



COOL SPRINGS  
**MONTESSORI**

## **PARENT HANDBOOK**

**2017 - 2018**

*"Children are human beings to whom respect is due, superior to us by reason of their innocence and of the greater possibilities of their future." Maria Montessori*

## **CSM Mission and Vision**

Our mission at CSM is to provide a stable and nurturing place that supports each child's unique development.

Within a harmonious, supportive, and reality-based environment reflecting the Montessori philosophy of education as an aid to life, each member of the community is guided toward realizing his/her fullest potential emotionally, socially, academically and spiritually. Children build a foundation of skills, habits and values that enable them to grow into fulfilled, compassionate, responsible citizens of our global community.

We envision a peaceful world in which each individual has respect for self, others and the environment that all living things share.

*"Peace is what every human being is craving for, and it can be brought about by humanity through the child." - Maria Montessori*

## **Educational Philosophy and Methodology**

The main premises of Montessori education are:

- Children are to be respected as different from adults and as individuals who differ from each other.
- The child possesses an unusual sensitivity and intellectual ability to absorb and learn from his/her environment that is unlike those of the adult both in quality and capacity.
- The most important years of a child's growth are the first six years of life when unconscious learning is gradually brought to the conscious level.

Children have a deep love and need for purposeful work. They work, however, not as an adult for completion of a job, but for the sake of an activity itself. It is this activity which enables them to accomplish their most important goal: the development of the self - their mental, physical, and psychological powers.

After years of expression mainly in pre-schools, Montessori philosophy is finally being used as originally intended, as a method of seeing children as they really are and of creating environments which foster the fulfillment of each child's highest potential - spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual - as members of a family, the world community and the Cosmos.

Dr. Montessori gave the world a practical and tested scientific method for bringing forth the very best in young human beings. She taught adults how to respect individual differences, and to emphasize social interaction and the education of the whole personality rather than the teaching of a specific body of knowledge.

*“The child has one intuitive aim: self-development. He desperately wants to develop his resources, his ability to cope with a strange, complex world. He wants to do and see and learn for himself, through his senses and not through the eyes of an adult. The child who accomplishes this moves in harmony with his world. He becomes a full person. He is educated.”*

- Maria Montessori

### **What Makes Montessori Unique**

- A Montessori classroom is child-centered, not adult-centered. The guide is not the focus of the classroom. The guide provides a link between the child and the environment, and maintains the environment with materials that teach children. The children teach themselves through use of the materials.
- Montessori classrooms are multi-age with a minimum 3-year cycle, and the child stays in the same classroom with the same guide for the full 3 years. The classroom becomes like a second family for the child. Each age grouping corresponds to a Plane of Development, as identified by Dr. Montessori. A Montessori classroom strives for a balance of boys and girls, and an equal number of each age group. In a multi-age class, the youngest children learn from the older children. This is achieved through observation, and by the older children actually giving lessons to the younger. In this way, the older children also learn through teaching, and gain self-confidence and leadership skills. Children can move at their own pace because there are always materials on their level available to them in any curriculum area.
- Children have an active role in the environment. They help to maintain the classroom, keep it clean, and respect and take care of the materials. They are responsible for their own materials, putting them away neatly and ready for the next person to use. Many children thrive on being helpers and seek jobs to do.
- Children are not required to do the same thing at the same time. In a traditional school, the whole class is generally working on one thing at the same time. In Montessori, the children are allowed to make choices in their work and work on it until their needs are satisfied. They can work alone, with a friend, or in small groups.

When looking around a Montessori classroom, one sees many different things going on at the same time.

- Dr. Montessori scientifically developed her hands-on materials. She spent her entire life observing and researching children, and trying different things with them. Each material has a specific purpose or goal towards development.
- Materials are kept on low shelves that children can easily reach without adult assistance. The furniture is sized just for them.
- Montessori children have freedom of movement in the classroom. Dr. Montessori not only recognized that children have difficulty sitting still for long periods of time, but believed they should not be required to; therefore, getting rid of desks was one of the first things she did. Children have a great need to move their bodies and use their energy, and through movement, they learn and gain control over their bodies.
- Discipline is a process carried out in a consistent, respectful and logical manner.
- Montessori is process-oriented, not product-oriented.
- There is a certain spiritual nature in the Montessori environment. There is a sense of wonder and awe at the world and nature, and an appreciation for all things different. The individuality of children is not only recognized, but respected and encouraged.

### **Religion and Spirituality**

Underlying all the educational work of Maria Montessori is her highest aspiration of nurturing the spirit of each child in order to bring about a better world. Our spiritual nurturing may include experience of silence and reflection, a reverence for nature, an appreciation for the connectedness of all things, the giving of service to others, and the cultivation of peacefulness, honesty, justice, cooperation, compassion, generosity and love. We will study different cultures and the resulting familiarity, we hope, will lead to tolerance and a respect for diversity.

As a non-sectarian school we do not celebrate the holidays of any one particular religion. We will, however, recognize that these holidays are occurring, noting that groups of people are celebrating very special days in their religious tradition. We welcome presentations that explain these traditions, along with symbols, music, pictures, food, art, clothing, etc. that have particular significance. We will avoid commercialized substitutes for the true meaning of any holiday in order to respect and preserve its essence.

We may, however, celebrate as a community such spiritually-based themes as the new life so evident in spring, the gifts of the harvest, the significance of light during the winter solstice, care of the earth, and the importance of peace.

In daily interactions we hope to support the development of men and women who will not only be intellectually strong, but who will also be tolerant and accepting of others, who believe that life is full of meaning and hope, who will pause to appreciate the wonders of the universe, and who will rise above self-interest and self-gratification to take some significant steps for the good of humanity. Such personhood was Maria Montessori's most cherished goal.

*"Our task as educators becomes easier when we realize that we do not have to instill spirituality in a child, we have only to protect it from being trampled and to nourish its natural growth." - Aline Wolf - Nurturing the Spirit*

## **Programs**

Young children possess a remarkable ability to absorb the world that surrounds them. Maria Montessori believed that the years from birth to six are the MOST critical period for nurturing a child's natural curiosity and for laying the foundation for all future development.

### **Toddler:** 18-36 months

Toddlers are full of energy, enthusiasm, and curiosity! The toddler program takes advantage of the toddler's natural drive to explore and act independently. A nurturing, secure environment supports the huge amount of development occurring in the early years of life. Young children learn by doing, so materials are always accessible, attractive, safe, and geared for a child's success. The curriculum and daily routines are designed to foster language and motor development, assist in developing self-help skills, promote independence, introduce grace and courtesy, and help children develop trusting relationships.

### **Primary:** 3-6 years, including Kindergarten

Each day, Primary students enjoy an uninterrupted work time that allows their self-chosen activities to proceed to natural conclusion. Having few interruptions, children become deeply engaged, increase their level of concentration, and experience the satisfaction of finishing with an idea or task before moving on. Once a child has been introduced to a particular work that has been chosen based on the guide's observations of his interests and level of development, a child may practice that work as often and for as long as he chooses. Repetition leads to

proficiency, which produces confidence and motivation to pursue new challenges. In the primary program, as students are becoming much more socially aware, a great emphasis is placed on community. As children are learning to balance their own wants and needs with those of others, lessons in grace and courtesy as well as conflict resolution are crucial to their social and emotional development.

Primary students are guided to:

- Pursue their innate desire to explore and learn
- Develop intellectually, physically, emotionally and socially
- Become independent, confident and self-motivated
- Develop a lifetime love of learning
- Care for themselves, their environment and community

### **Areas of the Primary Classroom**

- Practical Life: Exercises having to do with care of self and the environment, control of movement and grace and courtesy are presented. Concentration, coordination, independence and a sense of order are developed, forming a strong foundation for future academic work.
- Sensorial: Exercises develop sense discrimination, observation skills, and descriptive language. A clear approach fosters the continuing effort of children to categorize and organize the qualities of the world around them.
- Language: Exercises that assist the child in developing receptive and expressive language skills permeate the Montessori environment. There is a strong emphasis on vocabulary enrichment and self-expression. Development of phonemic and phonological awareness provides a foundation for writing and reading.
- Mathematics: Concrete activities are presented and introduce the child to numbers, counting, the decimal system, as well as mathematical operations. Careful design of materials in the mathematics area and in the sensorial area lays the groundwork for future learning in algebra and geometry.
- Cultural: The cultural area of the classroom provides an introduction to the world around them through history, geography, science, art, music and foreign language.

### **Areas of the Toddler Classroom**

The Montessori Toddler classroom is arranged in a similar manner to the Primary rooms, but with developmentally-appropriate materials tailored to our younger students. There are areas for Practical Life, Sensorial, Language and Cultural (including music and art), as well as an area for gross motor movement.

### **Summer Program - Toddler and Primary**

The summer program at CSM is both an introduction for children who are new to CSM, as well as a continuation of our children who are currently enrolled. During each week-long session, children will be introduced to activities that promote learning in a fun and peaceful environment. Daily activities may include cooking, gardening, nature study, stories, art, music and outdoor play. Our summer program can be used either for the whole summer or on a per-week basis.

### **Enrollment and Financial Information**

CSM does not discriminate in enrollment on the basis of race, national origin, or religion. We do not screen children through testing. We are committed to serving children whose parents support our values and philosophy.

- A non-refundable application fee is paid with each application for admission to the school.
- A registration fee will be assessed annually and is due for all students. The annual enrollment process requires payment of registration fees and a signed tuition contract to hold a child's place.
- Payment options are specified in the tuition contract. Tuition may be paid on an annual or installment basis.
- A child accepted for enrollment on or before September 1 will pay full tuition. Tuition for new students who begin after September 1 will be prorated accordingly.
- A sibling discount of 10% reduction of tuition will be provided for second and subsequent children attending school at the same time. The discount will be applied to the lowest tuition.

- There is no reduction in tuition when a child misses school due to illness or vacation.
- If a student is withdrawn from the school for any reason, the monthly tuition through the current month and one additional month will be assessed.
- Additional terms and conditions are provided in the tuition contract.

### **Extended Care**

Sunrise and Sunset Club (before and after school care) is available from 7:30 - 8:30 A.M. and 3:30 - 6:00 P.M. For children not enrolled in extended care, CSM offers hourly access to the Sunset Club when space is available. Parents must sign up in advance or contact the office to check on availability. Charges incurred for hourly use of the Sunset Club will be billed monthly.

### **School's Out Care**

School's Out Care (SOC) is available from 7:30 A.M. - 6:00 P.M. on most days that regular school is not in session. The cost of SOC is included in "Year-Round Extended Day" tuition. Others must sign up on a first come-first served basis and will be billed on the next monthly statement.

CSM is closed with no School's Out Care on the following days: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and the day after, Christmas Eve, Christmas.

### **Children's Records**

We must have the following documents on file before your child enters school:

- Application
- Tuition contract
- Emergency Medical Authorization Form
- Child Release Form
- Health History
- Tennessee Child Health Record, including proof of a physical within 3 months of the start of school, for any child younger than 30 months.

- Publicity Release
- Signed acknowledgement of receipt of CSM parent handbook and summary of DOE licensing guidelines

It is the parents' responsibility to keep all forms updated with all necessary telephone numbers and any new information pertinent to their child's wellbeing.

Student files are confidential records and are kept secure from unauthorized access. Parents or guardians who wish to view their child's file should notify the director. Upon written request of a parent or guardian, information from the student file may be sent to an outside professional, such as a psychologist or educational diagnostician.

We will not transfer records for families who have an outstanding balance on their account. All accounts must be paid in full in order for student records to be forwarded to new schools.

### **Immunizations**

The Tennessee Child Health Record is required for school attendance and must be filed in the child's cumulative school record. All students must be immunized age-appropriately according to the schedule approved by the Commissioner of the Department of Health. Medical exemptions are accepted if signed by an MD or DO. Religious exemptions are accepted if there is a letter signed by the parent or guardian stating vaccines violate their religious beliefs. A list of students with medical or religious exemptions is maintained at the school. In case of a disease outbreak, these students may need to be excluded from school.

### **Attendance**

We ask that you call us by 9:00 A.M. on days when your child will not be attending school. In order for your child to reap the maximum benefits of the program, prompt regular attendance is essential. The TN Department of Education issues guidelines regarding attendance of school-age children. These guidelines make clear the requirements incumbent upon CSM as a state-approved school. Additionally, we take seriously the negative effect of tardiness and absenteeism on a child's progress.

Cumulative progress reports including attendance records for school-aged students will be forwarded to their next school. Kindergarten students with an excessive number of absences may not be recommended for promotion to first grade.

## Arrival and Dismissal

Arrival and dismissal are important times in the school day for everyone. In order for these transition times to flow smoothly, we ask that you follow these guidelines:

- Arrival time is between 8:30 A.M. and 8:45 A.M. Children arriving late are missing out on an important part of the day, whether it be outdoor play or work time.
- Please use *extreme* caution in the parking lot. Whenever your children are with you, please keep them within "*touch distance*" at all times. We ask that you to **turn off your cell phones** when driving in the parking lot, as well as when you are entering/exiting the school, so that your children have your full attention when you are saying goodbye in the morning or greeting them at the end of their school day. If you park under the portico, please pull as far forward and to the right as possible, so that other cars may exit around you. Always turn off your car prior to entering the building.
- Children should walk (as opposed to being carried) into the building. This lets them know that we view them as capable, while fostering independence and promoting responsibility.
- Children are greeted by a staff member upon arrival. Prolonged separation is hard for the children and their parents, so the quicker the good-bye, the easier for everyone.
- Students arriving past 8:45 A. M. are considered tardy. Please try to be on time. Children who arrive late often feel that they missed something when entering a space where their peers are already engaged.
- Please sign your child in and out on the clipboard provided. This is required by the TN Dept. of Education. In case of emergency, this sheet serves as a student roster.
- Our pick-up time for half-day children is **11:45 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.** Please adhere to this **pick-up time**, as it affects our transition to lunch and nap. The pick-up time for our full-day children is **3:15 P.M. - 3:30 P.M.** **Children not picked up by 3:30 P.M. will transition to the ASC program. Late pick-ups can be disruptive to the classroom and unsettling for your child.** If you are going to be late unexpectedly, please let the office know ASAP. Half day and full day children who are picked up late will be charged for after-school care.
- Your child will only be released to those people authorized on your pick-up list or to a person whom you authorize on a special occasion. If you need your child to go home

with someone not on your authorized pick-up list, you must notify the school. Please be aware that people we are not familiar with may be asked to show identification.

- If any parent is prohibited from picking up his/her child, a court order is required to be on file. CSM will abide by all legally served court orders.
- We expect the same standards of behavior from the children whether they are in our care or coming and going with a parent or caregiver. This includes walking, following directions, and respecting others whether it is staff, parents, siblings or friends.

### **Illness**

The key criteria for excluding children from school due to symptoms or illness developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics:

- a. Prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities
- b. Results in a need for care that is greater than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children
- c. Poses a risk of spread of harmful disease to others

Upon arrival, any child who shows symptoms of being ill or infectious will not be permitted to remain at school. Should symptoms arise during the school day, a parent or authorized person will be contacted to pick up your child. We depend on parents to adhere to this policy to insure the health of all our children and staff.

Children with the following symptoms should be kept home from school.

- Fever 101°F if taken orally or 100°F axillary
- Fever accompanied by behavior changes or other signs and symptoms of contagious illness
- Vomiting
- Loose or watery stools
- Infectious discharge from nose or eyes
- Persistent, uncontrolled coughing or wheezing
- Contagious or undiagnosed rash

- Uncharacteristic irritability or lethargy; persistent crying

Children should not return to school until symptom-free without medication for 24 hours.

In addition, the school maintains a comprehensive list of illnesses that necessitate exclusion, as well as criteria that must be met before returning to school.

Communicable diseases should be reported to the school so that other parents can be notified if necessary.

### **Medications**

The TN Dept. of Education requires that specific procedures be followed in the dispensing of medications by school personnel. If your child requires medication during school hours, an authorization form must be completed by a parent or guardian and a staff member must agree to administer the medication. All prescription drugs must be brought to school in the original, pharmacy-labeled container. All non-prescription drugs must have the manufacturer's original label with the ingredients listed and the child's name affixed to the label. Medications must be handed directly to a staff member by the parent.

### **Allergies**

*All allergies should be reported to the school administration and your child's teacher.* For serious allergies, an Emergency Healthcare Plan with written instructions from the child's physician must be on file with the school. It is imperative that parents monitor the expiration dates on Epi-Pens, inhalers, and nebulizer medications.

### **Accidents and Injuries**

Staff members at CSM are certified in CPR and first aid and trained in proper handling of blood borne pathogens. First aid supplies are accessible throughout the school and on the playground. Accidents and injuries are documented in an accident report. Most minor injuries are tended to by staff members. A parent or guardian will be notified immediately of injuries to the head or mouth. Should an injury occur that requires professional medical care, a parent or guardian (or, if unavailable, someone on the child's emergency list) will be contacted and informed that the child has been or will be transported to an emergency room. All children

enrolled must have on file written permission for the school to authorize emergency medical care.

### **Child Abuse and Neglect**

Staff members are trained annually on recognizing the signs of child abuse and neglect. In accordance with Tennessee law, any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect must be reported to the TN Department of Children's Services.

Tennessee law requires that children be taught a personal safety/child abuse prevention curriculum every year. CSM uses the Keeping Kids Safe curriculum developed by Prevent Child Abuse Tennessee. Information about this program will be provided to parents prior to the curriculum being taught.

### **Inclement Weather**

In the event that weather conditions make travel hazardous, school may be postponed, closed early or cancelled. In many, but not all cases, we will follow the closing decisions made by Williamson County Schools. School closings and delays will be announced on local television channels, the CSM website, and via email and social media.

### **Emergency Preparedness**

CSM, in consultation with appropriate local authorities, shall develop a written plan to protect children in the event of disaster. Practice drills will be held and documented as required to meet regulations.

### **Clothing and Personal Items – Primary Program**

- Each child should have a pair of soft, slip-on shoes or slippers to be kept at school and worn inside the classroom.
- Practical clothing is a must. Children should dress for comfort and freedom of movement. The Montessori philosophy encourages independent self-care, therefore clothing should be easy for them to put on and take off by themselves.

- Dressy clothes sometimes make children hesitant about getting involved in work or play activities for fear of ruining them. It is a reality that children will often come home dirty from an active day at school.
- Children should be dressed in seasonably appropriate clothing so that they can have time outside each day. Expect that your child will spend time outside daily except in extremely inclement weather. Appropriate outdoor clothing and shoes that are safe for running and climbing are important.
- Raincoats and rain boots that can be left at school are highly recommended as we often play outside in rainy and muddy conditions.
- Each child should have at least one full change of seasonably appropriate clothes at school at all times.
- Mats will be provided for children who nap. Parents provide a cover for the mat, a small blanket and if desired, a small item to snuggle with.
- A tote bag will be provided to each child at the beginning of the school year, which they may use to transport items to/from school each day. Please do not send your child in with a backpack, as they take up a lot of room in the classrooms.
- All clothing, shoes, lunch supplies and nap items should be clearly marked with your child's name.
- Children should not bring toys, expensive jewelry, money, gum or candy to school. We cannot be responsible for miscellaneous items and they invariably cause friction among the children or get lost. Your child is welcome to share books and special objects which enrich the curriculum. If you have any questions about a particular item, please check with a staff member.

### **Clothing and Personal Items – Toddler Program**

Toddlers will need the following items labelled with your child's name:

- Diapers
- Wipes (soft-sided package)
- Diaper Cream (parents must give written permission to apply)

- 3 seasonally appropriate changes of clothes, including socks
- For toilet learners: 5 - 7 pairs of underpants, socks, and shorts or pants
- A blanket that covers them completely, and a lovey if needed
- A pair of shoes for outside, appropriate for running and playing
- A pair of water shoes for warmer weather, and a pair of rain boots for wet days/colder weather
- CSM will provide each toddler with a sheet for their nap mat, as well as a bag to carry their belongings to and from school each day.
- All clothing, shoes, lunch supplies and nap items should be clearly marked with your child's name.

### **Snacks**

Nutritious snacks are provided daily and fresh drinking water is always available. We ask each family to provide snack for the class for one week each semester. There is a sign-up sheet for each classroom and you will be provided with a shopping list in advance.

### **Lunch**

At CSM, we are very conscious that nutritious foods enhance the performance and good health of your child. Please send nutritious lunches for your child to eat at school. The children will set tables with dishes, napkins and cutlery. Since we encourage independence, please send food in wraps and/or containers that are manageable for your child. We encourage families to be environmentally conscious by using containers that are reusable or recyclable. Use a thermos or ice pack to maintain the temperature of heated or chilled foods. Remember that small children may be overwhelmed by large amounts of food. We recommend small portions of a variety of healthy foods, including protein, whole grains and fruits and vegetables. Processed, prepackaged foods are highly discouraged.

Please refrain from sending the following items to school for lunch. They will be returned home unopened.

- Jello, pudding, push-up yogurt, candy, chocolate, cupcakes, frosted cookies, sugar-coated cereal, or any sugar-laden items

- Juice boxes or pouches, soda
- Fritos, Cheetos, potato chips, or similar high calorie, low nutrition foods
- Cup of Noodles or other foods that require preparation

### **Birthdays**

Primary Program: We love to celebrate birthdays at school and parents are welcome to attend. A special ceremony is held in which the birthday child carries a globe (representing the earth) around a candle (representing the sun). The child makes one revolution for every year of his/her life. While making the journey, a brief account of his life story is read aloud, introducing children to the concept of history. Parents are asked to provide information about their child's life on a special form, as well as pictures for a timeline. Parents who wish to provide a special snack should inform the staff. Respecting the dietary preferences and allergy concerns of our families, please do not bring sugary snacks such as cake, cupcakes, donuts or anything containing nuts. Some families like to choose a book or other gift to give the school in honor of a child's birthday.

Toddler Program: An awareness of the passage of time is a developmental milestone that occurs beyond toddlerhood. For birthdays in the toddler room, we welcome a nutritious snack to share. Please check with the toddler room staff about allergies in advance. The birthday child is invited to help serve the snack and then we sing Happy Birthday to him/her.

### **Field Trips**

Field trips for Kindergarten students are announced in advance and permission forms are distributed. Safety rules have been established to ensure that trips are safe and enjoyable for all who participate. Volunteer drivers must have a completed driver form on file certifying that they have a valid driver's license, proof of insurance, and their car in is good operating condition. Students and drivers must adhere to TCA laws regarding seat belts and restraining devices.

## **Discipline**

CSM subscribes to the following statement of discipline, and all staff members are expected to adhere to it in all dealings with children.

It is the school's goal to help the child develop an inner discipline, thereby foregoing the necessity for outside intervention. All activity is guided by respect for self, respect for others, and respect for the materials and the environment itself. Self-discipline develops gradually through absorption in meaningful work. If a child has difficulty following the rules of the community, an adult usually helps that child select work which will more fully absorb his/her attention. It is acceptable for a child to separate him/herself from the main flow of the classroom in order to regain control. Role-playing and modeling help children learn how to treat each other. Grace and courtesy and respect as conveyed by the ground rules are practiced daily. Children are given verbal positive reminders as necessary to encourage good conduct. Derogatory remarks and corporal punishment are never used. Many instances resolve themselves as the child, within the bounds of safety and common sense, experiences the natural or logical consequences of his/her actions. If a child disregards the rules of the classroom community, the adult seeks the underlying causes in order to help the child understand the inappropriateness of his/her actions and to find a constructive alternative. If such behavior occurs repeatedly, the parents will be contacted for their support and cooperation and a decision will be reached on how to handle any further disturbance or harmful activity.

It is our intention that all children be successful in our school. However, situations arise where a child is unable to follow the rules after repeated attempts by the staff to explain and enforce them. In such cases, the school and parents agree to communicate with each other to find the solution that is best for the child while ensuring the rights and safety of all members of the school community.

## **Parent Orientation and Student Visits**

At the beginning of each school year, an orientation meeting is conducted for parents. Orientation meetings are not just for parents new to CSM. Policies, procedures, staffing and general information vary or change from year to year, therefore it is important for all to attend.

All students will be invited to visit their classrooms prior to the first day of school, in an open house format. This allows the children to see their classroom, meet their teachers, and bring

any items they will need on their first day. This visit is usually scheduled the Friday before the first day of school.

### **Communication**

CSM strongly values the partnership with our parents. We honor the parent's role as the first, most important and most influential teachers of their children. Our role as adults is to aid children in the unfolding of their full potential. We are better able to achieve this goal when a supportive network exists between home and school.

- All classrooms at CSM utilize Montessori Compass for online record-keeping and communicating with parents. Parents are able to view records of lessons given, notes about classroom activities, notes about their child in the classroom, and photos of their child at work.
- Family Mailboxes: Each school year, every family will have a "mailbox", located in the main hallway. The mailboxes are used whenever there is paperwork or hard copies of communications to go home. They are arranged alphabetically by the students' last names. Staff members have a mailbox as well, located on the bottom row of the mail sorter.
- Observations: Montessori is a process-oriented learning method; therefore there will be many times when your child's work will not result in a product that can be brought home. Many young children have trouble describing or recounting the work they have done during the day. For these reasons, we strongly encourage that every parent observe in his/her child's classroom. These observations provide reference points for communication. Observations are scheduled through the education director and guidelines will be provided.
- Conferences: Formal parent-guide conferences are held twice a year in the fall and spring. Additional conferences may be initiated by the parent or guide at any time.
- When questions or concerns arise, all communication about your child should begin with the lead guide. In the event that an issue is unable to be resolved, the education director will be consulted.
- Parent education meetings: The Montessori method is unlike most other educational pedagogies in many respects. Parent education meetings are held and

serve as a foundation for understanding the philosophy, curriculum, and materials. Topics such as child development and discipline are also discussed.

- Newsletter: Classrooms publish a monthly newsletter containing news, announcements, educational articles and other helpful information.
- Parent handbook: The parent handbook is distributed annually along with various forms that the school is required to have on file for each student. The TN Dept. of Education requires that parents sign a statement affirming their receipt and reading of this handbook.
- Notes, phone calls, requests for meetings: Small contacts are of great value in sharing useful information. Any incident, situation or event that could affect your child's behavior should be shared. The staff will also communicate any questions or concerns in a timely manner. If at any time you feel a need for additional information about your child, please send a note or telephone the school.
- Please notify CSM promptly of any changes in vital information.
- In cases of separation or divorce, we want to keep both parents informed of their child's progress and school matters. All written correspondence will be sent to both parents if contact information has been provided. In the absence of a relevant court order, both parents are equally welcomed at all school events.

### **Home and School Connection**

Children benefit most when there is consistency between home and school. Listed below are some suggestions for parents to incorporate at home.

- Follow the child's interests. Rather than deciding what he should be learning at a certain age, use Montessori ideas at home to provide support and materials related to the activities that he actually enjoys.
- Involve the child in household and real-life activities as much as he/she likes. Provide opportunities for him/her to help with cooking, cleaning, gardening, building, running errands, and performing many other types of daily tasks.
- Encourage independence at home by providing materials and setting up the environment to help children do things for themselves. For example, provide real

child-sized tools, and conveniently located step-stools so that children can reach the sink and other areas. Prioritize helping them to learn tasks, such as tying their shoe laces, instead of continuing to do it for them.

- Expect and allow children to have long periods of concentration on activities of their choosing. As much as possible, avoid interrupting children who are concentrating on their work or play, or at least try to set aside one or more daily periods for uninterrupted, self-directed activities.
- Provide educational toys. Place toys and educational activity kits on shelves that the children can access, so they can choose among a variety of options.
- Interact respectfully with children, treating their ideas and emotions as valuable. This suggestion may seem obvious, but it is at the heart of the Montessori Method.

## Suggested Reading List and Website Resources

### Books by Maria Montessori

The Absorbent Mind

Discovery of the Child

The Secret of Childhood

To Educate the Human Potential

### Books About Montessori

Montessori: A Modern Approach, Paula P. Lillard

How to Raise an Amazing Child the Montessori Way, Tim Seldin

Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius, Angeline Stoll Lillard

Montessori Madness: A Parent to Parent Argument for Montessori Education, Trevor Eissler

Understanding Montessori: A Guide for Parents, Maren Schmidt

A Parent's Guide to the Montessori Classroom, Aline Wolf

Nurturing the Spirit in Non-Sectarian Classrooms, Aline Wolf

The Montessori Way: An Education for Life, Tim Seldin and Paul Epstein

### Books About Parenting

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk, Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline, Becky A. Bailey, PhD

Children: the Challenge, Rudolf Dreikurs

The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon, David Elkind

Raising Self-Reliant Children in a Self-Indulgent World, Stephen Glenn

Your Child's Growing Mind: A Guide to Learning and Brain Development from Birth to Adolescence, Jane Healy

Unconditional Parenting: Moving From Rewards and Punishments to Love and Reason, Alfie Kohn

Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder, Richard Louv

In Defense of Childhood, Chris Mercogliano

Reclaiming Childhood: Letting Children be Children in our Achievement-Oriented Society, William Crain

### Website Resources

American Montessori Society [www.amsq.org](http://www.amsq.org)

Association Montessori Internationale [www.montessori-ami.org](http://www.montessori-ami.org)

Montessori Foundation [www.montessori.org](http://www.montessori.org)

Montessori Services [www.montessoriservices.com](http://www.montessoriservices.com)

Michael Olaf Montessori Company [www.michaelolaf.net](http://www.michaelolaf.net)

Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO) [www.educationrevolution.org](http://www.educationrevolution.org)



*“Supposing I said there was a planet without schools or teachers, study was unknown, and yet the inhabitants - doing nothing but living and walking about - came to know all things, to carry in their minds the whole of learning: would you not think I was romancing? Well, just this, which seems so fanciful as to be nothing but the invention of a fertile imagination, is a reality. It is the child's way of learning. This is the path he follows. He learns everything without knowing he is learning it, and in doing so passes little from the unconscious to the conscious, treading always in the paths of joy and love.” - Maria Montessori*

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