



## **Welcome to The Montessori School 2024-2025 Family Handbook**

To new and returning families, we extend a warm welcome to the new school year. We are so happy you are a part of our Montessori School family. Over the course of this year our children will grow in a Montessori environment to become self-assured, vibrant students who love to learn. Families are the most important teachers in the lives of their children and are a very important part of what makes our school community so special. We are honored to be partners with you in the development of your child. We rely on your communication, energy, support, and involvement to ensure a successful experience for your child. The Montessori School can benefit your child best when you understand the roles played by families, teachers, and children.

As we begin our 52nd year, we are delighted to share the many wonderful things about The Montessori School and to orient you to our policies, procedures, & resources. Please carefully review the information included in this handbook.

We do our best to remain in close communication with our families in a number of different ways.

- We use email to send our biweekly newsletter and to communicate important information. We encourage caregivers to read each e-news carefully, as this often contains important updates not found elsewhere. Please make sure that we have your most updated contact information.
- You may visit our website at [www.themontessorischool.org](http://www.themontessorischool.org) for information about the school and to keep up to date on school events and news. Our [school calendar](#) can also be accessed on the website.
- If you have suggestions, ideas, or concerns, contact your child's classroom Lead Guide and make arrangements to meet. They are your first line of communication.
- If you believe your ideas or concerns are not being addressed, please contact the Head of School, Megan Johnston ([meganj@themontessorischool.org](mailto:meganj@themontessorischool.org)) for further assistance.
- Questions and suggestions about billing should be directed to our office: [frontdesk@themontessorischool.org](mailto:frontdesk@themontessorischool.org)
- An annual family survey provides an opportunity to give us feedback covering the whole program.

The Montessori School is a Michigan nonprofit organization operated by a Board of Directors ([board@themontessorischool.org](mailto:board@themontessorischool.org)) and an executive staff. We are licensed by the Michigan Department of Human Services and registered with the Michigan Department of Education. Our school is a member of the Michigan Montessori Society, and our Lead Guides are certified Montessori Instructors. We look forward to a fun and rewarding year.

***The Montessori School***

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## **I. Mission Statement**

The Montessori School's mission is to provide an inclusive environment that inspires children to love learning, create, and make the world better.

## **II. Educational Goals**

At the Montessori School we aim to provide high-quality, comprehensive education that fosters your child's love of learning and addresses the whole child academically, emotionally, and socially. The Montessori curriculum varies by program, however the goals for our school are consistent:

- To enter a partnership with families in the education of their children
- To lead children toward mastery of individually identified intellectual, social, physical, and daily life skills
- To foster in the children deep and persistent curiosity that will lead to lifelong pursuit of knowledge
- To help children develop self-confidence
- To assist each child develop a habit of concentration
- To instill in each child a sense of personal responsibility for the world in which we live and engage in age-appropriate social justice work
- To spark in our children wonder, imagination, and joy

## **III. Our Core Values**

We believe that the pedagogical principles and practices developed by Dr. Maria Montessori fundamentally respond to the developmental characteristics and needs of children. We seek to utilize her educational principles and methodologies in all of the programs offered at The Montessori School.

- We believe that all children deserve to develop in an environment that is nurturing, safe and intelligent.
- We believe that families are the principle influence in a child's life. The school provides a secondary supportive role to the home. It is a tandem cooperative relationship between home and school which best serves the child.
- We believe that the model of our own behavior serves as the most distinct teacher to the child.
- We believe that every member of our community has a fundamental right to be treated with respect regardless of age, gender, gender identity, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion, race or disability.

- We believe that the development of whole, healthy individuals requires that our many dimensions be nurtured, including the spiritual, intellectual, physical, social and emotional.
- We center the programs and curriculum of The Montessori School on the natural needs of human development.
- We describe the learning environment of The Montessori School as active as opposed to passive. The environment is dynamic, with children functioning as active agents in the learning process by making choices and learning to be responsible for those choices.
- We believe that the School has a responsibility to prepare its students for life, balancing academic excellence with the development of personal, social and practical life skills.
- We believe that the first six years of life are critical to the development of one's life.
- We offer a flexible learning environment that responds to individual needs, has an adaptable curriculum, and honors diverse learning styles.
- We strive to create a true balance among freedom, order and responsibility in each classroom.
- We believe that children can learn constructive modes of problem-solving and conflict resolution, thereby creating a more peaceful learning and living environment.
- We believe that we are intimately interdependent with other life forms on this planet. As educators, it is our responsibility to foster knowledge of, interest in and responsibility for the natural world we inhabit.
- We believe in the fullness of life and the value of a diverse community, which promotes an understanding and acceptance of all peoples.
- We believe that all forms of expression and communication should be nurtured. Art, music, literature, drama and other forms are fundamental modes of expression for the human spirit.
- We believe that we are a dynamic member of our community. We nurture and promote “outreach” activities that involve the children in community improvement projects.

### **Positive Approaches to Discipline**

The Montessori School grounds its entire program in the significant relationship between adult and child. A positive, supportive and loving bond promotes the child's self-esteem and sense of security. The role model provided by the adult teaches children positive problem-solving techniques and courtesy. Children are continuously taught how to solve problems, work through frustration, and express feelings in a manner that is growth-producing and positive. Some examples of positive methods of discipline include:

- Redirecting or distracting a child from the unacceptable activity to a constructive one
- Planning ahead to prevent problems
- Encouraging, teaching, and modeling appropriate behavior
- Setting consistent clear rules
- Talking to the child about the feelings they are having

- Offering alternative solutions to the problem
- Involving children in solving the problem
- Ensuring a relationship between the behavior and the discipline method
- Observing patterns of behavior, triggers, coping methods, time of day, etc.
- Tailoring the method of discipline to the individual child based family feedback and collaboration with classroom staff
- Offer additional support and coaching for student during conflict

Students who are disruptive or hurtful to others will be asked to reflect on their choices. Families of children with excessively disruptive or harmful behavior will be offered resources for professional assistance. Families may be required to remove their child from the class if their behavior significantly disrupts the harmony of the group. (See withdrawal and enrollment termination.)

### **Anti-Bias Statement & Resources:**

Over 100 years ago, Montessori education was founded on the principle that every child, regardless of race, gender, or social standing, deserved a quality education. Dr. Maria Montessori also believed that the education of the child was the path to peace, saying, “Establishing lasting peace is the work of education,” and developed a model of peace education that is still used today in Montessori classrooms around the world.

Unfortunately, racism and discrimination still persist in our country. While modeling peace and empathy for our children is a great step towards a more just society, it is not enough. Discrimination does not just occur at an individual level, but institutionally and systemically as well. To combat this, we as educators must be actively anti-racist and anti-bias and teach our children how to be anti-bias as well.

At The Montessori School, we are committed to creating a just and equitable community for all the families we serve. We stand in solidarity with BIPOC, the LGBTQ+ community, and all other groups that face discrimination and marginalization. It is our promise to encourage our children to choose love over hate, embrace diversity, act with empathy, and remind them that being a global citizen comes with responsibility. In that spirit, we have compiled a list of anti-bias resources to help all of us, hand-in-hand with our children, begin the hard work towards establishing social justice. Please view our commitment in full [here](#).

In addition, the school has an active Anti-bias, Anti-racist Committee. The work of this committee is ongoing and will continue to evolve, requiring an active and engaged base of the school community. If you would like to be involved in this committee, please send an email to:

[frontdesk@themontessorischool.org](mailto:frontdesk@themontessorischool.org)



## **Green School**

The Montessori School is an active member of the [Michigan Green Schools](#) program. The Michigan Green Schools Program supports and celebrates the achievements of PREK-12 schools in protecting the state's air, land, water, and ecosystems through their commitments to environmental education and stewardship actions. We are proud to hold Evergreen status and committed to furthering the mission of the program.

## **IV. School Overview**

### **A. History and Philosophy**

For 52 years, The Montessori School has served as a nonprofit, private education institution for children ages 2 years, 9 months-12. Our highly trained, credentialed guides nurture and cultivate each child's curiosity while providing a strong foundation for continued academic success. The Montessori School provides a warm, vibrant, educational home designed to foster a love of learning and help all children reach their fullest potential at their own unique pace. We strive to educate the whole child and to inspire children to be caring, socially responsible participants in their community and world. Our carefully prepared classrooms are staffed with highly qualified, Montessori-certified Lead Guides (head teachers) and specially trained staff. Multi-age classrooms allow the children to learn from one another and to be valued contributors to the classroom community.

Families are welcome and encouraged to be an active part in their child's education. In addition to biweekly newsletters, an active Facebook page, and a regularly updated website, we invite families to observe in the classroom, join us on exploratory field trips, help us organize school events or fundraisers, and connect with each other informally, creating a network that links the classroom to the community, and in turn, to the world.

At The Montessori School we are invested in creating respectful relationships among guides, administrative staff, families, and children. We appreciate and celebrate diversity and recognize how we as a school benefit from the array of cultural backgrounds and traditions that families and staff members bring to our community. We work to provide an inclusive environment and do not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, religion, creed, national origin, ancestry, ethnicity, disability, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

Our approach to education is based on the philosophy and methods of Maria Montessori, the first Italian female physician who founded the first Montessori school in Rome in 1907. Dr. Montessori believed that the goal of the educational process was to cultivate a child's natural desire to learn. Dr. Montessori observed that all children have the same basic needs:

- The need for order – to organize, classify and interpret reality

- The need for independence – the impulse to act personally upon and within reality
- The need for social relationships
- The need to experience reality through imagination

The Lead Guide carefully prepares the classroom environment and directs the activity of the classroom, but it is the child who learns. Dr. Montessori observed that children are motivated through the work itself and that children, like adults, learn best by doing rather than being filled with facts. Concentration, determination, and purpose established in early childhood lead to confident, successful learning later in life. At The Montessori School, children learn how to observe, think, and evaluate and experience the joy of learning. The Montessori approach is not a tweaking of traditional models of education, it is a completely different way of learning and teaching designed to prepare children for success in an increasingly complex world.

The Montessori School is an advocate for the child, developing education programs that follow the natural needs and development of the child. We believe each person has the potential to achieve success through an ordered, challenging, nurturing educational environment that includes the whole person – intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical. At the center is the child, whose needs are the focus of the learning process. It is the role of the School's staff members not only to observe, but also to know and defend the rights of the child as they proceed through the learning process.

## **B. Campus & Classroom Spaces**

The Montessori School has two campuses located at 750 Howard and 710 Howard Street just outside downtown Kalamazoo. We have three primary classrooms, for children ages 2 years 9 months to 6 years of age. Our elementary program is located next door to our primary building, it is for children ages 6-12 years of age (1st-6th grade).

Each classroom is thoughtfully arranged and offers an inviting space for activity that is focused and calm. Learning materials are displayed on shelves that are accessible to the children to foster independence as the students go about their daily work. There are spaces in the classroom that allow for group activity as well as areas where the student can work alone. Parts of each classroom are open and spacious to allow younger children to lay out strands of beads for counting or elementary students to explore a 10 foot long Timeline of Life. There are well-defined spaces for each part of the curriculum, such as Language Arts, Math, and Culture. Each of these areas features shelves or display tables with a variety of inviting materials from which students can choose.

### **C. Curriculum and Teachers**

The term “Montessori” implies both philosophy and a method of education philosophy based on the research of Dr. Maria Montessori. At its heart, the Montessori method emphasizes independence, freedom within limits, and a respect for the child. Classroom spaces are purposefully designed and materials carefully curated in pursuit of an education partnership. Multi-aged classrooms provide benefits that are readily apparent when visiting the classroom. Younger children in the classroom have an opportunity to observe and imitate the older students as they work. Older students have an opportunity to reinforce their own knowledge by explaining what they are doing and assisting and mentoring younger children. Each child can learn and develop at their own pace within a classroom that accommodates many levels of ability and complexity.

The head teachers are referred to as Lead Guides. The experience and training of a Montessori guide is integral to the Montessori method. Our guides use both concrete teaching materials and a well-defined innovative curriculum tailored to the child through each three-year cycle from the Primary program through both levels of the Elementary program. The Montessori guide is specially trained to observe each child and to design lessons based on that child’s natural curiosity and love of learning. The guide is responsible for preparing the educational environment within each classroom and for presenting lessons in that environment. During the course of a day, the Lead Guide will demonstrate a wide array of concrete sensorial materials and sequential activities through individual instruction. The child soon learns to associate abstract concepts with hands-on experience.

### **D. Family Partnership**

Families are a fundamental part of the well-being of our school and of a successful educational experience for their child. As such, we have the expectation that all members of the school community participate and support the school whenever possible. Through our collaboration and partnership with you, we are creating a unified support system that nurtures each child's growth in the home and while at school.

It is the expectation of The Montessori School that families make every effort to understand and embrace the mission of the school. To that end, we aim to help families learn about the Montessori approach by providing information and opportunities for family education.

Additionally, we expect families to familiarize themselves with the philosophy, policies, and procedures contained in the Family Handbook and other school publications, including our regular email communications.

There are committees to assist in special programming and to help the school meet long-term goals. Our staff value the assistance and participation of families in the classroom and in adventures beyond the classroom. Both families and students are enriched with family involvement in school activities. In addition, each family is expected to support the annual fundraising efforts of the school in time, talent, or treasure. We are a nonprofit and rely on our families and alumni families to help ensure the successful future of our school.

## **E. Governance**

The Montessori School is a Michigan 501c3 nonprofit organization operated by a Board of Directors ([board@themontessorischool.org](mailto:board@themontessorischool.org)) and an executive staff. The Board of Directors is charged with the ultimate responsibility for financial, legal, and strategic planning and policy issues for The Montessori School. The board sets policy to be implemented by the administration and staff. Furthermore, the Board ensures the integrity of Montessori philosophy within the school. The Board members are families and alumni families of the school, along with two ex-officio members including the Head of School. Board members serve three-year terms. Board terms are staggered and Board members are appointed at the Annual Meeting in June.

The Board holds regular meetings throughout the year. Minutes are on file in the TMS office and are available to members of the family community upon request.

## **V. Admissions & Enrollment**

### **A. Admissions Guidelines**

To be considered for enrollment at The Montessori School, children must be at least 2 years, 9 months, and fully potty trained. Enrollment preference will be given to families with a firm commitment to Montessori philosophy. Classes are multi-age, and the school will make every reasonable effort to balance each class with respect to age and gender identity. The Montessori School is open to all children regardless of race, sex, religion or creed, national origin, ancestry, ethnicity, disability, gender identification, immigration status, or sexual orientation.

### **B. Admission Process**

Tour and observation: A tour or Open House of our campus is required for admission consideration. During this you will meet our staff, and pending the current health climate of the community, have the opportunity to observe a classroom “in action.”

Application: Interested families are encouraged to submit a completed admissions application accompanied by a \$50 non-refundable fee. If the cost of tuition is a concern, you are invited to fill out a FAST application for tuition assistance. When the applications and fees are received, we will follow up with you regarding next steps. Our administrative staff may request additional

information at this time to clarify or expound on application responses. In some cases, a meeting with the Administration of The Montessori School may be arranged.

Enrollment: You will be contacted by our administrative staff regarding your application for enrollment. If your family is considered a good fit for the school and the school is currently accepting new enrollments, the school will issue you a contract. If financial aid is requested, your request for assistance will be reviewed and a decision will be emailed to you along with the contract. Signed contracts, along with a non-refundable enrollment deposit and materials fee are used to hold your child's spot in a classroom. If you apply for enrollment but there are no openings, your child will be placed on the waitlist until an opening exists.

Late Starts and Two Week Trials: For students that are enrolling after the start of the school year they will be invited to take part in a two week trial, if there are openings available. The Lead Guide will meet with the caregivers to provide an orientation and discuss the dates for the trial period. Caregivers will complete a form in order to be billed for a prorated amount for two weeks only. Upon the completion of the two weeks the administration team will meet with the Lead Guide and discuss if the class is a good fit for the student. The caregivers will then be contacted to either complete their contract or be waitlisted till their student is ready.

### **C. Student Success**

The Montessori environment is unique. It cultivates an inner discipline that is the foundation for further learning and social development. Occasionally, the learning style of an individual child is not compatible with the climate of the Montessori classroom. If the Lead Guide becomes concerned about the suitability of the Montessori class for your child, they will contact you to set up a conference.

We want every child to experience the satisfaction and joy of a successful education. Generally, children adapt to the Montessori classroom within 60 days. If your child is not functioning successfully in the classroom, we will work with families to provide preventative and alternative teaching strategies, as well as ways families can support at home. If we believe that Montessori will not meet your child's needs, we will recommend alternate environments to you and remove them from the class.

### **D. Withdrawal**

The Montessori School is dedicated to maintaining a safe, harmonious classroom environment for the optimum development of all our students. Families of children with excessively disruptive behavior that require more support than staff can provide will be offered resources for professional assistance. While it is always the goal of the school to work with families, there are

certain situations that will require immediate withdrawal of the student in an effort to keep our community safe.

### **Enrollment Termination Process**

- The Lead Guide will consult with the Head of School at the earliest opportunity to identify an at-risk student.
- The Head of School will observe the student in the classroom and/or on the playground, and provide the Lead Guide with information and recommendations to address the child's needs.
- Staff will document specific incidents of behavior that are worrisome or problematic.
- If needs or problems are significant, the Head of School and Lead Guide will meet with families. Using observations about patterns of behavior, a plan will be created to address the needs of the child. The need for specific professional consultation may be identified. If the need for professional support is requested, families are expected to respond in a timely manner to acquire those services.
- A written statement of goals and strategies for achieving goals will be created with families, the School and consulting professionals. To ensure steps are in place for the success of the child, the Lead Guide and family will meet regularly to discuss progress.
- If support from the family is not forthcoming and/or the problems are of such severity that the climate of the classroom and safety of the other children is in jeopardy, families will be given a date by which the student will be removed from the classroom and families will need to obtain alternate care for their child.
- If a family is asked to leave the school, the student will be considered withdrawn after the last date of attendance. Tuition will be prorated for time attended, and the school shall retain the deposit and fees.

### **Other Reasons for Withdrawal:**

- The school operates on the tuition and fees paid for services. If a family's account is 60 days or more past due, the child will be withdrawn from the program until the account has been brought up to current status. Written notification of intent to withdraw a child shall be made at least 30 days prior to withdrawal. Always consult the enrollment contract for terms and conditions. Once the School accepts this agreement and a place in the classroom is reserved, the Caregiver(s) obligation to pay according to the Program Fees set forth above is unconditional and not subject to reduction, proration, or setoff because of Student's absence or Caregiver(s) decision to withdraw Student from the School, or involuntary closure, in which case the School may relocate and/or reschedule its operations, including extending the school year, if necessary. All students are enrolled for the entire school year

unless it is expressly agreed to the contrary in writing and approved by the administrative staff.

- Children who are not potty trained will be withdrawn from the school.
- Employment-related relocation. If the caregiver has to relocate for employment they must send a request in writing to the Administration of The Montessori School at least 30 days ahead of the change. A letter from the employer may be requested as well. Any adjustments will be at the discretion of the Administration of The Montessori School, whose decision will be final. Relocations on or after March 1 of the current school year will not be considered for readjustment.
- If the Caregiver(s) terminates this contract due to unavoidable circumstances other than employment related relocation, written notice must be provided to the School (30) days ahead of the change. The student shall be considered withdrawn after the last date of attendance or 30 days after notification, whichever is later.
  - If this contract is terminated prior to May 1, 2024 no program fees shall be payable to the school but the materials fee and deposit shall be retained by the school.
  - If this contract is terminated after May 1, 2024 but before August 26, 2024, the program fees payable to the school shall be half the contracted amount plus the materials fee and enrollment deposit.
  - If this contract is terminated after the first day of the school year, the Program Fees payable to the school shall be the sum of the prorated program fees from the start of school through the last day of attendance, plus the prorated program fees from the last day of attendance through the end of the school year. The school shall retain all deposits and materials fee.

**E. Programs & Tuition**

Annual Tuition: The tuition charged each year is for the academic year and is based on the program you have selected. There are two options for paying the balance of the tuition: 1) A single lump-sum prepayment, made by August 1st, or 2) Monthly installments via ACH transfer. A service charge is associated with each of the installment plans.

Primary 10 Month Programs (When choosing the ACH option, your first tuition draw will be August 1 and your last tuition draw will be May 1)	If Paid Annually (3% discount when paid in full)	If Paid Monthly (includes \$20 ACH fee)	Hours
Primary Half-Day Preschool Program	\$7211.76	\$741.18	8:30 am to

			12 pm
Primary Half-Day Preschool Program - w/Conference Days	\$7796.97	\$799.70	8:30 am to 12 pm
Primary Full Day Program	\$10,863	\$1106	8:30 am to 3 pm
Primary All Day Program - w/Childcare & Conference Days	\$14763	\$1496	7:30 am to 6 pm

Year Round Primary Program (When choosing the ACH option, your first tuition draw will be August 1 and your last tuition draw will be July 1)	If Paid Annually (3% discount when paid in full)	If Paid Monthly (includes \$20 ACH fee)	Hours
Primary Year Round Program	\$16,739	\$1414	7:30 am to 6 pm

Elementary Program (When choosing the ACH option, your first tuition draw will be August 1 and your last tuition draw will be May 1)	If Paid Annually (3% discount when paid in full)	If Paid Monthly (includes \$20 ACH fee)	Hours
Elementary - Program Only	\$12,964	\$1316	8:15 am to 3 pm
Elementary - w/5 Hours Childcare	\$14,755	\$1495	8:15 am to 3 pm
Elementary - w/Conference Days	\$14,023	\$1,422	8:15 am to 3 pm
Elementary - w/5 Hours Childcare & Conference Days	\$15,526	\$1,572	8:15 am to 3 pm
All Day Elementary - w/Conference Days	\$16,434	\$1663	7:30 am to 6 pm



Deposit: A one time deposit, of \$1,000, is due upon enrollment. This deposit is held on account until the tuition is paid in full. At this point the deposit will be held and applied to next year's enrollment. If your child is aging out of the program or you have notified the school that your child is not returning prior to May 1, you will receive your deposit back. In the event you withdraw your child from the school mid-year, the deposit is nonrefundable and the remaining tuition is due.

Material Fees: A non-refundable materials fee is due at the time of the enrollment contract. This fee is per student, depending on your program. The material fee is not prorated if the student is enrolled mid-year. For the 24/25 school year, the material fees are as follows: \$75 for preschool (primary), \$150 for kindergarten (Extended Day/Kindergarten), and \$250 for elementary.

Sibling Discount: If a family has two children enrolled, the total enrollment deposit for the younger sibling living in the same household is 50% of the deposit fee. The enrollment deposit for a third enrolled child living in the same household is \$0.

If a family has more than one child enrolled, they are eligible for a sibling discount on their tuition. The discount is 5% and will be deducted from the youngest child's tuition amount.

Tuition Assistance:

We offer partial financial aid awards to families depending on their level of need and the funds we have available. In order for your tuition assistance application to be considered, please submit an inquiry form through our website, tour our facility and meet with the Administration of The Montessori School. The Montessori School also works with the Department of Human Services and other community resources to coordinate financial assistance to eligible families. All requests and information are strictly confidential. If you have any questions, please contact us at 269-349-3248 for assistance.

Returning families have until December 1st of the current year to apply for tuition assistance to be eligible for the upcoming school year. All returning families will be notified of their tuition assistance prior to the deadline for contract renewals in mid-January.

New families have until April 1st of the current year to apply for tuition assistance to be eligible for the upcoming school year. All new families will be notified of their tuition assistance prior to the deadline for contracts in May.

## **VI. School Policies**

### **A. School Hours**

Our office is open from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm Monday through Friday. Voicemail is available when business responsibilities require personnel to be away from the office temporarily. Any recorded

message will be handled promptly by the administrative staff. You may also send an e-mail to [frontdesk@themontessorischool.org](mailto:frontdesk@themontessorischool.org)

### **Primary Program Schedule**

#### *All Year Montessori (AYM)*

The AYM classes are in session year round, from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday. The AYM classrooms are closed on some major holidays and select days as indicated on the [school calendar](#).

#### *10 Month Primary Schedule*

The school year program is based in the Oak Room and is open from 7:30am-6:00pm, 10 months per year, Monday through Friday. Preschool students may be enrolled in the All-Day program (7:30am-6:00pm), Full-Day (8:30am-3:00pm), or Half-Day Program Only (8:30am-12:00pm). If you need care outside the hours you selected on your contract, please contact our office to request a program change.

Extended Day is what we call our Kindergarten program. In the Oak Room it runs from 8:30-3:00 Monday through Friday. Families may select the All-Day program (7:30am-6:00pm) if additional hours are needed.

### **Elementary (Black Walnut) Schedule**

The Black Walnut room is open from 7:30am-6:00pm, 10 months per year, Monday through Friday. Elementary students may be enrolled in the Full-Day program (7:30am-6:00pm) or Elementary only (8:15am-3:00pm). Please note that childcare is only available as add-ons listed in the contract. If you need care outside the hours you selected on your contract, please contact our office to request a program change.

### **B. Accounting Policies**

Pick-up / Drop off: If the child is not picked up before the program ends, a \$15 fee is charged every 15 minutes.

Tuition Installments & Prepayment: Annual program fees are collected through ACH transfer or paying tuition in full. If you choose to pay your tuition through monthly installments they begin August 1<sup>st</sup> and monthly thereafter for the length of the contract. There is a service fee for monthly installment plans of \$20 a month. If you choose to pay your tuition in full, including music lessons and music books, this is due on August 1st.

Overdue Accounts: If a payment is late, a late fee of 1.5% is added to the unpaid balance on the first day of the month, each month after the invoice was due. After 60 days past due, you will be required to withdraw your child or be unable to begin school. Enrollment in other programs, e.g.,

summer programs, enrichment classes, next academic year and deposits for the following year will not be accepted unless your account is current. If your account is past due, all monies paid will be posted to the outstanding balance. Thereafter, monies paid may be used to secure future enrollment, provided they are accompanied by a signed re-enrollment contract demonstrating your intent. Accounts that remain unpaid will be referred to collections.

### **C. No School Days**

School is CLOSED and no services are provided on the days listed on our [school calendar](#). Please note that childcare add-on packages were available in enrollment contracts this year. If you did not opt to add childcare on these scheduled breaks and records days, you may contact the office to complete a new contract program change form.

### **D. Attendance**

Regular, punctual attendance is necessary for your child to receive the full benefit of the Montessori program. A vital part of our student's success is the **uninterrupted** 3 hour work cycle that occurs in the Montessori Classroom. When a student is late this interrupts other students, takes away from your student's work time, and is challenging for staff. Families should notify the office by 8:45am if a child is unable to attend school. Call the office and submit the daily health check form noting their symptoms or reason for keeping them home. Children with a contagious disease must be kept home for the health and safety of the other children. You must inform the office if your child contracts a contagious disease. More information can be found under the "Health Policies" section.

Tardy Policy: Continuous tardiness is an interruption to the classroom environment and learning of all students. We ask that you do your best to arrive daily on time with the understanding that occasional occurrences will happen. Please let the classroom and/or office know if you are running late. After 8:15am (elementary)/8:30 (primary) your student will be marked as tardy.

- 5 Tardies: Lead Guide will speak with the family and help problem solve ideas for a timely arrival.
- 10 Tardies: Lead Guide and Head of School will speak with the family and talk through options on how to alter morning routine, arrival, etc. in order to help with timeliness.
- 10+ Tardies: After 10 tardies the student will be missing an adequate amount of instructional time and can be dismissed from the program and asked to leave. The Head of School will meet with Administrative staff and notify the family of their decision.

Primary students: Daily attendance is vital for your child's development. If a student must be away for any length of time for reasons other than illness, families should contact the school in advance to discuss the situation.

Elementary students: Elementary-age children need to attend school each day. Children who miss school regularly often have academic gaps, and inconsistent schedules can result in social/emotional difficulties in class.

## **E. Arrival & Dismissal**

### Drop-off Procedure for Primary Students

- Adult pulls into the 750 parking lot and parks near the classroom door.
- Adult assists the child from the car with belongings and walks them to the classroom door.
- Adult rings the classroom doorbell and waits for Classroom staff to open the door.
- Child enters the classroom and Adult leaves the 750 parking lot.

### Drop-off Procedure for Elementary Students

- Adult pulls into the 710 parking lot and is directed to pull through the parking lot to the colored cone. Family remains in the car.
- Student waits in the car and removes the seatbelt and gathers belongings.
- Student exits the car and walks safely behind the orange cones to the elementary entrance. Families should remain parked until they are sure their child is behind the orange cones.

## **Late Arrival**

Late arrival (after 8:15am for Elementary students and after 8:30am for Primary students) must be scheduled in advance with the front office. Please try to arrive on time as late arrivals will be disruptive to the classroom. Please follow this procedure:

- Contact the front office and indicate the exact time of your child's late arrival.
- Office staff will notify the classroom community to make arrangements for receiving the child at the pre-arranged late arrival time.
- Please come to the main office and sign your child in.

## **Departure for Primary Students**

- If your child gets picked up after 3:30pm, please call/text the classroom cell phone ten minutes prior to arrival so that we can have your child ready for you.

## **Departure for Elementary Students**

- Adult pulls into the 710 parking lot and is directed to pull through the parking lot to the colored cone.
- Wait in your vehicle and your child will be escorted to you.
- TMS staff will not help students with seatbelts. Please make sure your child knows how to buckle themselves in securely.

- If your child gets picked up after 3:30pm, please call/text the classroom cell phone ten minutes prior to arrival so that we can have your child ready for you.

### **Early Departure**

- Contact the front office and indicate the exact time of your child's departure.
- Office staff will notify the classroom community to make arrangements for dismissing the child at the pre-arranged time.
- Please come into the office and sign your child out with the office staff and get your student.

### **Dismissal and Release of Children**

Please pick up your child at their designated time. If you will be late, please call the school. Children who are picked up outside of their program hours three or more times will result in the office moving their program to one with more hours and increased tuition. Please note that classrooms are only staffed for the programs families selected on their contract. Late pick ups may result in staffing difficulties for the school and are unfair to the families enrolled in extended hour programs.

For your child's protection, we will not release a child to someone other than a custodial caregivers, legal guardian, or individuals designated on the Family Information Sheet (Approved Adults) unless written authorization is provided to the school. We will ask for photo identification of the person picking up your child. Authorization can be granted on the emergency information form, but make sure to include a note anytime changes in regular dismissal are made. When your child arrives for the day, their arrival time will be recorded by a staff member. The departure time, also noted by a staff member, will be recorded as the time you and your child leave the school grounds for the day. Staff members will be happy to discuss this process with you if you have any questions. Attendance will be kept on Transparent Classroom and available to families there.

### **F. School Closings**

In the event of a snowstorm, weather emergency, or unforeseen school closure, please tune in to WWMT News Channel 3 for announcements about school closings.

We will also post information on our social media accounts and a message on Transparent Classroom. We know that many families rely on students being at school so they can attend work. Our school will balance that knowledge with the safety of our staff when making decisions regarding school closures.

We realize that many of you live some distance from school and we encourage you to use your

own judgment when deciding whether to venture out in questionable weather and road conditions. School work can always be made up.

During a power outage, the school is unable to receive incoming calls. When a power outage occurs, we will assess the estimated time of restoration and weather conditions to determine if the school needs to close. Notifications of closure will be made via [WWMT Channel 3 school closings](#), social media accounts, and Transparent Classroom. If it is determined that we will need to close, you must make arrangements to have your child picked up within one hour of the stated closing time.

## **G. Health Policies**

### **1. Immunizations**

According to Public Act 368 of 1978, any child enrolling in a Michigan school for the first time must be adequately immunized. Exemptions to these requirements are granted for medical, religious and other objections, provided that the waiver forms are properly prepared, signed and delivered to school administrators. Forms for these exemptions are available at the Kalamazoo County Health Department.

### **2. Illness**

For the protection of all of the students at the school, the school staff reserves the right to send a child home whose health (according to Department of Health guidelines) poses a threat to other children in the program. Any ill child should be kept home. Families will only need to complete the Health Screener if their child is ill to track illness. Please note that children must be fever-free without medication for 24 hours before returning to school. Children should not be brought to school or school events if they:

- Have vomited or had diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- Require more rest time than what is provided by the program
- Are unable to play outside
- Have a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher without the use of medication.
- Have a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher without the use of medication AND the addition of ANY other symptoms including:
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  - Chills
  - Repeated shaking with chills
  - Muscle pain
  - Headache
  - Sore throat

- Loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea

\*If a student is sent home sick or is too ill to attend the school day they will not be allowed to attend school events that day/evening in consideration for others.

Students will be sent to the main office if they have a fever of 100.4 degrees or higher and/or have any other symptoms of illness (see above). A staff member will care for them while contacting an adult for pick up. Determining illness will be at the discretion of the staff. Families will need to pick up their child as soon as possible once they are contacted. For everyone's safety, caregivers must agree to keep children home who are ill or appear to be ill. Materials and furniture touched by the child who is sent home will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Any student sent home for illness will be encouraged to consult with their doctor. The doctor can make a recommendation for an appropriate return.

The school reports weekly on communicable illnesses to the Kalamazoo County Health Department. If your child has a communicable illness, COVID (please call or email the office for further guidance), mumps, strep, chicken pox, hepatitis, pneumonia, measles, rubella, scarlet fever, scabies, pertussis, haemophilus/influenzae type b, encephalitis or meningitis, you must report this to the school office by phone/email as soon as possible and complete the health screening form.

All reports and data associated with serious diseases, such as HIV infection and AIDS, that are furnished by the Department of Health or a local health officer are confidential. Any further disclosure about a serious disease can only be made with written permission of the child's guardian.

### **Handwashing**

We will reinforce regular health and safety practices with children and staff and continue to comply with licensing regulations and CDC hand washing guidelines as follows:

- Staff and students will wash hands upon arrival and frequently throughout their time at the school.
- Staff and students will wash their hands often and thoroughly for at least 20 seconds using soap and water.
- Soap and water are the best option, especially if hands are visibly dirty. If hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can be used if soap and water are not regularly available.

Hand Hygiene is especially important after blowing one's nose, going to the bathroom, before and after eating, and after touching one's face. Additional hand washing signs have been added to our

common areas as a reminder to wash hands frequently. Students will receive hand washing lessons and be reminded frequently to wash their hands thoroughly.

### **3. Handling Bodily Fluids**

All staff members are trained in universal cleaning procedures to protect the children and themselves from possible contamination from bodily fluids.

### **4. Cleaning & Sanitizing**

We will engage in the following cleaning and disinfecting practices in accordance with CDC recommendations:

- Routine cleaning/disinfecting of high-touch surfaces (e.g., sinks, toilets, light switches, doorknobs, counter and tabletops, chairs).
- Normal routine cleaning of outdoor spaces, with special attention to high-touch plastic/metal surfaces (e.g., grab bars, railings).
- Bathrooms will be disinfected regularly.
- Use of a schedule for regular cleaning and disinfecting tasks.
- Cleaning dirty surfaces using detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- Use of CDC-recommended disinfectants such as EPA-registered household disinfectants, diluted bleach solution, and/or alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol.
- Materials that cannot be cleaned and sanitized will not be used.
- Materials will be cleaned and sanitized between each use.
- Machine washable cloth materials will be used by one individual at a time and will be laundered before being used by another child.
- Keeping cleaning products secure and out of reach of children, avoiding use near children, and ensuring proper ventilation during use to prevent inhalation of toxic fumes.

### **5. Medication Administration**

Any medicine that is brought to school must be given to a TMS staff member. It cannot be kept in your child's bag or lunch box. There are three things you must know about how we handle medications. These policies are for the protection of your child.

- A medication authorization form must be filled out, which includes the length of time the medication is to be dispensed. These medication authorization forms (available in each classroom) must be completed and signed before staff can give your child medicine. One form needs to be completed for each medication your child is taking. This form must be filled out completely.
- Give the medication to an adult. No medications are to be in lunch boxes. If you want your child to have vitamins or nonprescription drugs, please administer them at home.



- The medication to be dispensed must be in its original, labeled pharmacy container with your child's name on it. This rule is for clarification in case of an allergic reaction and to help prevent any mistakes in medications. This cannot be expired.

## **H. Child Safety**

Family Notifications: Families or their authorized emergency contacts will be notified immediately of any major accidents, injuries, or illnesses. For minor occurrences they will be notified by the end of the day. Behavioral incidents will be communicated on a case by case basis, depending on the seriousness of the incident (determined by Lead Staff). You will be contacted either immediately by phone for urgent matters, or at the end of the school day for less serious matters. Families are expected to pick their child up within 30 minutes of notification.

Child Abuse & Neglect: All individuals working in schools, child care centers, medical facilities and others who work with children are Mandated Reporters and required by law to inform Child Protective Services at the Department of Human Services of any suspected abuse or neglect of children. By law, a suspicion of child abuse generally means that the reporter has “reasonable cause to believe” or “reasonable cause to know or suspect” that a child is being maltreated physically, emotionally or mentally. Employees are trained in identifying abuse and neglect.

Employee Screening: All employees are subject to criminal screening through the State Police, and fingerprinted as mandated by the State of Michigan. Potential employees are required to interview, and provide references. All volunteers are screened for abuse and child neglect.

Body Safety: TMS Staff receive annual abuse prevention training, and follows the 5 safety steps:

1. Know the Warning Signs
2. Control Access through Screening
3. Monitor all Programs
4. Be aware of Children's Behavior
5. Communicate Your Concerns

Building Security and Emergency Preparation: Fire Safety inspection is done on a yearly basis. The Montessori School conducts fire, tornado, and shelter in place drills regularly throughout the year. We follow safety and emergency plans that are reviewed on an annual or as needed basis. During the day, all entrances to the building are locked (the door can be opened from the inside). There are doorbells on the entrances, but during the school day, everyone is asked to use the main/office door at both campuses.

Visitors: We encourage caregivers to speak with a Lead Guide to arrange classroom visits. Visitors should be prepared to follow the rules and norms within the classrooms. If visitors pose a

distraction or are not able to abide by the classroom norms they may be asked to leave or schedule a more suitable time.

Harassment: All children must be free from harassment and bullying in our school. Children may not be cruel and/or abusive to each other in any way in our environment. If you believe an incident of harassment has occurred with your child, please report it immediately to your child's Lead Guide. The Head of School will investigate with the staff members involved and take appropriate action.

Weapons: The Montessori School is a private property. No weapons of any sort are allowed on our campuses. Any individual who is found to have brought a weapon on campus (regardless of a license to carry), will be prohibited from being on The Montessori School property in the future.

## **I. Communication**

School Calendar: A calendar of events for the school year is available on our website. Changes and updates are made regularly on the calendar and are also communicated to you through our bi-weekly electronic newsletter.

Voicemail: The main office telephone number (269-349-3248) has voice mail capabilities. Voice mail is also convenient for leaving us after-hours messages. We check voice mail regularly throughout the day.

Email: In our ongoing efforts to be more conscientious in the use of resources, nearly all communication between the school and home will be made electronically. All regular correspondence from the school will be sent via email. If you are not receiving our bi-weekly eNews (electronic newsletter) or other email communication from us please inform the office or email your correct email address to [frontdesk@themontessorischool.org](mailto:frontdesk@themontessorischool.org).

All staff members have an email address. Questions, suggestions and other communications can be initiated by email. Please visit our website for the most up-to-date staff directory and for specific contact information.

Website: General information, the calendar of events, and other useful Montessori links can be found at our site: [www.the.montessori.school.org](http://www.the.montessori.school.org).

Electronic Newsletter (eNews): You will receive school's eNews electronically every other week. This important communication provides information on school-wide activities, events, updates, and volunteer opportunities, as well as information on the specific activities of your child's classroom. *Please be sure to notify the office if you are not receiving the eNews as this is often where important updates are included.*

Social Media: Social media can serve as a bridge between the school and the broader TMS community. The Montessori School provides information about school events as well as other items of interest to the community via an active [Facebook page](#). We encourage you to Like and follow our page, and to share our information with your community of family and friends.

Transparent Classroom: Transparent Classroom is the platform we use for keeping track of attendance, lessons given, pictures, forms, progress reports, and family information. You have access to all your child's information at any time through Transparent Classroom.

Changes of address or emergency contact information: Whenever you change your address, home phone, work phone or emergency notification information, *please notify the school office directly by email at [frontdesk@themontessorischool.org](mailto:frontdesk@themontessorischool.org)*. Your information will be updated on Transparent Classroom once the office is notified. It is important that your Family information sheet is always up to date in case of an emergency. Please do not rely on your child's Lead Guide to update the office. Alerting the office is the only way to guarantee information is updated and documented throughout the school. This includes our Family Information Sheet, billing, mailing lists, and classroom files. Both the office and the Lead Guide emergency records need to be up-to-date. This is a child care licensing requirement and, of course, it is beneficial for your child's safety and protection.

Problem resolution: We believe that open communication and supportive relationships between home and school are imperative for the full development of the child. However, we know that we are all human and things don't always go perfectly to everyone's satisfaction. Occasionally there might be issues, misunderstandings, conflicts, or communication confusion between families and the school. If you have questions or concerns that you want to address, please start by contacting your child's classroom Lead Guide. You may schedule a meeting if you wish. If you are not comfortable with the outcome of that meeting, you are encouraged to contact the Head of School. Their contact information can be found on the last page of this handbook.

At some point, the Lead Guide may feel a need to meet with you about your child's development. If so, they will arrange a meeting time with you that is convenient for all parties. They may request that the Head of School attend that meeting.

## **J. Clothing & Footwear**

### **1. Clothing & Extra Items**

Dress should allow children freedom to engage in a wide range of activities. Please help your child select clothing and shoes that allow freedom of movement. All children have outdoor playtime and/or physical education every day and should dress accordingly. Younger children should wear clothing that enables them to dress themselves easily. Students in Primary classes should be sure

to have two full sets of extra clothing, including socks and underwear. Please put all items in a plastic bag labeled with the child's name.

## **2. Outside Wear**

All students go outside most days. Outerwear should be appropriate to the weather. Appropriate shoes for school are sneakers or other casual shoes that may get dirty. The best sneakers for outdoor activities have laces that must be tied. Clogs, party shoes, or flip-flops are not appropriate for safe outside play. When there is snow or mud, boots are required. When it is very cold, snow pants, mittens, and hats are required.

## **3. Indoor Shoes**

All children wear indoor shoes while in the classroom for several reasons. The Montessori method recognizes the child's need for quiet and order in the classroom to allow them the greatest opportunity for concentrated work. The opportunity to take off and put on shoes increases their level of independence and dressing skills. The children use mats for a great deal of floor work, and indoor shoes help to maintain the cleanliness of the environment, alleviating mud and dirt being tracked into the classroom with street shoes. We ask you to provide indoor shoes to be kept at school. Please encourage your child to choose simple and comfortable ones, clog or backless type shoes tend to fall off frequently and are a distraction. Please mark the child's name on both shoes.

To avoid confusion and prevent loss of clothing, please label all garments with your child's first and last name. The Lost and Found clothing will be donated at the end of the school year in June.

## **K. Nutrition: Lunches & Snacks**

Nutritious food is essential for young, growing bodies. We encourage families to establish sound eating habits at an early age.

Lunches/water bottles: At The Montessori School, families are responsible for their child's lunches. All children staying for lunch need to bring lunch each day. Our school works hard to limit the amount of waste we produce. In that spirit, we hope families will partner with us to provide their child with whole, fresh foods when possible to help us reduce the amount of packaging that will be thrown away. We will send your child's leftovers home so you can gauge what and how much your child is eating. Please use ice packs and/or thermos bottles for foods that should be kept cold or hot. Refrigeration and re-heating are unavailable.

If a child arrives at school having forgotten their lunch, the school will attempt to reach the family to bring lunch to their child. If the family cannot be reached, one will be provided.

Children should arrive at school with a clean, reusable water bottle that can be used throughout the day. Lunches and water bottles are marked with the students initials and the date daily.

Snacks: A snack will be provided by TMS for our childcare programs. Each Primary classroom will have a Sign-up Genius for caregivers to sign up for a week to provide the ingredients for morning snack. Your child's Lead Guide will provide details. Please ask your child's guide directly if you have any questions.

## **L. Naps & Quiet Time**

Preschool children benefit from scheduled periods of rest. This rest may take the form of actual napping or a quiet time for children staying all day. At The Montessori School all children four or under are required to rest. Children who do not fall asleep will have a quiet rest time that may involve but is not limited to looking at books, listening to music, or other such quiet activities. Naps are available to all children if they need or want to rest during the day. Please keep in mind that if your child is too tired to attend school and participate that we encourage you to keep them home to rest.

## **M. Outdoor Play**

Our program is designed to include outdoor play in all seasons. Students who stay in school all day need fresh air, exercise and free time on the playground. For our preschool students, we maintain a ratio of one adult for every 10 students. Therefore, we are not able to have a staff member stay inside with one or two children who are sent to school with a cold, lingering ear infection, etc. Your child should be well enough to participate fully at school if they are in attendance.

Please be sure your child has appropriate clothing for outdoor play: sturdy, warm, waterproof and easy to put on. Our students go outside rain, snow or shine. Please label everything you send to school. Children often do not recognize their own clothing. Labeling helps your child and us to sort out the myriad of items that come into school each day. Use names, not initials, and mark in an easily-read place.

## **N. Personal Possessions**

Children often want to bring their favorite possessions to school, but we ask families to discourage this practice. Sharing these items with other children in the class will become a part of the classroom learning experience. We do not allow children to bring toys into the classroom. If your child asks to bring a toy or other personal property, simply explain that such items are not allowed at school. Please do not send valuables, including money and label all items that are sent to school. We do allow children to bring a comfort object with them to nap time and that can either be kept in the school bag or kept with the nap blanket depending on whether the item will

travel to and from school. Please do not allow your child to bring a cell phone to school. In an emergency, Elementary children can use classroom phones with staff permission.

### **O. Potty Training Policy**

To attend The Montessori School Primary program, your child must be fully potty-trained. This means that your child consistently spends at least three days without an accident and without the use of a pull up. In order to not interrupt the instructional time your child must be able to use the toilet with minimal assistance. Please see our full Toileting Accident Policy [here](#).

If your child is not potty-trained by mid-July, please let us know and we can withdraw your enrollment. Your deposit will be held on account until your child is fully potty-trained and an opening exists.

### **P. Babysitting/Tutoring**

We kindly ask that you refrain from asking our TMS Staff for babysitting or tutoring services as it causes a conflict of interest and can put the employee in a difficult position regarding FERPA, scheduling and other aspects. We recognize that family needs may prompt a caregiver to ask a TMS Staff member for their services, please seek guidance from the Head of School to explore your options. Before acceptance, Staff Members need to meet and receive approval from the Head of School.

### **Q. Child Custody Arrangements**

The Montessori School is dedicated to the total development of each unique child. We believe that all children need a loving, supportive family. When a family separates, it is especially difficult for the children. Their loyalties are torn as they love and need both caregivers. The school will be supportive, open, and welcoming to both families. We will remain neutral in conflicts between caregivers.

School records, conferences, meeting information, educational materials and similar items are available to both families. Caregivers should try to schedule joint conferences with the teacher, but accommodations can be made for separate conferences. Caregivers, regardless of the custody arrangement, are entitled to information about the activities of the school and access to certain records. These records include: medical, dental and school records, day care provider's records, and notification of meetings regarding the child's education. Billing information is made available to any person who has signed the financial contract.

The school will not limit a caregiver's access to his/her child unless there is a court order on file in

the child's records at the school limiting or specifying particular conditions for a caregiver's access to the child.

## **R. School Readiness**

Do not attempt to push your child into “readiness.” Make new experiences available, but do not attempt to force him/her inappropriately. This kind of pressure can produce anxiety and cause some fear. A special orientation session that we hold for new students allows the Lead Guide an opportunity to get to know your child. It also provides the perfect climate for your child's introduction to The Montessori School.

## **S. Special Services**

Sometimes, a child may show the need for additional support services. These needs may be physical, developmental or psychological. Through intentional observations, we are able to spot needs that affect the child’s ability to learn and socialize successfully in a classroom setting. If staff identify particular areas of need, we will meet with caregivers and recommend evaluation and professional consultation.

## **T. Family Education Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA)**

- Families have the right to access their children’s educational records. The Montessori School has the obligation to inform families annually of their right to this access. Families have a right to:
  - Inspect and review the student’s educational records.
  - Seek amendment to the student’s educational records that the family believes to be inaccurate, misleading or otherwise in violation of the student’s privacy rights.
  - Consent to the disclosure of personally identifiable information contained in a student’s educational records.
  - File a complaint with the Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. 20202-4605

## **U. Family Notification of Licensing**

This school maintains a licensing notebook of all licensing inspection reports, special investigation reports and all related corrective action plans. The notebook will be available to families for review during regular business hours. Licensing inspection and special investigation reports from the past five years are available on the Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing website at [www.michigan.gov/michildcare](http://www.michigan.gov/michildcare).

## **VII. Special Events & Programs**

### **A. New Student Orientation**

The first days of the new school year are devoted to the children who are new to our environment. For new Primary students, we offer a chance for the adults at home and the child to come and meet the teacher together in the classroom. Students will also be invited to a two-hour visit to the classroom in the morning the week before school begins to practice the drop-off transition and to spend a couple of hours with fellow classmates in their new classroom environment. Please see your welcome packets for more details and sign up information. Contact [frontdesk@themontessorischool.org](mailto:frontdesk@themontessorischool.org) if you have any questions.

### **B. Caregiver Education**

#### **1. Getting Ready for Montessori**

Transitions are important. We want to help you and your child make a seamless transition to the Montessori classroom. This is a special session for new families where we welcome the adult(s) at home to join us before school starts that gives you helpful tips for the start of this new learning adventure. Working with teachers and other families you will gain insight on Montessori philosophy and learn practical techniques to prepare for the first days of school.

#### **2. Family Information Nights**

At the beginning of each year, each classroom holds an informational meeting for new and returning families. These adult-only evenings are an opportunity to explain the school and classroom plans, policies and procedures for the new year. Families have an opportunity to get acquainted, meet all classroom staff, and learn about the specifics of their child's classroom. The Lead Guide and teaching assistants will answer questions about field trips, classroom procedures, volunteer opportunities, etc. Dates for the informational meetings will be announced via email or on our school calendar.

#### **3. Journey & Discovery**

This amazing family educational opportunity allows families to experience a Montessori immersion. Childcare is available during this event. Your child is in a unique learning environment. It is not just a curriculum; it is a way of working with children. The *Journey and Discovery* is your chance to experience Montessori for yourself. The *Journey* begins Friday. You will spend time exploring the Primary and Elementary levels of the classrooms. Then the *Discovery* takes place on Saturday. After a light breakfast you will go back to the classrooms to actually work with the materials just as your child would with the teachers acting as your guides. The program is designed to be undertaken as a whole so participants attend both Friday and Saturday. More details will be announced in the bi-weekly newsletter regarding dates for this special event.



### **C. Family Observation**

If you would like to observe a class, we ask that you make arrangements with the classroom Lead Guide in advance to minimize disruption to the classroom and to make sure that the students will be in the room when you visit. When you arrive for your observation, please sign in at the office.

### **D. Student Conferences**

Family-teacher conferences are scheduled in the Fall and early Spring. Offsite childcare may be necessary to conduct your conference. Families are given the opportunity to select a convenient time for the conference. Virtual conferences are available. Lead Guides are available for special conferences as necessary, with notice and prior arrangements. Please email your child's Lead Guide to make arrangements. We believe good communication between home and school is essential to the best learning environment for the child. Lead Guides will periodically make personal phone calls throughout the school year.

### **E. Social & Fundraising Events**

Please review our [school calendar](#), bi-weekly newsletter, and Transparent Classroom for information regarding social and fundraising events.

### **F. Birthdays**

**The Birthday Walk Around the Sun:** In the Primary classrooms, each child is honored in a special celebration called "The Birthday Walk," an international Montessori tradition. Families share in this important occasion by helping their child select photographs from each year of her life and by helping her prepare a written history of milestones reached and fun times had during each year. These milestones are shared as the child walks around the "sun," once for each year celebrated. Families are invited to participate in this beautiful ceremony with their child in person or virtually with a time pre arranged by Lead Guide. In the Elementary birthday celebrations are handled differently. Your child's teacher can explain how birthdays are celebrated in her class. Children with summer birthdays select a date during the school year to celebrate their birthday.

**Invitations and Presents:** If you are planning a birthday party for your child, please do not send invitations to school unless all the children in the class are invited. If your child is attending a party after school, please do not send gifts to school with your child. We have found that these situations can be upsetting for those who are not invited.

## **VIII. Guide to the Primary Classroom**

### **A. Principles of the Classroom**

The most important time for learning is the period between birth and six years of age. Children are eager to learn from new people and experiences. They absorb all the environment has to offer and it is our responsibility to ensure the world they experience is rich, safe, nurturing, and intelligent. The foundation of self-esteem and all future learning is constructed during these early years and the Primary and Extended Day/Kindergarten Programs are designed to take advantage of this powerful, formative period. The Primary program is our fundamental, core Montessori program that runs five days a week (Monday through Friday) from 8:30 am to 12:00 noon. The preschool program offers your child a step toward independence in an environment specially created for the developing young learner. This happy and intelligent setting offers your child an opportunity to develop strong social skills as well as explore language, music, practical life skills, art, math, geography, science, culture and large motor activities.

In the primary classroom, your child will be introduced to many different concepts and will learn both through observing and through direct interaction with our beautifully crafted materials.

### **B. The Three Year Cycle**

The Montessori primary (preschool) program is a three year cycle. Children begin as early as 2 years, 9 months of age in the primary (preschool). We have found children adjust and access the Montessori environment much more successfully when they attend five days a week. Preschool aged children especially need consistency. They bond socially more readily with the other children. They also tend to progress through the full spectrum of materials in the five day format. Developmentally it is beneficial for children to experience the full three year cycle. Children move into the Extended Day/Kindergarten program at age four or five depending on their developmental readiness.

### **C. Curriculum**

#### **1. Practical Life**

Dr. Montessori structured exercises for the classroom to help children satisfy the need for meaningful activity. We refer to these as “exercises of practical life.” They include those daily activities which adults perform to maintain the environment and promote cohesive human relations. The Montessori practical life area is designed to allow the child to practice skills that will lead to greater independence and self-control. This area provides the child with the opportunity to engage in tasks associated with the real world of home, garden, and self-care. This work allows the child to develop concentration and attention to detail. Fine motor skills are honed as the child gains a sense of satisfaction that comes from completing a task. They develop a deep joy for

caring for themselves, others, and their environment. There are four distinct groups of practical life exercises:

**Care of the person:** Children learn hand washing, fastening buttons, zipping, tying, combing, and other personal hygiene skills. First children have to take care of themselves, and then reach out to the environment. We help guide the children to gradually develop independence from their families.

**Care of the environment:** With these exercises, children take responsibility for the space they use and enjoy. The Montessori classroom is kept clean and tidy and the children are, in large part, responsible for its maintenance. They delight in washing windows, tables and chairs, sweeping floors, dusting shelves, polishing, and gardening. In addition, each child is responsible for returning their materials to the shelf upon completion.

**Grace and Courtesy:** Through classroom activities and modeling by teachers, children develop the necessary skills for conversation, conflict resolution, greeting, and thanking. By participating in Grace and Courtesy exercises, children learn to positively interact and to problem solve.

**Concentration and Coordination:** The exercises in practical life are among the first presented. These preliminary exercises include spooning, pouring, using tools, opening and closing bottles, folding and matching. These lessons help the child develop their gross and fine motor skills as well as develop concentration. In addition, there are groups of exercises that involve the analysis and control of movement to facilitate coordination. There are exercises that are essentially designed for this purpose, such as walking on the line and the silence game.

## 2. Sensorial Exercises

Maria Montessori believed that nothing exists in the intellect that was not first experienced in the senses. The materials in the sensorial area are designed to help children sharpen their senses by isolating particular qualities such as size, shape, composition, color, flavor, smell, pitch, texture and weight. Each of the materials in this area is autodidactic and allows the child to work at their own pace with minimal interruption from the teacher. Children enjoy working with these materials repeatedly and often develop their own variations on the standard lesson.

## 3. Language

Language is an integral part of the entire Montessori preschool curriculum. Stories, songs, poems along with conversations with adults and peers help children increase their vocabulary and develop oral language skills. Written language is taught through a specific progression of lessons that engage the senses—children learn letters and sounds through seeing, hearing, and touching them—and through immersion in a linguistically rich classroom environment. Children first learn the phonetic

sound of each letter. Using inviting, hands-on materials the children progress by classifying objects based on their sounds and then begin putting these sounds together to create words. Once they have learned to create their own words, reading follows quickly. The children work with increasingly more challenging materials. As they progress with their reading, the focus turns to comprehension and grammar. With the development of language, children develop a greater ability to organize their thoughts and express themselves.

#### **4. Mathematics**

The materials in the math area are designed for the development of a concrete understanding of abstract mathematical concepts. The hands-on materials in the math area help the child sequentially progress from basic comparisons of different quantities and their numeric symbols, through addition and subtraction and on to the combination of numbers, multiplication, division and fractions.

#### **5. Science**

The objective of science in the Montessori classroom is to develop each child's natural sense of wonder and invite them to find answers to some of their "Why's". Each classroom contains many materials with which to explore various aspects of science.

#### **6. Geography & Cultural Studies**

Maria Montessori believed it was important to study what humans have in common to instill in the child a greater sense of belonging to the universe. By examining the similarities and differences of humans around the globe, we build a sense of connection to all human beings. Children in the Montessori classroom begin by looking at the world as a whole. Children are first introduced to the ideas of air, land, water, and continents. They then begin the study of local regions, cultures, and geography of the United States and all the continents. Colorful puzzles provide extensive hands-on exploration of world geography. Boxes containing a variety of items from each continent give the children a concrete link to peoples in other lands. Students at The Montessori School come from a variety of intersectional identities and perspectives. This allows us a unique way to introduce students to other cultures and customs and to study countries in a variety of different ways.

#### **D. Extended Day/Kindergarten**

The Extended Day/Kindergarten program is available to those children, who are 5 years of age and older and who are developmentally ready to work in the afternoon. This program, which is in session from 8:30 am to 3:00pm five days a week, is a natural extension of the student's morning session. It allows children to continue the exploration that began in the morning. The children work at their individual pace and progress toward more advanced materials. It is not a "drop-in" child care option. We evaluate the child's ability to work successfully without a nap.

Instead of their school day ending at noon with the other Primary children, Extended Day/Kindergarten students continue to work with teachers until 3pm. During this time, the children build upon the activities of the morning and undertake projects and field trips that are typically too challenging for the youngest Primary students.

Extended Day/Kindergarten students stay in the same room with the same teacher and children and take on the leadership role in the Primary classroom community. This continuity is developmentally appropriate and beneficial to the child's sense of security and well-being. The Extended Day/Kindergarten students are in our Primary classrooms in the afternoon. Younger children are either napping or doing quiet activities. This opportunity for focused attention provides the perfect bridge to elementary education.

Extended Day/Kindergarten, like all Montessori programs, emphasizes active rather than passive learning. Children learn by actively participating in their environment, mastering many skills, and experiencing explosive learning during this time. Like other Primary students, Extended Day/Kindergarten students participate in music, language and cultural study, outdoor time, and other enrichment activities.

#### **E. Typical Day for the Primary program**

7:30 am-8:15 am: Students arrive that are registered for childcare or in an AYM program

8:15 am - 8:30 am: All students arrive

8:30 am-11:30am: Morning Work Cycle

11:30-12 pm: Outdoor Freeplay

12:00 pm: Half-day Dismissal

12:00 pm: Lunch

1:00 pm: Nap/Extended Day

3:00 pm: Dismissal for children not registered in childcare

3:00 pm-6:00 pm: Childcare for registered students and AYM students

### **IX. Elementary Program**

The elementary program is a natural continuation of the philosophy, materials and methods found in the Primary room. Like classrooms for younger children, Elementary classrooms are multi-aged; they include children aged 6 to 12 years old.

#### **A. Curriculum**

In the Elementary program, students begin to move away from concrete materials and develop an ability to think abstractly as developmentally dictated. Learning tools in the Elementary classroom take on multiple and more sophisticated uses. The integrated curriculum includes: reading,

language arts, geography, music, art, mathematics, spelling, history, botany, zoology, physical science, physical education, social studies, ecology, trades, field trips and a camping trip.

The Elementary program is guided by individualized yet collaborative learning. Each child is a unique person with particular aptitudes and interests. The role of the Montessori guide is to provoke questions and teach the children the skills to answer those questions. The teacher serves as a guide to each child in their own learning, exploring a diverse curriculum, and creating rich learning experiences as the child moves from concrete to abstract thinking. Our teachers match their instruction with each child's learning style and natural talents, ensuring every child is engaged and invested in learning, and capable of achieving success.

The children in our Elementary classrooms learn to research information, write reports, and make presentations to the group. They design and carry out their own community service activities, write plays, build models of the universe, and study foreign languages. The range of topics is limitless and the curriculum is vast. Montessori has a proud history of offering excellent hands-on, concrete materials to teach abstract concepts in both science and math.

Together, children and guides create an inclusive environment that supports social and emotional development. Children help one another and come to feel that helping is part of living. The feeling in the room is more like that of an extended family, and the focus on respectful social interaction and problem solving cultivates a social maturity atypical of children of this age. The strength of these relationships allows the children to take risks, voice opinions, and creatively express themselves.

### **B. Keeping Track of Work**

Children in an elementary classroom begin to keep a record of their work. This can take the form of a journal, a work plan, or chart. Children develop work plans where they agree to do certain work during a day, week or month. The child still has the freedom to choose their own work, as well as choosing to work with another child or in a group. Keeping track of their work helps them make good work choices, and lets the teacher see which presentations have been done and which are still needed.

### **C. Elementary Field Trips & Outings**

We try to give ample notice for field trips. Notification of a field trip is given to the families at least one week prior to an off-campus event. If you wish to have alternative care for your child for the duration of the outing, you will be responsible for making these arrangements.

The safety and protection of our students is a critical concern to The Montessori School. Off-campus trips create potential hazards that require us to take special precautions. The School

reserves the right to refuse to be responsible for children off campus when past behavior patterns indicate an inability to follow directions and basic rules. If we are concerned about the safety of a child based on observed behavior, development and/or maturity, we may require the family of the child to take sole responsibility for their well-being during the trip. Family volunteers or privately contracted busing services are utilized for student transportation for field trips. All family volunteers who accompany children on field trips must be screened for child abuse and safe driving records.

One of the culminating activities for the upper elementary students is the planning and funding of end of the year class trips. There may be various small fund raising projects related to these events throughout the school year.

#### **D. 6th Year Internship Program**

The Montessori School's curriculum includes a sixth-year internship experience. These internships provide students with the opportunity to continue their education outside of the classroom in a safe, controlled environment.

Students choose from internships in the areas of plants, animals, animals, social programs, manufacturing, science, technology, education, business, farming, culinary arts, and internal opportunities at The Montessori School. In addition to developing students emotionally, socially, and academically for the middle school experience, The Montessori School's sixth-year Internship teaches independence.

#### **E. Testing**

Standardized testing means different things to different people and some educators find data from standardized tests useful in guiding instruction for individual students. Others recognize that education has been adapted to "teach to the test" there for limiting meaningful learning. Montessori educators approach assessment differently. Assessment occurs through the process of keen observation, regular work and conferencing with the student, and through self-correction that is built into the Montessori materials. The teacher is able to observe readiness for new concepts.

At The Montessori School, we acknowledge that checking for understanding is necessary in the learning process, and the ability to effectively navigate a standardized test is an important skill. At TMS, we use the MAP assessment through NWEA. Each spring and fall, the elementary children participate in the practice of standardized testing for the sake of practice itself. In some sections of the standardized test there will be similarities between the test items and the work the children

have been doing in the classroom. In other sections there will be differences. Students are provided with instruction on test-taking strategies, and are given some time to practice the strategies. Families are provided with the results of the MAP testing.

## **F. Typical Day for the Elementary Program**

7:30 am - 8 am: Students arrive that are registered for childcare

8 am - 8:15 am: All students arrive

8:15 am - 11:15 am: Morning Work Cycle

11:30 am - 12 pm: Lunch

12 pm - 12:30 pm: Recess

12:30 pm - 3 pm: Afternoon Specials / Work Time

3 pm - 3:15 pm: Dismissal for students not registered for childcare

3:15 pm - 6 pm: Dismissal for children registered for childcare

\*Students that arrive after 8:15 am will be marked as tardy and must be signed in at the Main Office.

## **X. Staff Directory**

Please visit our website for our current [staff](#) and [Board members](#).