

The Montessori Children's School, Inc.

Family Handbook

2010-2011



Montessori Children's School, Inc.

714 Bates Street

Jacksonville, NC 28450

910-938-3826

910-938-8990

Email: mcsj@embarqmail.com

Website: www.jacksonvillemontessori.com

Welcome Letter.....	3
History of Our School	4
Overview.....	4
Philosophy	4
Montessori Method	5
<i>Philosophy</i>	5
Dr. Maria Montessori	7
Historical Overview	7
Dr. Maria Montessori	9
Chronological Overview.....	9
The Montessori Children’s School Curriculum	12
Parent/Family Education and Involvement.....	15
The Board of the Montessori Children’s School.....	16
Parent Teacher Organization (PTO).....	16
Fundraising at MCS.....	17
PTO Projects	17
Special Events	18
Policies and Procedures.....	19
Required Enrollment Forms.....	19
Finances and Re-Enrollment	19
Health & Safety.....	20
Attendance	20
Arrival and Dismissal.....	20
Illness & Absenteeism	21
Allergies.....	22
Immunizations	22
Medications	22
Lunch.....	22
Snacks.....	23
Nutrition.....	24
Electronic Key Entry System	24
Messaging System	24
Field Trips/Family Outings.....	24
Child Abuse Reporting Requirements	24
Social Services and Authorizations	24
Parent/Guardian Involvement/Information.....	25
Parent/Guardian Observations and Feedback	25
Parent/Guardian Conferences.....	25
Take-Home Folders.....	25
Student Assessment and Standardized Testing	25
Diagnostic Assessment, Tutoring, Counseling	25
Birthdays	26
Celebrations and Holidays.....	26
Personal Items.....	26
Clothing	26
Car Seat Storage.....	26
Nap/Rest Time/Bedding	26
Items Brought to School	26
Behavior Guidelines	27
Grace and Courtesy:	27
The Ground Rules in the Montessori Environment	27
Rights of Students and Parents/Guardians	28
Behavior Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Programs	28
Behavior Guidelines for Biting	28
Dismissal from School.....	28
Liability for Damages and Losses.....	28
The MCS Montessori Terms.....	29

Welcome Letter

Dear Families,

Welcome to the Montessori Children's School. Our school was founded as Jacksonville Montessori School in the fall of 1993 by three dedicated Montessori families. In 1997, the school opened a building designed to meet the needs of schooling in Montessori method. The school has grown to include classrooms for Toddler, Primary and Elementary students. MCS is a traditional Montessori school that nurtures the individual learning style of each student, while maintaining standards of academic excellence. The exceptionally well-qualified and experienced staff, trained in the Montessori Method, work to support the development of each student's potential. MCS is a non-profit organization (501)c(3) and is governed by a Board of Directors elected by the families.

Dr. Maria Montessori and Jean Piaget were two of the primary educational theorists who promoted inquiry-oriented learning based on "learning by doing," at the beginning of the 20th century. From her theory, "The Montessori Method," Dr. Montessori developed innovative learning material that are currently being utilized throughout the world.

The Montessori teaching method adapts itself to the uniqueness inherent in each student. It is based on the 'hands-on' exploration of concrete materials, which opens up the possibility for a greater depth of conceptual knowledge and critical thinking skills. In addition, it is understood that concentrated skill-building and a love of learning lead to high self-esteem and a positive sense of self. At MCS students are given the freedom for individual exploration, while becoming conscious of the natural limits of social and academic structures.

We are proud of our graduates who have gone on to enjoy the positive academic experiences in both private and public schools.

I look forward to watching your children thrive in our positive, supportive environment.

Sincerely,

Peggy Higgins

Peggy Higgins
School Directress

History of Our School

Overview

Incorporation: 1997

Enrollment: 130 Children

Grades: Toddler (12 months) Primary (3-6 years) Elementary (6-12 years)

Composition: Day student population from throughout the area representing the races, cultures, religions, and languages of a multi-national population.

Philosophy: Students are active participants, problem solvers, and learners who best learn "by doing," guided by accomplished teachers who are gifted facilitators.

Curriculum: A core curriculum of math, language, science, and culture taught in an experiential and inter-disciplinary manner to students cross-age grouped in multi-year developmental learning "cycles."

Governance: Volunteer Board of Directors elected by parents/guardians and teachers.

Philosophy

The Montessori Children's School was established in 1993 to provide a comprehensive Montessori program for families in our area. Our mission is to create a relevant Montessori curriculum that provides students with a solid basis for coping with the academic and social challenges they will encounter in the future. MCS is an authentic Montessori school that nurtures the individual learning style of each student while maintaining standards of academic excellence.

The Montessori method was originally created to adapt itself to the uniqueness inherent in each student. It is based on the "hands on" exploration of concrete materials, allowing children to acquire a greater depth of conceptual knowledge. At the beginning of the 20th century, Maria Montessori and Jean Piaget were two of the primary educational theorists who promoted an inquiry-oriented learning theory based on "learning by doing." As a result, Dr. Maria Montessori designed innovative learning materials that have become utilized throughout public and private schools, even those that do not call themselves "Montessori." Montessori education is the largest school system in the world.



As Montessori educators, we know that concentrated skill building and a love of learning lead to high self-esteem and a profound sense of self. Dr. Maria Montessori clearly stated that the goal of her educational method was world peace. In this quest, she was a great pioneer, recognizing the possibility of achieving this goal through the medium of education. MCS supports this goal by encouraging the development of problem-solving and conflict resolution skills as issues arise in the classroom, in weekly class meetings, and on an individual basis.

Montessori Method

Philosophy

Dr. Maria Montessori, 1870-1952, was one of the first educational theorists to design a philosophy of education, based on her close observation of children as they developed over time. She proposed the radical concept that children are not what we make them, but learn on their own, according to their own inner maturational promptings. Her theory, as it applied to intellectual and physical development, was similarly articulated by Jean Piaget, whose cognitive-developmental theory closely mirrored her own.



In fact, some of Piaget's observations of young children were done in a Montessori classroom! But Montessori's understanding of the spiritual well-being of the child was uniquely her own:

"As the child's body must draw nourishment and oxygen from its external environment, in order to accomplish a great physiological work, the work of growth, so also the spirit must take from its environment the nourishment which it needs to develop according to its own 'laws of growth.' "

—Maria Montessori,
Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook, 1914

Because Montessori philosophy is so vast and covers every act and decision a teacher makes, it is best to describe the variety of aspects that operate in our classrooms on a daily basis which lay the foundation for authentic Montessori education.

Sensitive periods, a concept first described by a Dutch biologist, Hugo de Vries, are distinct amounts of time when children easily absorb information from the world around them. A sensitive period is a specific time frame involving the child's development of a specific ability. For example, consider the sensitive period for language acquisition. It is crucial for children to hear spoken language. If a child is not exposed to language during his or her sensitive period there is the danger that language skills may be seriously impaired. The sensitive period for learning phonemes, the sounds of the letters of our alphabet, is between three and five years.

If a child's environment is appropriately designed for his or her sensitive periods, a natural unfolding of physical, emotional, cognitive and spiritual development takes place. If a child "misses" an absorbent phase, the specific attribute or skill due to develop at that time may languish, and it becomes difficult, perhaps impossible, for the child to acquire it later. Absorbent learning is effortless, while learning after a sensitive period has passed can be hard work and requires a different kind of mental activity.

Absorption is the process by which children take in information and make it their own, with no external effort, much the way a sponge absorbs water. Their sensitive periods lead them to sit up, walk, and talk; they seem to acquire these skills easily. Their innate developmental time table urges them to perfect these skills, and absorption is the manner in which they do so. They have the urge, they practice, and suddenly they are able to reach the next developmental milestone. This also happens as the child passes through the sensitive periods for reading and numbers. When the environment is properly prepared with attractive activities, the child feels suddenly drawn to these new

tasks. It appears as if they spontaneously burst into reading and arithmetic, although everything experienced up to this point has prepared the way for the next moment of interest.

As the teacher **follows the child**, she/he seizes the exact moment to match the child to the right material. This is called **making the match**. The well-trained teacher knows the single moment to call to the child and introduce him or her to the perfect task. Maria Montessori refers to this ability as the **art of teaching**. When the teacher has **prepared the environment** to contain aspects of the world in microcosm, the perfect sequence of concrete materials is at hand to lead the child to the next step. The teacher uses every teachable moment available to **individualize the learning** for each child so the he/she can **learn at his/ her own pace**. Because of the power of observation, the teacher is able to seize these moments as they occur. As a result, children move towards independence and become increasingly self-reliant.

Isolating the difficulty, the Montessori teacher presents only one concept at a time, allowing the child to **internalize** it before moving on. Each new experience builds on the prior one; learning proceeds in a sequential manner, moving from the concrete to the abstract and from the known to the unknown, in an ever-widening and deepening understanding of the Montessori curriculum.

During the **uninterrupted work period** the children are permitted to explore the materials in depth, without being disturbed. "Never interrupt a working child" is one of the basic tenets of Montessori philosophy. So, no bells interrupt the children to separate the math period from the language period. This is based on respect for the child and for the choices the child makes in constructing her/his own learning. In this way their progress is directed from within and born of their own curiosity and their never-ending desire to know.

In the **mixed-age classroom** the children function like an extended family. They help and inspire each other. As the little ones observe the older children, they silently think, "Oh, I will do that when I am big." This **modeling of behavior** is inspirational to the younger child and builds self-esteem in the older students. In this way, the classroom remains **child-centered**, for the children encourage each other to learn by their own activity, not through any urging on the part of the teacher. Rather, the younger ones say, "When can I do that?" and "Please show me how to do this!"

In the elementary years a foundation of the basic skills is established, as well as a lifelong love of learning. By **striking the child's imagination** and allowing him/her to learn in an enriched educational environment, the fire of learning is lit. Armed with skill, natural curiosity, and a love for others, the Montessori child goes forth **prepared for life**.

Dr. Maria Montessori

Historical Overview

After graduating from the Medical School at the University of Rome in 1896, Dr. Maria Montessori became a member of the staff of the university's Psychiatric Clinic. She became interested in the mentally deficient children, and became convinced that the condition of these children could be much improved through special education, a view shared by the French doctors Jean Itard and Edouard Seguin. She studied the works of these doctors carefully, at the same time giving lectures on the education of the feeble-minded which aroused such interest that a state orthophrenic school was opened and placed under the direction of Dr. Montessori. She worked intensively for two years studying, observing and teaching the children with such success that they were able to pass public examinations taken together with normal children.

It was at this point that Dr. Montessori became interested in the education of normal children. Her background was particularly important because it distinguished her from other educators of the time. She approached education from a scientific point of view, and valued the "principle of studying the pupil before educating him." This principle which was a keystone of science was hardly considered in the pedagogy of the time. She was also greatly influenced by the works of Itard and Seguin, two men who were hardly known outside of medical circles. Without any formal training in education, Dr. Montessori herself felt that her two years at the State Orthophrenic School was her "first and only true degree in pedagogy."

It wasn't until seven years later that she was given an opportunity to work with normal children. Dr. Montessori was asked to direct the operation of a Children's House in a poverty stricken section of Rome.

Dr. Montessori worked with children from ages three to six and discovered much about the child's learning process at this tender age. She discovered right away that these normal children responded quite differently to her materials than did the feeble-minded. She found that the normal child was able to fix his whole attention on an object and work in a high state of concentration without a break. After the work was complete the child appeared satisfied, rested and happy.

Montessori made many other observations which became the foundation for a new approach to educating children. She took the position of humble observer of the children, and in time they began to reveal themselves to her. With each discovery she made about the children, she adapted their learning environment to better suit their needs, and the children flourished.

She discovered, for example, that the children frequently repeated exercises of their own accord and for no outward purpose other than their own fascination with the exercise. She also observed that once the children were familiar with the objects used in the classroom they showed the interest and initiative to choose their own work. This concept of the children's free choice and movement within the classroom became an important aspect of Montessori's method. She also found the children to be fairly indifferent to any reward or punishment meted out by the teacher. Instead, they seemed to find some greater sense of personal satisfaction in what they were able to accomplish of their own accord, which was much more fulfilling than external rewards. She observed that the children were sensitive to silence, and that there was a peaceful atmosphere that pervaded the classroom in which the children could carry on their activities with order and discipline. She also recognized that children have a deep sense of personal dignity which is frequently being wounded or oppressed by insensitive adults.

The successful, if unintentional, transformation of these children drew much worldwide attention. Montessori's method of education was directed at the growth and well-being of the whole child, and she called for a fundamental change in the very way we regard children – approaching them humbly and with respect. Her ideas were timely, for around the world, advances were being made particularly in the area of child hygiene, and interest in the needs of children was growing. In Montessori's own words, "during the past years, there has been a stirring, in almost every nation, a movement toward the protection of the child."

Dr. Montessori's approach had universal appeal, and her principles have been applied successfully over the world by persons of varied cultural backgrounds, which seem to verify her belief that her discoveries about the child are fundamental.

Dr. Maria Montessori

Chronological Overview

- 1870** Aug. 31, Maria Montessori was born at Chiaravalle in the province of Ancona.
- 1882** The Montessori family moved to Rome in order to provide Maria with a better education.
- 1884** At 14 years of age Maria became interested in mathematics and developed an ambition to become an engineer, which later changed to that of becoming a medical doctor. Both professions were considered at the time to be quite inappropriate for a woman.
- 1896** After much persistence and hard work, Maria Montessori became the first woman in Italy to obtain the degree of Doctor of Medicine.
- Soon after graduating, she was appointed assistant doctor at the Psychiatric Clinic in the University of Rome. During this time, she became interested in mentally defective children.
- 1899** Dr. Montessori delivered an address at a pedagogic congress in Turin on Moral Education which led to a further set of lectures in Rome on the education of the feebleminded.
- 1899-** Dr. Montessori became the director of Italy's first state orthophrenic school **1901** and made remarkable progress in educating her defective children.
- 1900** Montessori attended a congress in London where she attacked the practice of employing child labor in the mines of Sicily, which lended support to a movement of the time directed against the exploitation of child labor.
- 1901** In addition to lecturing at the University of Rome, Montessori enrolled as a student and studied philosophy and psychology. She also studied very thoroughly the works of Itard and Seguin.
- 1904** Dr. Montessori became a professor at the University of Rome, where she occupied the Chair of Anthropology for 4 years.
- 1907** Jan. 6, Opening Day for a Children's House in the San Lorenzo quarter in Rome of which Dr. Montessori was to be the director. This was to be her first opportunity to test her educational theories on normal children.
- 1907** A second Children's House was opened in San Lorenzo, and a tired in Milan.
- 1908** A Children's House was opened for children of well-to-do parents.
- 1908** All of Italian Switzerland began using Montessori's methods in orphan asylums and children's homes.

- 1909** Dr. Montessori's book "The Montessori Method" was published.
- 1912** Montessori's mother died.
- 1912** Montessori made her first visit to the United States for a brief lecture tour. She was received at the White House and welcomed enthusiastically by such notables as Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell. An American Montessori Association was formed with Mrs. Bell as President, and Miss Wilson (President Wilson's daughter) as secretary.
- 1915** Montessori returned to the U.S. to give a training course in California.
- 1918** The Education Committee of London County/council sent a teacher to discover something about this new Montessori educational movement in Italy. The chosen delegate, Mrs. Hutchinson, returned with favorable reports and in addition set up a Montessori classroom in her own school with favorable results.
- 1919** Montessori paid her first official visit to England and was received like royalty.
- 1925** The International Montessori Congress was held under the presidency of Dr. Montessori at Helsinki.
- 1929** By this time Montessori schools had been distributed in each of the great continents.
- 1932** International Montessori Congress in Nice.
- 1933** International Montessori Congress in Amsterdam.
- 1934** International Montessori Congress in Rome.
- 1936** International Montessori Congress in Oxford.
- 1937** International Montessori Congress in Copenhagen.
- 1938** International Montessori Congress in Edinburgh.
- 1939** Montessori gave a training course in Madras, India. During the years of World War II, she gave courses in various other parts of India, during which time she met Mahatma Gandhi, Mr. Nehru and Tagore.
- 1944** Dr. Montessori gave a course in Ceylon.
- 1946** Montessori gave a training course in London.
- 1947** She was invited back to Italy by the government to reestablish the opera Montessori.
- 1948** Montessori flew back to India to give more courses in Poona and Adyar. She also established a model school at the request of Maharaja and Maharani of Gwalior for children up to the age of 12.

1949 Montessori gave her first course in Pakistan.

She gave an address to a gathering of UNESCO, at the end of which was given a great ovation.

She was decorated by the French with the medal of the Legion of d'Honneur.

1950 Dr. Montessori went on a lecture tour in Norway and Sweden, and alter, back in Italy, directed a training course for teachers.

1952 May 6, Dr. Maria Montessori died at Noordwijk-on-Sea, Holland.

The Montessori Children's School Curriculum

This handbook is designed to be an introduction to the different curricular areas in the Toddler, Stepping Stones, Primary and Elementary programs.

The curriculum developed by MCS is based on the subject areas and methods of teaching formulated by Dr. Montessori. This curriculum provides children with "hands-on," concrete learning materials designed by Dr. Montessori herself. Each of our Montessori-trained directresses has studied both the philosophy and the curriculum presentations which are essential to becoming an accomplished Montessori instructor. In addition to being well-trained in the Montessori curriculum, our directresses are familiar with the North Carolina state educational framework and the national school standards. We are pleased that we can provide your children with such a unique curriculum, which will prepare them for the challenges — moral, social and intellectual — that lie ahead. It is a pleasure to have the Montessori philosophy, methods, and materials at hand, which allow us to "teach to" the individual learning styles of your children.

The **Practical Life** room is usually the first place that the youngest children choose to explore and enjoy when they enter their new Montessori environment. The attractive activities are designed to enhance the young child's concentration, developing independence, coordination and sense of order. In this area the children explore through the use of different media like water, paint, arts and crafts. They also learn skills for taking care of themselves, using materials such as the "dressing frames," and skills for taking care of the environment, such as sweeping, washing, and dusting. All of these exercises also support their developing hand/eye coordination. These activities are designed and sequenced so the children have fun and are successful. As the children become more proficient, the tasks become more challenging. They gain competence as well as self-confidence, learning how to care for both themselves and their environment. In the elementary class the children become responsible for the physical environment and take care of their classrooms and the materials by themselves.

The **Sensorial Materials** were designed to help children become aware of the relationships between things. When the children interact with these materials their senses are drawn to the subtle differences of weight, height, temperature, sound, shape, and color. As the children are encouraged to notice these differences, they become more aware of their world. The sensorial materials are also the basis for the math and geometry curriculum; the children revisit these materials at the elementary levels and refine their understanding as they progress through the curriculum. For instance, the Constructive Triangles that the students explore in Primary classrooms reappear in the Elementary classroom, where the students study basic geometric principles. The Binomial Cube, whose eight pieces the preschoolers work with, is used again by the older students to understand algebraic formulas. In Elementary, the students explore the Pythagorean Theorem and the area and volume formulas with the very same materials they used in an entirely different way when they were younger.

The **Montessori Math** materials are the most well-known. (In fact, they have been so successful; they have been adapted and used in many non-Montessori classrooms.) The math materials are concrete manipulatives which were developed to enable children to master the basics of numeration and arithmetic, as well as to give them an early introduction to higher mathematics. Through the manipulation of materials like the "golden beads" and the "stamp game," the children learn the algorithms of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. After they have worked with these operations concretely in the lower levels and have mastered their facts, they are able to begin the study of mathematics. The students explore fractions, decimals, percents, different bases, ratios, proportions, probability, problem-solving, graphing, patterns and logic, algebra, geometry, and beginning trigonometry with the materials designed for these activities. The Montessori math curriculum, which begins in preschool and continues through elementary, includes skills that go far beyond those listed in the state and national math standards. Not only do children master the basics, which are essential in elementary school, but

they learn to think mathematically. They begin to understand and utilize the language of mathematics and become comfortable, and indeed proficient, with this information.

The **Montessori Language** materials allow many young children to read and write at an early age. The "Movable Alphabet" is designed so that children can compose their own stories before they are able to do the physical writing. This permits them to express their own ideas. Encouraged to write down their creative ideas and stories, they naturally move into early reading. Our Primary classrooms utilize the phonetic approach, the whole language approach, and the linguistic approach to learning to read. The younger children learn the sound of the letter, the shape their mouth makes when they form the sound, and the way the letter looks when it is written. Before long the young children put all of this information together and an "explosion" into reading and writing results. All children have the ability to learn to read and write, although this skill develops at different times for different individuals. But armed with the background of tactile, visual, and auditory experiences, Montessori children seem to acquire their skill overnight, much to their delight. When asked about when they learned these skills, children have been known to respond, "I just didn't know I could do it before!"

As the students get older they begin the study of literature and continue with their creative writing. The older children discuss novels that they read. In school as well as out, they write regularly and learn the basics of grammar, and how to apply this knowledge to their written work. They write poetry, stories, essays, book reports, and memoirs. At the end of the year the Elementary students create a unified writing project that is collected into a bound and illustrated book, with a cover of their own design. As they look back, they are both proud and amazed at what they have accomplished in such a short time.

Research is a component of our curriculum, which begins at the earliest levels, as soon as students start asking questions relating to things they are curious about. When children express those interests the teachers suggest that they "investigate" to find answers. At first the teacher collects and provides sources to help answer the child's questions. As the children become fluent readers, they are able to look for answers on their own. Research continues in all subjects, throughout the students' elementary years. In addition, starting in Elementary they begin to understand the finding sources, pulling out main ideas, taking notes, organizing their thoughts and putting them into reports, and presenting the report to the group.

The **Cultural Subjects** are often referred to as "Cosmic Education" by the Montessori community. They comprise the framework into which fit the subjects other than Language and Math. Taken as a whole, they represent the concept that all people have the same basic needs. These needs are studied by the children as they learn about the universe in which they live. Our students begin their exploration of pre-history with the big picture as they study the solar system in which their planet is located. Then they study Earth — the layers of the earth and the plants and animals which live on the surface of the earth and in its atmosphere. During the elementary years the children go on to explore Earth's geology and geography — both physical and political. They make a more in-depth study of botany and zoology — exploring the development of life on Earth and the vast variety of animal species, from invertebrates to vertebrates.

In the Elementary program, Chemistry, Biology, Physics, and Astronomy appear as subjects of study, as does History. The three-year history curriculum begins with the study of early humans and ancient civilizations, followed by the study of the middle ages, expansion westward, modern history and government, the history of North Carolina, and space exploration. The sequence is chronologically presented and designed to strike the imagination of the growing child. We work to show the students the whole range of natural and human events and to nurture an awareness of how these events impact our lives today. The students study current events as well as the past, and when they are ready to graduate, our "seniors" are well-educated, independent, and self-reliant citizens of their world.

There are several other areas of our curriculum that are essential to the education of well-rounded individuals. One of these areas is **Movement**. We have a movement teacher who

provides expressive motor activities for the children in all classrooms. These activities are so much fun that teachers continue to do them with their students throughout the year. The classroom teachers have also learned group songs, finger plays and dances from around the world, which they enjoy with their students on a regular basis. For the elementary students, we emphasize participation, cooperation and skill-building, supporting the children's natural enthusiasm for being active. All the teachers are aware that physical fitness and the ability to feel at ease in one's body is a necessary component of physical, mental and emotional health. In movement the students "make music" and share the joy of creating beautiful music as a cohesive unit. They learn folk dances from around the world and experience the pleasure of dancing together.

Our **Art Program** begins in the early years with early exposure to the Montessori color tablets, expanding as the children explore art with different media in the practical life room. Our art directress brings her professional artistic expertise into the classrooms, encouraging the children to express themselves in both two- and three-dimensional work, and in a variety of scales. There is a balance in the focus on the process of "doing art" and on the product of the artwork itself.

Foreign language is introduced at the earliest ages. The children are introduced to the language through songs, stories, conversations and poems. The study of grammar, literature, and culture is added as the students' progress, with an emphasis on speaking.

Because **social development** is a key component of one's education and experience on a daily basis, the teachers are well-trained in teaching conflict resolution — helping the children resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner. At an early age each child is encouraged to "use your words" to clearly express how he/she feels about a situation. "Be gentle with your friends and with yourself" and "He'll learn not to do that" are phrases that students learn early. Empathy for another's point of view is encouraged. The child is helped to understand the impact of his/her behavior and encouraged to think of a different, more positive way of behaving.

At the Elementary level the class uses positive **Conflict Resolution** techniques. Any problem that arises — either one between two children (if they cannot solve it between themselves) or one impacting the class — is aired, discussed and solved by the whole group, or they may use the "peace corner" in the classroom. This space is designed as a special place to talk out disagreements and/or take a moment to relax and reflect. As a result of consistent use of techniques, the children become very effective at giving and getting "I-messages" and constructive feedback and at dealing with issues as they arise. This peaceful solution to dealing with conflict is a powerful strategy that will serve the children throughout their lives.

We offer a **Before and After Care Program** for children who come to school before 8:15 a.m. or who stay between 2:45 p.m. and 6 p.m. This program is staffed by teachers who have designed a developmentally appropriate program for children who are at school longer hours. The emphasis is on social skill building through games, dramatic play, arts and crafts, and cooking in a nurturing environment.

Because our school is a family, we have **Community Events** that bring us all together. In October, students and families dress in cultural costumes and bring food to represent different cultures and countries for **International Night**. For the **Thanksgiving Feast** the children, with the help of a few parents, prepare and serve lunch. Before Winter Break, the school comes together to celebrate the season's many different holidays in song and dance, at our **Holiday Songfest**. In January the Primary and Elementary classes have **Parent/Child Night** when they come back to school in the evening. They guide their parents through the classroom and show them the lessons they are working on. In March we have an **Open House** for our parents and anyone interested in enrolling in the coming year. Wine and cheese is offered during this night intended only for parents. To finish out the year, the Lower Elementary class does an evening soiree and Upper Elementary goes on an overnight camping trip. The children look forward with excitement

to the camping trip. Their experiences there become ones they will always cherish. At the end of school, all the families enjoy a **family picnic**.

Our **methods for assessing student achievement** — and then for reporting it — are varied, with the most significant method being observation and record keeping. Our Montessori directresses are trained in these techniques, which allow them to guide the student's educational growth by offering the appropriate material or work for the next step in learning. Other methods for assessing and recording progress include anecdotal records, and teacher narratives. In addition, directresses meet twice yearly for conferences with each child's parents regarding intellectual, social, emotional, physical and general well-being. Elementary students take Albanisi tests on a regular basis and the Iowa Achievement Test in May of each year.

Our goal is to educate your children for the future, not just the present, nor the past. Their work is different from ours, and it is our responsibility to prepare them for it. As they move through our Montessori curriculum, they also have the opportunity to learn how to take care of both their indoor and outdoor environment. In all of our classes we provide problem-solving and conflict resolution experiences for the children so they will be equipped to deal with a variety of issues in a peaceful and thoughtful manner. We are excited that we can participate with you in preparing your children for the intriguing challenges that lie ahead for them.

Parent/Family Education and Involvement

Parents/Guardians play a vital role in the ongoing success of our school. It has been shown time and again that parent involvement in the school is a decisive factor in the child's school success. There are many avenues of involvement, and we strive to let parents know about these through several means: we have an e-mail newsletter, *The Montessori Messenger* that goes out to all families each week. Informational fliers and notes are placed in students' folders — they should be checked weekly — and in elementary students' work for home daily.

Parent participation in special events, such as helping before or during our Annual Silent Auction, and hosting at Open Houses, is essential. Parents can also do other school tasks, such as simple maintenance, fundraising activities and classroom materials-making. We require that each family contribute 30 volunteer hours per year. At the beginning of the year, a list of parents' skills, interests, resources and schedules is compiled so that parents can be matched up appropriately to jobs that need to be done. Parents keep track of the hours they have contributed in a Parent Participation Log located on the PTO shelf in the hallway. Hours must be recorded in this log in order for them to qualify as Parent Participation Hours. Families will be billed \$10.00 for every hour unrecorded.

Parent participation in the classroom is welcomed-- possible tasks include reading or writing with individual students, serving as a room parent or driving/accompanying the class on field trips. Directresses determine the parent volunteers for their classrooms. Parents interested in this type of work should talk with their child's directress.

There are many opportunities for parents to learn about the school's curriculum and procedures. Orientation night in August is a presentation about the Montessori Method and philosophy, and is a time for parents to meet as a group with their children's teacher to learn about the year ahead.

In addition, recommended reading list *The Montessori Method* and *The Absorbent Mind* both by Maria Montessori, *Raising a Self-Reliant Child in a Self-Indulgent World*, by Stephen Glenn and Jane Nelson, *Punished by Rewards* by Alfie Kohn, *Endangered Minds* by Jane Healy, *Multiple Intelligences* by Howard Gardner, *Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman and *Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius* by Angeline S. Lillard, PhD.

MCS is a non-profit, tax-exempt school. We rely on parents' active support of our fund-raising activities in order to maintain our educational standards. Donations to the school are both needed and appreciated. Those gifts and certain material donations, such as computers, are items that are deductible on income taxes, according to the current tax law. Annual projects such as Cici's Pizza and Fuddrucker night and Original Artwork items are other ways families support the school. The Silent Auction provides an opportunity for you to contribute to overall fundraising.

The Board of the Montessori Children's School

The Board of the Montessori Family School is comprised of parents, directresses, the Head of School, and alumni parents. Like most non-profits, there are always more parent members than staff. Parents represent the interests of the families in all programs. In our particular Board model the Board supports the Head of School who, in turn, supports the children and their families.

The Board does not involve itself in the day-to-day running of the school. Rather, it sets and reviews school policies, oversees the budget and sets fiscal policy, raises funds for the school, participates on important committees and identifies ways to make the school better.

The Board meets monthly throughout the year. Committees and task forces may meet more often. Between the experienced parent and faculty members, the needs of the school are well understood by the whole Board. Because parents/guardians and teachers are always included in the decision making process, things run very smoothly.

When big decisions face the Board, they may ask for opinions and support from the entire school. Board members serve for a two-year term. These terms may be renewed. In this way the Board has both continuity and change. We are very grateful for the intelligent and harmonious manner in which the Board members work together and the time they take to understand and support the needs of our school.

Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)

Purpose

The MCS Parent Teacher Organization is to establish a close relationship between home and school by advancing opportunity for all parents to become involved in the MCS community. The MCS PTO will sponsor assistance to teachers in the classroom setting, raise funds for supplemental education materials and experiences for students and teachers, and support school and family social interaction with the goal of creating the best possible learning environment for our children.

Membership

Membership in the MCS PTO is voluntary and open to all parents of currently enrolled students, teachers and staff members at the school. Membership is tracked in an effort to stabilize participation and add validity to decisions and recommendations made by the MCS PTO. There are no annual membership dues.

Fundraising at MCS

Each year, MCS and the MCS Parent Teacher Organization invite participation in a number of fundraising events and campaigns that achieve a variety of financial and community-building goals. We encourage participation from all families. Please review this sheet to consider the ways your family will choose to participate in each of the campaigns for the coming school year.

Annual Giving Fund	Goal: 100% Participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Annual Fund covers the gap between the tuition you pay and the cost of a quality Montessori education. It goes to cover operating expenses including teacher salaries/benefits, classroom materials, facilities maintenance, utilities, etc. The alternative would be for the Board to set tuition at actual cost. <p><u>Participation Opportunity:</u> Significant one-time financial gift commensurate with each family's capabilities.</p>	



Annual Auction	Goal: 100% Participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enjoy an evening of great food, great music and a silent auction of fabulous items. This opportunity helps raise funds for completing Project Greenspace which includes the natural learning landscape and the elementary school expansion. 	



PTO Projects	Optional participation, but strongly encouraged!
<p style="text-align: center;">Project Greenspace</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Goal: 100% Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fundraising through MCS and PTO Montessori Gear – clothing items sold with Montessori School logo which helps raise funds. Boxtops for Education – food item box tops collected and mailed in monthly for profit. Scrips.com – affiliate with MCS when buying items and a percentage of the purchase gets donated to the school. Amazon.com – affiliate with MCS when buying items and percentage of purchase gets donated to the school. Recycling – collection of aluminum cans, plastic, etc. to cash in frequently. Original Artworks – gifts made from the original student's artwork. Montessori Services – affiliate with MCS when buying items and a percentage of the purchase earns the school a merchandise approach through professional design, thoughtful use of hierarchy pathways, and transitional shelters/terraces. <p style="text-align: center;">This project seeks to: expand the naturalized environment in keeping with the Montessori approach</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Build the Upper School</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Goal: 100% Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a percentage of the group's sales go directly to the school. expand the school program to include an Elementary building up to sixth grade. <p style="text-align: center;">This project seeks to: expand the school program to include an Elementary building</p>

Special Events

In addition to individual classroom events, there are many all-school events. The School Calendar provides an overview of these events.

Parent/Guardian Orientation in the fall offers parents the chance to meet their child's classroom directress and hear about classroom policies and procedures, as well as plans for the year. It is also a time to get acquainted with the parents of your child's classmates. It is mandatory for at least one parent to attend this event.

International Night is a time in October that we celebrate cultures from around the world with costumes, songs, dance and special dishes to share.

Fall Parent/Guardian Conferences are scheduled in November. The school is closed so the individual classroom directresses can schedule appointments with each family. In addition, a written narrative is presented to discuss your child's development.

Thanksgiving is celebrated with a festival the day before the holiday. With the help of some family members, the children prepare and serve the food. The Elementary Class presents a play depicting the first Thanksgiving.

Holiday SongFest is presented each December with our students raising their voices in song to celebrate different cultures. Families share and celebrate with a reception in each classroom.

Parent and Child Night is held in January. The students in our Primary and Elementary Classrooms invite their families to come and visit their classrooms. The students choose the lessons they would like to share.

Teacher Professional Day is a day set aside in February for the MCS Directresses to have an opportunity to attend the annual Montessori Conference or spend the day visiting other Montessori Schools.

Kindergarten Graduation celebrating those students who are finishing their Primary Class is held in early June.

Family Pot Luck Picnic. Our families gather for an evening to celebrate the successful completion of the school year.

Policies and Procedures

Required Enrollment Forms

The following forms are required by the School and the State of North Carolina for the child's file. Children may not begin school until all forms are returned to the school office. The parent/guardian is responsible for communicating any subsequent changes to the school office.

- Student Application
- Enrollment Contract*
- Contact Information & Pick-up Authorization*
- Emergency Care Authorization & Contact Information*
- Immunization Record
- Child's Health Assessment
- Student Personal Record
- Permission Agreement
- Discipline & Behavior Management Policy
- Permission to Administer Topical Medication*
- Receipt of Summary of Child Care Laws
- Billing Contact Information
- Receipt of Family Handbook

*Form must be updated annually.

Finances and Re-Enrollment

Annual School Fees

The non-refundable annual school fee of \$500.00 per student (\$250.00 for multiple students in the same family) is required to enroll a new student and to re-enroll a current student. For re-enrollment, the Annual School Fee deposit is due March 1st with the balance due in full by June 15th.

Tuition Plans

The School offers enrollment on a ten-month schedule, beginning with the new school year in August. The annual tuition can be prepaid or broken into ten monthly installments. The ten-month students' first installment is due on August 15th and the last installment due on May 15th.

Tuition and other Fees Payment

Annual tuition and extended care fees may be paid in 10 monthly installments based upon the Tuition and Enrollment Contract. Tuition and fee installments are due on the 15th day of each month. Please note that some months such as December are short months, but tuition installments remain the same. Drop-in extended care fees will be added to the monthly statements due on the 15th of the month for the prior month's usage.

Form of Payment

Annual School Fee: Parent can pay the annual school fee by check, money order, cashier's check or credit/debit card.

Prepaid tuition: Parent can pay the yearly tuition in full on or before August 15th. The School is not responsible for any cash placed in the School's lock box.

Monthly Installments: Parent can opt to pay tuition and fees in monthly installments beginning in August and ending in May by one of the following two methods:

Option 1-Parent authorizes School to initiate monthly automatic ACH debit/bank draft from a checking or savings account.

Option 2- Parent authorizes School to set-up monthly recurring charges to credit/debit account.

Non-processed Payment/NSF Fee

Time is of the essence in making payments to the School. The Parent will be charged a \$25.00 fee on all bank draft or recurring credit card payments that are not transmitted by the 15th of the month.

Late Pick-Ups and Early Drop-Off

The School expects the Parent/Guardian to make advance arrangements for Late Pick-Ups and Early Drop-Offs with the Head of School no later than the school day proceeding the day of use. A fee of \$10.00 per hour will be charged for any late pick-ups and early drop-offs.

Volunteer Hours

Annually, 30 hours of volunteer work per student for the School is required. Any unfilled hours will be billed at a rate of \$10.00 per hour.

Prompt Payment

When an account is in arrears, or if the Parent/Guardian has a question or concern about their account, it is the Parent's responsibility to contact the Head of School or School Office to resolve any questions and to make arrangements for immediate payment. All payments will be credited in order of receipt to the earliest debit on the account. No re-enrollment contract will be accepted from a family whose payments of tuition and other fees are in arrears from a previous school year. The School will release a Student's records only when the Student's account is paid in full.

Billing Statements

A statement of their account will be sent by the tenth of the month as a reminder for tuition and fees due. Tuition and fees, as set forth in the Enrollment Agreement are due regardless of whether or not a statement was received.

Withdrawal

Ninety-day advance written notice is required. Any refund of fees or tuition paid must be requested in writing and will be made only at the discretion of the School's Board of Directors, whose decision will be final.

Health & Safety

Attendance

Regular attendance of the children is an important component of the program; children who benefit the most from the school are the ones who attend regularly. Please make every effort to ensure the continuity and regularity of schedule that your child needs to progress and develop. This helps foster their sense of order and to build trust in oneself, the environment and their directresses.

Arrival and Dismissal

Arrivals between 7:30 AM –8:15 AM: All students escorted to classroom and signed in with MCS Staff member.

Arrivals between: 8:15 AM –8:30 AM: All students (except for those under two years) will utilize the car pool line and be greeted by a Directress and escorted to their classroom for sign-in.

Arrivals after 8:30 AM must be signed in at the office and escorted to their classroom for check-in.

Dismissal at half-day session conclusion- Students will be escorted to their parents/guardians' vehicles by the Classroom Directresses.

Dismissal at full-day session conclusion- Students will be escorted to their parents/guardians' vehicles by the Classroom Directresses. Students under two year of age will be dismissed from their classroom and signed out by the parent/guardian.

Dismissals between 3:00 PM – 5:30 PM: Parent/guardian must walk-in and sign-out student with a MCS staff member.

Students picked-up before the regular dismissal time, must be signed out in the office or with the Classroom Directress.

Reminders:

- Drive slowly and safely on Bates Street.
- Keep our neighbors driveway clear of traffic.
- Hold your child's hand when walking into the building.
- It is unlawful to leave a child unattended in a vehicle.

The smooth flow of our programs depends in a large part on the children's prompt arrival and departure. It is important for each child to arrive on time; a good start to the day is crucial. Departure time is important too, in that children are often upset if parents do not arrive at dismissal time. If a parent's plan suddenly change and they cannot be at school at the time agreed upon, they need to call the office as soon as possible to tell us about the changes, so the we may relay the changes to the child. Children will be released only to those persons whose names appear on the Pick-up Authorization or Emergency Contacts.

If someone other than a parent or legal guardian is to pick-up a child, they must be on the approved list placed in the child's file by the parent or legal guardian. If someone other than those persons on the approved list is to pick-up a child, a written authorization, signed by the parent or legal guardian, must be taken to the school office by the parent or legal guardian. Phone calls are not acceptable as authorization for someone to pick-up a child, unless they are already on the child's approved list. Any authorized person must provide photo identification.

Any children dropped-off early or remaining after their contracted time will be charged \$10.00 per hour on their next monthly statement.

Illness & Absenteeism

Regular attendance is important; however illness is an excusable absence. Please do not send you child to school on days when any of the following symptoms are present:

- Fever (Temperature over 99.9 degrees)
- Rash
- Cough
- Sore Throat
- Discharge of discolored or excessive amounts of nasal mucous
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Sleeplessness
- Headache
- Pink or oozing eyes

If the School becomes aware of a potential outbreak of serious disease or parasite (e.g. head lice, chicken pox, meningitis, etc.) the Head of School will immediately notify families and staff members and will provide as much information and literature as possible on the symptoms, treatments and outcomes of the condition.

If your child is ill and will be absent, please telephone the office to advise. Also, please inform the school immediately if your child had been exposed to any communicable disease (other than the common cold). If you are a working parent, please be sure to have a back-up childcare plan for your child if he/she is sick and unable to attend school.

If a child becomes ill at school or is sent to school ill, MCS reserves the right to send the child home. If you child has a fever higher than 99.9 degrees Fahrenheit, an excessively runny nose, excessive coughing, a skin rash of any kind, eyes that are glassy, pink and/or oozing, lethargic

behavior, or other signs of illness, you will be called immediately to pick up your child and must do so within 45 minutes.

An incident report will be completed by the school each time a child receives medical treatment by a physician, nurse, physician's assistant, dentist, community clinic, or local health department, as a result of an incident occurring while the child is at the school.

After an illness lasting more than three (3) days, a physician's note is required for readmission to the classroom. If a child is sent home with a rash, a physician's note will be required prior to readmission.

If a child is sent home with a fever, he/she will not be allowed back into the school for 24 hours.

Children being treated with antibiotics for contagious illnesses should not return to school prior to 24 hours after beginning the antibiotic course of treatment.

Scratches and scrapes, which are inevitable when children play, will be washed and treated with an antiseptic and a bandage, if needed. In case of a more serious injury, an immediate attempt to contact the parent will be made. The School will not hesitate to seek proper care for the child. The child's physician and/or an ambulance will be called, if absolutely necessary.

It is extremely important that current emergency contact information be on file at the School at all times. Any changes to emergency information must be immediately reported to the school office.

Allergies

Allergies can be life-threatening. Parents/guardians of children who have allergies, food restrictions, and/or asthma must list these conditions on their child's Emergency Medical Care form. This information is compiled and posted so all staff members are aware of these conditions. Classroom Directresses may also need to notify all families to the effect that they may not bring in or send in a particular food, such as peanuts or nuts, to which one child in the class is allergic.

Immunizations

No person may be unconditionally admitted to school in North Carolina without documentary proof that she/he has had the required immunizations.

A child may be legally exempted from the immunization requirements if the school receives either a statement signed by a physician to the effect that immunization is unsafe for the child, or a letter of affidavit signed by the parent stating that immunization is contrary to his/her beliefs.

Note, however, that a child who is not immunized may be temporarily excluded from school if there is reason to believe that he/she has been exposed to a communicable disease.

Medications

No prescription or over-the-counter medicine will be given to children without written authorization and instructions from the child's parent and/or doctor. Medication authorization forms are available in the office. Medical authorization forms must be completed and signed by a parent or legal guardian. Authorized medication must be brought to school in its original container and will be kept in a locked cabinet. Prescription medications must have a correct and current label for the individual child receiving medication: to include proper name of recipient, name of prescription, dosage, and expiration date. Medication should never be placed in a child's lunch box or sent in with a child. The first dose of a medication must be given by the parent. With the completion of a blank permission form MCS staff can apply topical medicines such as diaper rash cream, anti-itch cream, sunscreen and mosquito repellent.

Lunch

We take nutritious lunches very seriously. Please include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, cheese, yogurt and other healthy foods your child enjoys. Please do not send any juices, cookies, chips, candy and other foods that do not have nutritional value. The State approved Meal Patterns listed below must be adhered to. Please use this as a guide when preparing your child's lunch and snack. In accordance with the North Carolina child care laws, all students staying for

lunch will have the USDA recommended serving size of fluid milk for lunch and snack made available.

Please also help us in our goal for independence by sending fruits and vegetables already cut to the child's liking.

Lunch or Supper	1-2 year olds	3-5 year olds	6-12 year olds
Milk—must be fluid milk	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1 cup
Meat/Meat alternate Lean meat, poultry, or fish without bone OR, Alternate protein product OR, Cheese OR, Egg (large) OR, Cooked dry beans or peas OR, Peanut butter or other nut or seed butters OR, Nuts and/or seeds OR, Yogurt, plain or sweetened	1 oz 1 oz 1 oz 1/2 egg 1/4 cup 2 tbsp 1/2 oz 4 oz	1 1/2 oz 1 1/2 oz 1 1/2 oz 3/4 egg 3/8 cup 3 tbsp 3/4 oz 6 oz	2 oz 2 oz 2 oz 1 egg 1/2 cup 4 tbsp 1 oz 8 oz
Vegetable or fruit or 100% fruit juice serve two different vegetables and/or fruits to equal	1/4 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup
Grains/Breads—must be enriched or whole grain Bread OR, Cornbread or biscuit or roll or muffin OR, Cold dry cereal OR, Hot cooked cereal OR, Cooked pasta or noodles or grains	1/2 slice 1/2 serving 1/4 cup 1/4 cup 1/4 cup	1/2 slice 1/2 serving 1/3 cup 1/4 cup 1/4 cup	1 slice 1 serving 3/4 cup 1/2 cup 1/2 cup
Snack—select 2 of the 4 components	1-2 year olds	3-5 year olds	6-12 year olds
Milk—must be fluid milk	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1 cup
Vegetable or fruit or 100% fruit juice	1/4 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup
Grains/Breads—must be enriched or whole grain Bread OR, Cornbread or biscuit or roll or muffin OR, Cold dry cereal OR, Hot cooked cereal OR, Pasta or noodles or grains	1/2 slice 1/2 serving 1/4 cup 1/4 cup 1/4 cup	1/2 slice 1/2 serving 1/3 cup 1/4 cup 1/4 cup	1 slice 1 serving 3/4 cup 1/2 cup 1/2 cup
Meat/Meat alternate Lean meat, poultry, or fish OR, Alternate protein product OR, Cheese OR, Egg OR, Cooked dry beans or peas OR, Peanut or other nut or seed butters OR, Nuts and/or seeds Or, Yogurt, plain or sweetened	1/2 oz 1/2 oz 1/2 oz 1/2 egg 1/8 cup 1 tbsp 1/2 oz 2 oz	1/2 oz 1/2 oz 1/2 oz 1/2 egg 1/8 cup 1 tbsp 1/2 oz 2 oz	1 oz 1 oz 1 oz 1/2 egg 1/4 cup 2 tbsp 1 oz 4 oz

Snacks

Healthy snacks are offered to all students each day and are provided by the classroom parents on a weekly rotating basis. The school provides water during snack time. Each child is assigned a week to provide healthy snacks for their classroom. Fruit is a perfect choice for mid-

morning snack. Crackers, pretzels or salty foods should not be included as snack food. The Classroom Directress will distribute the snack schedule during the first week of school. Also on the list will be fresh cut flowers for flower arranging lessons.

Nutrition

When we prepare food at school, we try to use natural sweeteners with no additives or preservatives, whenever possible. Occasionally we will use sugar in small amounts, but we do not allow children to bring products containing sugar to school. This includes sugar-sweetened, carbonated beverages (sodas, etc.),

This No-Sugar policy holds true throughout the school, no matter what age the child. We ask for your compliance in this matter. Holiday celebrations and birthday celebrations are exceptions to this rule; however, families are asked to bring nutritious and low-sugar treats for these occasions, if possible.

Electronic Key Entry System

Each family will be assigned a unique four-digit access code to the electronic key system installed on the front hallway door. All parents/guardians will have access to the building during our normal school hours. Please share this access code with only those authorized to pick-up your children. The key lock system tracks the date and time of entry by access code number. Initially, you will be given written notice of your access code and user instructions. Your access code will be listed on your monthly statement for your future reference.

Messaging System

With our top priority of keeping our families informed, the school has adopted the AlertNow Notification Service. This system will allow for your immediate notification in the event of an emergency via the telephone and/or email. This system will be used to notify families of school delays or cancellations due to inclement weather. The Caller ID will display 411 when delivering a dire emergency message. We will also use this system to send reminders about our special events and general announcements. In this case the Caller ID will display the school's name.

Field Trips/Family Outings

During the year the children have an opportunity to go on a variety of field trips. Notices will be sent home in advance of any trip to inform you of planned activity, location, departure time, directions to the event site and expected time of return to the school. On occasion the Directresses do take the students for nature walks. When this happens during the school hours, information will be posted on the classroom door and the office will be notified.

Students prepare for field trips with curriculum before the field trips. Preparations include points of interest, grace and courtesy and special information. We ask that you make the outing a time to be with your child and their classmates. No additional children should be included.

The NC Child Passenger Safety and the NC Seat Belt law must be the practice. If you cannot transport your child, you need to arrange to have them ride with another family. Our insurance does not permit us to transport students or to assign them to random cars.

Child Abuse Reporting Requirements

All staff members are required by law to report suspected abuse of any kind to the proper authorities.

Social Services and Authorizations

The North Carolina Department of Social Services and the Division of Child Development have the authority to interview any child or staff member, and to inspect and audit child or facility records without prior consent. MCS will make provisions for private interviews with any child (ren) or staff member and for examination of all records relating to the operation of the facility. The department and the licensing agency have the authority to observe the physical condition of the

child(ren), including conditions which could indicate abuse, neglect, or inappropriate placement, and to have a licensed medical professional physically examine the child/(ren).

Parent/Guardian Involvement/Information

Parent/Guardian Observations and Feedback

Parent observations of their child's classroom are welcome. Observations may be scheduled anytime after the first six weeks of school; it is during the first six weeks that the children get to know each other and become comfortable with the ground rules and daily routines.

We ask families, as we ask all classroom visitors, to respect the rights of the directresses and the students by making their presence as inconspicuous as possible. If any questions come up as a result of the visit, parents/guardians are invited to speak to the Head of School at that time.

Parent/guardian questions and comments are valued by the staff. In order to make an appointment to speak with either the directresses or the director, in person or by phone, parents can call the school office and leave their contact information.

Parent/Guardian Conferences

November and June parent/teacher conferences are held each year. These conferences offer parents the opportunity to speak individually with their child's directress, to hear about and receive a written narrative about the child's progress and the teachers' goals for the child. Conferences are an opportunity for parents to give directresses additional information about their child. We have found that it is best if both parents/guardians attend the conferences when possible. Please check the School Calendar for the exact dates and keep this time available. The two written narratives per year become a part of the students' records.

Take-Home Folders

Every Friday, in the Primary classes, a blue folder will go home with the child's work and correspondence from the directresses. Please send the blue folder back on Monday morning. If it does not come back it is difficult for the child to keep work together to make it home for you to share.

Elementary students take their completed work home in their bag.

Student Assessment and Standardized Testing

Directresses assess the children's progress daily through observation of their hands-on activities and their written work. Directresses also keep careful records and report to parents frequently, both formally and informally, concerning their child's areas of success and challenges.

The school administers a general standardized test to students in the first through third grade. The purpose of this annual test is to give students an opportunity to become familiar with test-taking procedures and strategies in a relaxed and supportive environment.

Diagnostic Assessment, Tutoring, Counseling

When it becomes evident that a child has learning, behavioral or social difficulties and the teachers believe he/she require professional assistance, a recommendation will be made for diagnostic assessment and intervention by an outside specialist. In such cases, the teachers will work closely with parents and specialists to help the child meet his/her goals.

MCS reserves the right to require parents to seek an alternative school placement if we feel we cannot meet the student's needs or when those needs lie outside the scope of the MCS classroom. This situation arises when a student's special education needs are beyond those which MCS can provide or support in its educational programs.

Birthdays

Each child's birthday is celebrated at school with a special ceremony. Photographs from home often enhance this event. Usually the child brings a treat for the celebration. Directresses can give parents ideas for low- or no-sugar refreshments for these occasions. Please coordinate with your child's directress before the celebration.

Celebrations and Holidays

The school celebrates a variety of holidays, as a way of expanding the children's awareness of other cultures. It is the belief of the staff that children need to become aware of rituals and celebrations, as part of their experience of the cultures of the world. The directresses do not promote any ethnic or religious positions.

Personal Items

Clothing

It is recommended that children wear comfortable and washable clothing that will enable them to participate freely in the many activities of the day. All students should dress in the school colors; blue, khaki and white or any MCS gear. These colors may be worn in any combination of colors (no large characters or large logos).

The weather is not always sunny and hot in Eastern North Carolina and the children get a chance to learn about rain, wind and even snow. We go on nature walks and play in the rain and the cold winter days. Raincoats and boots are nice to have for the children on such days.

For playground safety, we ask that students do not wear hooded jackets with drawstrings.

To prevent loss of clothes, all clothing should be labeled with the child's name. Parents are advised to check routinely for their child's belongings.

Toddler and Primary students need to have a change of clothes at school, send clean clothes with the child's name clearly marked on it.

All students must have a special pair of comfortable shoes that they only wear inside the classroom.

Car Seat Storage

In order to promote tidiness and organization, it is necessary to leave car seats in cars. We do not have proper storage for car seats. It is recommended that families obtain more than one car seat in lieu of leaving the seat at school.

Nap/Rest Time/Bedding

Preschool children have a nap or rest period each day. Parents provide a sheet and a small stuffed animal or blanket. Bedding should be taken home each weekend to be washed and returned on Monday.

Items Brought to School

Children love to bring treasures from home for show and tell. Directresses will inform parents about specific guidelines and procedures for sharing, as they may vary slightly from program to program.

Items not permitted at school include candy or gum, electronic toys or games, tape or disc players, money, toy guns, or anything that looks like a weapon.

Behavior Guidelines

Grace and Courtesy:

The Ground Rules in the Montessori Environment

FREEDOM	with RESPONSIBILITY
The environment is designed for and belongs to the child.	The children restore the environment during and after an exercise. They are responsible for mopping up spills, rolling their own rugs, placing their chair under the table, and returning the work to the appropriate spot on the shelving.
The child is free to use any apparatus in the room with which the child is familiar through demonstration by staff.	The child must use the equipment with respect -- without harming it, himself, or his classmates. Children may not use material in a way that would distract other workers.
The child may work on a table or a rug, whichever is suitable to the work chosen.	Children may not work on display shelves, as their presence there would obstruct the other children's access to the materials.
The child has the right to work undisturbed and undistracted by others. He may initiate, repeat and complete an exercise alone without a break in his concentration cycle.	Children may not touch the work of others unless invited by them to do so. No child is allowed to interfere with another's learning cycle. (This provides security for the involved child to work undistracted until completion.) If a child must leave his work temporarily, he can continue later, confident that he will find his work as he left it.
The child has the freedom to move about the room as his needs dictate in the above rights.	The children should move about calmly, quietly, so as not to disturb the activity or privacy of any other children or the group as a whole. Running, jumping, or shouting disturb others.
The child has the freedom as a social being to talk with others in the course of his activity.	The child should speak kindly, quietly, and privately, respecting another's right to work without being disturbed.
The child has a right to work alone.	Children are not forced to share work. Generosity develops from within as a child matures and gains security and ego strength. In a sense, children share all the materials in the Montessori environment because when the materials are returned to the shelf, they are then available for another child.
The child may work with another or in a small group where there is a mutual agreement or an invitation to join.	The children must respect each other and all others as with any individual activity in the pursuit of the common project, in no way interfering with or disturbing the work of others.
The child has a right to occasionally "do nothing."	Children learn in many ways while observing others, relaxing, wandering, etc. A child's idleness is respected as long as it does not distract other children from their work in any way.
The child has a right not to join a group activity. He may continue working with individual exercises or he may stand apart as an observer of group activities without becoming an active participant.	Children may not interfere or disrupt an activity they have chosen not to join, nor may they join and leave freely once they have made the choice. This is their responsibility to the group.

Rights of Students and Parents/Guardians

It is the right of the students and their parents/guardians to:

- Be informed of the policies and rules regarding student behavior and discipline;
- Be informed in writing of the misbehavior and the incident during which it occurred;
- Present his/her version of the facts; and
- Have a conference with the directresses.

Behavior Guidelines for Preschool and Kindergarten Programs

When a child behaves inappropriately he/she is:

- Reminded in a gentle and firm way of the appropriate behavior.
- Reminded that our motto is “Be gentle with your friends and with yourself.”

If a parent/guardian is called to pick up their child at school, he/she needs to come as quickly as possible. The parent is required to have a conference with the child’s teachers and requested to work collaboratively with them to come up with a strategy to help the child.

Behavior Guidelines for Biting

Toddlers bite for different reasons. Reasons vary from exploration to spatial relationships. The best way to stop biting is to prevent it, but this is not always possible. Biting may occur when a child is still using his mouth as a primary source of learning. Developmentally, biting may also occur when a child first begins to learn to chew. When a pattern of biting occurs, it is important to understand why the child is biting so that the behavior can be understood and dealt with. A child may be sent home if biting becomes out of control. Open communication and cooperation between the parents and staff will help this process. There is literature available if biting becomes an issue for your child. Together we will help your children learn more acceptable social behavior.

Dismissal from School

A student may be dismissed from school for the rest of the year if one or more of the following behaviors are exhibited by the student and/or their parents:

- Aggressive behavior
- Physical abuse
- Verbal harassment
- Cannot work in a group setting
- Running away
- Excessive disruptive behavior
- Destruction of school property
- Consistent biting
- Throwing objects that endanger other children
- Parent/guardian is unwilling to modify daily schedule to fit child’s needs
- Parent/guardian is unwilling to work collaboratively with MCS directresses and School Directress.
- Parent/guardian is unwilling to seek an assessment or counseling when recommended by directresses. Recommendations as a result of an assessment must be followed up by the parent/guardian.
- Sexual harassment – defined as verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory comments, slurs, unwanted sexual advances, invitation or comments: physical conduct such as assault, blocking normal movements, or interference with work directed at the individual because of gender; retaliation for having reported the harassment.

Liability for Damages and Losses

Parents or guardians are liable for all the damages caused by the willful misconduct of their minor children or themselves which results in the injury to or death of other students or to members of the school staff or volunteers, or in damage to school property, or damage to other personal property (car windows, school windows, house windows, etc.). Parents/guardians will be expected to pay for the costs of labor and materials needed to repair property. Parents/guardians will be expected to pay for medical treatment of the injured party.

The MCS Montessori Terms

Aid to Life	Maria Montessori's method is viewed as an "aid to life". Education should give the child what he needs to develop to his full potential.
Directress	A teacher in Montessori School is called a directress because she gives the child the proper direction to progress and develop.
"Follow the Child"	This principle is one of the key elements of the Montessori vision, and is anchored in the belief that the child has an innate drive to grow and learn, and that the task of the adult is to foster it by being attentive to the needs of the child.
Freedom	Maria Montessori believed very strongly that in order to learn a child must be free. This includes the ability to move and talk freely in the classroom and to choose his work; coupled with a deep respect for the work of each member of the community.
Golden Rule	"Be gentle with your friends and with yourself."
Indoor Shoes	To learn to care for the environment is a very important part of the Montessori educational approach. The children are invited to care for the school as if it were their home. As a sign of this special care, each child changes shoes before entering the classroom.
Isolation of Difficulty	Part of the success of the Montessori method resides in the fact that each new concept is introduced separately and in sequential steps that allow the child to grasp gradually more complex concepts. The child gains confidence as he masters a concept step by step.
Maria Montessori	The founder of the Montessori method is an Italian woman born at the end of the 19 th century. She was the first woman in Italy to become a physician. She applied her extraordinary power of observation and her scientific formation to the study of children. She gained revolutionary new insights in the way children learn and develop. This led to what is called the Montessori method, which she preferred to view as an aid to life. She designed a series of sensorial and didactic materials to assist the growth process.
Mixed Age Classroom	In the mixed-age classroom the children function like an extended family. They inspire each other. As the younger children observe the older children, they silently think, "-Oh, I will do that when I am big."
Normalization	A child is said to be normalized once he is able to work independently, to choose his work on his own, and to take joy in his work. He is then free to learn and grow.
Prepared Environment	Each classroom provides the learning environment appropriate for the age group it serves, so each child can learn at his own pace. Materials on the shelves are changed to cater to the developing needs of the children as the year progresses.
Sensitive Periods	Through her keen observation of children, Maria Montessori discovered that at certain periods of their development, children can

learn certain things with great ease, and that the educational process should recognize these periods and favors this natural process when it happens.

Work

Maria Montessori thought that every activity performed by the child is part of his work of growing up and learning. The child is more interested in the process than the result. When a child is absorbed in a task, he becomes oblivious of time and does not mind repeating the task over and over. A child working in this fashion should not be interrupted. In a Montessori classroom, when a child is working with a piece of equipment, this is his work. He is allowed to work with it as long as he cares to. Work and play were all the same for Maria Montessori.