

The Montessori Children's School, Inc.

# Family Handbook

2018-2019



Montessori Children's School, Inc.  
714 Bates Street  
Jacksonville, NC 28450  
910-938-3826  
Email: [MCS@MCSjax.org](mailto:MCS@MCSjax.org)  
Website: [www.jacksonvillemontessori.com](http://www.jacksonvillemontessori.com)

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## Welcome Letter

Dear MCS Community,

On behalf of the entire staff and the Board of Directors, I welcome you to Montessori Children's School for the 2018-2019 year.

Twenty-four years ago MCS opened its doors to the children and families of the Jacksonville area. We started in the living room of a local home; moved to a local church for two years and then purchased the property where our current campus is located. Since then we have built three buildings, purchased three houses and land adjacent to MCS and have built natural playgrounds to accommodate the different age levels of our students. This is all possible due to the wonderful families and community members who over the years believe in what a Montessori education can do to help children be responsible citizens and cultivate their own natural desire to learn.

There are many wonderful experiences that will take place in your child's life during this year. We encourage you to take advantage of the many opportunities to become involved with school events through our newly formed Montessori Volunteer Community (MVC). This will help to make those experiences with your child even more memorable.

This Family Handbook is a reference tool for you as we go through the school year. Many of the questions you have can be answered within these pages. We encourage you to keep it close and refer to it often. You can also access it through our website under the Parent tab.

Thank you in advance for your support. We truly appreciate everything you do to make MCS the best it can be. See you around our growing campus!

Sincerely,

*Ms. Hampton*

## History

### Overview

Incorporation: 1997

The Montessori Children's School (MCS) was established in 1993 and is a non-profit 501(c)(3) school. Our goal is to provide an authentic Montessori education that provides students with a solid basis for coping with the academic and social challenges they will encounter now and in the future. MCS nurtures the individual learning style of each student while maintaining standards of academic excellence.

Classroom Levels: Stepping Stones (12 months-3 years); Primary (3-6 years); Lower Elementary (6-9 years); Upper Elementary (9-12 years);

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

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

Governance: Volunteer Board of Directors elected by parents/community members and staff representatives.

### Philosophy

The Montessori Method of education 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."

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.

## **The Board of Directors**

The Board of the Montessori Children's School is a volunteer organization comprised of parents, directors/directresses, Administrative Director and Educational Director, alumni parents and community members. Our Board model supports the Administrative Director and Educational Director who, in turn, supports the children, their families and the staff.

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 through our annual auction, participates on important committees and identifies ways to make the school better.

Board members serve for a two-year term. At the Annual Board of Director's Meeting in May, new Board members were elected to replace those whose terms have expired. The new Board members should be committed to the well-being of the school and work to promote all policies and procedures as well as the long term goals of the school.

The Board meets monthly throughout the year. Committees may meet more often.

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.

## **Montessori Volunteer Community (MVC)**

The Montessori Volunteer Community is a parent-led effort that helps align the efforts of the volunteers with the needs and requirements of the school. Additionally, the MVC is an inclusive group that helps develop closer relationships among families through fellowship and cooperation. All families become active members of the MVC upon their enrollment of their child in Montessori Children's School.

There are three officers, which include the Volunteer Coordinator, the Treasurer and the Secretary, which help with the administrative work of the Community. If you have any questions about volunteerism, please feel free to ask or go to page 18 & 19 for more information.

In addition to these efforts, volunteers can also find opportunities to contribute to their classroom by asking your child's directresses.

Volunteer activities are divided into four broad categories:

- Fundraising
- Event Planning
- Board of Directors and Campus Support
- Teacher & Staff Appreciation

## **Policies and Procedures**

### **Non-discrimination Policy**

The Montessori Children's School does not discriminate on the basis of students' or their families' race, color, creed, national and ethnic origin, marital status or sexual orientation in its admissions procedures, educational policies, and employment practices.

### **No Pet Policy**

There is a NO pet policy for parents and staff of Montessori Children's School during school/business hours (7:30am – 5:30pm) and while the children are on school grounds for any school functions. Only trained animals like ADA compliant service dogs, or trained handlers will be permitted to expose the children or staff to new animals.

### **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.**

- Student Application
- Enrollment Contract\*
- Installment Payment Authorization Form\*
- Contact Information & Pick-up Authorization\*
- Emergency Medical Care Information & Authorization\*
- Immunization History\*
- Children's Medical Report
- Medication Authorization Form\* (only if needed)
- Student Personal Record
- Permission Agreement
- Discipline & Behavior Management Policy
- Permission to Administer Topical Medication\* (Stepping Stones only)
- Receipt of Summary of Child Care Laws
- Receipt of Family Handbook

**\*Form must be updated annually or as changes occur.**

In signing the student application, the parent/guardian gives permission for our school to contact the child's previous school(s) to obtain information on both the child's academic performance and general behavior in that school. We must receive this information before the enrollment process can be completed.

We do not utilize specific academic entrance requirements. We accept students of varying academic ability and diverse learning styles. However, we do not accept students who potentially may be disruptive to the class or who will require excessive individual attention from staff members. New students are admitted with a 30 day probationary status.

Montessori Children's School reserves the right to remove a student at any time if, in the sole judgment of the School, that student's conduct, progress, or influence on campus is not in keeping with the School's accepted standards, as determined by the School's sole discretion.

Montessori Children's School reserves the right to ask a parent to withdraw his/her child if the parent becomes abusive to the staff or to other children, as determined by the School's sole discretion.

### **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
- Have a conference with the director/directress

## **School Expectations of Parents**

General:

- Ensuring that your child arrives “on time” during morning drop-off and is ready for the day
- Ensuring that your child is picked up “on time” in the afternoon
- Refraining from the use of cell phones/electronics (parents and child) during drop-off and pick-up is requested
- Responding quickly when a child is ill or making alternate arrangements for having a sick child picked up
- Keeping a child home if he/she is showing symptoms of illness
- Limiting absences other than illness
- Submitting forms and fees on time
- Refraining from the use all tobacco/vapor smoking products while on campus or attending a school function to include field trips
- Giving support to the child in doing any independent research outside of the school environment
- Volunteering 30 hours per child per year (no more than 60 hours for 2 or more children)

Parent Orientation: Parent’s attendance at Parent Orientation is paramount to understanding the expectations of the school and of the director/directress for your child’s class. If a parent has children at different age levels attending the school, they should make every effort to attend the Parent Orientation for each of their children. Parents will receive at least one volunteer hour for attending.

## **Attendance**

The morning routine in every classroom is a very important part of the day. In order to best serve the children, we must keep arrival very consistent. Therefore, it is important to have your child arrive “on time” (by 8:30am) every day ready to start his/her day. It will help the child orient to school and it wards off confusion. A child who is “on time” walks into the classroom and is greeted by the Directress or assistant. A child who arrives after 8:30am may tend to disrupt the group and it can cause anxiety for them.

Excessive tardies or absences can affect a child’s learning and well-being. As a school, we want to help you and your child to have a consistent schedule every school day. If there are 5 tardies or absences your child’s Directress will arrange a meeting with you to help with solutions. After 10 tardies or absences a meeting will be arranged to include the Administrative Director and Educational Director. After 20 tardies a Letter of Concern will be added to the students’ academic file and a meeting will be held with the parents. After 20 absences a review will take place with the Administrative Director and Educational Director and class Directress and a meeting will then be held with the parents.

## **Behavior Issues**

Our goal is to help all students understand and use appropriate behavior towards themselves and others in their words and actions.

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 due to a behavioral concern, he/she needs to come as quickly as possible. A parent/ director/directress conference will be scheduled to further discuss the situation and develop a strategy to positively modify the behavior. MCS requests that parents/guardians work collaboratively with the staff towards the goal of achieving a peaceful, productive classroom environment.

## **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 observe 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.

## **Student Behavior and Discipline**

Empathy and being considerate of others are adult qualities that take many years to develop. It begins in childhood and in a Montessori environment it is nurtured as children learn to respect the people and the materials in that environment. Our discipline policy emphasizes positive democratic and respectfully approaches helping children behave constructively.

1. We encourage cooperative behavior.
2. We set clear limits and expectations for behavior to ensure a safe and peaceful environment for all.
3. We model appropriate behavior for the children.
4. We modify the classroom environment to encourage cooperative behavior.
5. We listen to the children.
6. We provide consistent redirection of any inappropriate behavior towards meaningful and purposeful activity.
7. We respect the individual needs, desires and feelings of each child.
8. We explain things to the children on their levels.
9. We remain consistent in our efforts to maintain a safe and peaceful environment for all our students.

Intentional aggressive behavior toward peers or staff including kicking, fighting, biting, pinching, poking, hitting, beating, bullying, shoving, spitting, tripping, scratching, using profane language, making disruptive noises, or misusing the school's and other's property will be addressed in a compassionately direct manner. Repeated behavior that does not improve with conflict resolution techniques may result in the following:

1. The child being removed from the environment. When the child has calmed down, the teacher will have a discussion with the child about behavior and will provide encouragement and redirection.
2. The teacher contacting parents to discuss concerns and partnering with the parents to provide support for the child.
3. Ending the child's day early. If the child is acting aggressively and has broken the agreements that have been made with him/her to keep everyone emotionally and physically safe at school, the parents may be asked to come and take the child home for the rest of the day. The child will be welcomed back the next day with agreements in place to ensure everyone's safety and well being
4. Holding a conference with the parents, teacher and Administrative Director and Educational Director.
5. If the behavior continues, the Administrative Director and Educational Director will use his/her own discretion as to how best to support the individual child and the rest of the MCS community.

#### Principles of Child Management

1. Use quiet voices inside.
2. Walk inside – Run outside.
3. Use furniture for its purpose (i.e., sitting in chairs).
4. Show respect for property.
5. Work with only one set of materials at a time.
6. Replace material on shelf as when taken.

#### Development of Social Conscience

1. Show respect for other people.
2. Listen without interrupting.
3. Use "Please" and "Thank you."
4. Wait until everyone is served.
5. Use "Excuse me, please."

#### **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 directors/directresses and Administrative Director and Educational Director
- Parent/guardian is unwilling to seek an assessment or counseling when recommended by directors/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.
- Threat of weapons or bringing weapons of any kind on campus

### **Liability for Damages and Losses**

Parents/guardians are liable for all damages caused by the willful misconduct of their minor children or themselves which results in the injury or death of other students, members of the school staff and/or volunteers. They will also be responsible for damage to school property or 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.

## **Health & Safety**

### **Bates Street/White Oak Street and Parking Lot Safety**

**We ask everyone’s cooperation in not creating hazardous situations during our morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up time. Be mindful of other cars, children and adults and also your speed (5 mph).**

#### **Additional Reminders:**

- Always keep the intersection of Bates Street and White Oak Street clear
- Turn on your blinker when turning onto or off Bates Street
- Stay close to the sidewalk or the edge of the street when turning onto or out of Bates Street
- Drive slowly and safely on Bates Street (5 mph)
- Always keep the neighbor’s driveways clear
- For your child’s own safety and keeping in line with the law, please make sure your child remains properly buckled in their car seat until you are at the school and a staff member is there to greet your child and help them out of the car. Children should not be hanging out of cars, sitting in parents laps or have their heads out of the sun roof.
- Keep off our neighbor’s grass and remain on the sidewalk at all times
- It is unlawful to leave a child unattended in a vehicle

There will be no parking on the school side of Bates Street during the following times:

8:00am – 8:45am

2:00pm – 3:00pm

If your car is found parked without you in it during these times you will be issued a \$5.00 ticket.

In order to minimize traffic backing up on Gum Branch Rd during morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up, we recommend the following route. From Gum Branch Road turn onto Dewitt Street, turn left onto Forest Grove, and turn left onto White Oak. You may want to follow this route (in reverse) when leaving campus, especially if you would typically turn left onto Gum Branch Rd. Traffic can be quite hectic during these times of the day.

### **Arrival and Dismissal**

Before School Care Arrivals between 7:30 AM –8:15 AM: Parents walk their child to their classroom and sign in their child with the MCS staff member present.

Morning drop-off begins at 8:10 am–8:30 am for Stepping Stones & Primary students and 8:15 am -8:30 am for Elementary students. We kindly ask if you want to walk your child to school that you park your car at the other end of Bates Street. Please hold your child’s hand, cross the street and stay on the sidewalk until you have met a staff member at the school who will then make sure your child reaches his/her class. All students with their parents/guardians who utilize the drop-off line will be greeted by a staff member

who will then escort the child to their classroom for sign-in. Please remain in your vehicle during morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up times.

**All Arrivals after 8:30 AM are considered late and must be signed in at the office by the parent/guardian and then escorted to their classroom by a MCS staff member.**

Students picked-up before their dismissal time are signed out at the office by the parent or authorized pick-up person.

**If a parent's pick-up plan changes and they cannot be at school by dismissal, please notify the office as soon as possible.**

Half Day Dismissal: 11:45am - Students will be escorted to their parents/guardians' vehicle by the Classroom Directress.

Full Day Dismissal: 2:45pm - Students will be escorted to their parents/guardians' vehicle by the Classroom Directors/Directresses during afternoon pick-up.

After School Care Pick-Up is between 3:00 PM – 5:30 PM and will be at the After School designated area. Parents use their electronic access key to enter and then will sign out their student with a MCS staff member.

### **Authorized Pick Up**

Children will be released only to those persons whose names appear on the Contact Information and Pick-up Authorization form. Any authorized person must provide photo identification prior to release.

If someone other than those persons on the approved list is to pick-up a child, a written authorization signed by the parent/legal guardian must be submitted to the office.

### **School Closings and Delays**

All families and staff will be contacted via phone or text with a One Call Now message for any school closings or delays. The school website will also be updated provided we have power.

If the school experiences more than four (4) days of school closing throughout the year due to inclement weather or other reasons beyond our control, the school will begin to "make-up" days on the fifth (5) missed day and subsequent days thereafter, based on the current school calendar. If the school has not made up the days missed by the end of the normal school year, the school days may be extended into the Teacher Workdays. If there is a catastrophic event that results in an extended school closure, make-up days will be handled on a case by case basis.

### **Illness & Absenteeism**

If your child is ill and will be absent, please inform the office. **Please do not send your child to school if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:**

- Fever (Temperature over 100.0 degrees Axillary)
- Contagious Rash
- Sore Throat
- Excessive amounts of nasal mucous
- Diarrhea / Vomiting / Nausea
- Pink or oozing eyes
- Head Lice or Fleas

If a child becomes ill at school, MCS reserves the right to send the child home for any of the symptoms mentioned above. You will be called to pick up your child and must do so within 45 minutes. 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. Children may return to school when they are without fever or the symptoms above for 24 hours.

If a child is sent home with a contagious rash, a physician's note will be required prior to readmission.

Head Lice Policy: When a child has been diagnosed with head lice the child may return to school when there is no sign of lice or nits in the child's hair. A child returning to school that has had lice/nits will be checked upon return to school to verify there are no lice/nits. If the child is found not to have lice/nits they may return to school.

Scratches and scrapes will be washed and bandaged if needed and an incident report will be sent home. Staff members are not allowed to place any ointment on wounds of students. In case of a more serious injury, an immediate attempt to contact the parents 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.

Also, please inform the school immediately if your child had been exposed to any communicable disease (other than the common cold). If the School becomes aware of a potential outbreak of serious disease or parasite (e.g. head lice, chicken pox, meningitis, etc.) families will be immediately notified. Families will be provided as much information and literature as possible regarding the signs/symptoms, treatment and outcome of the condition.

### **Allergies/Asthma**

Allergies and asthma 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. If medication administration is required a medication authorization form must be on file in the office and updated annually. We also recommend having an action plan on file (i.e. asthma or allergy) that has been developed by your child's medical provider.

Directresses will notify families if there is a particular food allergy that applies to their class.

### **Immunizations**

No student may be 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 that immunizations are unsafe for the child, or a letter of affidavit (available in the office) signed by the parent/guardian.

Please note that a child who is not immunized may be temporarily barred from school if there is reason to believe that he/she has been exposed to a communicable disease.

### **Medications**

If your child requires medication prescribed by a physician, you must complete the medication authorization form and bring the medication to the office. Prescription medications must have a current pharmacy label for the child receiving medication.

Medication, even OTC medicines (including cough drops), should never be placed in a child's lunch box or sent in with a child.

The day's first dose of medication must be given by the parent.

### **Lunch**

The State approved Meal Patterns should be followed and is included with the classroom handouts. In accordance with the North Carolina child care laws, all Stepping Stone and Primary students staying for lunch will have the USDA recommended serving size of fluid milk made available.

Please include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, cheese, yogurt and other healthy foods your child enjoys. For all foods, especially yogurt, only send in food items the child can easily open by themselves using no scissors or teeth. The use of 'tube' type containers of food, no matter how healthy is discouraged. You can place the food in a reusable container. Please follow our request to leave the following types of foods at home: Lunchables, fruit juices, energy bars, yogurt smoothies, go-gurt, novelty foods, cookies (store bought or homemade), chips, candy, chocolate and other such foods. These types of foods will be sent home.

Also help us in our goal for independence by sending fruits and vegetables cut and prepared to your child's liking. Please remember to use ice packs or a thermos to keep food at the proper temperature. Do not send food that needs to be microwaved as we do not have the extra staff to microwave lunches.

Each day children will need to bring a stainless steel water bottle filled with plain water only. We have water and milk available for children at lunch and water is always available. Yogurt smoothies, juices, flavored water and other beverages should remain at home.

## **Snacks**

Every family participates in providing healthy snacks, milk (for younger classrooms), and fresh flowers for the classroom. This is done on a weekly rotational basis that will be determined by your child's directress. Typically, you will be responsible for approximately 2 to 3 weeks of snack (depending on class size) over the school year. Directresses will distribute a snack schedule during the first week of school and will also provide guidance on healthy snack ideas.

## **Nutrition**

When we prepare food at school, we use natural sweeteners with no additives or preservatives. 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.), flavored water and juices.

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 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**

The school security system is operated with electronic access keys. All visitors must check in at the office by ringing the bell and office staff will let them in as appropriate.

**General visitors** will be issued an identification badge to wear and will be escorted while on campus.

**Volunteers and family visitors** will be issued a numbered access key along with an identification badge to wear during their stay on campus. The access key will allow them to open the doors and identify them to staff as an authorized volunteer/visitor. Volunteers/Visitors must return the access key when they sign out at the office.

Anyone who loses an access key will be required to pay a replacement fee of \$25.

**Families with contracted Before and After Care Program** will be issued two access keys during the first week of school which will allow them to unlock the doors/gates to drop off and/or pick up their children outside of regular school hours. If a family needs an additional access key, they can request one from the office. Families with access keys should only loan them to individuals authorized to pick up their children. Families must return all of the access keys on the student's last day of attendance for the current school year or they will be assessed a replacement fee of \$25 for any missing access key.

## **Field Trips/Outings**

During the year the children may have an opportunity to go on a variety of field trips/outings. 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. The Director/Directress will also provide you with dress code information for each specific field trip/outing. We prefer the children to dress in similar colors for safety reasons, and so that we can be easily recognized as a group.

Students prepare for field trips/outings through their curriculum. 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/siblings should be included.

Keep in mind that MCS adheres to the NC Child Passenger Safety and the NC Seat Belt law. If you cannot transport your child, it is your responsibility to arrange for the proper car or booster seat to be left at the school for transporting purposes.

On occasion the Directors/Directresses take the students for nature walks around campus. When this happens during the school hours, information will be posted on the classroom door and the office will be notified.

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

## **Personal Items**

### **School Dress Code**

Children should wear comfortable clothing that will enable them to participate freely in the many activities of the day. All students should dress in the school colors: navy blue, khaki, and white. Blue denim is also acceptable. These colors may be worn in any combination of colors. The only exceptions to the dress code policy are the MCS Earth Week tie-dye t-shirts, which may be worn on any day. Keep in mind the Montessori philosophy of experiential learning – your children will come home messy from time to time.

Please no cartoon characters or large logos on clothing or other personal items to include backpacks, lunch boxes, shoes, jackets, etc.

All students need to have a change of clothes at school. All clothing and personal items should be labeled with the child's name. Parents are advised to check the lost and found for missing items. Any items not claimed will be donated.

All students should have a pair of comfortable indoor shoes that do not cause a distraction ("light up or squeaky shoes) to wear while inside the classroom.

For playground safety, students are prohibited from wearing hooded jackets with drawstrings. Children should wear closed-toed shoes for outdoor activities. Children should refrain from wearing flip flops, open toed shoes or any type of "light up" shoes for their outdoor shoes.

We do ask that all students wear appropriate clothing that covers both the top and bottom of their bodies. For example; shirts worn should cover the entire torso. The length of shorts should be at mid-thigh or longer. Mid-drift shirts and shirts that do not cover a child's rear-end should not be worn. Shirts should not be see-through. For older girls, bras should not be seen through clothing and we recommend neutral or white bras. Shorts should be worn under all skirts. Shorts and leggings worn under clothing should be dress code colors (navy blue, khaki, and white). Hoodies with earphones should not be brought to school.

MCS is an all-weather school. As you prepare your children for school each day, please consider the weather forecast. MCS encourages children to experience the outdoor environment, including days that may be rainy or cold.

"Community Colors Day" are the exception to the dress code. On these days, there may be a specific color/theme or your child may choose what to wear. We do ask that you continue to observe the no

cartoon character request. Please refer to the school calendar for specific dates and look for information through email, the Messenger and/or fliers!

### **Car Seat Storage**

We do not have adequate space for car seat storage. It is recommended that families obtain more than one car seat in lieu of leaving a seat at school.

### **Nap/Rest Time/Bedding**

Full day children in the Main Building have rest period each day. Parents are asked to provide a sheet and a blanket for their child. Bedding will be sent home each weekend to be washed and returned on the student's next day of school.

### **Items Brought to School**

We highly encourage all personal items not listed on the class lists remain at home. MCS will not take responsibility for any item that is lost or misplaced by a child. Items not permitted at school include candy or gum, toys, stuffed animals, **personal electronic devices, electronic toys or games**, tape or disc players, money, real or toy guns or anything that looks like a weapon. Directors/Directresses will inform parents about specific guidelines and procedures for "share items".

## **Parent/Family Involvement/Other Information**

### **Family Involvement**

All MCS families are a part of the Montessori Volunteer Community and have many opportunities be involved. Our parents/guardians and community members play a vital role in the ongoing success of our school. There are many avenues of involvement and we strive to let parents know about these through several means. The office sends out e-newsletters with the Montessori Messenger as well as direct email communication, informational fliers and notes are placed in students' folders or backpacks so please check them every time they are sent home.

The list of possible opportunities for involvement include:

- Annual Auction
- Community Workdays
- Board of Directors
- Welcome Picnic
- International Night
- Hosting at Open Houses

Keep in mind that your volunteer/service hours to the school are not limited to those activities listed above. A list of volunteer activities are located at the back of this handbook. If you have a particular interest/area of expertise, please share it with the office or your child's Directress.

Parent participation in helping a classroom is welcomed. Possible tasks include:

- reading or writing with individual students
- making something for the class (i.e., play dough)
- assisting with a Holiday project
- accompanying the class on field trips/outings

Directors/Directresses will ask volunteers for certain tasks within their classrooms.

### **Volunteering Guidelines**

Volunteerism has long been a tradition at the Montessori Children's School. For the most part, volunteers have conducted themselves in a manner consistent with our philosophy and in accordance with the instructions of the directors/directresses. However, there have been some volunteer related instances where it was felt that perhaps a breach of confidentiality might have occurred. Some of these incidents have occurred in the classroom and at out-of-school social functions.

While it is recognized that these actions were not intentional, Montessori Children's School has decided to outline the conduct expected of volunteers and to require that volunteers sign a statement pledging their recognition of the volunteer guidelines. The statement is intended to address the sensitive issues of confidentiality, student performance, etc. and can be found in the pocket of your Family Handbook folder.

Thus, in order to preserve the integrity of our environment, all volunteers who are in the classroom will be required to:

- Review and sign a Volunteer Statement. All volunteers, including one-time volunteers must sign this statement which is in the pocket of your Family Handbook Folder.
- Check in at the office before proceeding to the classroom
- Adhere to the conduct contained in the Volunteer Statement and be aware that a breach of such guidelines may result in a discussion of a volunteer's status and/or activities.

It is our intent that these guidelines will continue to foster the spirit of volunteerism and concerns regarding child/director/directress confidentiality and conduct.

### **Parent/Guardian Observations and Feedback**

Parent observations of their child's classroom are welcome. Observations may be scheduled through the office any time after the normalization period, typically after the first six weeks of school. The office will announce when classroom observations begin.

We ask observers to respect the rights of the Directors/Directresses and the students by making their presence as inconspicuous as possible. Parents/guardians are encouraged to schedule an appointment with the Director/Directress (at a time that is convenient for all) to discuss their observations and to have any questions answered.

### **Parent/Guardian Conferences**

Parent/Teacher Conferences occur at least twice a year to offer parents the opportunity to speak individually with their child's Director/Directress. This time is for parents/guardians only. If your child attends the conference with you, your conference will be rescheduled.

Parents/Guardians will receive a written report outlining your child's progress as well as the goals the Director/Directress may have established for your child. Conferences also provide an opportunity for parents/guardians to share their concerns and/or provide additional information that may benefit the Director/Directress: child relationship. We have found that it is best if both parents/guardians attend the conferences whenever possible. An announcement will be made when conference sign-ups are available.

The bi-annual reports become a part of the students' records.

### **Student Assessment and Standardized Testing**

Directors/Directresses assess the children's progress daily through observation of their hands-on activities and their written work. They 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 third grade through Middle School. Second grade students are not required to take a standardized test, but may do so if parents request it. 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.

### **Developmental Assessment, Tutoring, Counseling**

When a Director/Directress believes that a child has learning, behavioral or social difficulty requiring professional assistance, a recommendation for diagnostic assessment and intervention by an outside specialist will be made. In such cases, the Director/Directress will work closely with parents and specialists to help the child meet his/her developmental needs.

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.

## **Birthdays**

Each child's birthday is celebrated with a special ceremony, the Celebration of Life. Please coordinate with your child's Directress before the celebration. Photographs and refreshments often enhance this event.

Please remember that there is a No-Sugar Policy. Directresses can provide ideas for low or no-sugar refreshments for this occasion.

## **Celebrations and Holidays**

The school celebrates a variety of holidays, as a way of expanding the children's cultural knowledge. Directors/Directresses do not promote any ethnic or religious positions.

## **Purchasing "Wants & Wish List Items" for Classrooms**

Every classroom has the necessary supplies, materials and lessons for providing Montessori educational services for your children's learning. However, if the classroom directors or directresses have a desire for items that do not fall into teaching supplies or materials category, these items are considered "wants & wish list items". Parents may purchase these items for the classroom. It is advised that no parent write a personal check, give cash or your credit card number to a Director/Directress to purchase items. If you want to purchase for the school in these ways stop by the office and the office personnel can help you. These purchases will become property of MCS and the classroom for which it is purchased. When \$10.00 is spent one volunteer hour is given. Parents must record their own volunteer hours when volunteering in this way.

## **Schedule of Fees**

### **Annual School Fees**

The non-refundable annual school fee is required to enroll all students. For students re-enrolling, the Enrollment form and deposit for the annual fee is due in the early spring, with the balance due in full by April 30th.

### **Tuition Plans and Payment of Other Fees**

Annual tuition and extended care fees may be paid in 10 monthly recurring installments based upon the Tuition and Enrollment Contract. Tuition and fee recurring installments are due on the 15th day of each month. Drop-in extended care fees will be billed monthly.

### **Forms of Payment**

**Annual School Fee:** Parent can pay the annual school fee by check, money order, cashier's check or credit/debit card. A \$12.00 processing fee will be added to any credit/debit card payment.

**Prepaid Tuition:** Parent can pay the yearly tuition in full on or before August 15<sup>th</sup> by check, money order or cashier's check.

**Monthly Recurring 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. This is the preferred method of payment and there is no processing fee.

**Option 2:** Parent authorizes School to set-up monthly recurring charges to credit/debit account which will incur a \$12.00 processing fee per transaction.

### **Billing Statements**

An electronic statement will be sent by the tenth of the month as a reminder for tuition and fees due. Tuition and fees are due regardless of whether or not a statement was received.

## **Prompt Payment**

When an account is in arrears or if a Parent/Guardian has a question or concern about their account, it is the Parent's responsibility to contact the office to resolve any questions and to make arrangements for immediate payment. All payments will be credited in order of receipt to the earliest debt 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.

## **Non-processed Payment/NSF Fee**

There will be charged a \$35.00 fee on all tuition payments that are not transmitted by the 20th of the month in which the payment is due.

## **Early Drop-Off and Late Pick-Ups**

Parents/Guardians should make advance arrangements for Early Drop-Offs and Late Pick-Ups with the office no later than the school day preceding the day of use. A fee of \$10.00 per hour or any part of an hour will be charged for any early drop-offs and late pick-ups.

## **Volunteer Hours**

Parent participation by volunteering is a great way to be involved. Thirty (30) volunteer hours is required, with a maximum of 60 hours for those families with two or more children. Any time spent volunteering in the classrooms, community workdays, and/or special events will be credited toward volunteer hours. Any purchase, such as snack or materials that benefit a classroom environment will be credited toward volunteer hours as well; every \$10.00 spent is equivalent to one (1) volunteer hour.

Parents/Guardians are responsible for recording their volunteer activities by emailing the school or stopping by the office and entering the information in the Volunteer Log. Each family will receive a statement of volunteer hours performed/money given in the middle of the year and late spring.

At the end of the school year, any unfilled hours will be billed at a rate of \$10.00 per hour.

## **Withdrawal**

We are a nonprofit school and our yearly budget is based on the amount of students enrolled. Any withdrawal or termination creates a financial impact on the School. As much advance notice as possible is welcome, however, thirty days written notice is required to withdraw your Student from the school. This written notice of withdrawal must be received by the Administrative Director and Educational Director by the fifth of the month preceding your Student's last month of enrollment. The School's monthly enrollment periods begin on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month. For example, if you are withdrawing your Student as of December 15<sup>th</sup>, written notice must be received by November 5<sup>th</sup> and the parent will be responsible for the November 15<sup>th</sup> tuition installment.

Tuition will not be pro-rated for withdrawal dates not aligned with the School's enrollment periods. For example, if the withdrawal date is December 20<sup>th</sup>, the Parent will be responsible for the December 15<sup>th</sup> payment and the last date of enrollment will be on January 14<sup>th</sup>.

If you are going through financial hardship, please let the office know. Any refund of tuition paid must be requested in writing and will be made only at the discretion of the Board of Directors, whose decision will be final.

## **MCS Volunteer Opportunities**

**Referral “Word of Mouth” Volunteer Opportunity** – A current MCS family will receive two (2) volunteer hours when they refer a prospective parent(s) with a prospective MCS student to attend a MCS sponsored adult event, such as a school tour, annual fundraiser, Wine & Cheese Open House or MCS parent educational opportunity and the prospective parent(s) attends the event.

Also, when that prospective parent(s) enrolls their child in MCS (Annual School Fee is paid), the current MCS family is awarded 15 volunteer hours per prospective student enrolled.

### **Maintenance of Building**

- Electrical
- Plumbing
- Change HVAC filters (monthly)
- Replace classroom and office light bulbs
- Replace outdoor lighting and exit lights
- Carpentry/sanding/refinishing furniture in classrooms

### **Outdoor Environment**

- Landscape (planning, weeding, planting, etc.)
- Build or maintain playground equipment after monthly inspections
- Spread mulch and sand
- Donate seasonal plants for gardening
- Help with community workdays

### **Classroom/MISC opportunities**

- Attend Board of Directors Meetings
- Make trips to the resource center at the library
- Wash classroom laundry once a week for your child's class
- Assist the directress with cooking in the classroom
- Make play-dough with recipe provided
- Prepare particular materials as needed by the directress (i.e. sewing, laminating, trimming)
- Play a musical instrument or do a presentation about the instrument in the classroom
- Provide classroom snacks
- Purchase items on directress's wish list

### **Other Opportunities**

- Serve as Board of Director member or committee member
- Serve on annual Auction Committee
- Help coordinate, set-up and/or clean-up for school events.
- Help coordinate an active or passive fundraising event

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT VOLUNTEER HOURS**

### **1. How many volunteer hours do I need?**

The current requirement is 30 hours per child with a maximum of 60 hours per family (with 2 or more children) each school year.

### **2. What happens if my child attends for only half of the school year?**

A prorated amount of hours will be required for children attending only half of the school year. (For example: If 1 child is enrolled, then 15 volunteer hours would be needed)

**3. What can I do for volunteer hours?**

There are many opportunities to meet your volunteer hours. See the previous page or contact the Volunteer Coordinator for a list of volunteer opportunities that will best suit you and your family.

\*\*Please note that bringing snack for your child's classroom can be counted toward your volunteer hours. Save your receipts and record the amount spent as described below in question #4.

**4. Where do I record my volunteer hours?**

The Volunteer Log Book/Binder is located on the front counter in the office. A volunteer log sheet has been prepared for each MCS family and filed alphabetically. Find your family's sheet and record the date, the volunteer task (or item purchased), and the number of hours (or amount spent) in the appropriate columns. Every \$10.00 spent is equivalent to one (1) volunteer hour.

\*\*Families may also email their volunteer hours to [admin@mcsjax.org](mailto:admin@mcsjax.org). Extra copies of log sheets are available in the volunteer log book/binder and maybe filled out at home then scanned and emailed to the address above.

\*\*Please remember it is our responsibility as parents to keep an accurate record of our volunteer hours.

**5. Do I need to save my receipts?**

Families do not need to submit receipts. MCS inherently trusts family members to document their time and money spent accurately.

**6. What happens if I am unable to complete my hours?**

A fee of \$10.00 per hour will be assessed at the end of the school year for any volunteer hours not completed.

**7. Can volunteer hours be carried over from year to year?**

Unfortunately excess hours cannot be carried over to the next school year.

**8. How much time should I record for doing my child's classroom laundry?**

Families receive one (1) volunteer hour for each day of classroom laundry.

**9. How much time should I record if two members of my family help chaperone/drive for a class field trip or a community workday?**

Families receive volunteer hours for **each** parent or adult family member that actively assists with being a chaperone on a field trip or community work day.

**10. Can I record volunteer hours if I help coordinate a fundraiser?**

Yes! Please record all time and money spent coordinating, preparing and cleaning up for school fundraisers or events. Please know money and time spent as an attendee should not be included.

For example, you coordinate the scholastic book program on behalf of the school and you purchase scholastic books for your household and purchase books for the classroom. Please include the volunteer hours spent coordinating, money spent on postage and books donated to the school.

Please exclude money spent on books for personal use.

**11. Do family basket donations for the annual Auction count toward volunteer hours?**

Yes, it is encouraged that all families donate a family basket to help raise money for the Auction. If your basket is valued at \$100 or more, the family may record 5 hours. Additionally, those who help plan, solicit companies for sponsorship, help with set up and/or clean up for the annual Auction will receive volunteer hours. However, time spent attending the auction and money spent at the auction (excluding items donated directly to the school) may not be included.

**Items NOT approved for volunteer hours:**

- Attending Parent/Teacher Conferences, Parent/Child Night, Open House, & Montessori Workshops
- Money spent on Soup Kitchen Food Donations
- Company/Personal business sponsored Auction donations (excluding family basket donations)
- Food costs and/or food preparation time for parent attended events outside school hours, such as International Night
- Parent education nights
- Money spent on Fundraisers (Scholastic Book Orders, Pizza Day, Ice Cream Socials, etc.)