

***Montessori
Children's
House***



Parent's Handbook

***5530 Medical Circle
Phone (608) 273-8600***



Welcome to Montessori Children's House!

This handbook contains information about our school's philosophy and policies. Reading it thoroughly will give you a better understanding of your child's school. Montessori Children's House does not discriminate in the admission, retention and dismissal of children on the basis of sex, race, color, class, national or ethnic origin, or the marital status, religious beliefs, sexual preference, political persuasion of parents or disabling conditions. All children will be considered for enrollment based on space available and licensing requirements.

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General Information

Montessori Children's House is the oldest Montessori school in Madison. Its founding in 1964 was due to an effort on the part of the community to bring Montessori education to the children of Madison. ***MCH is a non-profit, parent-operated school*** dedicated to providing high quality programs for children 2 to 9 years of age. The school's cooperative nature is designed to allow parents to take an active role in policy making. The classrooms are staffed with trained Montessori teachers. Classroom assistants are hired for their specific abilities and skills.

Educational Philosophy

The educational philosophy of Montessori Children's House is rooted in the teachings of Dr. Maria Montessori. She discovered that children possess an active love of learning and an eagerness to explore their environment. By working with a child's natural inclinations towards discovery, a learning environment can be created which will foster independence, self-discipline and motivation.

The Montessori classroom is designed with respect for children. Furniture and equipment are sized for them. Classroom materials are designed to encourage the children in their drive for discovery. The materials are arranged in such a way that children can follow the logical transition from one activity to another. A Montessori classroom invites children into an environment carefully designed to stimulate sensory perception, foster readiness for reading and writing and help the child gain self-reliance in learning.

A teacher with specific Montessori training heads each classroom. Assistants are selected on the basis of their awareness of children and the principles of child development. The Montessori teacher directs the classroom activity. They carefully plan the environment, gearing it towards the interests of the children, helping the children progress from one activity to the next. They are trained to assist each child, allowing choices among activities and ability levels. There is freedom with limits in the Montessori classroom. Children are allowed to work freely as long as they don't disturb others. The teacher guides the children through presentation of materials, answering questions and serving as a resource.

Dr. Montessori believed learning is more an individual than a group activity. In a Montessori classroom each child works without being pushed ahead or held back by the needs of the others in the classroom. Cooperation rather than competition is encouraged. In the classroom children interact continuously, choosing to work on their own or with a friend. The older children help the younger ones. The younger ones observe with fascination the work they will soon be able to do. Each day contains group activities and weather permitting, outdoor play.

A child goes through stages of development when certain types of knowledge are more easily acquired. Dr. Montessori referred to these as "sensitive periods", a term finding a new life in the recent research on brain development. This research is another validation of Dr. Montessori's work. Moving freely allows children to learn with all their senses. "Nothing can be in the intellect which is not first in the senses." Sensory-motor activities help build the neural connections in the child's growing brain.

Between infancy and 3.5 years, children are especially responsive to order and routine in their environment. They are also very receptive to language. During the latter part of this period they love to repeat exercises, easily learning to carry out complicated tasks. From 3-6 years, children are very aware of written language. If they are given proper preparation through a concrete, sensorial approach they are often able to learn to read and write.

Montessori Children's House programs are based on these goals:

- Children should discover their inherent love of order
- Experience the profound concentration they are capable of
- Enjoy work firmly grounded in reality
- Expand their independence with the self-confidence found through accomplishment
- Learn to share and appreciate each other
- Listen willingly and experience the strength and support of community
- Find real joy in their work

The Montessori Method of education has been in practice since 1906 in many parts of the world.

Montessori is not a static or closed system of education. It is as much an attitude about education and children as it is a specific method.

One aspect of Montessori Education that's recently come to the forefront is Peace Education. The essentials of education for peace are built into the Montessori curriculum at every level. Perhaps having lived in an era buffeted by wars caused Dr. Montessori to become a tireless worker for peace. She was proposed as a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1949 and 1950. Dr. Montessori's curriculum was designed to help develop a respect for our planet and its inhabitants. By learning to respect and care for themselves and the environment of their classroom, the children are learning to take care of the larger world.

Posted Information

- A copy of the center's policies and State policies are posted by the main entrance.
- The license and any violations are posted on the bulletin board by the main entrance to the center.
- Parental notices are posted by the entrance to the school.

Days Closed:

Because MCH is a preschool first that offers afternoon care to those who need it, we are generally closed for more days than childcare centers are. We loosely follow the Madison Public School District's schedule in regard to days closed and feel that these break times are essential to maintaining our educational priorities.

Here are some of the days that MCH will be closed.

- Labor Day
- Teacher In-service in September
- Two days in October for Parent/Teacher conferences
- Thanksgiving and the day after in November
- Winter Break
- Martin Luther King Day
- Teacher In-service in February
- Two days in March for Parent/Teacher conferences
- Spring Break
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- One week before the fall semester
- **We will be closed during all Madison Public School snow days**
- Weather conditions may cause MCH to be closed even on some days when the Public Schools remain open. If weather conditions prevent sufficient staff from reaching school safely, or other comparable public programs (kindergarten/early childhood) are canceled, we will carefully weigh safety concerns for our community against the needs of our parents in making the choice to

close or remain open. Parents should tune their radios to WIBA 1310 AM for announcements, or television to channels 3 or 27.

A school calendar will be made available to each family both online and in print form. Some child care options for these days include: pairing up with other families and sharing child care, calling the guidance department at an area high school to advertise for a sitter, call 4-C (Community Coordinated Childcare) for other alternatives.

Programs

MCH offers programs for children from 2 to 9 years old, year round. We accept children who will attend five mornings a week with the option for the Early Arrival and Afternoon Programs. Here is a list with a brief description of our programs.

- **Toddler Program**

The Toddler program is for children between the ages of 2 and 3. It is based firmly in Montessori philosophy. The program's main emphasis is relaxed learning through play. It has a maximum group size of twelve and is usually staffed with a lead teacher and two assistants. Toddler Program hours are 8:30 to 12:00p.m., daily.

Due to the young age of the children in this program, we recommend that the Toddlers stay for a maximum of 7 hours per day. This is only a recommendation; ***any exception should be discussed with the Director.*** Children from this class will phase into the preschool program as they reach the right age and/or readiness

- **Preschool Program**

Each preschool class consists of a group of approximately 20 children ranging in age from 3-6 years. This mixed age group allows for modeling by the older children, greater socialization and individual instruction. The ideal classroom is made up of 1/3 three-year-olds, 1/3 four-year-olds and 1/3 five-year-olds with a 50/50 mix of gender. **Parent input is taken into consideration for the placement of the child however the MCH staff will decide which classroom a child will be enrolled in.** The program meets daily from 8:15 to 12:15.

- **Extended Day/Kindergarten**

The Extended Day Program is designed for children who are ready for an extended program beyond their primary class. These children usually range in age from 5-6 years. The extended day class is from 11:30-3:00 daily. There is an emphasis on special projects and cultural activities in this class. Academic skills acquired in the primary classrooms, including reading, writing and math are further developed.

- **Early Arrival**

This is our early morning childcare program. The hours are between 7:00a.m. and 8:15a.m. It is intended primarily for families who work early and need childcare. We ask that parents sign up ahead of time because of limited enrollment. If you plan on dropping your child off before 8:15a.m., please use the early arrival program. **The preschool teachers use the time prior to 8:15 for classroom preparation and may be in and out of the room.** The program takes place in the Toddler room.

- **Afternoon Program**

Our afternoon program is an after school childcare program. It is designed to be a relaxed homelike environment, which compliments the more academic morning Montessori program. The Afternoon Program hours are as follows:

- Toddler- 12:00p.m. - 5:00p.m.
- Preschool- 12:15p.m. - 6:00p.m
- Extended Day- 3:00p.m. - 6:00p.m.
- Elementary- 3:00p.m. – 6:00p.m.

- **Summer School**

The Montessori summer programs are similar to the regular school year programs. They blend indoor and outdoor activities in order to encourage the enjoyment of ongoing learning. They are typically more of a relaxed camp like environment that loosely follows a theme.

Arrival

All families will be given a code so that children can be checked in and out at the time clock in the foyer. Please adhere to the start time of the program that your child is enrolled in. Dropping your child off earlier can affect the progress of the Teacher's set up time and result in a fee. If you need care before the start time of the program, you are welcome to sign up for the Early Arrival Program. Arriving much later than the start time can affect your child's day—the children find their teachers and classmates already involved in the activities of the day and this can sometimes cause late arrivers to feel uneasy.

- **You need to accompany your child to his/her classroom, (or onto the playground if the children are there), upon arrival. Children may not be let out of cars to walk in alone.**
- **You must let a staff person know that you and your child have arrived by making eye or voice contact.**

If you experience some separation problems with your child, let the teachers know and they can probably help to make the transition an easier one. The teachers will be on the lookout for arriving children and will quickly incorporate your child into the classroom activities with a pleasant "good morning".

Dismissal and Lateness

Dismissal for the morning Preschool classes is between 12:00 and 12:15. The Toddler class dismissal is between 11:45 and 12:00. Extended Day and Elementary dismissal is between 2:45 and 3:00. If for any reason you wish to pick up your child earlier or must pick up later, please call the school so the teacher is advised of the unusual circumstances. **Staffing is planned for the number of children pre-enrolled for a given program, so children who are picked up late may considerably disrupt the program, especially at a transition time.** The children themselves are often distressed by the late pickups. Please make every effort to be prompt.

- **You must let a staff person know that you are leaving with your child by making voice or eye contact.**
- **There is a late pick up fee of \$15.00 for every 15 minutes or portion there of that your child is at MCH after their scheduled pick up time.**

Parents may authorize others to pick up their children in writing on their enrollment forms and emergency cards, by a written notice to the office or teacher, by calling the office or writing the information in the Logbook. You must include the name of the person who will pick up your child, the time the child will be picked up and a number where the person can be reached. They must bring a picture I.D. that will be checked by a staff member.

Fees

All fees are listed on the Montessori Children's House Application Form

- ✓ **Registration Fee** There's a non-refundable registration fee, which is due upon application.
- ✓ **Deposit** A deposit is to be paid at the time of registration or within ten days of the notification of acceptance to the program. This deposit is refundable at the end of the school year or following thirty-day prior notice of withdrawal from the program. **Withdrawal from the program without thirty days written prior notice will result in forfeiture of the deposit.** You may choose to apply the deposit to May tuition or the next year's deposit or receive a refund.
- ✓ **Tuition** Regular tuition is calculated as part of a September to June academic year. Fees are prorated in ten installments to cover the year. Tuition and childcare fees are prepaid and due by the 5th of every month. **After the 5th a late fee of \$10 will be assessed. The late fee increases to \$20 if tuition is not paid by the 15th of the month. Payments more than 30 days in arrears shall be referred to the Director for further action, which may include withholding of service. Any parent submitting a tuition check returned by the bank for insufficient funds (bounced check) shall be charged a fee of \$35 per check that does not clear.** No additional late fee shall be applied; assuming proper payment is made promptly within 5 days notice. If your family is having difficulty making a payment by the due date, please contact the Director to set up an alternate payment plan.
 - Tuition is not refunded for absences (illness or family vacations) or for unscheduled closings of school (i.e. snow days)
- ✓ **Working Together--** the school, the community and its members all benefit from working together. **Participation in the school community in some form is required of all families.** A Contribution Form is sent out at the beginning of the school year, you may choose to sign up for two areas of school involvement, Classroom, Building and Grounds, Fundraising or Social Events. In lieu of participation a \$100 contribution can be made.

School Policies

- ❖ **Enrollment** Children may be enrolled at MCH as openings arise. If we are filled to capacity a waiting list will be started. Preference is given to siblings of children who have attended or are attending and to children of optimal enrollment age. The Montessori preschool class was designed as a three-year program. **Children who attend the complete program will benefit more than children who only attend for one year.** This policy provides for continuity of enrollment, which enhances each child's experience at MCH. Here are the steps to follow, in order to enroll.
- ❖ **Use of Parent Directory and/or Parent Personal Contact Information**
Parent contact information, usually found in the parent directory or email lists, is intended for personal use (i.e. setting up play dates, birthday parties, etc.). It is not to be used for conducting business or for mass emailing in any inappropriate way. Any mass emails or mass communications to our community need to be approved by the MCH director(s) prior to being sent. MCH will not sell our community's personal contact information.
- ❖ **Field Trip Policy (Attendance)**
On occasion, the children at MCH will attend field trips that may support the curriculum. When there are a large number of children attending a field trip, MCH will use the services of a professional bus company to transport the children, staff and any parent volunteers. The bus may or **may not** have restraining devices (seat belts). Attendance procedures will be used on all field trips and in the case of the aforementioned; the following attendance procedure will be followed. Attendance will be checked before boarding the bus and while exiting the bus at the destination. Staff and parent volunteers will be assigned a few children to be responsible for, while at the destination. Attendance will again be taken as the children enter the bus and while they exit the bus at MCH. Finally, the teachers will take individual classroom attendances upon arrival to the classroom or playground.
- ❖ **Attendance Methods**
 - The attendance time clock is located in the lobby. The person dropping off or picking up the child shall check the child in and out with the time clock.

- A teacher or assistant will take the daily classroom attendance which will include the child's birth date, arrival and departure times and a head count will be done each time there is a change in location.
- If your child will not come to school on any particular day, notification will need to be given either in written form on the classroom clipboard, by a phone call or by email. If nobody is able to answer the phone in the office, dial your child's classroom extension and leave a message if necessary. If you do not inform your child's teachers of an absence, you will receive a call of inquiry during the morning of the absence

- ❖ **Probation/Termination** For all children there is a six-week probationary period. We have this policy to ensure we can adequately serve the needs of all our children. During this time we look to identify children who are experiencing problems in the program. In the case of a child whose needs appear to not be met, we seek to make changes. Areas considered: The physical environment, interactions with adults and children, appropriate learning materials to fit the child's perceived needs, schedule of the day and additional resources (information, training or materials) for the staff. As we consider these changes, we look at the following procedures:
 1. The classroom staff meets to discuss changes that may be helpful. Another staff member observes the child and discusses their observations with the classroom staff.
 2. The director is consulted
 3. A parent/staff conference is arranged. The director may also be included.

If this process extends beyond, or arises after the original six-week probation period a parent/staff/director conference will be held. If it is determined the program does not meet the needs of the child, the probation period may be extended or a final day of enrollment will be determined with every effort made to give the parents time (up to 30 days) to find an alternative arrangement.

A child may be withdrawn from the school for reasons such as, but not limited to:

- ❖ **School Termination**
 - Needs of the individual cannot be served by the school.
 - **When, in the opinion of the director and staff, the needs of the center dictate that a child is dismissed, the center reserves the right of dismissal.** Dismissal will occur only after written notice has been provided to the parent.
 - Parents are uncooperative
 - The center reserves the right for dismissal for failure to promptly pay tuition.
 - The center reserves the right of dismissal for failure to submit required health and enrollment information.
 - The center reserves the right of dismissal for failure to follow center policies and inappropriate behavior.
 - Chronic lateness, that is, more than three episodes of lateness in any one-month period, constitutes grounds to ask a family to withdraw from the program.
- ❖ **Parent Termination**
 - Parents must provide written notice of intent to withdraw a child at least one month in advance of last date of attendance.
 - Parents are financially obligated for 30 days from the date written notice is provided, whether or not the child continues to attend.
- ❖ **Mutual Decision Between School and Parent**
 - The child's enrollment will be terminated when the center and the parents mutually agree that placement is inappropriate.

- Parents are responsible for any outstanding balance they may have prior to the agreed upon termination.

Parents will be responsible for tuition only up to the final day of enrollment. Any disagreement between the school and parents over the termination of a child's enrollment prior to the end of the contracted time can be appealed in writing to the MCH Board of Directors. (See Grievance Procedure)

❖ Grievance Procedure

If a parent has a grievance, the following steps are to be taken.

1. Speak to the party involved (another parent, staff member or board member). Resolve the problem if possible.
2. Speak to the Director and ask for assistance to solve the problem.
3. If not resolved, write a note or call the Board President asking for time on the MCH Board agenda and any other help that the board can provide to resolve the problem.
4. Final Resort – call the State of Wisconsin, Department of Health and Social Services.

❖ Abuse/Neglect Policy

Teachers and Childcare workers are required by State Law to report suspected or known cases of child abuse or neglect. In accordance with this requirement, any MCH staff person with suspicion or knowledge of abuse or neglect of a student shall take responsibility to see that it is reported. If a parent has a suspicion of abuse or neglect on the part of any staff member, the concern should be brought to the attention of the director.

❖ Health Policy

➤ **ILL Child Procedure**

- Children with a sore throat, inflammation of the eyes, fever (>100 degrees), lice, ringworm, rash, vomiting, diarrhea or other illness or condition having the potential to affect the health of other persons shall be isolating and the parent called.
- The Director or staff will call the parent who must pick up the child within one hour. The emergency contact person will be called if the parent cannot be reached.
- The child will be placed in the school office and will be provided with their sleeping bag or sit in a chair. A staff member will be in sight and hearing of the child until the child is picked up.
- **Children are required to be absent for 24 hours after their last vomiting, diarrhea or fever.** Prescription medications must be administered a full 24 hours before the child can return to the center. In the case of head lice, the child must be "nit free" before returning to the center.
- If the child complains of feeling ill, the staff will watch for other symptoms. The child may continue for the day unless he/she is unable to participate in the daily routine and/or a condition listed in above develops.
- The center reserves the right of exclusion when, in the opinion of the Director or staff, the child appears to be ill.
- **Please notify the school by phone or email by 9:00 a.m. when a child will be absent.**

➤ **Minor Injury Procedures:**

- The child will be comforted
- Wounds will be washed with soap and water. A bandage will be applied if needed
- Bumps will have an ice pack applied if needed.
- Other injuries may be treated as appropriate

- An accident report will be filled out by the staff member involved and then signed by the parent. It will be placed in the child's file
 - The parent is notified by phone, or report of the injury when they pick up the child
- **Serious injury procedure:**
- If the injury appears to be life threatening, 911 will be called
 - First aid will be administered if necessary, and the child will be comforted.
 - The parent or emergency contact person will be notified as soon as possible of a serious injury to the child.
 - The teacher or Director will accompany the child with the child's file to the hospital.
 - A staff person will stay with the child until a parent or emergency contact person arrives.
 - The emergency medical facility is the University Hospital or another hospital as determined by the EMS.
 - An accident report will be filled out by the staff member involved and then signed by the parent. It will be placed in the child's file.
- **Off- Site Injuries Procedure**
- Emergency cards will be taken each time the children go on a field trip.
 - A first aid kit will be taken on trips
 - Help via voice alert, will be sought as soon as possible in the case of an injury.
- **Communicable Disease**
- Parents are informed when a child in the center is found to have a specific communicable disease by a notice posted by the entrance to the school. Parents are to inform the center when their child has a communicable disease so that others may be notified. The identity of the infected child will remain confidential. Certain diseases, however, must be reported to the Health Department.
 - A child may be readmitted without a statement from a doctor after having had a communicable disease only if the child has been absent for a period as specified by the Health Department.
- **Medications-** Medications cannot be given unless:
- A medication authorization form has been filled out and signed by the parent listing specific dates and times during which it is to be given.
 - Medication is in the original container and labeled with the child's name, dosage and directions for administration.
 - Medications are stored on top of the refrigerator in a locked container and are inaccessible to the children.
 - Medication that requires refrigeration will be placed in a locked container clearly labeled with the word MEDICINE.

Discipline Philosophy

The development of inner discipline in a child is always the goal with Montessori education. Self-discipline is fostered in many ways. The classroom environment is organized in an orderly, logical manner. Children, typically, choose work that they are capable of doing and are free to use it for as long as they wish without interference from others. This approach alleviates many problems of discipline that might be present in another kind of environment. In addition, the mixed age group allows the younger children to emulate the older children's more mature behavior.

It is our belief that discipline handled in a way that respects the dignity and the will of the child and fosters a positive self-concept, has a good chance of becoming internalized by the child. This philosophy suggests that cooperation is preferable to blind obedience because the child has input and the child participates. The child does something because it makes sense, because it is clearly needed and not simply because the teacher has made a request. We feel that boundaries are an important factor in producing an environment in which the child will feel secure. An environment in which there are no boundaries is frightening for the child.

Preferred Discipline Techniques Include:

- Redirection – substituting another material or suggesting another activity
- Positive reinforcement and encouragement – such as using specific praise or other intrinsic rewards. Food will not be used as a reward.
- Modifying the environment to meet the needs of the child.
- Explaining consistent, clear rules to the children.
- Maintaining realistic, developmentally appropriate expectations of children’s interests, skills and behaviors.
- Phrasing things positively rather than negatively. That is, say “please walk” rather than “don’t run”.
- Acting as a role model for acceptable and appropriate actions.
- Offering choices when possible and being willing to accept the choice the child makes.
- Offering a breather: inviting a child to sit apart from the classroom, either with a teacher or alone.
- Assigning a child a break: telling a child to sit apart for a time, with a discussion of what aspect of the classroom rule has been disrupted.

Peacemaking In The Classroom

We have chosen to approach discipline from the perspective of peacemaking because of Dr. Montessori’s lifelong devotion to peace education and because such a positive approach fits the Montessori classroom very harmoniously. In any disciplinary situation, the staff always considers the long and short-term goals for the children involved. For instance, for a child who has hit another child, the immediate goal is to stop the hurtful behavior. The long-term goal is to help the child find ways of handling and expressing emotion in acceptable ways.

Delegation Of Discipline

Only staff members are allowed to discipline. Other people should bring a situation or incident to the attention of staff members who will respond to it.

Role Of Parents In School-Related Discipline

We are aware that we are not taking over as educators from you, your child’s first teachers. Our goal is to establish an effective partnership whose common goal is your child’s optimal growth and development. We encourage parents to talk with children about their day at school. In regards to discipline, it is helpful to us if you encourage your child to respect the rules at the school, as we will support your authority at home in our conversations with your children. Where rules are different than at home, we hope that you will help your child understand that group situations sometimes call for different rules; we may not always agree in every particular, but we always have an opportunity to model respect for differences. We appreciate your input on methods that have been effective for you in eliciting positive change for you child, and look forward to sharing our experience with you as well.

If you have concerns about the most effective way to carry over learning experiences from the school day to home, or vice versa, we would be happy to discuss that with you in a conference. Preschoolers still live very much in the present, so by the time you receive information about your

child's day, anything he or she may have done is very much in the past. If we inform you of incidents during the day, it's to help you be aware of significant events from the day, and to let you know how it has already been handled for your information, not out of an expectation that this should be a focus for you and your child at home.

Consistency

Young children need to repeat activity, even challenging behavior, in order to gain the security of knowing where the limits are, and when they exist. We feel that it is important to give them the security of consistency.

Responsibility

We encourage children to learn responsibility by experiencing the consequences of their behavior. This usually proves more effective than lecturing or raising our voices. For example, if a child has spilled at mealtime, tools and materials (and encouragement) are provided to help him or her deal with the spill independently.

Emotions

Emotions are great moving causes in behavior. They can be found at the root of actions we would consider positive as well as negative. We feel that the ability to recognize, accept and express emotions is part of a healthy self-image. We encourage the expression of emotions in acceptable ways (no violence- "it's o.k. to be angry, it's not o.k. to hit"). We also encourage recognition and acknowledgment of emotions rather than denying them; because we realize that will not make them go away and will often increase their intensity. A child who has fallen on the playground does want an appropriate reflection of the degree of his/her injury, not a denial: "Let's see. Is there any damage? What would you like to do about that?" rather than, "You're O.K. That doesn't really hurt."

Parent Involvement

- **Ways To Be Involved** Montessori Children's House is run by a Board of Directors comprised of parents. Board meetings are held once a month and are open to the public. Agendas of upcoming meetings and minutes (notes from meetings) of past meetings are posted on the bulletin board by the office. **Since Montessori Children's House is a non-profit, parent run school, we need the time and talents of every parent!** Parents may choose to help with MCH needs by serving on the Board of Directors, helping with classroom needs, building and grounds maintenance, fundraising, or social events. If parents do not choose to contribute in one of these areas of direct involvement, they are asked to pay a contribution fee (see Fees and Tuition).

Because your input is important to us as educational partners, we ask parents for their opinions and input by filling out a questionnaire during our spring evaluation process.

In choosing our school, you have already affirmed your support for the Montessori educational philosophy. We feel we can do the best job fulfilling your expectations if we have opportunities for sharing what goes on in the classrooms and why. One way of doing this is for parents to try to attend our **parent meeting** if possible. A scheduled Parent Night occurs at the beginning of the school year. We make an effort to vary these presentations each year while still providing the information parents often request about the programs. Parents who attend regularly have commented that they always discover something new!

Another valued parent contribution to the class would be to volunteer to share a special interest or talent; we always enjoy learning about your own family's customs or special foods, having parents demonstrate science experiments or help with a baking project or

crafts, or offer to help with some classroom maintenance work, etc. You may be surprised at your own gifts!

Parents may also be asked to assist us on **field trips**. A note to inform parents of an upcoming field trip will be sent out in advance with all pertinent information and request for drivers. Due to insurance regulations, the teachers are not allowed to drive, so we really depend on you. Children must be in legally appropriate restraining devices (car seats). On field trips, children will wear T-shirts identifying them as part of the school, but not by name, for safety. Emergency information and first aid supplies will always be taken on field trips.

- **Classroom observation** Parents and legal guardians are welcome at their child's school at any time. It is especially useful to both parents and teachers if you've had a chance to spend some time in the class before fall and spring conferences. When your child is initially adjusting to a new classroom, it is usually less confusing for your child if you wait until he or she is feeling independently comfortable, generally several weeks after the school year begins, before observing. Here are some general guidelines we give any visitors to our program:
 - You'll get the most useful information from your visit if you spend time quietly observing.
 - Your presence will inevitably change what is happening somewhat, but sitting in the Observation Chair (which the children are used to being watched from will minimize this and give you the "truest" experience. We have an adult-sized chair for this purpose in each classroom.
 - If a situation arises during your visit in which you are unsure of the appropriate response, please ask a staff person for assistance. Only staff people are allowed, by our licensing regulations and our policy, to discipline children.
 - If you've come in spontaneously to observe, we appreciate your checking in at the office first. This ensures that we know who is in a classroom at any given time for safety reasons. If the office is empty, just let your classroom teachers know you're there to observe.

- **Communications/Conferences** We are constantly working on ways to ensure that we maintain processes for communication between parents and staff, which is crucially important to our partnership. We have the following processes in place to facilitate communication:
 - Parent/Teacher conferences regularly scheduled twice a year, October and March, and at any other time, as mutually convenient, by request.
 - Whiteboards outside of each class (a starting point for those conversations that usually begin, "what did you do at school today" and end, "nothing").
 - The logbook in each of the classrooms for changes or special notes about your child's day, such as medication to be administered (see Medication), a different pick-up time or person, or notes about general well-being: Margaret didn't sleep well last night, so she may be tired or grumpy.
 - Individual classes may have their own additional ways of sharing information; check with you classroom teachers.

In order that they may give their full attention to the children during class hours, the teachers will not be available, except for messages of great urgency or by special arrangement, to take phone calls or conduct personal conferences during class in the morning before 12:30p.m. The teachers have only a very little amount of time to prepare their classes in the morning, so that is not a time when they can give you the attention they would like, especially for issues requiring some special focus. They are happy to arrange other times to talk or meet; just ask! If you wish, you may leave a message and your call will be returned at the earliest possible opportunity.

We really value your concerns and in-depth understanding of your child. It is particularly helpful for us to know about changes in your child's life, or your family's, that may effect how she or he is

responding at school, such as inability to sleep, changes in toileting or eating habits, the birth of a sibling, a death, separation or divorce, or any other stressful or exciting situation occurring in the home or at school.

Conferences can be a good time to share these, but we also encourage you to schedule conferences as need be, to discuss any problems, concerns or questions with the teacher.

Confidentiality

Any information that you share with any member of the staff will be held as confidential. Any information that needs to be shared with the Board of Directors (information that could impact the school community) will be held as confidential too. Staff and members of the Board are made aware of their responsibility to keep information regarding our families confidential during their annual orientation process.

Items Parents Need to Provide

A list of specific items that will be needed in each class will be included in the Fall Newsletter. Please remember, your child needs the following items:

1. A change of clothing including 2 pairs of underwear, shorts/pants, socks and slippers. These items should be replaced continually as they are used. Children in the Toddler Program will also need to provide diapers and wipes to share. **Please label items your child brings to school.**
 - Our goal is for children to be able to participate comfortably in any available activity of their choice. This is easier if their clothes are comfortable and easily laundered. Long pants are recommended for outdoor play. Children who are still working on dressing and toileting skills (almost all of them, one way or another!) are greatly helped in this process by wearing clothes that are easy for them to manage independently.
 - **We seriously discourage the wearing of costumes/super hero clothing (even t-shirts)** at school. Children often take on the more aggressive persona of the character. And if their character is the “good guy”, then some unwilling child is cast in the opposing role. Even costumes of a non-aggressive nature cause the children to focus on the image of their friend’s outfit, rather than their friend, him/herself. We find that our classrooms are much more peaceful if the child’s true self can shine through.
 - We ask that all children keep a raincoat and rain boots at school (please no umbrellas) for days on which it is raining lightly but we can still enjoy the out-of-doors. During cold/snowy weather, children will need snow pants, hats, boots (insulated) and mittens. Children go outside every day that it isn’t bitter cold or heavily raining. We recommend bringing soft, silent slippers for your child to wear in the classroom. This not only sets a quiet tone to the classroom, but also adds to your child’s comfort.
Please be sure to label ALL your child’s clothing. This makes the inevitable process of tracking down lost items so much less frustrating!
2. The completed Emergency Contact Form, Enrollment forms, Field Trip permission (on the back of the Enrollment Form), the Health Form signed by your physician, the State of WI Health and Enrollment Form, and an Immunization Form.
3. At the beginning of each semester we ask that each child bring 2 boxes of tissues and 2 packages of markers for use in his/her classroom.
4. For children enrolled in the Afternoon Program:
 - A child size sleeping bag needs to be brought to school every Monday and **taken home for cleaning every Friday.**
 - **A lunch box labeled with your child’s name needs to be brought to school.** The school provides milk. As a certified center, the state of Wisconsin requires that children eat a nutritious lunch. The state defines this as including **at least** the following servings
 - 1 serving from the meat/legume group (meat, peanut butter, etc.)

- 1 serving from the grain group (bread, cereal, crackers, etc.)
- 2 servings from the fruit/vegetable group

Please do not include dessert or treat items in the lunch.

Many prepackaged foods, in addition to being environmentally unfriendly, contain high amounts of sugar and sodium and comparatively little nutritional value. Using reusable containers, such as Rubbermaid and Tupperware, or butter tubs, not only helps the children save leftovers for later when they are hungry again, but supports our goals as a school for helping children consume responsibly and being aware of their impact on the natural world. They are also easier for the children to open and close thus they help children gain independence (one of MCH's primary goals). We appreciate it when you reflect this concern in your lunch choices. **Please send only nutritious food choices for you child's lunch.** As it is not possible for us to warm up food, please send those food items that need to be warm, in a thermos. When your child does not finish all the food in his/her lunch, the uneaten food will be brought home so that you have tangible evidence of how much she/he is eating. When a child first eats lunch with his peer group, he may prefer to watch rather than eat until he becomes accustomed to the new circumstances. We try to make lunchtime a happy, social time for the children, during which they will have a chance to practice social graces related to eating.

Things from Home to Share in Class

Each classroom teacher sets his or her own class procedure on how to share things the children bring in. Children should leave items in a place designated by the teacher until time to show. Please encourage children to talk about objects or experiences that will provide fruitful discussion: items from nature or cultural artifacts are particularly good. Toys often cause conflicts between children, or become such a focus of your own child's attention that he or she has difficulty choosing work or interacting with others. When negative emotions such as jealousy and envy occur, feelings are hurt. **Therefore we ask that all toys be left at home.** A toy that inadvertently finds its way to school- in spite of your best efforts!- need to be placed in the office on top of the counter for safe keeping and can be reclaimed there at the end of the day.

School Snacks

The school provides a morning snack consisting of Natural Ovens Bread and a spread (i.e. peanut butter, cream cheese, etc.) and frequently, there is a food preparation activity for the Preschool Classes. There is an afternoon snack too for which the expense is factored into tuition. The Toddler Program has a group snack at 10:30a.m. from their lunchboxes.

Special Diets

The Director notifies the staff verbally and through written communication when a child has a dietary need or food allergy. This notice is posted on the kitchen cupboard. When a child has a dietary need or food allergy the Parents are asked to provide the snacks for that child. Foods that need to be refrigerated are placed in the refrigerator in the basement. Parents are notified when the child's food is getting low. The parents may bring a treat to be kept at school for birthday or other celebrations.

Birthday Celebrations

If your child wishes, he/she may bring in a treat on his/her birthday to share with preschool classmates. Toddlers cook their own birthday treats as a class. We encourage food items with minimal sugar content (muffins, fresh fruit) so that all children may participate in the festivities. Your classroom Teacher will know of any special dietary concerns within your child's class.

Celebrations in the Classroom

Observances having a formal religious connotation will not be a part of the planned staff-initiated school activities. Teachers will be free to respond openly to questions or comments of a religious nature by the children. Parents are very welcome, and encouraged, to share family celebrations that are significant for their child with the classroom.

Laundry

We ask all parents to volunteer to do laundry from your child's classroom at least once a semester. This will be done on a sign-up basis. Sign-up sheets are usually posted near the door of each morning classroom.

Thank You for taking the time to study this handbook! Your cooperation and concerns for the various operations and programs of our school are necessary for the success of your children and their school. **Thanks for your involvement!**

Please sign and date below and then return the lower portion of the page to the basket on the piano.

I/we have read the Montessori Children's House Parent Handbook. I/we agree to abide by and support the policies of our child's/children's school.

Signature, parent/guardian Date

Signature, parent/guardian Date

This Handbook has been revised as of August, 2006. The policies and procedures contained in this handbook supersede and are controlling over all other past correspondence, written or oral, and issued in handbooks.