The Montessori Schools of Central Texas



Parent Handbook

Welcome to The Montessori Schools of Central Texas

Celebrating 44 Years of Excellence in Education

Welcome to the Montessori Schools of Central Texas (MSCT). The Board of Directors, staff, and faculty warmly welcome you and your child to our school. We believe you have made a wonderful decision for your child, and we encourage you to participate fully in all MSCT has to offer your family.

Please read these guidelines carefully. They are presented to enhance your understanding of our program, as well as the procedures by which our school operates. Bear in mind that these guidelines will be continually reviewed and evaluated. As children "learn by doing," so do our faculty and administration. We always hope to strengthen our program by being active participants in these experiences.

Since children's basic needs are diverse, effective programs must be comprehensive in scope. All phases of life for the developing child move simultaneously, each affecting and being affected by all the others. A Montessori program is primarily child-centered, offering protective and supportive services to the child and to his or her family. This parent handbook is meant to serve as a reference, providing you with information that will be useful to you and your child during the school year. Please keep it in an accessible place and refer to it as needed. Of course, you are always welcome to ask questions or make constructive suggestions.

We are pleased to serve your family and are privileged that you have chosen us to care for your child. Thank you for allowing us to share in the academic and intellectual development of your child, and to be one of the first educators in their life.

The Montessori Schools of Central Texas complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate based on race, religion, color, national origin, age, or sex. The Montessori Schools of Central Texas does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, religion, color, national origin, age, or sex.

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Mission Statement

The mission of The Montessori Schools of Central Texas is to provide children with the academic and social skills, as well as the moral judgment, to successfully achieve their personal goals and potential so that they may positively impact society.

Vision Statement

Empowering future generations to be compassionate, responsible, and successful citizens who enrich their communities and shape a better world for all.

Goals and Objectives

The main objective of The Montessori Schools of Central Texas is to provide a carefully planned, stimulating environment which will help children develop foundational habits, attitudes, skills, and ideas which are essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning.

The specific goals for the children who attend our school are as follows:

- Develop a positive attitude toward school and learning.
- Develop a sense of high self-esteem.
- Build habits of initiative, persistence, and independence.
- Foster inner discipline and a sense of order.
- Develop socially acceptable behavior.
- Acquire the basic skills necessary for a lifetime of learning.
- Help develop each child's innate, ultimate potential through high self-expectations.

How Montessori Children Learn

"Scientific observation then has established that education is not what the teacher gives; education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual and is acquired not by listening to words but by experiences upon the environment."
Dr. Maria Montessori, Education for a New World

Learning is facilitated in our comfortable, home-like setting which is attentively filled with developmentally appropriate materials that contribute to the growth of self-motivated, independent children. Each class contains a range of ages and abilities; more experienced children share what they have learned with younger children, who in turn enjoy the daily stimulation of older role models. In helping others, these peer teachers reinforce their own skills and experiences through the responsibilities of leadership. Children care for each other in a warm atmosphere of acceptance and joy; adults consciously and delicately nurture the development through their caring and compassionate characters.

Each class operates on the principle of "freedom within limits." Children are free to work at their own pace, alone or with others. We encourage a balance of active, self-directed learning with small group collaboration and peer teaching, so that children will problem solve, see natural connections in knowledge, and create new ideas. Children in this environment learn to make decisions at an early age, to reason, cooperate, negotiate, reflect, and understand. Through direct experience and the process of discovery and investigation, children learn most effectively - and attitudes toward learning remain positive and enthusiastic, not overwhelming.

Philosophy of Education

Montessori education is a philosophy with the fundamental tenet that a child learns best within a social environment that supports each child's unique development.

Maria Montessori, M.D., the founder and developer of what is called "The Montessori Method of Education," based this new education on her scientific observations of young children's behavior. As the first woman physician to graduate from the University of Rome, Dr. Montessori became involved with education as a doctor treating children. Then in 1907, she was invited to open a childcare center for the children of desperately poor families in the San Lorenzo slums of Rome. She called it "a children's house," and based the program on her observations that young children learn best in a home-like setting filled with developmentally appropriate materials that provide experiences contributing to the growth of self-motivated, independent learners.

Dr. Montessori's dynamic theories included such revolutionary premises as:

- Children are to be distinctly respected as individuals that differ from one another.
- Children create themselves through purposeful activity.
- The most important years for learning are from birth to age six.
- Children possess unusual sensitivity and mental powers for absorbing and learning from their environment, which includes people as well as materials.

Dr. Montessori carried her training throughout the world, including the United States, as early as 1912. After an enthusiastic first response, interest in the U.S. waned until a reintroduction of the method in the mid-1950s.

The basic premise in the Montessori philosophy of education is that all children carry within themselves the person they will become. In order to develop physical, intellectual, and spiritual potential to the fullest, the child must have freedom: a freedom to be achieved through order and self-discipline. The world of the child is full of sights and sounds that at first appear chaotic. From this chaos, children must gradually create order, learn to distinguish among the impressions that assail their senses and slowly but surely, gain mastery of themselves and their environment.

Dr. Montessori developed what she called the "prepared environment," which possesses a certain order and allows children to learn at their own pace in a non-competitive atmosphere.

Dr. Montessori also recognized that the only valid impulse to learning is the self-motivation of the child; children move themselves toward learning. The teacher prepares the environment, directs the activity, and offers the child stimulation, but it is the child who learns and is motivated through the work itself to persist in a given task. If Montessori children are free to learn, it is because they have acquired an "inner discipline" from their exposure to both physical and mental order. This is the core of Dr. Montessori's philosophy. Social adjustment, though a necessary condition of learning in a traditional classroom, is not the purpose of education.

The years between birth and six are the crucial years in which children learn the rules of human behavior most easily. These years can be constructively devoted to teaching the child good manners and habits, so that they may take their place in society as a productive and responsible citizen.

Patterns of concentration, established in early childhood, produce a confident, competent learner in later years. The Montessori teaching method teaches children to observe, think, and judge. It introduces children to the joy of learning at an early age and provides a framework in which intellectual and social disciplines go hand-in-hand.

Five Core Components of Authentic Montessori Schools

1. Montessori Certified Teachers

A qualified Montessori teacher supports children's natural development by observing their interests and abilities and introducing developmentally appropriate lessons and materials. Trained in Montessori theory and practice, these teachers skillfully use materials, guide students, and create a supportive learning environment. AMS recognizes credentials from AMS, the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), and accredited Montessori teacher education programs.

2. Multi-age Groupings

In Montessori schools, multi-age groupings allow younger children to learn from older peers and face new challenges through observation, while older children reinforce their learning by teaching and developing leadership skills. This setup fosters cooperation and reflects real-world interactions across ages. Montessori classrooms are organized by developmental stages, though some schools adjust groupings for state regulations. Typical age ranges are:

- Infants: Birth – 18 months
- Toddlers: 18 months – 3 years
- Early Childhood: 2.5 – 6 years
- Lower Elementary: 6 – 9 years
- Upper Elementary: 9 – 12 years
    - or combined Lower and Upper Elementary, 6 – 12 years

3. Montessori Materials

Montessori materials are specially designed to allow students to manipulate and investigate them to master the lessons they embody. Each material is presented by the teacher and teaches one skill at a time, following a logical sequence. Built-in error-control allows the child to determine if they've done the exercise correctly. Materials offer multiple levels of challenge and can be used repeatedly at different developmental levels. Through these materials, a child uses real objects and actions to translate abstract ideas into deeper, concrete understanding. concrete form.

4. Child-Directed Learning

Montessori education encourages children to select meaningful, challenging work that sparks their interest, fostering engagement and intrinsic motivation. The classroom design supports this with calm, uncluttered spaces for both individual and group activities, promoting curiosity. Children are free to move and explore, while teachers guide their learning and ensure a respectful, orderly environment.

5. Uninterrupted Work Periods

Montessori education encourages children to select meaningful, challenging work that sparks their interest, fostering engagement and intrinsic motivation. The classroom design supports this with calm, uncluttered spaces for both individual and group activities, promoting curiosity. Children are free to move and explore, while teachers guide their learning and ensure a respectful, orderly environment.

About Montessori Schools of Central Texas

The Montessori Schools of Central Texas was founded in 1982 as a private nondenominational Christian school for young children. It is an incorporated, nonprofit, tax-exempt school licensed by the Texas Health and Human Services *Child Care Regulation* and is a member school of the American Montessori Society. Our approach to education focuses on the Montessori teaching method and encompasses the very best practices of current early childhood and elementary educational theory.

The founders, Drs. Jerry and Sherry O'Donnell, moved to what is now the current location at 1302 S. 27th Street in Temple, into a beautiful Victorian-era house in 1990. This change allowed the school to open enrollment for four classes with three different age groups, in order to offer educational opportunities to children ages 3 to 12. In late 2016, the O'Donnells decided to add a new building to the Temple property and open a school for infants and toddlers. Construction began in March 2017 and the Montessori Infant & Toddler program opened its doors in October of 2017. Currently, the Temple location offers educational programs for children from 6 weeks to 12 years old.

Advisory Board

The Board of Head of Schools ensures that the school operations are consistent with Montessori philosophy and are in the best interest of its students, parents, and teachers. The Board reviews the annual operating budget, conducts all fundraising activities for the school, and promotes the school within the community. It is the duty of the Board to approve a long-range plan for the school and set and evaluate annual goals for the School. All matters of grievance or conflict are handled through the policies set forth in this handbook.

Head of School

The school's leadership carries out the broad educational policies established by the Board of Directors. The leadership determines the methods for carrying out Board policies, creates operational policies and procedures, and oversees the business operations. The leadership also develops and evaluates student programs and services, provides administrative and professional leadership for faculty and staff, orchestrates external relations, oversees the maintenance and repair of the facility and grounds, and has overall responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the school and its programs. The leadership is responsible for developing and maintaining a supportive and respectful relationship among all staff and parents, as well as open and complete communication with all.

Staff

At MSCT, each classroom has a lead teacher and an assistant. Each lead teacher is Montessori certified for his or her class's age level. Occasionally, the need will arise to use a Montessori intern until certified. Assistants have on-the-job training or have been certified through the AMS Assistants' Workshop, and have received other training at MSCT with the lead teachers.

Child Care Regulation

Located in the school office for your review is a copy of the Texas Health and Human Services *Minimum Standards* under which we are licensed. Posted in the hallway is a copy of our most recent licensing, fire, gas line, and health inspections. The DFPS website is located at www.dfps.state.tx.us. Their address is 4501 S. General Bruce Drive, Temple, TX 76502, and they can be reached at (512) 834-3456. Our most recent Licensing inspection report and Minimum Standards can be found at https://childcare.hhs.texas.gov/child_care.com. The Child Abuse Hotline can be reached at 800-252-5400.

Classroom Environments

At MSCT, the children are provided with environments that are clean, child-sized, and beautiful. The children feel a sense of order around them whether on the school grounds or in the classroom. Each activity is an inviting object that calls to be used. It is our gift of beauty to the children that helps foster respect and pride for their surroundings and provides a peaceful, responsible attitude at school. This important attention to the classroom environment is the first sign that the children entering the community will be respected. In our rooms you will find classic works of art, not cartoons. You will see wooden furniture instead of plastic chairs and tables in loud colors. At lunch or snack time, the children set the tables with place mats, plates, and glasses. With these opportunities to use real objects and not toys, the children feel important and confident and treat these materials with a spontaneous respect that awes most parents observing the children for the first time.

Class Size

Classes are varied to allow each age group a number of peers and to reinforce the need and ability of the child to become self-reliant and independent. The classroom is truly a community in which the teacher is neither the center of attention nor the sole source of learning. The teacher is there to ensure that each child is exposed to all areas of learning and that he/she is given those lessons at the right time. Class size varies among classes based on square footage, enrollment, and staff-to-child ratio according to the State's *Minimum Standards*.

The Infant Care Environment

The *Nido* (Italian for "nest") environment provides quality care for infants, ages six weeks to eighteen months at the time of enrollment. The carefully prepared Montessori environment presents a home-like setting in which the children are assisted in their developmental process by stimulation of the five senses, encouragement of gross and fine motor control, and introduction of self-help skills at an individual pace.

The Nido areas consist of large learning environments with floors of wood, tile, and carpet. The Infant room is partitioned into two areas to accommodate those children that are crawling and walking, and those that need more "bed" time. The activity areas are furnished with multi-level furnishings that promote movement and activity, while the sleeping areas have a floor bed for each child under ten months and a sleeping cot for those older than ten months. The classroom also has a changing room with a large sink, a nursing area, a restroom, and a combination kitchen/dining area. Materials found in the Nido learning environment are mirrors, a rocking chair, kiosks, and shelves with baskets of materials. Infant children are permitted to visit outdoors as the weather permits. The Nido is lovingly nurtured by trained and certified Montessori teachers and assistants.

The Infant Class – Nido (6 weeks to 18 months)

The very youngest children have been part of the Montessori learning community from the beginning when visionary Italian physician Maria Montessori first made her observations about children's development. Today, neurological research on early learning confirms the accuracy and relevance of Dr. Montessori's teaching method. Some frequently asked questions about the Nido program are listed below:

- *What is the Montessori approach to guiding very young children?*

  Dr. Montessori describes the ability of even the youngest children to soak up the new, revel in sensory experiences, experiment with movement, practice language, and find their places within their learning environment. We welcome infants beginning at 6 weeks, which is very early in their lives. As each infant is treated as an individual, the infant program gently nurtures these children who are just a few weeks old through 18 months. At heart, the Montessori approach to educating the youngest learners is based on respect for the child. The adult caregiver is there to assist, not teach. During these early months of life, when the foundations of the personality are laid down, Montessori teachers educate by showing and modeling, not correcting.

- *How are Montessori learning environments organized for infants?*

  At first glance, a Montessori infant care environment will not look at all like a traditional nursery or preschool. You will immediately notice less noise, a muted environment, and a lot of natural light in the activity area, while the sleeping area has dimmed lighting to simulate the mother's womb. The environment is safe, healthy, and stimulating. The focus is on fostering a basic trust in the child. Foremost in the environment is the adult, whose caring, respectful response to the infant's needs – physical, psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual – conveys a message of unconditional love and acceptance.

  Montessori infant communities follow the natural rhythms of young children through a predictable day. Your infant's sleeping and eating patterns will be observed and honored. Your child, when old enough, will crawl and eventually learn to walk on both a hardwood floor and a carpeted area, reach for mobiles, and enjoy supervised "tummy time" to strengthen muscles. Your infant will experience different textures and objects to touch, feel, and watch.

  This approach supports neurological development by providing freedom of movement and choice. In a Montessori environment, children are not restricted to infant equipment or high chairs. They are allowed freedom, within limits, always in the presence of an adult. Safety is paramount.

- *How do children spend their time in a Montessori infant learning environment?*

  Children that are not yet crawling spend most of their time on their individual floor bed being nurtured and attended to. These children need their diapers changed, they need feeding, and they need mental stimulation through sight and sound. Through gentle touch and voice, the infant builds trust in the caregiver that lasts throughout their time in the infant and toddler program phases.

  Once your child can crawl, he or she will learn through direct experience, choosing his own activities within a carefully prepared learning environment. Infants intuitively discover concepts, learn language, solve simple problems, develop muscle control, and learn self-care skills as they explore specifically designed materials. Infants that can securely walk learn to appreciate the larger world through safe outdoor activities and exploring objects from nature.

  The Montessori approach recognizes that small children learn best through movement and exploration, following intrinsic motivation, and that they experience "sensitive periods" – times when they are particularly attuned to discovering and mastering skills. A carefully prepared Montessori environment, planned down to the smallest detail, guides children to tools for learning new things just at the moment they are ready for them. Furniture and learning materials are child-size. Everything needed to complete tasks and achieve success is easily accessible.

- *What do children learn in a Montessori infant program?*

  A central tenant of the Montessori approach is that children have the innate ability to explore and learn on their own. At the right moment of time, they learn to use the toilet and to wash and dry their hands. They learn by interacting with self-correcting materials, by moving, and by observing other children and teaching other children themselves. These children are building confidence and becoming independent. Children learn sign language before verbal skills and Spanish is introduced as a second language.

  Visitors are often struck by the orderliness and peacefulness of a Montessori learning environment. Adults move slowly and calmly, speak softly, and seek to embody two Montessori watchwords: grace and courtesy. The approach is based on the premise that a child's earliest experiences help him or her become a peaceful, caring, sensitive, and healthy person.

  In our infant program children learn to trust themselves and the world and to recognize their own competence. They learn to make decisions and to understand that their behavior affects others who have needs and wants, too. They learn to appreciate nature, to care for their bodily needs, and to persist. They develop a love of learning and experience the satisfaction of success.

Infant Safe Sleep Policy

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) cannot be completely prevented, but there are some things that parents and caregivers can do to reduce the risk of SIDS. We adopt the following Infant Safe Sleep Policy as a beneficial means to prevent SIDS while your child is in our care:

1. Babies will always be put to sleep on their backs.
2. An approved waiver from Child Care Regulation (CCR) must be obtained before a child may be put to sleep in a way that conflict with the current *Minimum Standard* requirement. A physician's order is required that explains the medical reason why the baby must be placed to sleep differently, instructions how the child must be placed to sleep, and a time frame that the instructions are to be followed. A child requiring this waiver will not be accepted until the waiver from CCR is in place.
3. Only safety-approved floor beds and firm mattresses will be used for bedding purposes.
4. Bibs and hoods will be removed before the child is placed in the floor bed.
5. Pacifiers will not be used as a means to aid sleeping or to prevent crying. Pacifiers are not part of the Montessori infant care program.
6. Floor beds will be free of toys, stuffed animals, and extra bedding at all times.
7. Each baby will be assigned their own floor bed for the entire time.
8. The room temperature will be kept comfortable as for a lightly clothed adult.
9. Wedges and/or infant positioners will not be used in floor beds or support in chairs.
10. Infants may not be placed in devices that may restrict airflow or cause strangulation, such as car seats, swings, bouncy seats or high chairs.
11. This is a smoke-free environment at all times.
12. Infants who are awake may enjoy supervised "tummy-time" daily.
13. All staff members are knowledgeable about safe sleep policies and practices and are required to obtain a minimum of 24-clock hours of annual training.

Parents of students enrolled in the Infant program will be required to sign a separate form in the registration packet acknowledging that you have read, understand, and agree to the safe sleep policy as written without any modifications, additions, or deletions.

Breastfeeding Mothers

Mothers are welcome to send frozen or liquid breast milk. Please legibly print your child's name and date that the milk was expressed. Mothers are also welcome to breastfeed their children at any time. Mothers will be provided with an adult-size chair and may request a pillow to support the infant, a stepstool to prop the mother's feet upon to prevent back strain, and water to help the mother stay hydrated. Mothers need to bring and use a cover-up for modesty.

Infant Class Daily Routine

Infant routines are on-demand; our guides follow each child's schedule to meet their needs for changes, meals, and rest throughout the day. Cloth diapers are provided as part of toilet awareness (an approach to toilet training).

7:00 – 10:30 **Uninterrupted Work Time -** Arrival; meet and greet; transition to cloth diaper for school day; child-directed engagement of sensory and perceptual, cognitive, physical, gross and fine motor, self-help skills, and social/emotional development. The learning environment fosters freedom of movement, integrates daily routines, and provides development through objects and opportunities for grasping, pulling up, crawling, cruising, and walking.

Circle Time / Tummy Time – Children strengthen muscles through independent sitting or lying on their tummy, listen to short bible stories, sing a variety of songs, and explore activities for sensorial development; social/emotional connections with guides and community are strengthened.

10:30 – 2:00 **Lunch / Quiet Time / Outdoor Environment -** Mealtime prayer; transition to eating, restoring, toilet awareness, and sleeping; children rest to symphonic music; opportunities for small group lessons filled with language enrichment (ASL, English, and Spanish) and movement; exploration of the outdoor environment on the porch or astroturf and the different sights, sounds, and textures of nature.

2:00 – 6:00 **Uninterrupted Work Time** – Child-directed engagement of sensory and perceptual, cognitive, physical, gross and fine motor, self-help skills, and social/emotional development. The learning environment fosters freedom of movement, integrates daily routines, and provides development through objects and opportunities for grasping, pulling up, crawling, cruising, and walking.

The Toddler Community Environment

Children leave the Nido and enter the Toddler Community at approximately 18 months of age (space permitting). As in the Nido, the Montessori environment is carefully prepared to aid the toddler in achieving independence, interacting socially with other children, and developing language skills. Cooking, music, and movement activities are also stressed. Additionally, Montessori rules are taught and enforced in preparation for moving to the Primary environment (ages 2.5-6 years) in order to move more rapidly into academic-rich routine.

The toddler environment consists of a movement area, a bathroom for toilet learning, a water fountain, a sink for hand washing, and a kitchen for cooking, a dining area, a storage area for personal items, and an area for sleeping mat storage. The floor is hardwood with rugs to enhance the tactile sense and facilitate a clean and sanitary environment. Outside the learning environment, there is a toddler-sized playground with an astroturf surface and underground foam cushions in the fall zones, along with a garden area where the children plant and tend seeds, and play. The Toddler community has a Montessori-certified teacher and an assistant.

The Toddler Program (18 months to 3 years)

The toddler program operates from 8:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The toddler community has a lead teacher and assistant. The environment has many opportunities to fulfill the following needs: freedom of movement, independence, language development, caring for one's self, caring for the environment, and mastery of the toileting process.

Toddlers need not only love and emotional nurturance and a healthy physical environment, but also an environment that promotes their very real need to learn. The Montessori teaching method provides a basis for individualized learning activities, appropriate for even the earliest stages of a child's development.

The purpose of the toddler program is to encourage, assist, and protect the normal development of each child. Children in this program flourish in prepared environments that respect, support, and respond to their basic needs for independence, exploration and the building of trust and self-esteem.

This program works with cooperation between the caregivers and the parents. Parental involvement is emphasized; parents know their child better than anyone else. Therefore, parents and caregivers must feel comfortable in exchanging knowledge and experiences about the child. Consistency at home and school propels a child's independence.

During the early years of life, Dr. Montessori felt that "the first thing the child's education demands is the provision of an environment in which he or she can develop the powers given by nature." Quite literally, the school environment is the curriculum.

The structure of the curriculum is based on five development areas: Sensory and Perception, Physical and Motor, Self-help Skills, Language, and Social and Emotional. Dr. Montessori

emphasized the need for a rich environment and noted the speed at which children can develop: "If our own adult ability be compared with the child's, we should need sixty years of hard work to do what he or she does in three." While providing a structured, and thus familiar, environment, the needs of the individual child are met.

Sensory and Perception - The young child absorbs the world around him or her through the five senses, and a rich environment should cater to the child's senses.

Physical and Motor - Along with the mind, both fine and gross motor skills develop rapidly from three months to three years. Attention to these needs support balanced development. Physical activity in the young child is an important part of environmental involvement, and thus education.

Self-help Skills - The focus is on helping the child enjoy independence; each individual must depend on himself or herself for education.

Language - The construction of vocabulary is a part of every aspect of the classroom from snack time to group activities. Children learn sign language before verbal skills and Spanish is introduced as a second language.

Social and Emotional - A well-rounded and happy child, whose balanced development and happiness have been supported by responsive individual attention, reacts positively with the environment, copes with frustration, and learns easily.

Toddler Class Daily Routine

8:00 – 2:30 **School Day –** School starts at 8:00 am.

7:00 – 8:00 **Before-School Activities -** Children arriving early may choose work from the shelves, participate in practical life activities, practice grace and courtesy, engage in puzzles, books, and feed the classroom animals.

8:00 - 10:00 **Uninterrupted Work Time–** Arrival; children engage in child-directed sensory and perceptual, cognitive, physical, gross and fine motor, self-help skills, and social/emotional development.

Morning Snack - Children participate in place setting, preparation, and snack serving.

10:00 – 10:15 **Circle Time -** The students sit in a circle as a group. We open the day in prayer and discuss the calendar and weather. Group lessons are presented pertaining to our monthly unit of study. We also sing a variety of songs and participate in movement activities.

10:15 – 11:00 **Outdoor Environment –** Opportunities for creativity and exploration through feeding birds, gardening, and playing on the playground.

11:00 - 2:00 **Lunch/Naptime -** Lunch preparation and hand washing; toilet awareness; mealtime prayer and lunch in a family-style setting; clean up; rest/nap time.

2:00 – 3:00 **Snack/Outdoor Environment –** Children rise, eat snack, and transition to outdoors for playtime.

3:00 – 3:45 **Circle Time -** The students transition back inside; toilet awareness; circle time

3:45 - 4:30 **Uninterrupted Work Time –** Children engage in indoor or outdoor activities, depending on weather.

4:30 – 6:00 **After-School/Combined Group Activities –** Toddler classes combine for after-school activities, books, puzzles, and music.

The Primary School Years (2.5 to 6 years)

The primary classroom day begins each day at 8:00 a.m. and ends at 2:30 p.m. The class has access to Montessori materials the whole day, and also has cooking, gardening, and outdoor activities.

The goal of the primary environment is to be a catalyst for, and so cultivate, the child's own natural desire to learn. This objective is approached in a variety of ways:

- By encouraging the child to experience choice because through decision-making the child is empowered with intrinsic motivation and self-discipline.
- By guiding the child "to do it by myself," the child's basic need for independence is satiated. Independence is most clearly experienced by being allowed to make choices.
- By helping children believe they are capable and competent; therefore, positive attitudes toward learning are formed and last a lifetime. Making choices strengthens the child in his/her ability to think and act for him/herself.

The primary class is indeed a child's world, geared to the size, pace, and interest of boys and girls between the ages of two and a half to six. Sounds and movements abound in the class as children actively explore, manipulate, and investigate in order to see, hear, feel, and personally know their world. "Learning by doing" is the foundation of the Montessori approach. Thought and movement are considered integrated and interdependent. Dr. Montessori, like both Aristotle and Piaget, believed that the hand is the chief teacher of the child; the mind must be hand-made. Although individualized instruction is emphasized in the Montessori classroom, group collaboration and cooperative learning are also encouraged; children often engage in small group work.

Children have ample opportunity to practice burgeoning skills to the extent they feel is necessary. Nature instills in the primary child a strong desire to repeat an activity over and over, and with each repetition, new observations are discerned and stronger physical and mental muscles develop. Concentration appears with repetition; with heightened concentration, learning takes place naturally and in due time.

It is a well-established fact that primary children mature at very different rates and their periods of readiness for academic subjects vary a great deal. Dr. Montessori believed that learning experiences should not be tedious, but should occur naturally and joyfully at the proper moment for each individual child. The Montessori approach to education teaches children to think, ask probing questions, and seek creative answers. Montessori teachers encourage children to be actively engaged in the learning process and to not accept mediocrity.

The class can be thought of as a learning laboratory, organized into several curriculum areas, among them:

- Practical Life (social graces and courtesy, movement, and art)
- Sensorial
- Language
- Mathematics
- Cultural (geography, history, Bible, zoology & botany, social studies, and music)

Simpler tasks are mastered before complex ones are introduced. Many materials involve the child in tasks that facilitate eye-hand coordination and small muscle control. Throughout the curriculum, one finds a web of indirect preparations that enhance the learning process.

Practical Life - These simple exercises have complex aims: to develop order, concentration, coordination, and independence. With carefully designed activities, children joyfully learn to care for themselves and their class environment. The tasks of buttoning, transferring quantities, polishing, preparing - all subconsciously develop accurate eye-hand abilities, later needed for reading and other academic pursuits. Children soon develop courtesy, graciousness, poise, and self-control, as vital interest in purposeful activity almost always breeds social maturity.

In the Art area, children are introduced to art history and art studio. As they explore the world of arts and crafts daily through the media of paint, clay, paste, color, and use of simple tools, creative and individual expression are emphasized.

Sensorial - Sensorial exercises, with their wide variety and many uses, provide purposeful movement and aid in muscular coordination. A child becomes aware of details by he or she is offered opportunities to redefine texture, colors, and dimension. One-to-one correspondence in matching/sorting and grading/discerning differences - these are necessary cognitive preparations. Intelligence is built as the child learns to distinguish, to categorize, and so relate new information to what he or she already knows. Children move through the structured materials independently, challenging themselves and gaining confidence. "Never let a child risk failure unless he/she has a reasonable chance of success," Dr. Montessori cautions; carefully planned success motivates further learning.

Language - The Language area is designed to enrich a child's vocabulary, conversation, and to establish a personal interest in reading and reading comprehension. As the child works with everyday living and sensorial foundation exercises, he/she develops many reading readiness skills. The child shows an interest and a comprehension of activities preparatory to written language, and the teacher provides the child with an opportunity to explore letter sounds and formation.

The Montessori unique approach to language development is a carefully respectful, individualized response to each child's natural desire to absorb language and communicate.

Mathematics - The purpose of the Mathematics area is to follow the child's basic need to seek order and logic in all things. Children count with enthusiasm, and that enjoyment is channeled to a concrete understanding of math facts and concepts. Later, the school age child can make abstractions and truly understand the theoretic rules of math.

Our math materials are firmly based in process, not product. The child grasps (literally and figuratively) a personal mathematical understanding through extensive use of manipulatives.

Culture - These exercises help the children gain an awareness of the world around them by exploring other countries and their customs, food, music, climate, language, and animal life. This helps to raise their consciousness about other cultures and to gain an understanding and compassion for all people of the world.

Geography - The materials used to teach geography help students better understand their world. Montessori students learn about the different types of land regions that exist, the climates that different regions have, and also about the plants and animals that exist around the world. By working with manipulative puzzle maps and other hands-on materials, learners gain an appreciation for many

geographical facts. For example, there may be a raised portion of land on the model that the learners can feel. The model may dip down, forming a bowl for water to be poured in by the learners. This helps them to understand how land and water interact with each other and forms a stronger association between the solidness of land and the fluidity of water.

Zoology and Botany - In Science, the children's natural curiosity is stimulated through discovery projects and experiments that help the children draw their own conclusions. The plant and animal kingdoms are studied in an orderly fashion to foster a love and appreciation for all living things.

Bible – The "Good Shepherd" program is presented with hands-on materials that focus on God's love and care for each of His children. Bible stories are non-denominational in content and allow for self-discovery.

Music – Activities in music, both spontaneous and planned, include an exploration of musical instruments, composers, and music of many nations and styles.

Physical education - P.E. is daily activity, as children are led in various activities to help develop gross motor skills such as running, walking, jumping, and walking with purpose and balance.

Primary Class Daily Routine

8:00 – 2:30 **School Day –** School starts promptly at 8:00 am. Students arriving after 8:00 will need to obtain a tardy slip from the office before entering class.

6:30 – 7:30 **Arrival & Before-School Program –** As children arrive, they may engage in manipulative activities, game projects, participate in classroom responsibilities, feed the classroom animals, and socialize.

8:00 – 10:00 **Uninterrupted Work Time & Morning Snack -** The children choose work in which they have already had a lesson, or they receive a new lesson. The curriculum integrates the core areas of Practical Life, Sensorial Math, Language, and Cultural Studies. The learning is child-centered and directed. The teacher circulates, interacting with students, assessing work, giving lessons, and redirecting students. During this time, a nutritious snack is readily available for children to independently choose.

10:00 – 10:30 **Circle Time -** The students sit in a circle as a group. We open in prayer, present group lessons, or social grace and courtesy lessons. We sing a variety of songs, participate in movement activities, and review classroom rules.

10:30 – 11:00 **Recess & Gardening Activities -** The students spend time on the playground daily. Practical life activities such as gardening and flower care are also available for students to gain an appreciation of our natural world.

11:00 – 11:30 **Lunch -** The children participate in lunch preparation, eat, and clean up their areas. Lunch preparations include formal and informal settings.

11:30 – 2:00 **Rest Time -** The younger children lay down to rest and take a nap.

12:00 – 2:00 **Afternoon Work Time -** Older children participate in an additional work period.

2:00 – 4:30 **Afternoon Snack/Classroom Restoration/Recess -** A nutritious snack is served to the group at this time. The children participate in responsibilities to prepare the classroom for the next school day. After work, they enjoy free time activities.

4:30 – 5:00 **Circle Time -** Children gather for a short circle time to receive a group lesson or listen to a story read by the teacher or an older child.

5:00 – 6:00 **After-School Activities -** Children enjoy working with manipulatives and game projects.

The Elementary School Years (6 to 12 years)

MSCT elementary classes begin at 8:00 a.m. and end at 3:30 p.m. There are two elementary classes on campus for children ages 6-12, or levels 1st-6th. Elementary children have a three-hour work period in the morning for individual and small group lessons and projects, and a two-hour work period in the afternoon. They have a weekly physical education class in which fitness and sports skills are practiced. In addition, they have weekly Spanish classes with materials in each classroom for follow-up work during the week.

Dr. Montessori describes the elementary-age child as a very different being from the younger, primary child. In Montessori's view, successive levels of education must correspond to the successive stages of development of the child; the educational approach for elementary students is not a direct continuation of what has gone before, although it is built upon the foundation laid in early childhood.

Three important tendencies emerge at the elementary age: the passage of the child's mind from concrete to abstract reasoning, the birth of a moral sense, and the intensification of the drive to explore one's natural and social environment. The child at this stage of life shows a growing capacity for tackling problems, reasoning, socializing, and harnessing the imagination.

Dr. Montessori pointed out that morality has a practical side that governs social relationships and a spiritual side that presides over the awakening of the child's conscience. Questions of right and wrong are considered in class meetings, which serve as arenas for discussions of fairness, rules, and procedures. The class meetings also encourage cooperative effort. This is the stage during which the child's sense of justice is formed, and these experiences help children build and internalize a moral code.

Physical & Motor Development – Freedom of movement, open work space, and uninterrupted blocks of time for individual and group projects all help to support the 6 to 12-year-old's need to gain control over his or her growing body, as well as the child's drive toward autonomy.

Physical exercise through non-competitive sports and games helps develop large-motor coordination while emphasizing the benefit of teamwork. Children at this age love physical challenges.

Montessori materials are still available to help refine small-motor skills in writing, math, and science. As the child grows, the many hands-on projects of the curriculum will provide increasingly sophisticated and challenging small-motor exercises.

Cognitive Development – As the child matures during these elementary years, the Montessori curriculum focuses on the following:

- The child's growing ability to abstract from concrete information.
- The drive to develop and to be accepted by one's peer group.
- Children's fascination with all aspects of their culture and with the grandeur of the world at large.
- Montessori elementary studies are based on a cultural curriculum that integrates history, geography, mathematics, science, biology, language, art, music, computer, and Bible studies. This interdisciplinary approach helps children build creative and critical thinking skills.

The assignments, projects, and field trips include individual work, small and large group cooperative work, decision making, and evaluation. At the upper elementary level, seeds are planted for advanced concepts in math, as well as physical and earth sciences.

In keeping with Montessori's process-oriented educational philosophy, the assessment of a child's performance is based on a systematic collection of information, including observations by teachers and parents, portfolios containing examples of work, and conferences. Parents receive written progress reports at regular intervals, three times during the academic year.

Impact of Montessori Elementary Education on the Child - A child who has completed a Montessori elementary program will have developed competence in both the social and cognitive areas. The student will have experienced first-hand the value of working cooperatively in a community where there is trust. The student will have learned that one may use both concrete information and one's own imagination to explore the world, and understands the importance of taking responsibility for one's own work and creating a personal code of morals.

Mathematics - While most math programs are oriented toward the teaching of arithmetic rules and practices, the Montessori Method focuses on developing a comprehensive understanding of the patterns, concepts, and skills underlying the system of mathematics.

Every new concept is presented with manipulative materials and the student is asked to record the steps of the process and demonstrate the underlying thinking for the problem. The goal is for the student to move from the concrete manipulation of objects to making a picture or some other form of representation to the final stages of working with abstract symbols.

How the student feels about mathematics and themselves will have a dramatic effect on their continued learning and future academic and personal success. Students must understand and excel in mathematics if they are to cope with this technological age.

Language – Language is an important part of the entire Montessori curriculum. Its treatment as a separate subject comes only at the point in which it is necessary to give clarity to the child's mind – that is, to give him or her conscious awareness of language so that it may be used more effectively. Once the child has the understanding that writing is a graphic form of language, work will center on spelling, word study, penmanship, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization. The real experience in reading and writing comes through the child's work in other areas of the curriculum, such as geography, history, botany, zoology, etc.

Because children have different cognitive styles, they are provided with a different means for learning to read within the environment. In this way, the child will be able to select the components of reading which fit his or her cognitive style and put them together in the way that is best for him or her. Once reading is mastered, the child expands into learning to love literature and poetry, reading for information and pleasure, and learning to write well-reasoned arguments and creative writing.

Social Studies – Our social studies program flows naturally from within the innate tendency of young children to constantly reach out, seeking to understand the world in which they find themselves. The goal is to teach children in an experiential manner about the way other people live, their points of view, and how to negotiate with one another to live with respect and integrity. The integrated studies curriculum

broadens the scope to include geography and history in a formal sense as well as a view of education, entertainment, economics, science, music, and art in integrated studies such as the Middle Ages, Ancient Civilizations, and the Civil Rights Era.

Science – The major goal of the science program at our school is to give children a good foundation on which to build scientific literacy and problem-solving skills. Our basic philosophy is that children learn best from active involvement with real materials. Integrated curriculum areas include biology, zoology, botany, microbiology, measurement, earth science, chemistry, and physics. Field trips to outdoor sites are chosen for their relevance to the units being studied. By the time a child leaves the Montessori elementary program, he or she has had experience with the major sciences.

Computer Education – Computer skills are integrated into studies such as humanities, writing, science, and math to enhance communication and creativity. The use of computers is primarily used as a research base for Upper Elementary students.

Art – Our art program is based on a sequential curriculum that stresses expressive outcomes. This curriculum includes both traditional hands-on studio art activities and art history experiences in which students become acquainted with significant late 20th century artists and art movements.

Activities are developmentally appropriate and include virtually every medium. Children explore clay, drawing, figure drawing, pastels, paints, construction, and architecture among others.

Elementary Class Work Goals

Students are expected to complete daily and weekly work goals in the areas of math, language and culture based upon their developmental and academic levels. Teachers will meet with students at the beginning of the school year to plan their work goals based upon their developmental level and their ability to complete work.

First Level Weekly Work Goals – The overall goal for the first level student is to complete 25 to 30 pieces of work per week. Daily work goals should include approximately 2 language, 2 math, and 1 culture work. After completing the weekly work goals, the student has the free choice of work.

Language work can include a phonics reading activity or reading comprehension work, handwriting lessons, grammar, or a word study. Math would include one operations work and one facts work daily. In operations, students learn a concept such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division. In facts, students learn through repetition of their math facts in addition and subtraction. Cultural work would be the focus on the current unit of study or something that follows the child's interest.
In addition to daily independent work, small group or whole group lessons would be added to the work plan for the day. Usually there is an immediate follow-up activity from a small group lesson, therefore counting as an independent piece of work.

Initially, the teacher guides the first level student on when and what work to do, but as the year progresses, these students will become more independent.

Second Level Weekly Work Goals – The overall goal for the second level student is to complete between 30 and 35 pieces of work per week. They will maintain a balance of activities in all subject areas in order to develop as a well-rounded, enriched learner and to prevent deficits while promoting strengths.

Weekly work goals include the following:

Language:	3 phonics, 3 reading, 4 writing/spelling, 2 word study, 3 grammar
Math:	3 operations, 3 facts, 2 word problems, 2 geometry, 2 fractions/money, 3 practice cards
Culture:	2 zoology, botany, earth science, 2 history, 2 geography

These weekly work goals will result in approximately 6 to 7 works completed per day. The student should complete six works per day, then have free choice of work. Along with the first levels, the second level students attend small and large group lessons, which may or may not include a follow-up activity. The students are much more independent at planning their work week, but the teacher guides them when necessary.

Third Level Weekly Work Goals – The overall goal for the third level student remains similar to second level students in terms of number of works to complete per week, about 35 finished pieces. More emphasis will be placed upon advanced research and writing activities, including different types of writing and moving from beginning paragraphs to multi-paragraph papers by the end of the year. Likewise, more

independent projects may be assigned and will have deadlines to aid in the child's development of responsibility.

These students are now developing as independent, focused learners whose intellect is capable of more abstract work, whose social skills are capable of cooperative group activities, and whose academic skills must be sharpened.

Skills that will be focused upon include:

Language: Mechanics in writing, handwriting, reading and vocabulary development, grammar, spelling, and oral communication.

Math: Concepts and proficiency of operations and the related fact work, application of concepts in linear counting, fractions, time, money, measurement, and working with charts and graphs.

Culture: Independent and group projects relating to the topic of study which may include oral and written reports, an interactive project (such as a game or play), or a drawing or model.

Fourth - Sixth Level Weekly Work Goals – The overall goal for the fourth through sixth level student is about 35 complex, finished pieces. Students are delving into advanced research and writing activities, including multi-paragraph research papers. Likewise, more independent projects may be assigned with required work outside of class time. Assignments will be required, and deadlines will be given to aid in the child's development of responsibility.

These students are intellectually capable of abstract work and have social skills that are capable of cooperative group activities.

Skills that will be focused upon include:

Language: Deriving a plot map for any genre of book that is read, more advanced and detailed analysis of a sentence, advanced comprehension and word study, different types of parts of speech and different language mechanics.

Math: Decimal operations, proportion, multiplicative identity, percentage, multiplication and graphing of binominals, and square roots. Geometric introduction to tangrams, areas of figures, and relationships between two or more figures.

Culture: Research topics of continents and countries. Flag studies, indigenous diets, traditions, and animals.

Work Plans – Each student will maintain a monthly work plan to meet their daily independent work goals. The teacher will review the work plan with the student on a weekly basis to ensure the work goals are met. At the conclusion of the month, examples of work completed will be filed in the student's portfolio for parental review and for tracking the student's progress.

Arranging for Work during an Absence

Teachers are more than willing to prepare work for the student. However, they need adequate planning time to prepare an individualized work schedule. Please notify the office in advance if you know your child will be absent and include the request for take-home work. Teachers will make copies and have your child's work available for pick up during their planning period.

Field Trips

Field trips are off-campus experiences related to the classroom curriculum. Teachers plan a field trip or special project activity for each of their major units of study. A permission slip explaining the objectives of the trip are sent to each parent as trips are planned. The admission price for each field trip will be taken from the supply fee furnished at the beginning of the school year by the student's parent. *State regulations require that all students wear a school shirt on field trips.* In the event you do not desire your child to participate in a school-planned field trip, you are responsible for making other childcare arrangements for your child during the event. Children are not permitted to remain at school.

Elementary Class Daily Routine

8:00 – 3:30 **School Day –** School starts promptly at 8:00 am. Students arriving after 8:00 will need to obtain a tardy slip from the office before entering class

6:30 – 7:30 **Before-School Program -** Students who arrive during this time will need to be dropped off at the Primary 1 classroom. They may engage in manipulative activities, game projects, participate in classroom responsibilities, feed the classroom animals, and socialize.

7:30 – 8:00 **Arrival -** Students who arrive during this time will be dropped off on the elementary playground. On bad weather days, students will report directly to their classrooms for manipulative activities and game projects.

8:00 - 8:15 **Raising of the Flags -** After raising the flags, the children open the day with prayer, the pledge of allegiance, and roll call.

8:15 – 8:30 **Group Meeting & Morning Snack -** The students come together in a circle for journaling. Students may then share their responses to the journal topic. Students mark the passage of time and have an opportunity to discuss any significant upcoming events for the day. A group lesson on the current unit of study is presented. During this time, a nutritious snack is readily available for children to independently choose.

8:30 – 11:30 **Uninterrupted Work Period -** The children choose work they have already had a lesson on or they receive a new lesson in Mathematics (including Geometry and Algebra), Biological and Physical Sciences, Technology, Language Arts and Literature, History, Physical and Political World Geography, Civics, Economics, Anthropology, Peace and Cosmic Education, Art, Music, Additional/World Language, and Physical Education. The teacher circulates, interacting with students, assessing work, giving lessons, and redirecting students.

11:30 – 12:30 **Lunch -** The children participate in lunch preparation, eat, and clean up their areas.

12:30-1:30 **Outdoor Activities/Physical Education -** The students spend time on the playground daily. Practical life, animal care, and garden and flower care activities are available for students to gain an appreciation of our natural world. Once weekly the students participate in organized games during P.E.

1:30 – 1:45 **Quiet Reading Time/Community -** Children relax indoors while listening to a chapter book read by their teacher or a peer.

1:45 – 3:00 **Uninterrupted Work Period -** Students finish work started during the morning work period. Small group lessons in Spanish take place during this time.

3:00 – 3:30 **Community Restoration -** The children participate in classroom responsibilities and class jobs to prepare the classroom for the next school day.

3:30 – 4:45 **Recess, Gardening, and Afternoon Snack -** Students are dismissed to the playground for outside activities and a nutritious snack.

4:45 – 6:00 **After-School Activities -** Students transition to the Primary 1 classroom for game projects and/or manipulative activities.

School Policies and Procedures

Registration

The Montessori Schools of Central Texas admits students of any economic and social class, racial and ethnic heritage, and religious beliefs. Children who are between 2 1/2 and 6 years of age by their start date, and are completely toilet trained and independent, will be considered for our Primary program. Students who are between the ages of 6 and 11 years of age by their start date will be considered for our Elementary program.

The following is a list of the steps in our admission process:

1. Interested parents will need to make an appointment for a tour at our school by calling 254-771-1116. School tours are scheduled Monday-Thursday at either 9:00, 9:30, or 10:00 a.m. During your visit, we will explain about our school programs in more detail and answer any questions you may have. Tours usually last approximately thirty minutes.

2. As an option, we accommodate observations of our classrooms as a scheduled appointment. Scheduling should be made through the school office. Observation times are individual to each classroom and are scheduled during the morning "work period."

3. When you decide to apply for admission, complete the application form and return it with the non-refundable $100 application fee. Applications will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis as long as spaces are available. Once a space becomes available, parents of primary and elementary students will be contacted to schedule an assessment for their child, as well as two one-hour class visits that must be completed before the planned start date. Parents of infants and toddlers will be contacted to schedule a home visit and two one-hour class visits.

4. The assessment will determine if the Primary and Elementary child is Montessori-ready and how to individualize the curriculum to the child. If the child is ready to attend, you will be given an enrollment packet with registration paperwork. These forms should be submitted as soon as possible, preferably at the time of the first visit, along with the non-refundable supply fee. If the child is not ready at the time of assessment, they will remain on the waitlist for one more registration cycle.

5. Following our collection of the registration paperwork and supply fee, you will be given an enrollment contract which will need to be initialed, signed, and returned. Completed enrollment packet, supply fee, and contract must be returned for enrollment to be considered finalized.

Waiting List - If placement is not immediately available for enrollment, your child may be placed on our waiting list. Submission of the application and fee will secure a space for your child on our waitlist. When a space becomes available, new students are selected in order of application date and with consideration for maintaining classroom balance. Priority will be given to siblings of children currently enrolled at MSCT and children of MSCT staff. **Applications for sibling priority must be received by deadline for pre-registration in order to be considered for the upcoming school year.**

Inclusive Services

Students with special medical, physical, discipline, or learning needs can only be accepted after a conference with the Head of School during which the exact nature of the child's need is ascertained. In the child's best interest, we reserve the right to refuse admission in cases that require professional attention which would fundamentally alter our programs. MSCT is unable to accept students requiring the attention of specifically trained personnel to administer injections, breathing treatments, or perform other medical procedures. Should medical, physical, discipline, or learning needs surface during the school year, it will then be determined whether MSCT can continue to offer the programs necessary for the proper development and welfare of the student.

Hours of Operation

MSCT is open Monday through Friday (except holidays) during the following hours, per the annual calendar:

- Our before-school program opens at 6:30 am for primary and elementary students and at 7:00 am for our infants and toddlers. The campus closes at 6:00 pm.

- Students should attend, at minimum, the school portion of the day which is 8:00 am to 2:30 pm for toddler through primary and 8:00 am to 3:30 pm for elementary.

- Office hours are Monday through Thursday from 7:45 am to 4:45 pm, and Friday from 7:45 am to 4:15 pm.

To ensure adequate staffing at all times and to comply with *Minimum Standards*, drop-in service is not available.

Late Pick-up - Parents that pick up their child after closing, based upon our school clock, will be assessed a late pick-up fee of **$1.00 per minute late**. You will be billed for the late fee, and payments are due within 24 hours.

Tuition and Fees

Tuition and fees are based on an annual rate established by the School Board. Returning parents are encouraged to pay annually and receive a discounted rate. However, there is a monthly payment plan for first-time parents and returning parents, as needed, through the ACH monthly draft. Our school programs are five days per week, according to the published school calendar, for a 10-month school term (August-May). During June and July, our summer camps are optional. Tuition and fees will remain the same for

the entire term selected. There will be no reduction of tuition or fees for absences, holidays, withdrawal, or disenrollment. Tuition and fees are not prorated irrespective of the start or drop date during the month.

Late Payment - Monthly payments are through bank drafts (EFT) on the 2nd of each month. Late payment accounts will be charged at a rate of 10% of the monthly payment.

Insufficient Funds - Checks or bank drafts returned for insufficient funds will be charged $35.00 per return, in addition to the late payment fee. Returned bank drafts must be remitted in cash, money order, or by check within twenty-four hours of notification.

Withdrawal Procedure (Infant and Toddler)

The Infant and Toddler spaces are non-contractual. Submit written notice to the Head of School one month in advance before disenrollment to stop automatic ACH withdrawal.

Withdrawal Procedure (Primary-Elementary)

Parents are financially responsible for the entire contract period in which they have enrolled their child. The following steps will be taken to withdraw your child from the school:

1. Submit a 30-day written notice to the Head of School, along with a forwarding address if moving.
2. A statement of your account will be mailed to your forwarding address reflecting any payments due.
3. Parents have ten (10) days to settle their account.
4. After account closure, a final statement will be mailed to the parents.
5. Accounts with outstanding balances will be referred to the Small Claims Court for resolution.

Disenrollment

We reserve the right to disenroll any child if the Board of Head of Schools determines that disenrollment is in the best interest of the school. We also reserve the right to disenroll any child for non-payment of tuition or fees. *The Montessori Method of education is not always appropriate for every child; therefore, we accept each child on a 30-day trial basis. The terms and conditions of the enrollment contract apply regarding tuition and fees.*

Rights of a Parent or Guardian

A parent or guardian of a child at a child care facility has the right to:

- enter and examine the child care facility during the facility's hours of operation without advanced notice; (If your child sees you and is unable to transition peacefully back into their environment, it would be better for the child to go home for the day.)
- review the child care facility's publicly accessible records;
- receive inspection reports for the child care facility and information about how to access the facility's online compliance history;
- obtain a copy of the child care facility's policies and procedures;
- review the facility's staff training records and any in-house staff training curriculum;
- review the child care facility's written records concerning the parent's or guardian's child;

- inspect any video recordings of an alleged incident of abuse or neglect involving their child, provided that:
    - video recordings of the alleged incident are available; (MSCT does not have video cameras.)
    - the parent or guardian does not retain any part of the video recording depicting a child that is not their own; and
    - the parent or guardian of any other child in the video recording receives prior notice from the facility
- have the facility comply with a court order that prevents another parent or guardian from visiting or removing the child;
- be given the contact information for the child care facility's local Child Care Regulation office;
- file a complaint against the child care facility; and
- exercise these rights without receiving retaliatory action by the facility.

Classroom Policies

Transitions

At each level of transition within our school, children are moved according to four determining factors: age, physical changes, social readiness, and cognitive abilities. When a child transitions, he or she should be ready in these areas, as determined on a case-by-case basis.

Transitions are made in June, July or August. Mid-term transitions may take place in January provided space is available. Set transition months allow for new children to have early group lessons with other new children.

Classroom Community Assignment

A lot of thoughtful planning by the administration and the teaching teams goes into building each Montessori classroom community. New students are assigned to a new classroom based upon their individual needs and the needs of the community itself. Montessori communities require diversity and balance to be successful. Since each program is typically a three-year cycle, effective communities should have equal numbers of each age group, boys and girls, and mentors and mentees. To maintain the ability to balance classrooms successfully, MSCT does not accept parental requests for classroom placement. Upon acceptance, a particular teacher or classroom is not specified or promised as a condition of enrollment.

Students are enrolled at our school to excel emotionally, spiritually, and academically, requiring environments that support this endeavor. Even though children may play well together, grouping best friends in the same classroom can lead to counterproductivity and distractions. In addition, a dependent child cannot reach their full potential if they share a classroom with an older sibling. To meet their social needs, our toddler, primary, and elementary classes have daily shared recesses among a larger variety of peers.

We have children's best interest at heart and consider all of these factors before selecting a classroom community to place each child.

Adjustment Period

All parents should be aware that young children beginning school are just starting to develop social skills, and that our approach assists children in this developmental process. While we aim for peaceful environments each day, some instances of disruptive behavior do take place. This is considered normal since children of this age are learning to get along with others. However, when a child has had several instances of aggressive behavior, the teacher will notify the parents and together they will make a plan to better support the child's needs. If the situation persists, a meeting will be scheduled between the teacher, parents, and Head of School. At this time, a request may be made for further help in the form of outside assessments and/or a shorter day for the child, and a timeline for improvement will be set. If progress is not made within the given timeline, it may be in the best interest of the child for the parents to seek a more structured environment where the child can be more successful.

Safe Environment Policy

There are many ways to foster children's development as they work through the process of forming their personal identities. The focus of our effort is to provide students with the experience of true community involvement, and to help them recognize how to assert their individuality while working in a community based on common Montessori values and principles. The school's environment allows significant space and resources for the children to work out this balance for themselves. Some issues affecting the community as a whole are handled through group meetings, monitored and directed by the teacher and led by the children.

Our school does provide clear boundaries to help children as they develop this balance and to shield children in the community from threatening situations. As part of our safe environment, MSCT will ensure that the teacher provides an environment that enables and encourages children to report threatening behavior. Our community is not able to grow properly with emotional, verbal, or physical threats present.

A safe environment includes:

- An environment that enables the child to report threatening behavior
- An environment where the child knows how to report threatening behavior
- An environment where MSCT investigates and reports to the family should a child tell only their parent

Threatening behavior includes but is not limited to:

- Physical aggression
- Verbal abuse

Biting by infants and toddlers is harmful and hurtful for all children and cannot be allowed in a safe environment. Children who bite will be gently but firmly spoken to concerning their behavior and an incident report will be prepared for parents of both children involved. Repeated instances of biting will result in a meeting with the parents and can lead to disenrollment if improvement is not made.

In the toddler, primary, and elementary environment, a child exhibiting threatening behavior will be immediately corrected and will be placed in time-out for one minute per the child's age in years. A discussion with the child regarding the behavior will take place before and after the time-out. The child will be allowed to return to the community after it is clear that he/she understands how his/her behavior needs to change to function within the community. This may include a meeting of the parents with the Head of School. The parent will be notified by phone call, email, and/or incident report. Bullying will not be allowed under any circumstance.

If a child brings an implement to school that could harm another child, the implement will be confiscated, and the parents will be called immediately. If that same child returns with another harmful tool, the implement will be confiscated, and the parents will be called to pick up and take their child home for the day. A meeting to discuss and correct the situation will be arranged between the teacher, the parent, the child, and the Head of School.

Upon disenrollment for behavioral issues, all fees and paid tuition will be forfeited irrespective of the day of the month.

General Procedures

Classroom Entrance and Exit Procedures

Please take note of the entrance and exit procedures to ensure safety and limit classroom distractions.

Each building is equipped with coded keypad locks. Parents of enrolled students will be issued a code for entrance. In order to maintain a safe environment, parents are required to keep the code secret from anyone who is not on the authorized pick-up list, including students. Security codes will occasionally change and be emailed to parents of currently enrolled students.

To help minimize distractions, tardy primary or elementary students should be brought to the front office to receive a tardy slip which will allow them entrance into their classroom Students enter and exit the classroom independently.

Cell phone usage is very distracting; therefore, please turn off your cell phone before entering the building or leave it in your car.

Arrival

Parents must escort their child to their classroom and ensure that a staff member has acknowledged the child's arrival.

All Classes:

Students learn more with fewer distractions. Therefore, parents should say their "goodbyes" at the door and allow students to enter the classroom independently. We ask that you save verbal communications with the teacher for a time when they do not have students in their care. Communication is important; however, child supervision is that much more important! Please utilize your teacher's email or arrange to meet with them during their planning period to answer questions. If your communication cannot wait until the afternoon, you may contact the office and we will send your message as soon as possible.

Students in toddler through elementary level classes need to finish the school portion of each day with as few distractions as possible. If your child has a doctor's appointment or other necessity before school has ended for the day, come to the office and a staff member will quietly bring your child to the office for dismissal. Please pick-up Toddler 1 and Primary 1 students leaving early directly from their own classroom.

Dismissal

At the end of the day, when you pick up your child:

- Parents are to wait **outside** the classroom and **quietly** make their presence known to the staff member.
- Parents need to wait until the child has completed their work and put it away before departing

- Visit with other parents **outside** the classroom.

- Adults must accompany their child out the door to the parking lot.

- Please keep cell phones put away while inside the school.

- Students will be signed in by their teacher; you will need to sign your child out at the time of pick-up. All people picking up children from the school are required to sign them out through our digital platform daily. For siblings, each child must be signed out individually as they are picked up from their classroom.

- Children will only be released to their parents or to those whom the parents have listed as authorized pick-up persons. MSCT assumes all biological parents can pick up their child from the school, regardless of the names listed on the enrollment form. If there is a legal document stating otherwise, MSCT must have this document on file. This includes divorce decrees stating the child is in the custody of one parent, or court restraining orders. MSCT cannot refuse the right of a parent to pick up their child without this documentation.

- Parents must notify the office when making changes to their approved pick-up list so we can keep accurate records. All first-time people picking up a child MUST show the staff a valid photo ID before the child may be released to them.

- All staff reserves the right to see identification before releasing a child if the pick-up person is not recognized.

- Children will not be released to staff members of MSCT.

- Children will not be released to any person who appears under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Between 4:45 and 6:00 p.m., parents of students primary through elementary may pick up their child in the Primary 1 building by entering through the north-facing side door of their front porch.

Parents should check their child's lunch boxes or cubbies daily for items that have been sent home. Soiled clothes will be returned for washing in the zip-lock bag provided by the parent.

Infants:

Parents of infants will pick up their children in the lobby of the infant building. The teacher inside the classroom will answer the door. Authorized pick-up persons will identify themselves and the teacher will lead or carry the child to the door for dismissal. The door to the classroom will be locked as soon as the school program begins each day for security. Since the Infant classroom has crawlers, we aim to keep the classroom as sanitary as possible and insist that shoes not be permitted. Please remove your shoes or put on the disposal shoe covers before entering the infant classroom.

Daily Activity Reports - Each infant will have a daily activity log that records their eating and sleeping habits, urine and bowel movements, and notable behaviors during the day. Please

note that teachers fill out activity reports when they are not actively supervising children. The report will be uploaded and available for parents to view in their child's online portal by the end of each day.

Toddler-Lower Elementary:
Parents of students enrolled in the toddler through lower elementary program will pick up their child by making themselves known and then waiting outside of the classroom for their child to restore their work. Authorized pick-up persons will identify themselves and the teacher will lead the child to the door for dismissal.

Upper Elementary:
Parents of students enrolled in the upper elementary program may pick up their child on the playground after 3:30 pm, or in the entry hallway by the front office on rainy days or before 3:30 pm. Authorized pick-up persons will identify themselves at the office and the office staff will call for your child. The teacher will ask the child to clean up their work and prepare to leave. Students enter and exit the classroom independently and will come to meet you downstairs.

Early Release from Class

The infant program is considered "on-demand," which means that you may drop off or pick up your child anytime within our operational hours of 7 am – 6pm.

Toddler through elementary children should remain in attendance every day until the conclusion of class. We understand that occasionally you may need to pick up your child early for a doctor's or dentist's appointment. Please avoid picking up toddlers during lunch and naptime between 11 am to 2 pm. If your child should need to be released from class early, please notify your child's teacher ahead of time so they may have them ready to go.

Indoor and Outdoor Play

Outdoor play extends opportunities for large muscle development, social-emotional development, and small muscle development by offering variety, challenge, and complexity in ways that are not attainable in a confined indoor space. The benefits of physical activity include better cardiorespiratory fitness, strong bones and muscles, weight management, coordination and motor skills, cognitive development, and mental and emotional well-being. Outdoor play provides for greater freedom and flexibility, fuller expression through loud talk, and a greater range of active movement.

At the Infant level, children engage in outdoor play for an amount of time as tolerated by the child. Active play is at minimum sixty minutes for Toddler children, and ninety minutes for Primary and Elementary children, per day. In addition, the Elementary classes have formal Physical Education once weekly at a local gymnasium to learn group sports and sportsmanship.

Should air quality or weather permit outdoor active play, opportunities for indoor play, such as music and movement or games will be offered to meet the child's needs. The Head of School will monitor the weather to determine if outdoor play should be limited due to extreme conditions.

While on the playgrounds, children will have opportunities to run, climb, slide, swing, and balance on a variety of play equipment. We have handheld manipulatives available, such as balls, frisbees, games,

large toy trucks, and jump ropes. Our students also participate in practical life activities such as gardening, sweeping, raking, and care for their outdoor environments.

Discipline Policy (TDFPS)

The definition of discipline is teaching or learning; it has no positive or negative meaning itself. The voice of challenging behavior speaks through the child's actions, their behavior. We begin to help children by listening carefully to what they tell us with their actions. Discipline must be individualized and consistent for each child, appropriate to the child's level of understanding, and directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.

MSCT uses only positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourages self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include the following: 1) using encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior, 2) reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements, 3) redirecting behavior using positive statements, and 4) using brief supervised separation from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited in duration.

There will be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. Staff members are prohibited from using these types of discipline:

- Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment
- Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training
- Grabbing or pulling a child
- Putting anything in or on a child's mouth
- Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child
- Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language
- Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed
- Putting a child in a restrictive device for time out
- Withholding active play or keeping a child inside as a consequence for behavior, unless the child is exhibiting behavior during active play that requires a brief, supervised separation or time out.
- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age (Texas Administrative Code, Title 40).

Incident Reports

A report will be presented to you for your signature if your child was injured, or if behavior modification is needed. We enlist the support of our parents to help correct misbehaviors, in order to allow the safest environment possible. Incident reports are kept in each child's file for documentation purposes.

Repeated Misbehaviors

If a child continues to injure themselves, others (to include biting), or the environment, or damage or destroy materials, and MSCT has diligently tried to correct a child's misbehaviors, as well as enlisted the support of the parents, a meeting will be called with the parents to establish a timeline for behavior modification. Should the behavior continue, MSCT will have no choice but to suspend the child each

time the behavior is exhibited. Parents will be required to pick up their child within thirty minutes of being called. Suspensions will depend upon the seriousness of the behavior and the agreement between the Head of School and the parents to modify the behavior. If the misbehavior is not rectified in a timely manner, it may be necessary to expel the child for the greater good of the community.

Damaged or Destroyed Materials

If a child damages or destroys classroom materials or furniture due to misbehavior, the parent will be notified and a request for reimbursement will be given to the parent for prompt payment.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is extremely important to your child's total development. Parents should notify the school office by 9:00 a.m. if their child is unable to attend school. If a student must be away for any length of time for reasons other than illness, parents should contact the school in advance to discuss the situation.

If a child's absence is due to a contagious disease or illness, the parent must immediately contact the school advising us of the condition and situation. This is a licensing regulation, as well as a safety precaution, for all children and staff.

Elementary Students:
Elementary students are required by Texas state regulations to attend a minimum of 90% of the number of scheduled school days based upon their first day of enrollment whether or not the absence is excused or unexcused. Therefore, students are permitted 18 absences per academic year (August – May) before he or she is considered delinquent. Failure to maintain this requirement will result in the following:

First Year of Enrollment: Should a student fail to attend a minimum of 90% of scheduled school days per first academic year of enrollment the student will remain in the present grade level. Should the student transfer to another school, private or public, a recommendation will be sent to that school noting the non-compliance.

Second Year of Enrollment: Failure to attend a minimum of 90% of scheduled school days per second academic year of enrollment will result in dismissal from The Montessori Schools. The person(s) financially responsible for the student's tuition will remain contractually responsible for the remaining tuition balance, as stipulated in the enrollment contract.

Mandates for Elementary Absences (August – May)

Month of Enrollment	Allowable Absences Thru End of Year
August	18
September	16
October	14
November	12
December	10
January	9
February	7
March	5
April	3
May	1

Tardy Policy

Emergencies are understandable; however, it is imperative that primary and elementary children arrive at school no later than 8:00 a.m. Promptness in a child's life is very important. Children who arrive late and/or are picked up late can feel awkward and uncomfortable. Tardiness is disruptive to the teachers and classes in session. Primary and Elementary students arriving after 8:00 a.m. must obtain a tardy slip before they enter the classroom. Students are allowed three (3) unexcused tardies per semester; after this time, parents are asked to bring a doctor's note or bring their child to school the next day.

Electronic Devices Policy

Devices that record audio or have camera features compromise privacy; therefore, cell phones, and other electronic devices are not permitted at school. All other items of value should remain at home, as the school and other students will not be responsible for lost or damaged goods.

Dress Policy

The Montessori classroom is a prepared environment. The materials, the furniture, the pictures and posters, the books, and the music have all been selected to create a space which is conducive to concentration, higher-level thinking, and creative expression. Our intention is to always incorporate only the finest and most enduring manifestations of our culture. The clothing worn by the children becomes a part of the environment and can have an effect on the children. Just as we would not hang posters on the wall of popular movies, TV, or video themes, we also ask that you reserve shoes or clothing with such depictions for use outside of the school. We prefer plain T-shirts, but those depicting elements of nature, flora or fauna, the arts, sports, or travel are acceptable. We are confident that the child will not be deprived of fads and pop culture by their exclusion from the classroom.

Comfortable clothing should be worn at all times. Often children want to wear slip-on shoes to school. These shoes can hinder a child's participation in running and climbing activities that are important for their fitness and play. Children should wear tennis shoes whenever possible. Children who are unable to tie should wear Velcro style shoes. Children should be dressed in clothing appropriate for the season. Fall and winter clothing should be layered to accommodate the daily temperature changes.

Extra Clothing - Students in infant through toddler classes should have a minimum of 5 COMPLETE CHANGES OF CLOTHING in his or her cubby at all times to allow for wetting or other accidents (food or paint spills). Primary students should have 2 COMPLETE CHANGES OF CLOTHING. If an accident should occur, a replacement set of clothes must be brought to school the next day. Extra sets of underclothes are always necessary. Toddlers should have a minimum of five (5) sets of underwear in their cubby to change into as they transition from diapers to underwear.

Please label all clothing!

Indoor Shoes - Children need to leave at school a pair of slip-on style indoor shoes for use in the classroom. Suggestions include Velcro tennis shoes, ballet slippers, crocs, etc. House shoes, flip-flops, and slippers are not allowed. Cowboy boots, flip-flops, and clogs do not stay on feet at all times, especially when running, nor do they provide enough traction on steps or ladders; therefore, they are not permitted on the playground or in the classroom.

All Students - It is recommended that your child wear simple play clothes to school. Jeans, pants, and shorts allow children the freedom to run and climb on the playground and sit cross-legged on the floor in the classroom. Because modesty is important, students should wear shorts under dresses and skirts to help prevent embarrassing situations. Clothing with suggestive or inappropriate slogans and superhero depictions are not permitted. Halter-style tops or spaghetti-string tops may be worn with a shirt over or under this style.

Hair – The length of hair for boys should not fall below the top of the collar of the shirt when loose. Hair paint, colored extensions, permanent colors not of natural-born colors, or distractive styles, such as a mohawk, should not be worn to school.

All Students - It is our desire to create a distraction-free environment for your child; therefore, the following items are not permitted at school:

- Backpacks
- Flashing lights on shoes
- Face painting
- Lip gloss or other make-up
- Money
- High heel or platform shoes
- Cowboy boots
- Cleats
- Purposely squeaky shoes
- Candy or gum
- Bells on shoes or clothing
- Rub-on tattoos or body stickers
- Hair paint
- Toys or stuffed animals
- Costume jewelry
- Flip flop shoes
- Super-hero or cartoon clothing
- Roller skate shoes
- Extremely long shoe laces

Precious stone jewelry should not be worn to school. Aside from the risk of loss, it is a safety issue. Staff members will not be liable for jewelry.

Snack Program

We serve fresh fruits and vegetables for the morning and afternoon snack periods with limited dairy and carbohydrates. Snacks that expose our children to interesting and appealing foods originating from the country or food group currently being studied are incorporated.

Morning snack takes place individually or in small groups, with no special time set aside for "snack time." The class has a snack table which accommodates small groups. Children set out their own snack, pour their own drink, and socialize while eating. Children discipline themselves, for the most part, to a single serving and decide with their own "internal clocks" when they are ready to have snack. Likewise, children may choose to continue their work uninterrupted until they finish and then decide to have snack.

Children are also served an afternoon snack each day. This snack is usually eaten by the class as a group while sitting in circle. As with morning snacks, the foods offered in the afternoon are also nutritious and filling.

Lunch

We would like for your child to have the most enjoyable day possible. One of the ways you can help with this is by sending a nutritious lunch. It has been our experience that those children who bring empty-nutrient foods and sweets are those who have a more difficult afternoon.

Involve your child in planning, preparing, and packing lunches to encourage their knowledge about nutrition, their creativity, and to avoid complaints about choices.

A good lunch should provide variety and satisfy one-third of a growing child's daily nutritional requirements. This means one selection from each of these five groups: protein, dairy, fruit, vegetable, and grain.

Children need to bring a **ready-to-eat,** picnic-style lunch in an **insulated lunch bag** each day (no warm-ups for students other than elementary). Elementary students are provided a lesson in using the microwave for reheating foods (no cooking). Each lunch brought from home must contain a protein, a grain product, a fruit, and a vegetable. To meet the other nutritional requirements, the school will provide milk for the children's lunches. All food brought to school should be nutritious, fresh, and easy for the child to eat. Foods that are high in preservatives (i.e., Lunchables), sugar, or salt should be eaten away from school. Solid foods should be *precut* into safe and manageable pieces for young throats. *Please do not send drinks in your child's lunch.* It is not necessary to pack eating utensils or napkins as the school will provide these items.

A food allergy emergency plan signed by a physician is required for any child suffering from allergies or related illnesses that prohibit him/her from eating certain foods, including milk. It is the parent's responsibility to provide alternate dairy products for children whose physician has determined an allergy to dairy.

Containers - Lunch items need to be packed in an easy-to-open container that allows the child to open it independently. *Children are not permitted to bring food items in pop-top or metal rimmed lid containers.*

Please note that tomato sauce is not considered a vegetable, nor are fruit flavorings considered a fruit, by state guidelines.

Please exclude drinks, cookies, cake, candy, donuts, fruit roll-ups, pie, Nutella, Jell-O, chips, chocolate pudding, frozen pizza, microwavable meals, food to be cooked, and Go-gurt (yogurt, pudding, or other products in squeeze-type tube).

Parents are responsible for ensuring their child brings a lunch to school on a daily basis. If your child happens to forget their lunch, you will be contacted to bring a lunch for your child to school in a timely manner. The school is unable to provide lunches for students.

Lunch Suggestions

Grains	**Protein**
Wheat bread or crackers	Any meat
Granola	Peanut butter
Nutri-grain bars	Soup (in a thermos)
Rice cakes	Beans and hotdogs
Pasta	Boiled egg
Chex mix	Tuna fish
Graham crackers	Nuts
Rice	Tofu

Fruit	**Vegetables**
Any fresh fruit	Any raw vegetable or salad
Dried fruit	Any cooked vegetable
Applesauce	Pickles

Rest Period

Infant students nap as their bodily needs dictate utilizing floor beds. Infant students 10 months and older use a cot that the school provides. Toddlers and primary students ages 3 to 4 settle down for a rest period. State regulations require that nap mats be waterproof or washable; therefore, if a child destroys their nap mat, the parent will be notified to replace it by the next school day. Providing a nap-mat-cover helps to sustain durability.

Toddlers and primary children may bring a small, thin, child-size blanket for resting, if desired. Pillows and sleeping bags/mats are not allowed by state regulation. Blankets must be labeled with your child's name with indelible ink or printed tags. Blankets and mat covers are to be taken home each Friday to be washed.

Primary children ages five and older will have a quiet period after playground time that will involve either reading or working independently on their lessons.

Personal Supplies

A personal supply list will be given and explained upon enrollment. It is the responsibility of the parent to bring all personal supplies, marked with the child's name, by the child's first day of class and to maintain

consumable supplies and changes of clean clothes. All student are encouraged to wear their school t-shirt on Fridays.

Birthday Celebrations (Primary and Elementary)

Since every child's birthday is important, their special day can be celebrated at school during the morning group period. A birthday letter will be sent home prior to each child's birthday explaining the celebration and birthday story. Parents are welcome to attend their child's celebration. This event is a celebration, not a party.

On birthday celebration day, our tradition for the birthday child is to present their class with a realistic book in honor of their birthday. This enables the child to learn the value and pleasure of giving rather than just receiving. Parents wishing to participate in this tradition should inscribe the book with the child's name and birth date in the cover of the book. We appreciate books of interest to our current units of study, or with realistic pictures.

Children can enjoy a special birthday snack at school. In an effort to adhere to a more nutritional approach and to avoid difficulties with allergies to peanuts, chocolate, etc., and with sweets (cake, cookies, etc.), please do not bring traditional birthday cakes, cupcakes, candy, ice cream, or cookies. We suggest a creative nutritious birthday treat.

Snack Ideas for Birthday Celebrations

Mini muffins
Popcorn
Cheese and crackers
Banana bread
Fruit and dip tray
Vegetable and dip tray
Fruit or sausage kolaches

Animals

Animals are included as an integral part of the Montessori environment. In our environments, you will find a variety of fish, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. The children receive valuable lessons in caring for the needs of their classroom pets, and are then allowed to care for the fish and mammals in our environments. After caring for the animals, children are directed to wash their hands.

School Pictures

Each fall, individual and class school pictures are taken by a trustworthy photographer. These photographs are available for purchase from the photographer's company at a reasonable cost. Parents are under no obligation to make this purchase.

Water Activities

MSCT provides limited water activities for our students beginning the last week of May through the last week of August on Fridays.

- Infants use a baby pool or water table with no more than a couple inches of water. Only one baby may use the baby pool at a time and the child will be strictly supervised.
- Toddler children enjoy sprinkler play on the astroturf of their playground, and the use of a water table.

- Primary through Elementary classes will have use of our aquatic splashpad.

On splash days, children should arrive at school in their bathing suit with cover-up on. They should bring with them a waterproof diaper (non-potty-trained children), a labeled towel, and a change of clothes in a labeled plastic bag.

Sunscreen and Insect Repellant - Since children have varying arrival times, it is recommended that children come to school with sunscreen and insect repellant already applied. During the afternoon, teachers may apply various sunscreens and insect repellants before the start of the afternoon recess.

Release of Student Information

Written parental consent must be obtained for releasing information to community agencies or professional personnel outside of the school. Records such as test scores, health data, attendance records, and narrative progress reports will be forwarded to the school to which the student transfers upon receipt of written consent of the parents, provided that their tuition balance is current.

Confidential information about any child or parent shall be privileged communication and shall be respected with regard to utmost confidentiality.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

We believe that parents are the child's first teachers. We encourage close relationships between parents and staff members so that we can learn about each child and his or her unique qualities, and also understand the family customs and traditions that have helped to shape his or her life.

At conferences, we hope a discussion and exchange of ideas will occur. Observations about the child's cognitive, physical, social, and emotional growth are presented, and a plan for helping with the child's present challenges may be established. Conferences are scheduled throughout the year and are convened formally at least twice during the school year. In order to ensure that the parent(s) and teacher may speak freely, children are not part of the conference and alternate child care should be arranged.

Class Observations

Parents are welcome to observe their child's classroom (the best days to observe are Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday). An observation chair is provided in each classroom and mothers are welcome to nurse their babies during observation periods. There are also observation booths available with one-way mirrors outside of certain classrooms for use at any time. Most children enjoy having a parent to visit - meeting friends and teachers, seeing their favorite activity, and experiencing school Montessori-style!

It is helpful to remember, however, that children do not act the same when their parents are in class with them - behavior can be surprising. Please recognize that observations are not true indicators of a child's progress within a group.

If your child sees you and is unable to transition peacefully back into their environment, it would be better for the child to go home for the day.

Please stop by the school office before observing your child's class to receive an observation form. We appreciate your comments on the form. Please remain in the observation chair during your time in the classroom.

Parent Communication

MSCT Website: montessorischoolsofcentraltexas.com

The school website is a good source for general information about MSCT. It includes, among other information, school events, monthly newsletters and calendars, and other helpful links. You may also contact the school Head of School through email at the following address:

frontdesk@templemontessori.com Mrs. Jennifer Watson, Head of School

Group Emails

The office sends out emails to families regarding service opportunities, updates on school activities, and reminders of school events and policy changes. Families are strongly encouraged to regularly check the email account they provided the school on the Enrollment Information form.

Calendar and Newsletter

Parents will be sent a copy of the new calendar and newsletter each month via email. Both the newsletter and calendar are also posted to our website for your review. Hard copies are available upon request.

Messages

Staff members can be reached by calling the front office after 3:00 p.m. daily at (254) 771-1116. The office personnel will connect you with the requested staff member, if that individual is available. If not, you may leave a request for the person to call you. If the office personnel are unable to answer the phone at the time of your call, please leave a voicemail with your name, number, and reason for calling. Voicemails will be checked on a daily basis.

Inclement Weather Advisories

Our concern is always for the safety of both child and adult. Our weather procedures have always been developed with safety as our primary concern.

During the winter season, please remember the following: for emergency school closings or late opening information, listen to local radio and/or television stations. Our school will follow the same weather closing procedures as Temple ISD. Our school day begins at 8:00 am; therefore, when we have a two-hour delay, the school will open at 10:00 am. To give our teachers time to arrive and prepare, students will not be accepted into their classrooms until 10:00. No tardies are given on inclement weather days. Our only concern is you and your child's safe arrival.

Health and Safety

Immunizations and TB Requirements

Each child enrolled in the Montessori Schools of Central Texas must meet applicable immunization requirements specified by the Texas Department of Health. All immunizations required must be for the child's age and must be completed by the date of admission. A parent may also choose to remit an affidavit for an exemption from childcare immunizations for reasons of conscience. This affidavit may be obtained from the Texas Department of State Health Services. The affidavit must be an original copy and not expired. Should there be an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease, unvaccinated children will be excluded from care until such time as the disease subsides.

As needed, The Bell County Health Department can require that children enrolled in a child-care facility be screened for tuberculosis.

Vaccine-Preventable Diseases (Staff)

It is the position of The Montessori Schools of Central Texas that an employee has the right to decide what is in their best interest regarding their personal health care decisions. Employees are encouraged to ask their physicians for vaccine recommendations and then to make decisions based upon their own best interest. If an employee chooses to receive CDC recommended adult vaccines, they will present written proof from their physician along with a schedule for any remaining boosters, to be remitted to the administrative office. If an employee chooses not to be vaccinated as recommended by the CDC adult vaccine schedule, they may provide a letter from their physician stating that the vaccine is medically contraindicated or may sign and date a statement that for reasons of conscience, including a person's religious beliefs, that the employee is exempt in order to maintain employment.

Hearing and Vision Screening

We provide an annual hearing and vision screening to the meet the requirements of the Texas Department of Public Health. If a child is four years of age or older by September 1st, a screening must be given. They are administered at no charge and parents will be notified of the results.

Illnesses

Staff members are unable to accept a child who is ill or who has a condition that is questionable. Parents should keep children home who have experienced the following symptoms within the previous 24-hour period:

- Fever (100°F or above)
- Uncontrolled Diarrhea - not contained in diaper and/or exceeds two or more stools above the normal for that child; and a toilet-trained child's diarrhea is causing soiled pants and clothing
- Vomiting – two or more episodes in a 24-hour period
- Undiagnosed rash with fever
- Eye infection
- Mouth sores with drooling
- Abnormal breathing

- Behavior changes or other signs that a child may be severely ill
- Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness such as lethargy

Children returning from an absence should be well enough to participate in the full program, including outside play, or they should remain at home until this is possible.

Children who become ill during the school day will need to be picked up within 30 minutes of notification.

Parents must leave correct contact information regarding work and THREE emergency numbers where someone can be reached at all times. As changes occur, parents are to inform the school of any updates in address or phone numbers.

Absence Notes - Upon a child's return to school after a contagious illness, a physician's note is required for re-admittance. Please notify the school office if your child will be absent due to an illness, or for any other reason.

Students should only have appointments during the school day when it is absolutely necessary. When an appointment does occur within the school day, please advise your child's teacher with a written note of the time you will be picking up your child.

Medical Procedures and Forms

If your child requires medication, you must complete a medication documentation form and give the form and medication, in its original container, to a staff member. DO NOT place medication in your child's lunch bag. Medication will be administered after the lunch period. Over-the-counter medications will be administered according to the label directions. Please be sure to label all medication with your child's name and date. Medication documentation forms can be completed up to a 1-year period.

To ensure students are properly supervised at all times, we are unable to administer medication such as breathing treatments and/or other medical devices.

Food Allergies – Every child with a food allergy listed in their file must have a food allergy emergency plan. The food allergy emergency plan should be an individualized plan developed by the child's healthcare professional and should include:

1. A list of each food to which the child is allergic.
2. Possible symptoms if exposed to a food on the list
3. The steps to take if the child has an allergic reaction

The health care professional and a parent must sign and date the completed plan. Required medications must be provided and cannot be expired while the child is in attendance. Parents will sign a permission form to administer prescribed medications.

It is the desire of MSCT to include all children regardless of food allergies in food preparation activities and shared meals, such as snack, cooking lessons, and party days. Prior to enrollment, parents of children with food allergies will meet with the lead teacher of their class to develop acceptable rotating snack menus, including substituted items. For cooking lessons, teachers will publish the recipe, including the brand name of ingredients to parents for review prior to the activity. When outside food is brought into a

classroom, such as birthday celebrations, if it cannot be determined that a particular food is clear from allergens, for safety, another item on the approved food list may be substituted. For party days, the Head of School will speak with food vendors to avoid food allergens, and publish the purchased items to the parents of students with food allergies for further review. For the Valentine's Day party, goody bags will be given directly to the parent for their close inspection since these items were collected from a variety of outside sources and it cannot be guaranteed that an allergen is not present. All efforts will be made to keep all children safe from allergens; however, MSCT will not be held liable if a parent chooses to serve their child a food from an outside source that contains an allergen.

First Aid

Every effort will be made to ensure the safety of your child, but accidents may occur. Parents will be notified for emergency situations. If a parent cannot be reached, the emergency numbers you have indicated will be called. The child's doctor is the next to be called if emergency numbers are not reached. Upon the advice of the doctor, or if the need warrants such a trip, the child may be taken to the emergency room of the nearest hospital. Health records and emergency treatment release forms will be carried to the hospital. Parents will be asked to meet the child and staff member at the hospital as soon as possible.

Emergency Preparedness Plan

The purpose of the emergency preparedness plan is to ensure the safety of children enrolled in MSCT during an emergency, with respect to emergency evacuation and relocation. This plan addresses several types of emergencies that could occur in this area, is not limited to only natural events such as tornadoes, floods, wildfires, or earthquakes.

Employees of MSCT will be made aware of the plan during their initial orientation. Parents of enrolled students will be informed at the parent orientation meeting and a copy will be made available for review upon request.

The Head of School is responsible for implementing the emergency preparedness plan. The Head of School will use a cell phone to communicate with local authorities and to send a group email to the parents to inform them of the situation. In the Head of School's absence, the staff member assigned to be in charge will lead the emergency evacuation and relocation, if necessary.

Lead teachers will use their cell phones to contact parents for immediate pick up from the designated alternate shelter. Students will be supervised and cared for while waiting for pick-up. Parents will have thirty minutes to pick up their child using the digital platform to sign out their child.

Assistant teachers in each classroom are responsible for the following items: roll-call sheets, the emergency notebook with contact information that includes the names of parents, telephone numbers, and authorization for emergency care, and the first aid kit.

The emergency preparedness plan will be practiced as a minimum as follows:

Fire Drill: A fire drill will be practiced monthly with a safe evacuation of three (3) minutes or less. Infants will be transported in evacuation cribs.

Lockdown Drill: A lockdown drill will be practiced at least once every three months.

Severe Weather: A severe weather drill will be practiced at least once every three months.

All drills will be documented to include the date of the drill, time of the drill, and length of time for the evacuation or relocation.

Emergency Evacuation and Relocation Diagrams are posted in each classroom and at exit doors from each building. In an emergency, the staff will move the children to the designated safe area for that type of emergency. Children will be evacuated in a quiet and orderly manner to the designated exit in the classroom and led to the safe area by the responsible staff member. Children under the age of 24 months will be transported in mobile evacuation carts. Children will not be prodded to move but will be verbally prompted to move quickly by walking to the designated location.

The Head of School will take the emergency bag containing limited supplies to the designated alternate shelter which is American Legion Post 133, 1300 South 25th Street, Temple, Texas 76504, Telephone 254-778-9789.

The emergency telephone number for MSCT is 254-421-6373. Children evacuated or relocated from MSCT will be accounted for by the daily roll-call sheet maintained in each classroom.

Fire Safety

Our policy is to provide for the physical well-being and safety of every child and to regularly instruct each child and staff member in fire safety. The school meets all fire requirements as mandated by law. Monthly fire drills are conducted during the school day. There is to be no smoking anywhere on the premises, school grounds, or on field trips at any time.

Gang-free Zone

Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1,000 feet of a childcare center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to a harsher penalty.

Partnership with Parents

"Montessori is a way of life encompassing the development of the whole child. The parent, therefore, has a vital role to play in the educational process."
David Kahn, President,
North American Montessori Teachers Association

Children are largely dependent on their families for identity, security, care, and a general sense of well-being. Good communication between parents and teachers helps to build mutual understanding, which provides consistent guidance for the child. A partnership between parents and teachers forms a basis for mutual problem solving about concerns, behaviors, and observations. It enhances the learning process in both the home and the school by strengthening ties.

Parent Forums

Parent education events are held on a variety of topics; some are classroom oriented and some are open to the entire school. We encourage your attendance, as an understanding of Montessori theory and curriculum enhances your child's development within MSCT and your home. Parents will be asked to attend two types of events:

- **Parent Orientation** – An introduction to The Montessori Schools and what it offers each family.
- **Parent Enrichment Meetings** – Each class will hold individual meetings to explore the Montessori curriculum and how it benefits each child.

At least one Silent Journey or Discovery event will be offered during each school year. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend a Silent Journey and/or a Discovery event as early in their child's Montessori experience as possible. Childcare is available for students enrolled at MSCT during parent forums.

Parent Involvement

All quality schools need volunteer and financial resources to help achieve their goals. The school is a nonprofit organization that has only two basic means of support: the dedication of the faculty and staff, and the commitment and generosity of our families. Thanks to the outstanding support of many people, our school has accomplished a great deal since its founding. It is our goal to maintain this commitment and service to the children of our school. We invite you to join us and be a vital part of our school. We need your continued support, and your children will reap the benefits of your participation.

Parents are encouraged to become actively involved in the school as parent volunteers. Parents are asked to assist with fundraising events and work with the administration and faculty to support classroom activities. Parents complete various volunteer jobs around the school and grounds, aid in the classrooms, and consult with the Board of Head of Schools in many areas. Parents or other designated adult family members are asked to volunteer 20 hours per academic year per family.

Parent Committees

Parent participation plays a significant and crucial role at The Montessori Schools of Central Texas. It provides a means through which parents can meet and get to know each other better and work together with the staff and students for the benefits of all children. This list below summarizes major volunteer activities. Committees meet at scheduled intervals. Please check your monthly newsletter and/or calendar for specific dates and times.

Helping Hands Committee - This committee assesses the needs of our facility and implements necessary maintenance and repairs. They endeavor to improve the school buildings and surrounding grounds. Parents with an interest in gardening and/or landscaping and who are willing to assist classrooms with gardening projects and campus beautification are also welcome.

Development and Advertising Committee – This committee administers and directs annual fundraising and advertising campaigns. They coordinate and conduct special fundraising events, as well as generate and implement new ideas for fundraising projects.

Classroom and Staff Support - The foundation of the classroom support responsibilities include welcoming new parents, recruiting volunteers within their class for school events or special class projects, and assisting with classroom parties and teacher appreciation activities.

Donations

Donations made to the Montessori Schools of Central Texas fund teacher education and development, new materials, playground equipment, and our scholarship program for families in need. Parents are strongly encouraged to help support our school in its endeavor to continuously improve our staff and environments, both indoors and outdoors, and help fund scholarships. As a 501(c)(3), all donations are tax-deductible. Donors will receive a receipt for tax purposes from the office. Non-monetary donations can also be documented for tax purposes. Your kind generosity is greatly appreciated!

Policies for Staff and Parent Volunteers

Ethics and Confidentiality Code

When Maria Montessori says to follow the child, she directs us to consider the needs of children, and to provide for those needs. We know that children need guidance, and that they need role models to follow. In our capacities as MSCT staff members and as volunteers, we are obligated by our hearts and minds to continually act in ways that we would have the children emulate. In this same spirit, everyone who works at the school, whether as staff member or volunteer, should be aware that all information read, overheard, or observed is strictly confidential and should not be shared with anyone that is not authorized to receive that information.

Supervision Policy

No child is to be left unsupervised at any time. The teacher's responsibility begins when the parent or responsible adult brings that child into the classroom or to the playground and does not end until the parent or responsible adult collects the child at the end of the day.

Driver Policy

Parents are to be responsible for arranging for the transportation of their children to and from school at the beginning and the end of each school day. The Montessori School staff and employees may not provide transportation for students to and from the MSCT facility at the beginning and end of each school day.

Chaperone Responsibilities for Field Trips

If you would like to volunteer to assist on one of our field trips or if you would like to have your elementary child participate in our field trips, please note the following chaperone responsibilities and requirements:

1. The entire group travels in a caravan to and from the field trip site.
2. Children may not sit in the front seat of a vehicle.
3. Children must be seat-buckled at all times.
4. Children must use an inside voice while in a vehicle.
5. When arriving at our destination, children should be dropped off at the entrance, curbside.
6. Children of chaperones must follow the class rules. No special favors, food, gift shop items, etc.
7. At least one adult in the vehicle must have a cell phone. Cell phone numbers are collected by a teacher prior to the field trip for communication purposes.
8. To participate in a school field trip, children must be enrolled in the Montessori Schools of Central Texas elementary class, or be at least 18 years of age to be a chaperone. As this is an extension of our elementary learning experience, childcare arrangements for siblings or other non-participants need to be made prior to field trips.
9. No smoking permitted to, during, and from field trips, per *Minimum Standards*.
10. The role of a chaperone is supportive. The student will rely upon the teaching staff to guide them through the field trip experience.
11. Chaperones should understand that student's of chaperones may become excited with their parent in attendance. Please allow teaching staff to give directions and have expectations that your child is responsive.
12. Parents must wear matching school t-shirts.

Transportation

Only elementary students will be transported by MSCT for field trips. The guidelines for the transportation service are as follows:

- Children may be assigned a seat at the discretion of the bus driver.
- Children must always wear a seat belt while on the bus. Parents will be required to provide a car seat for children that are required to ride in one.
- Children will not be permitted to eat or drink on the bus. Toys or electronic devices with screens are not permitted on the bus.
- A quiet, inside voice must always be used.
- Feet are to be kept out of the aisle and will be on the floor in front of them.
- Inappropriate language (name calling, arguing, profanity, vulgarity etc.) will not be permitted.
- Children will always listen and obey the bus driver for safety reasons.
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Abuse and Neglect Policy

If an employee or MSCT volunteer suspects that a child is being abused or neglected, Texas law requires the staff member to report it to the TDFPS or a law enforcement agency.

To help deter an act of abuse or neglect, all employees undergo a criminal history check that includes a search of the TDFPS central registry of reported cases of child abuse and neglect and FBI fingerprinting, as required. Each staff member maintains annual abuse and neglect training to identify signs of abuse and neglect, and the procedures for reporting. The staff does not prevent parents from visiting the facility during its hours of operation, and interactions between staff and the children can be observed.

Common Indicators of Possible Child Abuse – The following are some common indicators of possible child abuse but are not limited to these scenarios: bruises or wounds in various stages of healing; injuries on two or more planes (sides) of the body; injuries reported to be caused by falling but which do not include hands, knees, or forehead; doughnut-shaped, or imprint (hot iron or cigarette) burns; reluctance to leave school, comes in early, stays late; inappropriate dress for the weather; discomfort when sitting, sophisticated sexual knowledge or play; radical behavior changes or regressive behavior; child withdraws or watches adults; child seems to expect abuse; revealing discussion, stories, or drawings; sudden changes in school performance; and has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to parents attention.

To learn more about preventing and reporting abuse and neglect – Contact the abuse and neglect hotline (800) 252-5400 to learn more about abuse and neglect and how to report it.

Drug and Alcohol Policy

The Montessori School's policy dictates that MSCT be free of alcoholic beverages or controlled substances. Each employee undergoes a pre-employment drug screen and random drug screens while employed.

Sexual Harassment Policy

MSCT seeks to assure that it maintains a workplace free of sexual harassment and intimidation. The school has a zero-tolerance policy for vulgar, abusive, humiliating, or threatening language, practical jokes, or other inappropriate behavior in the workplace. MSCT will not tolerate the harassment of any employee or non-employee by another employee or non-employee or Board member for any reason. Non-employee violators of this policy are subject to expulsion from the school facilities when harassment occurs on the premises. Furthermore, MSCT may report violators to the appropriate authority for civil action. Any harassment observed should be reported promptly to the school Head of School.

Conflict Resolution Policy

The staff and administration of MSCT desire to support and promote healthy and timely communications focused toward developing solutions in all interactions. For answers to your questions and solutions for your concerns, please refer to the following items below for direction:

Matter related to:	**First contact:**
Your child's progress Classroom activities and schedules Classroom procedures Montessori education Academic policies Parent conferences Parent education	Classroom teacher
Admissions information Classroom observation schedule Registration School calendar School schedules Student records Digital Accounts	Assistant Head of School
Student finances State regulations Facilities Faculty and staff Fundraising Governance Legal matters Montessori education	Head of School
Parent organization activities Volunteering	Parent coordinator

Annual Giving program

If more help is needed, resolutions should follow these steps:

1. If you have questions regarding your child, ask the teacher. Please leave a message on the voice mail system or in writing. Teachers are your first resource to answer your questions and resolve your concerns.

2. If the communication with the teacher by telephone does not answer your questions or resolve your concerns, please request a parent conference with the teacher.

3. If communication with the teacher by telephone or conference does not resolve the issue, please address your question to the Head of School by phone or email, who can assist in resolution of the problem. Written positions will be requested from both parties.

We desire to provide a healthy and safe school experience for all students. When areas of concern are addressed quickly, collaboratively, and with care, we will be able to support your student and family in developing appropriate solutions.

Acknowledgment of Operational Policies

MSCT will add or change operational policies during the year as necessary. You will be given written copies of these changes. Just as you have acknowledged the receipt of the operational policies in this Parent Handbook on Student Enrollment form, we will request you sign your understanding of any revised policies. It is a regulation of TDFPS that this acknowledgement is kept in your child's file.