Welcome to The Montessori School
2017-2018 Parent 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. Parents 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 parents, teachers, and children. As we begin our 45th year, we are delighted to share the many wonderful things about The Montessori School and to orient you to our policies, procedures, resources, and events.

Please review carefully the information included in this handbook. It is intended to acquaint you with the policies and procedures of the school. It is important that you read it thoroughly.

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. Please make sure that we have your most updated contact information.
- You may visit our website at 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. She is your first line of communication.
- If you believe your ideas or concerns are not being addressed, please contact us at support@themontessorischool.org.
- Questions and suggestions about billing should be directed to Susan Atkinson: susan@themontessorischool.org
- An annual parent survey provides you with an opportunity to give us feedback covering the whole program.

The Montessori School is a Michigan nonprofit organization operated by a Board of Directors 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 affiliates of Association Montessori Internationale, or The American Montessori Society.

We look forward to another wonderful and productive year.

Ann Pilzner

Head of School
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I. MISSION STATEMENT

At The Montessori School, children and families experience an individualized education that builds the foundation for a lifetime of success and a love of learning through specialized teachers, lessons and materials in accordance with the principles and philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori.

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 parents 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
- 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 parents are the principle influence in the 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, ethnic origin, sexual preference, religion, race or disability.
- We believe that intelligence is not rare, but a state of the healthy mind. As such, it can and should be nurtured and encouraged.
We believe that wisdom can be nurtured and cultivated in a positive, affirming and intelligent learning environment.

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 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 for 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 the technology of the “Information Age” must be made available to children as is appropriate for their developmental level. Access to, and instruction in the use of, computers is fundamental to the Elementary program.

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.

We nurture an extended family community within the school whose participants are supported at all levels by the whole community.
SCHOOL OVERVIEW

A. History and Philosophy

For 45 years, The Montessori School has served as a non-profit, private education institution for children ages 3–12. Our highly trained, credentialed teachers 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.

Parents 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 parents 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 teachers, administrative staff, parents, 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, handicap, 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 he/she proceeds through the learning process.

B. Campuses and Classroom Space

The Montessori School has two campuses. Our Kalamazoo campus is located at 750 Howard Street just outside downtown Kalamazoo. At this campus we have two primary classrooms for children ages 2 years 9 months to 6 years of age. Our elementary program is also located at our Kalamazoo campus for children ages 6-12 years of age. We have one class of lower elementary children, grades 1st through 3rd and one class of upper elementary students in grades 4th through 6th. Our second campus is located in Richland at 6274 N. 32nd Street. At the Richland location we have two primary classrooms for children ages 2 years 9 months to 6 years of age.

Each of the classrooms 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 – an Italian physician and educator. 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 his 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. All of The Montessori School's Lead Guides have completed extensive Montessori teacher training with either the American Montessori Society (AMS) or Association Montessori International (AMI) in additional to their bachelor's or master's degrees. Our guides use both concrete teaching materials and a well-defined innovative curriculum tailored to the child, and 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 Commitment

Parents 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.

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

Additionally, we expect parents to familiarize themselves with the philosophy, policies, and procedures contained in the Parent 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. Teachers value the assistance and participation of parents in the classroom and in adventures beyond the classroom. Both parents and students are enriched by parents’ involvement in school activities. In addition, each family is expected to contribute to the annual fundraising efforts of the school. We are a non-profit and rely on our parents and alumni families to help ensure the successful future of our school.
E. Governance

The Montessori School is a Michigan 403(b) nonprofit organization operated by a Board of Directors 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 currently consists of 10 members (parents and alumni parents of the school) along with 3 ex-officio members including the Head of School, Business Manager, and one teacher representative selected by the faculty. Board members serve three-year terms. Board terms are staggered and Board members are appointed at the Annual Meeting in May.

The Board holds regular meetings approximately 10 times per year, typically on the third Tuesday of the month. Minutes are on file in the TMS office and are available to members of the parent community upon request.

IV. ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT

A. Admission Guidelines

To be considered for enrollment at The Montessori School, children must be at least 2.9 years of age and 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. The Montessori School is open to all children regardless of race, sex, religion or creed, national origin, ancestry, ethnicity, handicap or sexual orientation.

B. Admission Process

Tour and observation: Though not required, a tour of our campus is strongly recommended. You may visit the Richland campus, the Kalamazoo campus, or both campuses. During this tour, you will meet our teachers, and will 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 financial aid application. When the applications and fees are received, we will follow up with you regarding next steps.

Parent and Student Meeting: Once a completed admissions application and application fee have been received, a meeting may be scheduled with you and your child. Elementary age children will typically visit and spend a day in a classroom.

Enrollment: The school will notify you within one week regarding the admissions decision. If accepted and space is available, 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 an enrollment deposit and materials fee are due back to the office within 10 days 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 wait list until an opening exists.
C. Student Success and Meeting Student Needs

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, she 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 make educational recommendations to your family. If we believe that Montessori will not meet your child’s needs, we will recommend alternate environments to you and remove him/her 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. Parents of children with excessively disruptive or hurtful behavior will be asked to seek professional assistance.

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 parents. 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, parents 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 parents, the School and consulting professionals. A date for a progress review will be set.
- 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, parents will be given a date by which the student will be removed from the classroom and parents 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.

- Children who are not potty trained will be withdrawn from the school.

E. Information about Programs and Tuition

i. **Annual Tuition:** The tuition charged each year is for the academic year. A deposit is due upon enrollment or re-enrollment. This deposit is held on account until the tuition is paid in full. At this point the deposit may be held and applied to next year's deposit for enrollment, applied to your account, or issued as a refund. In the event you withdraw your child from the school mid-year, the deposit is nonrefundable. Please refer to your enrollment contract for additional information.

   - Primary Program Deposit: $500
   - Extended Day Program Deposit: $1000
     ($500 can be held over from primary program enrollment)
   - Elementary Program Deposit: $1500
     ($1000 can be held over from extended day enrollment)

Once the program deposit is paid, there are two options for paying the balance of the tuition:

1. a single lump-sum prepayment in August
2. monthly installments. A service charge is associated with each of the installment plans of approximately $20.00/month.

**2017-2018 School Tuition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Tuition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary (ages 3-4, 9am to 12pm)</td>
<td>$5,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Day (kindergarten year, 9am to 3pm)</td>
<td>$8,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary (ages 6-12, 8:15am to 3pm)</td>
<td>$9,950</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ii. **Tuition Assistance:** We understand that many families would like to provide a Montessori education to their children, but are limited financially. We offer partial financial aid awards to families depending on their level of need and the funds we have available. Tuition assistance applications are reviewed on a rolling basis beginning April 1st for the following school year.

In order for your assistance application to be considered, you must first submit an admissions application and fee ($50). A link to the financial aid application can be found on the school website. If you have any questions about how to complete the application, please contact our business office for assistance. The Montessori School also works the Department of Human Services and other community resources to coordinate financial assistance to eligible families. For more information on these resources, please contact our business office. All requests and information are strictly confidential. If you would like to donate to the financial aid fund, please call the main office.
V. SCHOOL POLICIES

A. School Hours

Primary Program  9:00am - 12:00pm.  
Extended Day     9:00am - 3:00pm.  
Elementary     8:15am - 3:00pm  
Childcare      7:30am - 6:00pm

The regular Montessori School year schedule is from the day after Labor Day through mid-June. Childcare is available for Primary and Elementary children the week after school lets out. Montessori Summer for the Primary Aged child (3-6) begins the following week and continues through the second Friday of August.

Our Kalamazoo office is open from 8:00am to 4:00 pm Monday through Friday. All calls and business for Richland go through the Kalamazoo office. 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 support@themontessorischool.org

B. Accounting Policies

i. **Materials Fee:** To assist with the expense of replacing and updating the Montessori classroom materials, an annual materials fee is charged at the time of enrollment or re-enrollment. The materials fees are $50 for each primary and extended day student, and $75 for each elementary student.

ii. **Child Care Billing:** For families who use before or after school childcare and are billed at our hourly rate, fees for childcare are billed on the first of each month based on total hours of use in the preceding month. They are calculated from the time your child arrives in the classroom until he/she leaves the building with an authorized parent or guardian. The hourly child care rate is $6.50/hour for the oldest enrolled child and $4.75/hour for each additional child in the family. Beginning at 8:15, families who have a child enrolled in the Elementary receive a credit for childcare for younger siblings who arrive with their older sibling at 8:15.

iii. **Monthly Invoices:** Invoices for tuition installment payments and/or childcare are issued and e-mailed around the 5th of each month and payments are due in the office by the last business day of that month. Please make checks payable to “The Montessori School”. You may use postal mail or drop your payment in person at the Kalamazoo school office.

iv. **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. 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. An informational sheet describing Montessori’s billing process in more detail is available from the school office.
C. No School/No Childcare Days
School is CLOSED and no services are provided on the following days:

- August 21 through September 1 - Staff Training
- September 5 - Labor Day
- November 23 & 24 - Thanksgiving Break
- December 25 through January 5 - Winter Break
- May 28 - Memorial Day

D. Attendance

Regular, punctual attendance is necessary for your child to receive the full benefit of the Montessori program. Parents should notify the office by 9 a.m. if a child is unable to attend school. Children with a contagious disease must be kept home for the health and safety of the other children. Please inform the office if your child contracts a contagious disease. More information can be found under the “Health Policies” section.

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, parents should contact the school in advance to discuss the situation.

Elementary students: Legally, all elementary-age children must attend school daily. Parents should be aware that taking their children out of school for vacation could be detrimental to their education. If a vacation is scheduled, parents should discuss with the Lead Guide the educational experiences and activities that will be learned.

E. Arrival and Dismissal

Primary Students attend 9am to Noon, with a 10 minute grace period for arrival and departure
Extended Day Students attend 9am – 3pm, with a 10 minute grace period for arrival and departure
Elementary Students attend 8:15 am to 3pm, with a 15 minute grace period for arrival and 10 minute grace period for departure

If a child arrives prior to the grace period (8:50am for primary and extended day, 8:00am for elementary) child care rates will apply from the time of arrival until the program start time. If a child is present on the campus beyond the departure grace period (12:10pm for primary, and 3:10pm for extended day and elementary), childcare rates will apply from the program end time, until the child leaves the campus with their parent or guardian.

Arrival: When arriving at our school, parents of primary children should park in the parking lot and enter the building using your child’s classroom entrance where a guide or assistant will be waiting to greet you and your child.

Elementary children will all enter the building using the elementary entrance on the east side of the building. Elementary children may be dropped outside the elementary entrance and enter the building themselves or be escorted to the door by an adult.
**Dismissal and Release of Children:** Please pick up your child at the designated time. If you will be late, please call the school. For children enrolled in the 9am-12pm Primary program, dismissal time is at noon. For Extended Day and Elementary students, dismissal time is at 3pm. Children who have not been picked up within 10 minutes of dismissal time will be placed in the After School Childcare program and parents will be billed for this time. For children who are not picked up by 6pm, we charge a late fee of $5 for each 15 minutes, or portion thereof, beyond our usual closing time.

For your child’s protection, we will not release a child to someone other than a custodial parent or individuals designated on the Family Information Sheet 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.

Please be sure to let a staff member know when your child arrives and leaves the school. When your child arrives for the day, his/her 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.

**F. Late Arrival**

It is important that children arrive on time, as the beginning of the school day sets a tone for the classroom. Children who are rushed and arrive late may not be in the right frame of mind to begin their activities. We ask for your cooperation in ensuring that your child has the opportunity to begin his/her work at the start of class. Parents should not enter classrooms or disturb guides once the day has begun.

Primary children should arrive just before or promptly at 9:00 am. Elementary children should arrive no later than 8:10am. An elementary child who arrives after 8:15am must be signed in at the main office.

**G. School Closings**

In the event of a snowstorm, weather emergency, or unforeseen school closure, please tune in to WWMT CHANNEL 3 for announcements about school closings. You also may register with WWMT.com for immediate text messages sent directly to your mobile phone for updated school closings. To sign up for text alerts, go to [www.wwmt.com/community/features/closings](http://www.wwmt.com/community/features/closings). Under Mobile Alerts, click on School/Business/Church closings for directions.

We will also post information on our [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com) as we are able. Since many of you rely on us to provide child care so that you can attend work, our school is only closed when Western Michigan University and local businesses close or if we are without electricity*. Our Richland Campus will be on a 1 hour delay when Gull Lake Schools are closed.

We often remain open while many other schools are closed because those schools provide student transportation. 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. You are welcome to call the office if questionable conditions exist.

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](https://www.wwmt.com/community/features/closings), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com), and e-mail when possible. If it is determined we will need to close, you must make arrangements to have your child picked up within one hour of the stated closing time.
H. Health Policy

i. **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.

ii. **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. Children should not be brought to school if they:

- Have vomited or had diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- Require more rest time than what is provided by the program
- Currently have a fever, or have had one within the last 24 hours, over 99 degrees
- Are unable to play outside

Additionally, if your child has a communicable disease e.g., mumps, strep, chicken pox, hepatitis, pneumonia, measles, rubella, scarlet fever, scabies, pertussis, haemophilus/influenza type b, encephalitis or meningitis, you **must** report this to the school office.

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. These reports are made solely to the Head of School. Any further disclosure about a serious disease can only be made with written permission of the child’s parent or guardian.

Additional information is available from head staff members concerning health issues and Health Department guidelines. If you have any questions, please ask.

iii. **Hand washing:** children and staff wash their hands upon arriving at school daily. Children and staff wash their hands before eating, after using the bathroom and blowing their noses.

iv. **Handling bodily fluids:** all staff members are trained in universal cleaning procedures to protect the children and themselves from possible contamination from bodily fluids.
v. Cleaning and sanitizing cots and equipment: cots and sheets are washed and sanitized daily. Equipment is regularly cleaned and sanitized to minimize the spread of disease.

vi. Controlling infection: The school uses disposable paper products to control the spread of disease. If the staff notices a child showing symptoms of an infectious disease, we send the child home immediately. When waiting for parent/guardian pick up, the child will be removed from the other children and be in a separate room under staff supervision. We post signs, including symptoms, at classroom doors and institute special daily disinfection procedures. If necessary or in severe cases, the school will contact the Health Department to discuss recommended action for this particular illness.

vii. Medication administration: Any medicine that is brought to school must be given to your student’s Guide. 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.

- 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.

viii. Health Resources

- Kalamazoo County Health Department
- www.aap.org – American Association of Pediatricians
- www.mayoclinic.com/health/childrens-health – Mayo Clinic health information
- www.kidshealth.org/ – addresses a wide variety of health issues
- www.cdc.gov/ – Center for Disease Control – Infant & Child health

I. Child Safety

i. Parent Notifications: Parents or their authorized emergency contacts will be notified immediately of any accidents, injuries, or illnesses. 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.
ii. **Child Abuse & Neglect**: All schools, child care centers, physicians and others who work with children are 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.

iii. **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.

iv. **Body Safety**: TMS Staff have received abuse prevention training, and follows the 5 safety steps:

1. Know the Warning Signs
2. Control Access through Screening
3. Monitor all Program
4. Be aware of Children’s Behavior
5. Communicate your concerns

v. **Building Security and Emergency Preparation**: Fire Safety inspection is done on a yearly basis. The Montessori School conducts fire 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 (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.

vi. **Visitors**: We welcome and encourage visits to the school from parents, outside teachers, prospective families, and the larger community. When you visit the school, please sign in at the office.

vii. **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 teacher. The school will investigate and take appropriate action.

viii. **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.

**J. Communication**

Nearly all communication coming from the school will be disseminated electronically. It is essential that we have your email address and that you keep us current if that address changes. **Please make certain to read the biweekly electronic newsletter as it contains important information about your child’s classroom as well as school-wide information.**
i. **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.

ii. **Voicemail:** The main telephone numbers at each campus have voice mail capabilities. Voicemail is also convenient for leaving us after-hours messages. We check voice mail regularly throughout the day.

iii. **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 e-mail. 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 support@themontessorischool.org. All Lead Guides and administrative staff members have an e-mail address. Questions, suggestions and other communications can be initiated by e-mail. Please visit our website for the most up-to-date staff directory, for specific contact information.

iv. **Website:**
   General information, the calendar of events, and other useful Montessori links can be found at our site: www.themontessorischool.org.

v. **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. **Please be sure to provide the office with your updated email address.**

vi. **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.

vii. **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. 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 teacher emergency records need to be up-to-date. This is a Department of Consumer and Industry Services requirement and, of course, it is beneficial for your child’s safety and protection.
viii. **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 parents 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.

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

K. **Clothing and Footwear**

i. **Clothing and 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 a full set of extra clothing, including socks and underwear. Please put all items in a plastic bag labeled with the child's name.

ii. **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 open-toed sandals 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.

iii. **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.
L. Nutrition: Lunches and Snacks

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

i. **Lunches:** At The Montessori School, parents are responsible for their child’s lunches. All children staying for lunch need to bring a lunch each day. **Please be sure to send nutritious lunches your child will eat and enjoy, and which also include the important basic food groups. Please do not send candy, pop or sugary foods.** We discourage prepackaged foods (i.e. Lunchables, Hot Pockets, Chef Boyardee, etc.). We will send your child’s leftovers home so you can gauge what and how much your child is eating. Refrigeration is available, but we cannot reheat food. You may use thermos bottles if you wish.

ii **Lunches (continued):** If a child arrives to school having forgotten their lunch, the school will attempt to reach the parent to bring a lunch to their child. If the parent cannot be reached, or cannot bring a lunch to the child, one will be provided.
The list below provides diverse ideas for healthy foods that can be prepared and packed for your child’s lunch.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breads</th>
<th>Spreads &amp; Condiments</th>
<th>Fillings</th>
<th>Fruits (fresh &amp; dried)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bagel</td>
<td>almond butter</td>
<td>carrots (shredded)</td>
<td>apples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baguette</td>
<td>apple butter</td>
<td>cheese (lite/low-fat)</td>
<td>apricots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bread sticks</td>
<td>avocado (mashed)</td>
<td>chicken</td>
<td>Asian pears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crackers</td>
<td>banana (mashed)</td>
<td>chicken salad</td>
<td>blueberries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English muffin</td>
<td>brie cheese</td>
<td>egg salad</td>
<td>cherries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>focaccia</td>
<td>cashew butter</td>
<td>hard boiled egg</td>
<td>cranberries (dried)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lavash bread</td>
<td>cream cheese (lowfat)</td>
<td>nitrite-free hot dogs</td>
<td>dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pita bread</td>
<td>goat cheese</td>
<td>lettuce</td>
<td>figs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pizza bread</td>
<td>honey</td>
<td>shrimp salad</td>
<td>mango</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rice cakes</td>
<td>hummus</td>
<td>sliced avocado</td>
<td>papaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rolls</td>
<td>jam (spreadable fruit)</td>
<td>sliced cucumber</td>
<td>pears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sandwich</td>
<td>ketchup</td>
<td>smoked salmon</td>
<td>prunes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bread</td>
<td>mayonnaise/mustard</td>
<td>sprouts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tortillas</td>
<td>peanut butter</td>
<td>tofu</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pesto</td>
<td>tuna salad</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pizza or tomato sauce</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pumpkin butter</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetables</th>
<th>Treats</th>
<th>Other Grains</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>asparagus</td>
<td>applesauce</td>
<td>pasta</td>
<td>baked tofu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beets</td>
<td>baked chips with salsa</td>
<td>rice</td>
<td>bean burrito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bell peppers</td>
<td>dried fruit</td>
<td>couscous</td>
<td>cottage cheese with fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bok choy</td>
<td>fruit bar</td>
<td>oatmeal</td>
<td>garlic toast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broccoli</td>
<td>fruit leather</td>
<td>bulgar</td>
<td>polenta with pizza sauce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brussels</td>
<td>granola</td>
<td></td>
<td>and cheese</td>
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<tr>
<td>sprouts</td>
<td>popcorn</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>cabbage</td>
<td>pretzels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>carrots</td>
<td>trail mix</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>cauliflower</td>
<td>yogurt with fruit</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>celery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cucumbers</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>eggplant</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>green beans</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>lettuce</td>
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<tr>
<td>mushrooms</td>
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<td>seaweed (nori,</td>
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<td>hijiki)</td>
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<tr>
<td>shelling peas</td>
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<tr>
<td>snap peas</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soy beans (edamame)</td>
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<tr>
<td>spinach</td>
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<tr>
<td>squash</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sweet potatoes</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>yams</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>zucchini</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: wastefreelunches.org

ii. **Elementary Pizza Days**: The 5th year students organize sales to hold regular pizza days for lunch and the pizza is available to all Kalamazoo students who elect to participate. The funds they generate from these sales are used to fund the 5th year trip. Organizing pizza days is an excellent learning experience; the children have developed some ingenious systems over the years to meet the needs of their customers. The cost for participating in pizza days will be distributed to Kalamazoo families near the beginning of the school year.

iii. **Snacks**: In each classroom, parents provide items for morning snacks on a rotating basis. A calendar indicating the days you are responsible for snacks will be sent home monthly and also be included in the bi-weekly newsletter. When the snack items are not designated by the Lead Guide, please be sure that snack items are nutritional and, when possible, involve your child in preparing the snack to be shared with classmates. Suggestions include items like fresh fruit, crackers & cheese, pretzels,
muffins, yogurt, or vegetables and dip. Some classrooms ask for supplies or ingredients that are used by the children in the classroom to prepare (e.g., bake or make) the snack. Your Lead Guide will provide details at the information night meeting. Please ask your child’s teacher directly if you have any questions. If your child remains for after school childcare, the school provides the after school snacks. These snacks include fresh or canned fruit, crackers and cheese, tortilla chips and salsa, vegetables and dip, yogurt, and other similar items.

iv. Nutrition and Fitness Online Resources.

- [www.bcm.edu/cnrc/resources/kids.html](http://www.bcm.edu/cnrc/resources/kids.html) — Baylor University nutrition
- [www.americanheart.org/](http://www.americanheart.org/) — American Heart Association — Children’s Health

M. Naps and 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 under four 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.

N. 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 he/she is in attendance.

In the winter, our preschoolers play outside as long as the wind chill factor is above 0 degrees; if it is below that temperature, they will stay inside. Elementary students may go outside in colder weather at the discretion of the teacher.

Please be sure your child has appropriate clothing for outdoor play: sturdy, warm and easy to put on. Also, label, label, label. 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 the School each day. Use names, not initials, and mark in an easily-read place.
O. Personal Possessions

Children often want to bring favorite possessions to school, but we ask parents to discourage this practice. We welcome books, items made by the child, or objects related to culture, science, or nature. 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, playthings and electronic devices including cell phones 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.

P. Potty Training Policy

To attend The Montessori School, your child must be fully potty-trained. This means that your child consistently spends at least three days without an accident. If your child is not potty-trained by August, 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.

Q. Babysitting

Parents recognize the nurturing quality of our staff members and naturally wish to invite them to baby-sit. However, we require that our staff members not contract privately with families of currently enrolled students. Please do not ask any members of our staff to baby-sit for your children.

R. Child Custody Issues

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 parents. The school will be supportive, open, and welcoming to both parents. We will remain neutral in conflicts between parents.

School records, conferences, meeting information, educational materials and similar items are available to both parents. Parents should try to schedule joint conferences with the teacher, but accommodations can be made for separate conferences. Parents, 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 parent'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 parent's access to the child.

S. Academic Readiness

Academic readiness is not an issue at The Montessori School. In the preschool program your child will not be evaluated as one of the criteria for enrollment. Whether your child knows colors or numbers is irrelevant. Of greater importance, the teacher is concerned about the whole child: his/her ability to communicate and to cooperate, and eagerness to accept and seek out new experiences.
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.

**T. Special Services**

Occasionally a child may evidence the need for special services. These needs may be physical, developmental or psychological. We have been working with children for a long time. We are trained to spot needs that affect the child’s ability to learn and socialize successfully in a classroom setting. We will recommend evaluation and professional consultation. The school does not contact or contract for outside services. It is the decision and responsibility of the parents to make those arrangements.

We make every attempt to provide space for private tutoring and other services contracted for by parents with other organizations. However, we have limited space. All requests for private tutoring space must be made through the office.

**U. Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA)**

Parents have the right to access their children’s educational records. The Montessori School has the obligation to inform parents annually of their right to this access.

Parents have a right to:

- Inspect and review the student’s educational records.
- Seek amendment to the student’s educational records that the parent 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.

**V. Parent Notification of the Licensing Notebook Requirement**

This center maintains a licensing notebook of all licensing inspection reports, special investigation reports and all related corrective action plans.

The notebook will be available to parents for review during regular business hours.

Licensing inspection and special investigation reports from the past two years are available on the Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing website at [www.michigan.gov/michildcare](http://www.michigan.gov/michildcare).
VI. SPECIAL EVENTS AND 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, three shortened days, Tuesday, August 29, Wednesday, August 30, and Thursday, August 31, from 9am to 11am are just for the new students. Orientation is a crucial component in your child’s successful introduction to the class. Please plan vacations, appointments, etc., around these important days.

B. Parent Education

i. Getting Your Child 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 before school starts that gives you helpful tips for the start of this new learning adventure. Working with teachers and other parents you will gain insight on Montessori philosophy and learn practical techniques to prepare for the first days of school.

   Richland - Tuesday, August 15, at 6:30 pm
   Kalamazoo - Thursday, August 17, at 6:30 pm

ii. Journey and Discovery. This amazing parent educational opportunity allows parents to experience a Montessori immersion. 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.

C. Parent Observation

All parents are welcome and encouraged to observe our classrooms. Seeing the children at work is to experience the Montessori philosophy in action. To make your observation more meaningful: take a look around the room and notice the amount and diversity of activity; the range of ages; the types of materials; the individual and group activity; and the interaction of the children. Focus your attention on the Lead Guide and notice the composure, the teacher as observer, and the respect the Lead Guide shows each child. Focus your attention on your child and notice the succession of activities; the concentration on work; enthusiasm and self-satisfaction in each activity; and the child’s respect for other children, the materials, and the adults.
If you would like to observe a class, we ask that you make arrangements with the classroom Lead Guide or the Admissions Coordinator 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.

During a formal in-class observation, we request that you adhere to the following guidelines: sit quietly in the observation chairs indicated; try not to make your presence felt; do not initiate conversation; and do not handle the materials. We recommend these guidelines to minimize interference in the children’s peaceful environment. Feel free to make notes of items you would like to discuss during your conference with the classroom teacher.

**D. Parent Information Nights.**

At the beginning of each year each classroom holds an informational meeting for new and returning parents. These parent-only evenings are an opportunity to explain the school and classroom plans, policies and procedures for the new year. Parents 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 can be found on our website at www.themontessorischool.org/calendar

**E. Student Conferences**

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled in the Fall and early Spring. Parents are given the opportunity to select a convenient time for the conference. Lead Guides are available for special conferences as necessary. Speak directly with your child’s teacher to make arrangements. We believe good communication between home and school is essential to the best learning environment for the child. Head teachers will periodically make personal phone calls throughout the school year.

Parents of children with special needs may request a written daily record which may include food intake, sleeping patterns, elimination patterns, developmental milestones and changes in the child’s usual behaviors.

**F. Classroom Family Nights**

Children love to share their experiences, so this evening is set aside for the children to show parents and other family members around their classroom. It is always a very special evening for your scholar. The evening begins at 5:30 pm. We are out the door at 7:30pm because we appreciate your need to be home in the evening as a family. Check the school calendar for the dates of your child’s classroom family open houses.

**G. Social and Fundraising Events**

i. **Fall Picnic and Ice Cream Socials.** Please join families and staff for these fun events to kick off the school year! If you would like to bring a picnic and a blanket, please do so. We provide the ice cream. The Kalamazoo Campus Ice Cream Social will be held on September 12 from 5:30-7:00pm on the Kalamazoo Campus Playground. The Richland Ice Cream Social will be held at on September 14 from 5:30-7:00pm at the Richland Campus Playground.
ii. **Oktoberfest.** This fun family fall festival will be held at our Kalamazoo campus on Friday, October 6 from 5:30pm-7:30pm. Please watch the e-News for more information.

iii. **Montessori Main Event.** Our annual fundraising activity is an adults only evening out and we welcome all families, friends, staff, alumni, and supporters of The Montessori School to come together for this special evening of fellowship. This year the event will be held on a Saturday in the spring. Last year we raised almost $35,000! Please join us to support the school. The Montessori School is a nonprofit organization, and all donations are tax deductible.

**H. Field Trips and Going Out Excursions**

We try to give ample notice for field trips. Notification of a field trip is given to the parents 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 parent of the child to take sole responsibility for their well-being during the trip. Lead Guides and supervisory staff can exclude a child from an outing if this parental supervision is not available.

Parent volunteers (preschool and elementary students) or privately contracted busing services (elementary students) are utilized for student transportation for field trips. All children under 4’ 9” must be secured in a child safety seat or child booster seat. All parent volunteers who accompany children on field trips must be screened for child abuse and safe driving records.

For elementary students, Going Out Excursions offer enrichment opportunities beyond the classroom setting. Some field trips include all elementary students; others include only one class or age group. These Going Out trips allow children to see, hear, and experience what we cannot offer within the classroom walls. The trips usually relate to the topics being studied, but also may be scheduled to observe steps in a process or places and events that foster community awareness. We also attend musical events and visit museums of art in the area.
I. Birthdays

i. **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. Parents 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. Parents are invited to participate in this beautiful ceremony with their child. 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.

ii. **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.

J. Great Skate Outings

Two fun outings to Great Skate Roller Skating Rink days are held each year: the day before the Thanksgiving break and the day before spring break. Elementary children go skating with the staff and parent volunteers in the afternoon as part of our program.

K. Music Concerts

i. **Winter concert in Kalamazoo.** Each year our Elementary and Extended Day students at the Kalamazoo campus present a musical program for their families. This year it is scheduled for Friday, December 15, at 5:30pm at the Free Methodist Church.

ii. **Richland Winter Wassailing Concert.** The children at the Richland campus hold a short concert. This year the concert will be held at Living Hope Community Church in Richland on Thursday, December 7, from 5:30-6:30pm.

iii. **All-School Spring Concert.** This annual special performance is the opportunity for us to showcase the wonderful music program we have at The Montessori School. All children participate in this concert, performing with their voices, musical instruments, and dancing. This year the Spring Concert is scheduled for Tuesday, May 29. All children from both campuses participate, and we welcome all of our families and their guests to attend. If your family plans will prevent your child from participating, please let your child’s teacher or Hal know so another student can be assigned to take your child’s place.

L. End of Year Celebration

The families from both of the Richland and Kalamazoo community campuses are invited to join together for an end of the year celebration at the Sherman Lake YMCA camp in Augusta, MI. This event is a fun afternoon and evening of games, waterfront activities, picnic, and use of the wonderful Sherman Lake YMCA facilities. Watch for more details regarding date and time to come in the bi-weekly e-news, and also via Facebook, and an individual e-mail communication from the school.
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 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 9:00 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 at three years 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. Pre-school 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 program at age four or five depending on their developmental readiness.

C. Curriculum

i. 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 parents.

- **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 his/her 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 his/her 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.

ii. **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.

iii. **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.
iv. **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.

v. **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.

vi. **Geography and 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 rich cultural backgrounds. This allows us a unique way to introduce students to other cultures and customs and to study countries in a variety of different ways.

vii. **Special Offerings:** Students also experience art, music, languages, and physical movement as part of the Primary program. Regular singing, movement, and use of musical instruments is offered to all Primary children in both large and small groups by our Music Teacher, Hal Hobson.

**D. Extended Day (Kindergarten)**

The extended day program is available to children who are in their third year of the program and are developmentally ready to do work in the afternoon. This program, which is in session from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm five days a week, is a natural extension of the student’s morning session. It allows children to continue the exploration begun 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. Admission to the Extended Day program is based on the child’s development, not on chronological age. We evaluate the child’s ability to work successfully without a nap. This usually occurs when the child is between 4 and 5 years old, and often happens mid-year as a child demonstrates the developmental milestones that indicate readiness.

Instead of their school day ending at noon with the other Primary children, Extended Day 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 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. Only the Extended Day students are in our Primary classrooms in the afternoon. Younger children are either napping or have gone home for the day. This opportunity for focused attention provides the perfect bridge to the elementary education.
Extended Day, 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 students participate in music, language and cultural study, outdoor time, and other enrichment activities.

E. Summer Program
Our Montessori Summer program is available to currently enrolled students three through six years of age. Enrollment information is distributed in March/April each year. You are encouraged to reserve a place for your child early in the Spring because space is limited.

F. Typical Daily Schedule

7:30 am - 9:00 am: Childcare and arrival. Children engaged in wide variety of activities that include individual play, small group activities, care and feeding of plants and animals.

9:00 am - 11:15 am: Independent work choice time. The children are engaged in a wide variety of activities working individually, in small groups, or the whole group together. The teacher meets with individual or small groups of children throughout the morning. Children also participate in music time and snack.

11:15 am: The children put away materials, clean up, and prepare to go outside.

11:30 am: Outdoor play

12:00 pm: Primary children are dismissed to their parents from the playground. Extended day children and younger children who remain all day return indoors and prepare for lunch.

12:15 pm: Children begin lunch

12:45 pm: Children begin lunch clean up

1:00 pm: Younger children nap, or engage in quiet Montessori activities in the childcare room. Extended Day children who no longer nap engage in the afternoon work period.

2:45 pm: Extended Day children put away materials and clean up. Napping children wake up from nap.

3:00 pm: Outdoor play and dismissal

4:20 pm: Children in after school childcare program return indoors

4:20 pm - 6:00 pm: Snack, story time creative dramatics and individual work choice

6:00 pm: Closing Time

G. 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, deal with 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 he/she is having
- offering alternative solutions to the problem
- involving children in solving the problem
- ensuring a relationship between the behavior and the discipline method
- tailoring the method of discipline to the individual child
- removing the child from the source of conflict

Students who are disruptive or hurtful to others will be asked to reflect on their choices. Parents of children with excessively disruptive or hurtful behavior will be asked to seek professional assistance. Parents may be required to remove their child from the class if his/her behavior significantly disrupts the harmony of the group. (See withdrawal and enrollment termination.)
VIII. 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, 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 his or her 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. Through both in-class and out-of-class activities, students develop strong skills in the STEM area. The children explore art, music, biology, chemistry, poetry, theater, engineering, and more.

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. Upper Elementary Trips

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. 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 negotiate 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. Parents are provided with the results of the MAP testing.

X. CHILDCARE

The Montessori School offers a full-day program for the children of working parents. Your child may arrive at school anytime between 7:30 a.m. and the start of school. Child care is available after class until we close at 6:00 pm. (See “Hours” under Policies & Procedures for details.)

A. Policies

i. Hours: Child care rates apply as follows:
   - From 7:30 am to 9:00am AND noon to 6:00pm for Primary students
   - From 7:30 a.m. until 9:00am & 3:00pm to 6:00pm for Extended Day
   - 7:30am until 8:15am & 3:00pm until 6:00pm for Elementary
   - Conference and Vacation (no school) Days from 7:30am to 6:00pm (whole day)
ii. **Pickup after dismissal**: If your child arrives more than 10 minutes before class or is not picked up within 10 minutes of dismissal, he/she will join the child care group and you will be charged the regular child care rate until school begins or from the time of dismissal.

iii. **Late fees**: A late pick-up fee of $5.00 is added for each/any portion of a quarter hour beyond closing for which services are required.

### B. Availability

Our child care program remains open on all weekdays except legal holidays, the first week of winter holiday break, and the two weeks before school starts in the fall. Check the school calendar for details and specific dates.

Before the winter break, we will post any updates on possible holiday closings. Be sure to check the school calendar and the bi-weekly *E News* as well as notices placed outside classroom doors.

On days when school is not in session (such as conference days and breaks), child care will be offered from 7:30am to 6:00pm for our students and their siblings (6 to 12 years of age who have also attended The Montessori School) who register in advance.

### C. Childcare Sign-Up for Conference and Vacation Days

Sign-up for part or full-time childcare will be sent by e-mail two weeks before school closings (when childcare is offered). This helps us assure proper staff/child ratios. If you have an emergency need for childcare, please call the office to secure attendance. Childcare fees are billed monthly.

### D. Childcare Program

Children in our childcare program will be involved in a variety of activities, including individual play, work, group games, art projects, story time and occasional field trips. These activities are supervised by the lead assistant in your classroom, who is an experienced childcare provider.

### E. Naps

The primary students who stay for child care will rest from 1:00 to 3:00 pm. All children younger than four years of age will be required to rest during nap time. Naps are available to all children as needed. Please send a lunch, small pillow, small blanket and change of clothing in a zip bag, along with any other items required to ensure your child's comfort while staying with us for the afternoon. Check your teacher's welcome letter for details.
F. Enrichment activities

Music Lessons: Private and small group piano lessons are available for elementary and extended day students based on interest. Lessons are typically held after school, although some lessons may be available over the recess period. These lessons are arranged with Hal Hobson (hal@themontessorischool.org) and more detailed information regarding pricing and scheduling will be provided at the beginning of the year.

Recorder Ensemble: This is an optional afterschool ensemble open to all interested elementary students. Members of the ensemble are charged a small annual fee to cover the cost of materials. In addition, the afterschool school childcare rate is billed for the student’s time in the ensemble rehearsal. The group meets Fridays from 3:15 – 3:40pm. More information is available from Hal Hobson (hal@themontessorischool.org).

XII. MONTESSORI RESOURCES

A. More About Practical Life

There is an age when movements possess a fascinating interest, when the human muscular and nervous apparatus responds to exercise. It is the age of infancy and childhood.

We want to help children perform useful acts. We do not want to simply do for them; we want to empower children to do for themselves. Parents who wait on their children, or who have servants to wait on their children, should understand the danger engendered in this passivity. It puts obstacles in the way of the life that is unfolding; it leads to helplessness and lack of strength.

How can a parent follow through at home? Hopefully, parents come to understand that their children are trying to become independent. They need encouragement. The environment must be prepared for exploration by the child, who has a need for self-control and coordinated movement. Low beds, shelving at the right height, a select group of toys – all of these relate to the child’s need for independence. Wise parents let their children feed themselves, even if it’s messy; dress themselves, even if they are slow; and discourage regression when their children are exploring limits, i.e., a return to pacifiers or diapers. Instead, they accentuate the strides their children are making into society: their ability to set the table, the lunchboxes they help pack, the hair grooming tools they can manage, etc.

Beyond the concept of freedom in the environment is dignity. Children can only begin to achieve this sense of dignity through self-sufficiency. When they can care for their own clothing, pour their own drinks, clean up their own spills, and correct their own mistakes, their sense of self begins to emerge. They are no longer helpless and dependent, but on the road to becoming free. Montessori’s practical life activities for young children are carefully prepared to give them opportunities for successes: dressing frames that contain buttons, laces, bows and pins; pitchers on trays for pouring; table setting exercises; shoe polishing kits; and food preparation are among the many choices.
These are activities that many children long to do at home but are frequently handled by adults because they are too difficult, dangerous or awkward to organize. What we really mean when we give these excuses is that we won’t take the time to tailor the tasks to their size and developing abilities.

In the play school, we observe children sitting at tables being served, arms and legs being stuffed into clothing, buttons being fastened. Even in making Valentine cards, we may see a child being instructed to place the already cut-out heart or rabbit in a certain space, rather than creating something of his/her own.

Watching two children with Down's Syndrome prepare a snack, set the table, and clean up afterward was one of the most impressive sights I've ever observed in a Montessori class. Their absolute delight in arranging the flowers, drying the tiny cups, and serving their companions was a joy to see. This freedom from patronization made it anything but a chore.

These early practical life skills help children focus on their own capabilities, making competition with others not only irrelevant but non-existent. Today, when we as adults find the competitive atmosphere in our own environments difficult, it is reassuring to know our small children can be shielded from unnecessary pressure – at least until the tendency emerges on its own during the second plane of development (6-12 years old). By that time they have experienced many successes and can more easily cope with their occasional failures and inadequacies.

**B. Montessori “Work”**

In a Montessori school all of the students’ activities are called work. By using the word this way, it does not denote something unpleasant and opposite from fun. To young children, their “work” is its own satisfaction. There is neither praise nor punishment. The urge to give too much praise is difficult even for an experienced teacher to suppress. But we try to remember this: whether you criticize or praise a child's work, you are evaluating the product without knowing how much effort was expended or even whether the child has developed his/her own opinion about it. The inequality between the child and adult is reflected in your response.

A more helpful approach is to comment on an actual attribute of the work. For instance, “I like the way you used this design to border your booklet.” Or, “I've noticed your addition work is becoming very accurate!” These kinds of statements encourage students to consider their own progress and begin to evaluate their own work with a critical eye. This allows them to move away from dependence on adult approval.

In our learning environment, regular discussions about correct behavior, courtesy and respect for others take place in the classroom as a part of instruction, not just as a response to a given negative behavior. Often, in traditional schools and at home, these lessons are given after the fact – when emotions are high, someone is injured and someone “must be punished.” Our approach does not eliminate all negative behavior, but it does give the teacher the opportunity to refer to the lesson. “Remember when we talked about walking carefully around someone's work?” Or, “I'll bet you remember the lesson about pushing in your chair without a sound.”
In our modern hyper-stimulated society, the Montessori teacher’s job is challenging. The children must come to love their own efforts without immediate rewards and praise. The materials beckon to the children, but their satisfaction must come from within. This intrinsic reward is the most meaningful and long-lasting.

A 4-year-old lays out a felt mat and chooses a box of fabrics from the shelf. She arranges them carefully and begins to sort and make pairs – wool with wool, silk with silk. After adequate exploration she puts on a blindfold and begins the process anew. Observing carefully, one can see the smile of satisfaction when like pairs are discovered and matched. What is most impressive is the calm, orderly manner of her work. Across the room a 3-year-old pours water from dainty pitchers slowly and carefully, watching the last drop as it clings to the spout. With the same sense of independence and determination he begins the task again, checking his tray for a spilled drop.

This atmosphere of calm and joyful order is usually the first impression a visitor experiences in a Montessori school.

When you visit a play group or day care center with children grouped according to age, you may be overwhelmed by the boisterous activity, running and loud voices. Or you will see the children all involved in an activity that demands silence and immobility. These choices are managed by the supervising adult.

In a Montessori classroom you will experience a clear sense of freedom, but you will also realize that freedom is attainable for the children only because the environment is carefully prepared and controlled in a different way. There are a few rules, but they are consistent and equitable. These young students learn not to disturb each other or to misuse the materials. They are shown how to select an exercise carefully, complete the procedure, repeat it as many times as desired, and replace it on the shelf as they found it. They learn that preparation and clean-up are part of the activity, not an adjunct. Within these limitations they have the opportunity to choose from every activity the teacher has presented to them.

Free play sounds like a similar concept, but in reality it can be limiting for children, especially those who have not developed concentration skills. Play-Doh, building blocks, Legos, paints, puzzles, Big Wheels and puppets may look exciting. But an observer will see children roaming from one activity to another, leaving toys strewn haphazardly, and eventually declaring that they have nothing to do. They may begin to interfere with other children simply because they have not developed enough self-control to handle their freedom. In a play school setting you will seldom see the children being allowed unlimited time and sufficiently challenging work to engage their concentration and intellectual energies.

Montessori students have the security of knowing that they each have exclusive use of the materials they have chosen for as long as they need them. Thus, one of the major conflicts in play between children is immediately eliminated. The child is satisfied because the work has value, challenge and purpose.
C. The Adult Role

As adults entrusted with the lives of children, it is our obligation to help them develop their minds, enable them to use individual judgment, and learn how to contribute to society. It is up to us to keep alive their innate desire to learn.

The relationship between adult and child is fragile. We cannot think of ourselves solely as “teachers” or “parents” because we are often in an alternate role. We are guardians/custodians of the environment that prepares our children for the culture of today. This child/adult relationship is based on respect and knowledge of the child. Give and take is not always on the side of the child or the adult, but rather both are learners. Both are moving toward self-perfection. By avoiding certain inner restrictions or attitudes, we can feel more competent and joyful in our relationships with children. Some of these hampering attitudes are:

- Lack of trust or belief in a child's abilities
- Arrogance, especially related to knowledge
- Lack of patience
- Need to be right or to always know the answer
- Need for immediate results
- Inclination to see wrong in others
- Dishonesty
- Pride

Children need our help. The cultural ideal is, too often, a few winners and many losers … and always being in competition. Children learn to suppress their own inner drives very early. We parents and teachers are products of that same system. We have to learn not to lose patience, not to give in to anger, but rather to grow through our experiences with the children.

Balancing our love for our children with intelligence, resisting the urge to keep the child dependent, developing enough self-discipline and, when needed, detachment to allow growth are examples of the kind of intelligent, thinking love we want our children to experience. The teacher or parent who is in “need” of love or reaffirmation can undermine this process. Rigidity in our own attitudes can be a sign of unresolved inner conflict, which can be easily communicated to children. As they grow, children will force us to look inward as well as outward to find more knowledge.

All adults working with children are in need of support. We can only make a definite difference in the lives of our children if we combine efforts, seek the same goals, and continue to respect the dignity and innate capability of every child. If we truly believe in the unlimited potential of the child, we realize the importance of every period of childhood development and the significance of the adult role in the process, not just in the achievements of your child or mine, but in the progress of humanity.

Dr. Maria Montessori
Often in Montessori we speak of “the child who is not yet here.” We know the child is on his/her way and that we, all of the adults in this child’s life, can make the journey more successful, joyful and rewarding. Our belief in the emergence of this child is the activating force behind each day in the classroom.

**D. First Plane of Development**

Dr. Montessori talked about the absorbent quality of young children’s minds: their ability to take in knowledge through the senses; their amazing capability for learning language and the overall importance of those first formative years. Piaget wrote of the importance of the years from birth to six. Freud proposed that what happens to us before the age of five decides how we will live as adults in the world. But Wordsworth framed it most poetically in *My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold A Rainbow In The Sky* when he said, “The child is father of the man.”

In many families there are financial considerations when we make the decision to offer our children a Montessori education. We must discuss and evaluate early education realistically, looking at the many years ahead. We may need to consider private education and college as mutually exclusive, or at least difficult, choices. Among those who have made that choice in years past, we have yet to hear a Montessori parent express discontent or regret over the commitment to a Montessori education. The benefits are far reaching and instrumental in the total development of not only one child's future, but also to the generations of young people who will eventually take their places as leaders in our world.

On a smaller plane, it becomes clear that the adults in your child's environment at home and at school are the most important “teachers” your child will ever have. They create the possibilities for your child to explore. It will be his/her teacher who offers language. It will be this adult who encourages and helps sustain that soaring imagination. It will be this teacher who chooses the right moment to introduce a story, a concept, and an idea that will give the child the incentive to seek more information. Dr. Montessori said, “The essential thing is for the task to arouse such an interest that it engages the child’s whole personality.”

Once that energy has been engaged and that immense capacity for learning has been stimulated, there are no intellectual boundaries, no social or moral issues too complex, and no aspirations too grand for this small, powerful person. All we can do is remove obstacles, clear the way of debris, and through careful observation decide the right moment for that “special lesson.”

Although Montessori schools are well known for the early acquisition of reading skills, the beautiful concrete materials of math, and highly trained classroom teachers, our goals reach far beyond the memorization of math tables or sounding out phonetic words. We hope to instill in every child a lifelong love for learning; a joyful expectation for the new and unknown; and a continuous desire to find out, to seek, and to explore life’s possibilities.
Our curricula for the Primary classes are grounded in reality, in factually based information. Only through knowledge and experience can children begin to separate truth from fiction, reality from fantasy, and begin to feel safe enough to explore new ideas and accept the possibility of the unknown in the second plane of development.

In addition, in the first plane of development we try to instill an inner discipline – that we are polite, thoughtful and ethical because it is the right thing to do. We hope to develop awareness in each child of his/her role in, and relationships with, the community of the classroom, family, school and town.

E. The Work Cycle

There are many features which characterize a secure, yet stimulating environment appropriate to the needs of a young child. Safety in the physical sense is a given. Ideally there is also an intangible quality or “feeling” that permeates the entire school, emanating from the staff and present in each classroom, nurtured by the teacher. Montessorians seek to provide positive support, believing that the good within each child will flourish and develop. Dr. Montessori said, “Never speak ill of a child in his presence or in his absence.” She intuitively understood that even a slightly derogatory remark regarding an absent child sets a tone, no matter how unintentional, that could be damaging to the child. A positive emotional climate is the responsibility and mandate of the adult. To maintain that climate, the children gradually accept simple ground rules. We are not free to harm others or to disturb the work of others. Lessons involving grace and courtesy are implemented in daily life.

Dr. Montessori created an environment where certain characteristics of childhood were revealed that had not been previously observed. One phenomenon was the ability to work for long periods of time in concentrated activity. For this to occur, an unbroken cycle of three hours must be provided.

1) Many children will enter the class, choose something relatively simple, and stay with it a short time – almost as though they are re-establishing feelings of competence.

2) Their next activity is generally more difficult and they stay with it longer.

3) This is followed by “false fatigue,” a time when many children have put their work away and have not yet selected another activity.

4) If the teacher allows the children to take the time they need to experience the restlessness of the false fatigue, they will soon settle into their most difficult work choice of the cycle and stay with it for a longer period of time. During this time their concentration is the deepest and they make the greatest strides in the development of skills and the acquisition of knowledge. Montessori called this the “great work period.”

5) As the cycle nears its completion, the children put away their work and they appear to be refreshed and relaxed as they talk with one another.
When the time available is less than three hours, the great work period does not occur and the work cycle does not complete itself. To protect themselves from the frustration of having their great work period interrupted, children either do not choose any work after the false fatigue or they choose something that involves only superficial involvement.

Considering the intensity of the “great work period” and the value derived from the child's development of concentration, it is easy to understand the importance of regular attendance, adequate rest, and the opportunity for physical exercise before and after school. Your child should feel rested and physically strong when he/she arrives each morning. Careful consideration should be given to nutrition, bed times and opportunities for physical activity after school.

F. Repetition

Understanding an idea and accepting a concept are just the beginning; they are the precursors to meaningful repetition for a child. Occasionally curiosity and creativity can be confused with idle manipulation of an object or an idea. A period of involvement and deep integration begins when children of their own volition choose, focus on, and repeat an activity. A sense of satisfaction and calm may be observed. Dr. Montessori said upon observing such a child, “He shows no progress in speed or skill. It is a kind of perpetual motion. The achievement of repetition, no matter how trivial it is to the adult, gives a strength of power and independence to the child.” True inquisitiveness and curiosity are expanded here. An inner need of the child's has been satisfied. In the classroom and at home we need to protect children from interruptions during such a period.

Most adults have an external aim for which they are actively working. For children, the aim is internal. They work to grow. This is an unconscious process, indefinable in terms of the future. The work of the child, Dr. Montessori has said, is to create the adult he/she will become. When children reach the state of repeating an exercise, we know that they are on their way. The process has been set in motion. Externally, we observe self-disciplined children. They are working to perfect themselves through the use of the environment, which is a reminder that the environment should be painstakingly prepared to support the children, to sustain their need for activity, and to protect their right to develop at their own pace.

Parents with young children are very aware that a three year old cannot be hurried! For us, the activity is a means to an end. To the child, the activity is the end in itself. The whole person is involved.

We love what we know best. We repeat activities that we enjoy, that interest us. Through repetition, children create a faculty within themselves and then create something external. The 3-year-old tracing sandpaper letters would achieve little with only one introduction or one tracing experience. The tracing goes on indefinitely, with no obvious reward or result. We know that this indirect preparation is for the development of the hand. But the children do not know this, nor would they care. Eventually they will pick up a pencil and spontaneously begin to write words. The preparatory work frees them to experience a new kind of joy. This is creativity.

Recently we observed a small child, around 5 years of age, embroidering a geometric shape on a square piece of burlap. She had obviously been given several lessons prior to this experience because her stitches were careful and precise. She completed the shape with small stitches, tied the knot, and turned the fabric over to
examine all sides. At this point I expected to see her place the finished product in her cubby or at least show it
to a friend or an adult. Instead, she took the ripper and removed the stitches, and started the process again.
This is a child with self-discipline. This is a child on her way to very positive self-formation.

Resources

i. **Resource books**: Parenting is a challenge, and there are many insightful books that you might find
helpful. A collection is available in the office for your review. Here are some suggestions:

- *Positive Discipline for Preschoolers — Nelsen*
- Parent Talk — Chick Moorman
- Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius — Lillard
- Touch Points: Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development — Brazelton
- How to Talk so Your Child Listens, and How to Listen so Your Child Talks — Faber
- Montessori: A Modern Approach — Lillard
- The Absorbent Mind — Montessori
- The Secret of Childhood — Montessori

*If you read only one book, this should be it!*

ii. **Resources on line**

- [www.MariaMontessori.com](http://www.MariaMontessori.com)
- [www.amiusa.org](http://www.amiusa.org)
- [www.michaelolaf.net](http://www.michaelolaf.net)
- [www.montessori-namta.org](http://www.montessori-namta.org)
- [www.mmsoc.org](http://www.mmsoc.org)
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**Lead Classroom Guides**

**Kalamazoo Primary:**
Juniper – Emma Young  
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Oak – Megan Schopf  
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**Richland Primary:**
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**Kalamazoo Elementary:**
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