public Schools. Staff 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 each family is key to the school's success.

## **VISITING CAMPUS**

The Montessori School campus is annually closed to visitors until October 1 so that staff and children can fully participate in the normalization process. **With the exception of planned school activities - admission into the school building is limited.**

All guests, during school hours, must check in at the school office. Parents or visitors should not enter the building without approval of school staff. **Unless specifically directed otherwise, ALWAYS come to the main door for admittance into the building. We do not admit people into the building through the delivery doors nor do we release children there other than before and after care.**

We ask that when parents are on campus, our no device policy be honored. Whether you are attending a parent orientation, participating in a classroom event, or even shopping at the book fair - please put away your device and enjoy the time with your child(ren).

When picking up children from the building (early, aftercare, or any other time), please do not ring the doorbell if you are on the phone. If we see that you are on a call or text, we will wait for you to finish and then open the door.

## **CLASSROOM OBSERVATION GUIDELINES**

We encourage observation of the classroom by parents, as this leads to a richer and fuller understanding of the Montessori approach and classroom philosophy. Classroom observations are held virtually and last one hour. They must be scheduled at least 24 hours in advance. You will be provided with a digital "guide to observation" prior to your scheduled observation and will need to read and agree to the guidelines in advance.

Parents will also have the opportunity to attend regular scheduled virtual demonstrations that do not require a reservation. In addition two “demonstration” programs are on the 2023-24 school calendar that will allow you to visit your child’s classroom in person to observe them at work.

## **VOLUNTEERING**

Parent participation is needed in a number of areas to ensure success of school events and programs. Opportunities to volunteer in 2024-25 will be provided to families throughout the school year. Each family is required to obtain 200 points through volunteering for, participating in, and attending school programs, events, and activities. See pages 23 and 24 for more detailed information.

## **CAMPUS SAFETY**

**In order to keep our campus as safe as possible, please note that the garden doors are only used for deliveries and before/after care.** If you arrive at that door, it will not be opened for you. Please always come to the main door - unless dropping off or picking up your child in extended care.

Building doors remain locked at all times. Aside from school programs and activities, campus visitors will not be admitted into the building unless it is a prescheduled meeting or appointment. If you are picking up your child early or dropping them off, you will be asked to remain outside.

**In addition, the campus gates remain closed during the school day. Please do not open the gates yourself. They will be opened by staff for afternoon carpool at the appropriate time.**



# The School Year

## **NORMALIZATION**

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.

### **Each student will need:**

- Indoor (only) shoes with a hard sole. **Socks will not serve as a replacement.**
- Lunch box with a handle only. (No straps).
- Water bottle that locks closed - with a no spill lid (no straps). Water bottles should be filled each morning with water only, no juice or Gatorade, please.

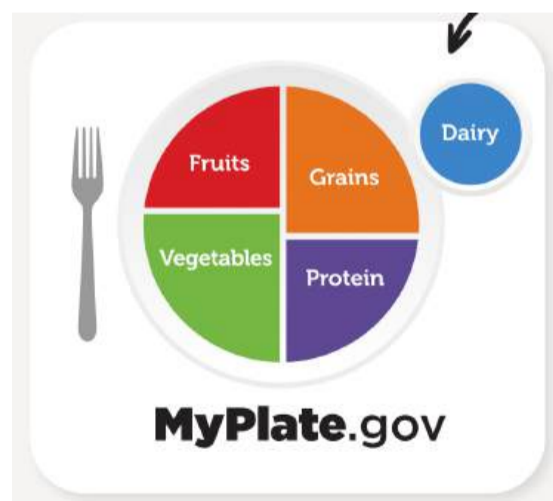
### **What NOT to bring:**

- Backpack (primary students will receive a tote bag for their things)
- School supplies - other than what is requested for older students
- Toys, stuffed animals, games, etc.
- Umbrellas, sunglasses, hats, jewelry, purse, wallet, money, etc.
- Electronic devices (including AirTags)

**Students who wear a smartwatch to school must put (and leave) it in airplane mode while on campus.**

## **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.



Lunches should follow the nutritional guidelines as set forth by the USDA. This includes a serving of fruit, vegetable, protein, and grains. **Children may have a small (bite size) candy bar or “treat,” but anything larger will be sent back home.** If sugar is one of the first three ingredients, it will be considered a treat. **Please do not send a lunch that only includes carbohydrates.** Please include an assortment of protein, vegetables, fruit, and dairy as well.

Food 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.

**Microwaves are not available to students in primary or lower elementary. Please do not send lunches that need to be heated if your child is not in upper elementary or middle school.**

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 garden shelves later in the morning. Soft drinks are not allowed, nor is gum or candy.

**Please do not drop off fast-food or restaurant food for lunch. This includes pizza. Lunches not in a standard lunchbox will not be brought into the building and will not be given to the child.**

### **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. Your child's teachers will communicate all celebration information to you prior to their birthday or celebration day.

To help children recognize that while we often receive gifts on our birthdays, we can also use this special day to help others, we provide opportunities for children to share the celebration with others.

On their birthday, we encourage students 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.
- **Bring a "birthday box" with nonperishable goods** to be placed in our community Blessing Box. Children who bring food for the box may take a friend with them to fill the box during their classroom birthday celebration.

Children may bring a **small** dessert 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, for distribution, if the entire class is invited. If you wish to invite select friends, we ask that you mail these invitations personally. **Gifts sent to the school for distribution to other children will be returned home. Please exchange gifts off-campus.**

### **DRESS CODE**

To help provide a quieter and cleaner environment, children wear inside-only shoes in the classroom. Indoor shoes must have a back, a 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 the administrative staff. Photographic examples are available.

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

**Clothing should fit your child's body** and be suitable for movement in the classroom (i.e. too large or small) for your child.

**Outdoor 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. Inappropriate footwear includes open-toed sandals, flip-flops, high heels or pumps, and shoes without a back (including crocs). Shoes should tie or velcro - dependent upon the child's ability to put on their own shoes.**

**Footwear that fits a child's foot well and is ideal for running is important. Slip-on shoes should fit the child's foot snugly so that their feet do not slide nor come out of them while playing.**

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. Younger elementary children are welcome to bring extra clothes as well.

### **FIELD TRIPS**

The school may schedule field trips periodically. To participate, each child must have a field trip permission form on file in Transparent Classroom. Classroom rules also apply outside the school and students must exhibit good behavior.

Parents interested in chaperoning must fill out the appropriate applications and pay the required fee.

### **"GOING OUT"**

For our Upper Elementary 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.





# 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.

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.

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:

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

## **CLASSROOM STANDARDS OF WORK ETHIC AND BEHAVIOR:**

Work Ethic –

- Participates in lessons in a mannerly way
- Accepts correction when needed
- Moves/works quietly in the classroom
- Works in an organized manner
- Uses class time effectively
- Takes pride in work
- Accepts responsibility for accomplishing goals
- Concentrates on own work and respects concentration of others
- Works without visiting excessively

Behavior –

- Listens carefully
- Handles materials carefully
- Shows respect for classmates and teachers
- Waits patiently
- Plays only at recess
- Stands/sits correctly and quietly at appropriate times
- 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
4. Discussion of possible options to help student become successful
5. Documentation is created to include: date of consultation, agreed upon options with specific behavior goals, and stated agreed upon time frame for improvement

6. Conference with teacher, parents, and head of school
7. 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 their actions disrupt the school environment. For the safety and well being of all individuals in the environment, the following are unacceptable behaviors:

- Talking back and arguing
- Intentionally disrupting the learning environment
- Misuse of school materials or playground equipment
- Intentionally not following directions in the classroom, lunch area, or playground
- Encouraging others to misbehave
- Disrupting or impeding the work of others
- Showing rudeness or disrespect to others
- Littering

### **SUSPENSION/EXPULSION POLICY**

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

- Using abusive language or threats of bodily harm directed at another student, staff member, or parent
- Intentional abuse and/or vandalism to school property
- Bringing on campus or viewing any pornography, explicit photography, or written material, or attempts to access such material via school computers
- 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
- Bringing onto campus any illegal substances or prescription medications for unauthorized use
- Stealing
- Touching another person's private body parts or intentionally exposing oneself for the sole purpose of self-gratification or harming another individual
- 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 used by the significant adults in their environment. Parents who are respectful and kind to others 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:

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



# Communication Protocols

## **WAYS TO RECEIVE AND SEND INFORMATION**

The Montessori School uses Remind as a method of communication between school staff and families. New families are added to the system after July 1 and returning families are adjusted to new classes as needed. If you do not receive messages, it is critical that you let the office know immediately. Day-to-day information and important reminders are sent via Remind.

To reach classroom teachers via remind or email, please do not message their personal accounts. Messages will not be received in a timely manner. Instead, use the classroom account.

## **EMAIL FOR STAFF**

Sarah Boone, Head of School, [sboone@fsmontessori.com](mailto:sboone@fsmontessori.com)

Cristy Clamser, School Administrator, [cclamser@fsmontessori.com](mailto:cclamser@fsmontessori.com)

Primary 2 Teachers (Lily Glaze, Zarnab Qayyum, and Annie Yu), [primary2@fsmontessori.com](mailto:primary2@fsmontessori.com)

Lower Elementary Teachers (Zirwa Mian and Brittany Thompson), [lowerelementary@fsmontessori.com](mailto:lowerelementary@fsmontessori.com)

Upper Elementary Teachers (Christie Fancher and Autumn Patton), [upperelementary@fsmontessori.com](mailto:upperelementary@fsmontessori.com)

Middle School Teacher (Katie McDonald), [middleschool@fsmontessori.com](mailto:middleschool@fsmontessori.com)

## **REMIND**

Please use these accounts to contact staff and classrooms:

Sarah Boone: FS Montessori

Cristy Clamser: Cristy Clamser

Primary 2: Primary 2

Lower Elementary: L. Elementary

Upper Elementary: Upper Elementary

Middle School: Middle School

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

## **ISSUES OR CONCERNS**

There may be times when issues or concerns arise in the classroom that you wish to discuss. It is our practice and protocol to always start with the classroom teachers. They are with the students daily and have more information about what happens in the classroom than the office staff. Should the situation not be resolved, you are welcome to schedule a meeting with the HOS. Please email or call the HOS to schedule a meeting and let them know what you would like to discuss. That will give them time to get up to speed prior to the meeting. Sensitive and difficult conversations often require planning and forethought.

Should your issue or concern be something outside of the classroom, please reach out directly to the HOS with your concern.

# Policies Regarding Staff

In a small school community such as ours, staff and families often become friends/friendly - especially when their children are in class together. However, in order to maintain professional standards and boundaries, we have the following policies in place to protect all relationships and ensure that everyone feels treated equally.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

**It is a policy of The Montessori School of Fort Smith that school staff should not interact with school families via personal Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Threads, or any other form of social media.** This is to protect and ensure a professional and fair relationship between families and staff. *Please do not send friend requests to staff.* Instead, please contact staff via school e-mail, school phone, or through Remind.

## **GIFT - GIVING**

The School encourages donations to the annual Staff Holiday Fund (each December) as an important way for families to acknowledge the talent and dedication of teachers and staff members. Contributions to this fund provide a “holiday bonus” and are greatly appreciated by all. Donations are divided evenly among full-time staff members, with part-time staff receiving a gift card and small bonus.

While staff members do not expect gifts for their professional work, like everyone, it is nice to be thanked. They especially appreciate handwritten notes from students or parents that highlight favorite experiences or learning outcomes. Some families choose to present small tokens of appreciation at the holidays or at the end of the year as a way of teaching their children to express gratitude. Staff are allowed to accept such items from individual families provided they do not hold significant value. School staff cannot accept cash from families.

While well-intentioned, large or valuable gifts can inadvertently foster a sense of competition among classrooms that runs counter to the School's philosophy. The School asks that families not engage in collecting money for group gifts except in those cases when a class chooses to acknowledge a teacher's wedding or new baby. All contributions must be voluntary.

For the annual Staff Appreciation Week, class parents will solicit voluntary contributions of food and donations to make the week festive for all.

## **BABYSITTING**

School staff (including aftercare) do not provide babysitting services for families. They love seeing your children each day, but in order to maintain a professional relationship, it is not appropriate for staff to also be employees of school families.