



2023-2024

# Parent Handbook

The mission of Children's House Montessori School is to aid each student in building an independent personality, to instill a lifelong love of learning a sense of compassion, respect for the world around them and everyone in it, and to educate the potential of every child through the use of Montessori pedagogical principles.

The policies stated in this handbook are intended as guidelines only and are subject to change at the sole discretion of the Head of School of the school and the School Board of Directors.

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# General Information

## Staff List

### Toddler Environment

Dani Fitzsimmons - Co Head Teacher

Heather Jackson - Co Head Teacher

Beth Johnson - Assistant Teacher

### Primary Environment

Amy Stam - Head Teacher

Cory Austin - Teaching Assistant

Morgan Beattie - Head Teacher

Braden Curley - Assistant Teacher

### Elementary Environment

Jessica Flood - Head Teacher (focusing on the lower grades)

Esther Jirka - Head Teacher (focusing on the upper grades)

Christal Silver - Assistant Teacher

### Support / Special Area Teachers

Marisa Aguiar - Garden Teacher

Diane Farley - Garden Teacher

Princess Koletsky - Literacy Specialist

Tatiana Huertas - Music Teacher

Sharon Pitts - Garden Teacher

Noemi Rodriguez - Spanish Teacher / Floating Assistant

Sunny Tomlinson - Yoga Teacher

### Administration

Kelly Libby - Head of School

## School Board Members

Chair: Dora Mallett

Members: Ella Wheeler

Caitlin Williams

David Williams

# A Brief History of Children's House Montessori School

Children's House Montessori School was founded in 1967 by Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church congregation members seeking to offer a Montessori preschool opportunity to children of our community. Through the years, new teachers received Montessori training and certifications and the school not only continued to operate but also grew in size and stature. In 2018 Children's House Montessori School incorporated separately as a non-profit 501(c)3 DeLand Montessori School, Inc. The DeLand Montessori School Board of Directors is composed of members of the church community as well as the larger DeLand area community who are directly responsible for the operation of the school. The Board hires the Head of School and receives monthly activity and financial reports for their approval. The Head of School is responsible for staffing, daily operation, long term planning and the financial well being of the school. We are appreciative of our long term relationship with Faith Lutheran Church who continue to provide a home for us.

## Montessori School History

### Maria Montessori

Maria Montessori was, in many ways, ahead of her time. She was born in the town of Chiaravalle, in the province of Ancona, Italy in 1870. She became the first female physician in Italy upon her graduation from medical school in 1896. In her medical practice, her clinical observations led her to analyze how children learn and how they build themselves from what they find in their immediate environment.

In 1906, she accepted the challenge to work with a group of sixty children of working parents in the San Lorenzo district of Rome. It was there that she founded the first *Casa dei Bambini*, or "Children's House". What ultimately became the Montessori method of education began there, based upon Maria Montessori's scientific observations of these children's almost effortless ability to absorb knowledge from their surroundings, as well as their tireless interest in manipulating materials. Every piece of equipment, every exercise, every philosophy Montessori developed was based upon what she observed children do "naturally," by themselves, unassisted by adults. When her students were evaluated using the standardized tests given throughout Italy at that time, Dr. Montessori's students scored as well as and in some cases higher than their counterparts in private and traditional schools. She was invited to bring a classroom with students, teachers and materials to the 1907 World's Fair in San Francisco. Interest in her method of education spread worldwide.

*Children teach themselves.* This simple but profound truth inspired Montessori's lifelong pursuit of educational reform, methodology, psychology, teaching, and teacher training - all based upon her dedication to furthering the self-creating process of the child.

Maria Montessori died in Noordwijk, Holland, in 1952, but her work continues. Montessori schools exist around the world in Canada, Russia, Taiwan, Holland, Japan, Korea, Sri Lanka, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, South Africa, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Romania, Mexico, Italy,

Norway, France, Columbia, India and many other countries. Dr. Montessori founded the Association Montessori International (A.M.I.) in 1929. Dr. Montessori intended that the A.M.I. further her life's work in its original integrity and completeness and to guide its development and application in the interests of all children. A.M.I. functions as the source of Montessori training according to Maria Montessori's principles as well as a center for continuing research and development.

For a fuller understanding of Maria Montessori's work, we invite you to borrow the books, DVDs, and periodicals available in our parent library.

## Philosophy and Curriculum

*"My vision of the future is no longer people taking exams and proceeding then on that certification . . . but of individuals passing from one stage of independence to a higher [one], by means of their own activity through their own effort of will, which constitutes the inner evolution of the individual."*

—Maria Montessori, *From Childhood to Adolescence*

## What is Montessori?

Montessori is a comprehensive, hands-on educational approach structured to use a child's natural learning tendencies to achieve a high level of knowledge, independence, and responsibility. Children work in prepared environments for multi-age groups (0-3, 3-6, 6-9, 9-12, and 12-14), using specially designed, manipulative materials that allow children to engage in learning activities of their own individual choice. Under the guidance of a trained teacher, children in a Montessori classroom learn by making discoveries with the materials, cultivating concentration, motivation, self-discipline and a love of learning.

## Multi-Age Groups

There are a multitude of benefits to staging children in multi-age groups. The little ones learn from the older children and the older ones further their mastery of subject matter by teaching the younger. This is true academically as well as in the day-to-day class management and discipline. Additionally, every child can work and learn at his/her own pace and rhythm, increasing the incidence of success and decreasing negative self-comparison. Mixed-age groups encourage all children to develop their personalities socially and intellectually at their own pace.

## Montessori Compared to Other Educational Approaches

The prepared environments and the role of the teacher in the classroom distinguish Montessori from other educational approaches. Rather than learning by passive reception of information, children learn through their own activity. The manipulation of developmentally appropriate materials creates a deep understanding of the concepts presented. Practical experience leads the students to discover theorems and recognize spelling patterns, rather than simply memorizing formulas and rules.

The teacher acts as a guide as students learn to direct much of their educational experience and time management. The students have many opportunities to choose what work to do, when to do it and how to accomplish their task. This process leads to a strong work ethic and a more thorough understanding of the subject being addressed.

An atmosphere of respect for others begins with the Montessori teacher's respectful attitude toward students. Students are free to move responsibly around the classroom and to interact with other students and the teacher. They are encouraged to help each other and to work in groups on common interests through in-depth projects. They are an integral part of the planning, problem-solving, and rule-making of the class. This atmosphere results in students learning to respect adults, their peers and themselves.

## The Three-Year Cycle

The children in the final year of each level are a vital component to the classroom. Whether in Toddler, Preschool and Kindergarten, Lower Elementary or Upper Elementary, the third year offers the child the opportunity to take his/her well-earned and much anticipated place in the community as a leader and a mentor. In this role the students give back to the community that was provided for them for two years. These early experiences of stewardship and service are key elements of an interdependent community and of our mission to educate each child for life. For this reason, we ask families to consider carefully their long-term plans prior to enrolling their child at CHMS.

## The Role of the Parents

The Montessori method is most effective when the parents and family are integrated into the Montessori philosophy of learning. The most significant role of the parents is to provide a structure at home in which intellectual interest and responsibility can grow. To this end, parents need to supply a routine schedule that allows some time for developing personal interests, use discipline techniques that are consistently firm yet encouraging, and practice healthy life habits.

Parent support and involvement with the school is important, as well. This begins with teaching your child to make attendance and punctuality a priority. These both are integral to his/her

ability to make consistent academic progress, to develop responsibility, and to establish community in the classroom. Parent support can also include helping the child develop the habit of thinking about what needs to be brought to school each day and being sure that homework is completed accurately and turned in on time. Parents may be further involved by attending school functions, serving as school and classroom volunteers, attending parent-teacher conferences, and communicating with the school about areas of concern.

## Parent Education

We offer an extensive lending library of books and media about Montessori education, child development, learning styles and differences, alternative education, and parenting children of all ages. Special opportunities to participate in seminars and workshops will be announced in our monthly newsletters and email.

## Books Written by Maria Montessori

*The Absorbent Mind*

*Education for a New World*

*The Child in the Family*

*The Discovery of the Child*

*To Educate the Human Potential*

*Education and Peace*

*Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook*

*From Childhood to Adolescence*

*The Montessori Method*

*The Secret of Childhood*

## Books About Montessori Education

*Maria Montessori: A Biography*: Rita Kramer

*Montessori: A Modern Approach*: Paula Polk Lillard

*Montessori in the Classroom: A Teacher's Account of How Children Really Learn*: Paula Polk Lillard

*The Spiritual Hunger of the Modern Child*: Includes a chapter by Mario Montessori

*Children Who Are Not Yet Peaceful: Preventing Exclusion in the Early Elementary*

*Classroom*: Donna Bryant Goertz

*Montessori's Concept of Personality*: Michael J. Gross

*Montessori in Contemporary American Culture*: Margaret Howard Loeffler

*Nurturing the Spirit in Non-Sectarian Classrooms*: Aline D. Wolf

*A Parents' Guide to the Montessori Classroom*: Aline D. Wolf

*Peaceful Children, Peaceful World: The Challenge of Maria Montessori*: Aline D. Wolf

*Our Peaceful Classroom*: Aline D. Wolf



## How Parents May Help Prepare Young Children for School

Prepare your child for school by helping him/her gain independence and responsibility in these ways:

- ❖ Allow your child to walk, perhaps holding your hand, instead of being carried.
- ❖ Provide your child with clothing that is easy to manage independently and teach him/her to dress him/herself as much as possible.
- ❖ Label your child's clothing and help him /her to recognize his/her name on them.
- ❖ Invite your child to work with you sharing cooking or other household responsibilities such as folding laundry and taking out the trash.
- ❖ Teach your child bathroom hygiene and the importance of hand washing. Provide a stool if necessary.
- ❖ Encourage your child to use common courtesies, "please", "thank you", "excuse me", etc.
- ❖ Encourage your child to make eye contact while speaking with others. Speak normally with your child and listen to assist in the development of communication skills.
- ❖ Prepare your child for going to school by assuring him/her it will be a pleasant place and that he/she will enjoy the activities there.
- ❖ Break dependent habits like bottles, pacifiers and sippy cups that are not available in their classrooms.
- ❖ Give your child some experiences of being away from you before school opens so that staying at school without you will be less difficult.
- ❖ Encourage your child to take care of his/her possessions and to respect the property and rights of others.
- ❖ Help your child to put away toys and other possessions. Make sure that there is a special, easily accessible place for each of the possessions. Avoid toy boxes and chests where toys are carelessly dumped. Limit the amount of toys.
- ❖ Teach your child to handle books properly.
- ❖ Share good literature with your child to develop language skills and the skill of listening.
- ❖ Explain to your child that the teachers are there to help him/her. Encourage your child to respect their authority as he/she does yours.
- ❖ Participate in parent orientation and other parent education opportunities. Make use of the parent resource library on the brown bookshelf between the two Lower Elementary classrooms to find out more about Montessori education.

# Administrative Policies

## Financial Policy

### Tuition Payment

#### Terms of Payment:

- Full Payment: A 3% discount will be given for all accounts paid in full by June 1<sup>st</sup>. Please note that if you withdraw your child before the end of the year due to job transfer or other approved refundable, you will lose the 3% calculating your refund.
- Monthly Payments: Through our (3<sup>rd</sup>) party collection company "FACTS CORPORATION". Please sign-up at - <https://online.factsmgt.com/signin/3T52Z>.
- Change in Tuition: When a child is moved to a different community within our school(i.e. Toddler to Primary I), tuition changes for the remainder of the academic year will be prorated starting the month of the change.
- No credits can be allowed for absences due to illness or vacation. As long as a place is reserved for your child, full payment is expected.

### Late Fees

Late payment fee of \$25.00 will be assessed and collected by FACTS CORPORATION".

### Returned Checks

Returned checks will be charged a \$25.00 returned check fee.

### Past Due Accounts:

- For currently enrolled families with past due accounts, the CHMS Head of School and Board of Directors will consider each case and make a decision whether to continue educational services.
- Families will not be permitted to re-enroll for the upcoming academic year if any accounts or fees are in arrears. Permanent records will only be released if payments are up to date.

## Sibling Discount

For families with more than one child enrolled at the primary level or above, CHMS offers tuition discounts,

First Child – pays full tuition

Additional Children - \$400.00 annual discount

## Required Enrollment and Medical Forms

In addition to the application, emergency contact and medical information forms we distribute, there are additional requirements by the state that include a copy of your child's birth certificate and the Florida Department of Health medical forms recording immunizations and the results of your child's last physical examination. You may obtain these forms from your doctor.

In addition to the above forms, all children are required to have the Department of Children and Families distracted driver brochure, flu brochure acknowledgement, and lunch & food related activities sheets signed and on file.

Preschool students must have had a physical exam within the past two years. Kindergarten students must have had an exam within the last year.

These forms should be submitted before or during the first week of school. Please bring in updated forms for immunizations or physicals as they occur during the school year. Current health forms are a requirement and we can be cited and fined if we do not enforce this regulation.

If your child has a medical condition that may necessitate school or emergency personnel intervention (i.e. diabetes, life-threatening allergies, history of seizures, asthma, etc.), additional documents must be on file upon the student entering CHMS. These may include, but may not be limited to, Care Plans and Permission to Administer Emergency Medication(s) Forms. Please see the school administration for further instructions.

## Emergency Contact Information

Please keep the office informed if your home, business or cell phone numbers change, so we may always reach you in case of emergency.

# Attendance

As a school, we want to ensure that our students are receiving the education they need to succeed. One of the biggest factors in a student's education is their attendance. Below, you will find helpful information as well as the school's policy on attendance.

## What is Truancy?

When a student is absent from school without a valid excuse they are truant. We may excuse certain absences, but being a student at a private school does not give students permission to arrive late, miss a day or leave early on a regular basis. Truancy can have a negative effect on students, parents, the school and the whole community. Parents play an important role in preventing truancy. Making sure your child comes to school is your responsibility.

How to help prevent truancy:

- Learn about the school's policy
- Stay in touch with the school
- Be firm about school attendance
- Talk with your child about the importance of being in school on time each day
- Find a morning routine that works and be consistent with it every day so that you arrive at school on time

## Absences for Ages 18 Months – 4 Years (age at start of school year)

There is not a state requirement that children under kindergarten age are in school. However, we highly encourage you to be sure your child is in attendance each day even at this young age. Consistency is so important to them and helps both at school and at home.

## Absences for Grades K-6

If your child will be absent, please inform the school. If you know they will be out ahead of time, you can talk with your child's teacher before that date. If it will be an extended absence, the teacher may ask that they have some work assigned during their time away from school. However, the Montessori method uses very specific materials that are in the classroom, so there is no way for them to continue to advance with work outside of school. The work they will have will help to keep their mind engaged and in "school mode".

If your child is sick, please call the school or email and let us know once you have determined that your child will be absent. If we have not heard from you by 9:00, we will call to check in to

make sure everyone is okay. This is a DCF requirement for all children in preschool, but we feel it is a safety issue so we will call all age groups.

Below, you will find our policy regarding absences and tardiness.

#### 5 Absences in 30 Days

If your child misses five school days in a thirty day period, you will receive a letter. If the absences have been explained, there will be no further action. If the absences have been unexplained, you will receive a form to complete to let us know why your child has missed school.

#### 10 Absences in 60 Days

If your child misses ten school days in a sixty day period, you will receive a letter and will be asked to complete the form referenced above. You will also be asked to come in for a meeting with the teacher to talk about your child's progress in the classroom.

#### 20 Absences

If your child misses twenty or more days of school, you will be asked to come in and meet with the teacher and the Head of School. We will create a plan together to help ensure that your child is coming to school regularly going forward.

#### 45 Absences

If your child misses forty-five days or more, we will meet to determine whether or not your child will be able to continue on in his/her current class, and whether or not she/he will be able to advance to the next level for the following school year.

#### Tardiness

Being tardy regularly means that your child is missing specific lessons each day. It can be as damaging as excessive absences. Please be sure that you arrive on time each day. We will count **five tardy days as one unexcused absence**.

#### Field Trips/Special Days

Field trips are educational activities and are an extension of your child's classroom. If your child does not attend, it is considered an absence. In addition, days that are not a typical school day (rehearsals, performances, field days, etc) are counted as school days. If your child does not attend, it is considered an absence.

## Dismissal/Authorized Pickup

Students in Toddler are dismissed at their classroom door in the hallway.

Students in Primary are dismissed on the Playground at 11:30, or at the main entrance gate at 3:00.

Students in Elementary are picked up at their garden gate.

If your child does not usually stay in after-care, but you find you will be late picking him/her up, please notify the school. If anyone other than parents or authorized adults will pick up the child, please notify the school office in writing in advance, designating the person's name. We will release a child only when we have the parent's specific permission.

Children enrolled at CHMS may leave the premises only with parents or individuals authorized by the parents/guardians. Anyone requesting to pick up a child will be asked to confirm his or her identity through the use of a picture ID. If prior permission has not been obtained, or authorization cannot be validated; the child will not be permitted to leave the school with that individual.

Parents are responsible for making sure that an accurate list of authorized individuals is kept on file in the office. Should there be a need for a person not listed to pick up the child, we must have written notice from the parent stating the name of the individual picking up the child, the date, and approximate time. This information will be kept on file for future reference.

Please keep in mind that when a child is new to the school or a class or a newly authorized adult is picking up, the office staff and teachers may ID you until they become familiar with your face. Please understand that this is for your child's safety.

Those individuals who are the legal guardian(s), or who have legal custody of a child enrolled in CHMS must provide the school a copy of the official documents stating the arrangement. This information will be kept in your child's file so that in the event a question should arise about custody, your child will not be released to an unauthorized individual. ***Please be advised that unless proper documentation is provided to the school stating a parental custody arrangement, we are legally required to release a child to a biological parent.***

***If parents/guardians wish to allow their children) to leave on their own accord (walk, bicycle, skateboard, etc.) from CHMS, Permission to Leave Campus Form must be on file.***

## Before/After School Care

Early Drop Off will be available from 7:30am to 7:50am at a rate of \$5.00 per morning. Students should enter through the garden gate and report to Ms. Sharon Pitts. Parents needing occasional use of the After School Program will be billed monthly at a flat rate of \$15.00 daily. If you know you'll need After School Care, please notify the office when you drop off your child. If something comes up you may call the office to arrange for after school care. The after school portion of the program will be conducted on the playground or in the Fellowship Hall after 3:05pm. When picking up your child, parents should always enter through the gate to check out their child with the adult on duty. If you find your child frequently stays until 5:30, the extended day rate may be beneficial. It is important that all of the children are picked up no later than 5:30 so our teachers can leave on time. If you arrive after 5:35, you will be charged \$1/minute from 5:30 until the time you have picked up your child. For example, if you arrive at 5:45, you will be charged \$15. This money will be given to the teachers who were here past their scheduled time to leave.

## Inclement Weather Procedure

While it is our goal to have your child in school every day, it sometimes becomes necessary to close the school due to inclement weather. The safety of our children and staff is of primary concern. CHMS will generally cancel school if the Volusia County School System announces the closings of public schools due to inclement weather. We will strive to email every parent/guardian and employee in a timely manner. We will schedule "make-up" days as needed.

## Illness

Please do not send your child to school ill. He/she will not be able to fully participate and may infect the other children and/or teachers. If your child becomes sick at school it is important that he/she be picked up promptly (**within 30 minutes of our call**). We ask that you arrange to have someone available if you are unable to comply with this request. Remember to update phone and cell numbers throughout the year. Regular attendance is important for all children. However, there is no advantage to sending a sick child to school.

If your child has a fever, diarrhea, or vomiting, they must stay home until they are symptom free and medication free for 24 hours. If they require antibiotics, they must have a full 24 hours on their antibiotics, and be feeling better, before they can return to school. If your child does not have any of the above symptoms, but is lethargic, has a severe cough, or any other things that are affecting their normal activity level, please keep them home.

Please notify CHMS promptly if your child will be absent due to illness. If your child has an illness that is contagious, please notify us so we can alert the families in the classroom to be on the lookout for the symptoms in their own children.

### *Head-lice Information*

Lice are tiny insects that live in the hair and suck blood from the skin. Often lice are spread among children at school or in other group settings. Lice are a common problem in communities and are in no way a reflection of personal hygiene. The eggs of lice, known as nits, look like tiny white grains clinging to the hair. The bites of lice cause itching in the affected areas. For treatment contact your physician or pharmacist who will recommend a shampoo. Hairbrushes, hats and other clothing should be washed in hot water and dried in a dryer. If your child has lice please report it to the school. We will carefully check the other children so that we can prevent the problem from spreading further. Following treatment, children must be checked by a staff member and be free of lice, eggs or nits before returning to class.

## Allergies

Please make sure that the office and your child's teacher are informed of any allergies your child may have. Be sure to differentiate sensitivities and food preferences from allergies.

## Birthdays

If your child is having a birthday party and is not inviting the whole class, we ask that you mail or email invitations and thank you notes. This protects the feelings of those children who might not be invited.

## Discipline Policy

When a child persists in displaying inappropriate behavior the adults in the classroom will first attempt to redirect the child to another work or another space in the environment. If more assistance is needed the child will partner with an adult until he/she is able to control him/herself appropriately. If the behavior is a distraction to those working, the child may be taken outside or to another space until calmed down. Our purpose is to teach children to develop self control not to punish negative behavior.

## Out of Classroom Experiences



Because no classroom can contain the answers to all of the student's questions, "going out" is a response to the need to explore beyond the classroom. In contrast with the traditional field trip, where the adult usually plans the activity for the whole class, the "going out" excursions of Montessori students are based upon individual or small group interest in extensions of classroom study. Whether it be a walk to the public library for more specific books on earthworms and butterflies or a trip to the art museum to see Japanese paintings, children "going out" plan their own excursions, call the institutions to be visited, and work out their transportation needs. The experiences of learning from new resources and meeting different people present a glimpse of social cooperation and of the role of community services.

## Field Trips

Students in the kindergarten through sixth grade classes take field trips for both educational and recreational purposes. Parents are notified well in advance and are invited to accompany us as drivers/chaperones. All adults must be attentive to the children of the class and for this reason; we cannot allow younger siblings of the student to attend field trips. If there is a cost for the trip, it must be paid prior to the day of the trip. Guidelines and requirements of drivers will be given to them prior to departure. Each driver needs a copy of valid drivers' license and current auto insurance on file in the office.

## Appropriate Handling of Peer Difficulties

Parents trust their children in our care and supervision while they are here at school. Our staff members are specially trained and experienced in handling difficulties and problems. Our community is a familiar and comfortable one for parents but it is never appropriate or permissible for a parent to directly discipline or reprimand someone else's child. Problems between children need to be discussed with the teacher and/or administrator. Often we are aware of the problem and can give you perspective and if the issue has not been brought to our attention we can then address it. Confronting a fellow parent directly is also to be discouraged as it usually results in anger, embarrassment and defensiveness that will only exacerbate the problem. Children are usually able to forgive and move on much more quickly than adults.

## Social Skills

In a Montessori class, nothing is assumed — we are prepared to teach any skill that we want a child to master. This includes the lifelong task of acquiring and honing good social skills. First and foremost, children in a Montessori class are expected to follow the class rules, be respectful to others, and cooperate in all activities to the best of their ability. When a behavior problem occurs, interventions based on logical and natural consequences will be implemented. If a child has a problem with another student, he/she will receive instruction on how to handle the

problem on his/her own, how to get help when he cannot handle his problem, and how to tell the difference.

Recurring problems that students have with any aspect of the elementary class may be brought to the weekly class meeting.

The years from ages 9 - 12 are important ones for children's moral development. Please offer your child only the best in literature, film, and other media, and limit the amount of time that he/she is allowed to participate in passive technology and screen time. Setting standards for the quality of your child's entertainment helps impress upon him/her values of good character. Limiting the quantity gives your child an opportunity to *get bored* and turn to more creative endeavors.

In the classroom if a student is disturbing others he or she is reminded of our rules and if the behavior persists, a period of time out may be served. We have found this method to be very effective and we rarely have disciplinary problems in the classroom. While on the playground, we allow the students to interact freely settling their own disagreements. We do step in if actions could result in injury to anyone. Again misbehavior results in a period of time out.

## Policies for Peace

### Expectations

Each Children's House Montessori School staff member is expected to model and teach appropriate behavior. Each Children's House Montessori School student is expected to exhibit the following appropriate behaviors.

Our CHMS students must relate respectfully to all adults and fellow students.

Our CHMS students should be kind, caring, courteous, cooperative and inclusive of other students.

Our CHMS students must exhibit self control and self discipline.

Our CHMS students must be non-violent and must develop and use problem solving skills.

Our CHMS students should be assertive, not aggressive when standing up for themselves or others.

Our CHMS students who witness aggression, violent behavior or threatening behavior should report it to an adult.

These are clear expectations and should be discussed with students as needed.

### Policies for addressing inappropriate behavior

Our purpose is to teach children to develop self control not to punish negative behavior. When a student exhibits inappropriate behavior we use the following strategies:

We will redirect the child to another work or another space.

We will partner the child with an adult until he/she is able to control him/herself appropriately. We will teach the student how to handle a problem with another student on his own, how to get help when he/she cannot handle the problem, and how to tell the difference.

#### Policies for addressing acts of aggression or violence, threatening or intimidating behavior

Acts of aggression, violence or threats of violence will be addressed by the administrator.

The students involved will be addressed personally by the administrator.

Parents of the students involved will be notified immediately.

A meeting with each parent, student, teacher and administrator will take place as soon as possible.

A written report of the incident with any injuries noted and the consequences instated will be given to the parent and placed in the student's file.

In dealing with repeated offenses the administrator has the right to suspend or expel any child.

## Animals in School

Although animals are an important part of our program here at Children's House, adding family pets to the very active scene at drop off or dismissal times, or to school events is a cause for concern. Your family's pet is most likely a trusted, well-trained animal that interacts well with your children. But animals can react differently in some situations. We would like to remind you of our policy that animals, other than those that are members of our school community, should not be present on our school property. The only exceptions to this policy are service dogs.

## Parent School Communication

Please note that email is our primary mode of communication. In addition to monthly Newsletters, timely announcements and reminders will be sent to your email account. Be sure to check our website for information also. For immediate needs please call the school office at 386-736-3632.

## Parent Teacher/Conferences

Our teachers always welcome the opportunity to answer your questions or address your concerns. During the school day, including arrival and dismissal times, the teachers are attending to the children. Please email the teacher to schedule a meeting time, which can take place either in person or virtually, or call the school. Conferences are held in November and in

May. Our assistants should not be expected to answer your questions or address your concerns. This could result in misunderstandings.

## Progress Reports

Teachers will provide progress reports for children starting in the Toddler room through Elementary twice a year.

## Parent Grievance Policy

Montessori teachers and parents work closely to support the development of each individual child. There is an on-going conversation between teacher and parent regarding the needs of the child and how to meet those needs throughout the years. Issues can arise which require closer attention.

If a parent disagrees with the process and/or outcomes regarding the management of issues involving their child, he/she has a right to express a grievance by composing responses to these questions in order to discuss concerns with the Teacher and/or Head of School.

1. What are the perceived specific unmet need(s) for the child in question.
2. What has been done thus far by the family and staff to meet the unmet need(s)?
3. What is the parents' understanding of the plan and options already offered by the teacher to meet the needs of the child? What parts do they find appropriate and what parts are inadequate.
4. What specific alternatives would they propose and how is that within the role of the school to provide?

The teacher, and/or the Head of School, will respond in writing to the parent's answers to these questions, including the school's position on the parents' request for specific alternatives and then meet in person with the parents to discuss this response

If, after meeting with the teacher and/or the Head of School about their responses to the questions and receiving the school's responses, the parents feel that the issues are still not adequately resolved, they may send a copy of the above responses to the School Board President for review. It is not the role of the Board to intervene in day to day operations or to question the decisions of the Head of School unless they feel there is a potential threat to the integrity of the organization overall.

## Policy of Withdrawal of Student

If you choose to withdraw your child after August 1, you will be responsible for the tuition for the full school year. The administrator has the right to request the withdrawal of any child. This could be for behavioral challenges, or if we feel the Montessori environment is not meeting the needs of the student. If the student is asked to withdraw, the parents will not be expected to pay the full tuition.

## Notice of Non-discriminatory Policy

Children's House Montessori School is committed to maintaining a school environment\* that is free from racism, harassment, bullying and discrimination. It does not discriminate against or tolerate harassment based on age, race, sex, color religion, handicap, political belief, national or ethnic origin, linguistic or language difference, sexual orientation, physical characteristics, gender identity/expression, socioeconomic status, marital status or parental status. All of the students have equal access to all of the rights, privileges, programs, policies and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. Any incidents of bullying or harassment will be swiftly addressed in accordance with the school policy.

\*school environment includes all of us; staff, parents, visitors and children.

## The Environments

The following sections are based on each individual environment within the Montessori school. Please read on to learn more specifics about your child's environment.

# Toddlers

The Children's House Montessori School welcomes you and your children to our Toddler Community. Our program is designed to meet the needs and tendencies of children 18 months to 3 years of age.

Dr. Maria Montessori realized that once a child stands upright and walks he experiences a "second birth". Having experienced the independence of free movement the child is able to move into the larger social community.

The Toddler experiences a biological necessity to move. The rapidly developing bones, muscles and nerves demand exercise. Gross motor control and large muscle movement are an integral part of the Toddler Program.

Language activities are equally important, as the child from birth to three is in the most sensitive period of language development. Throughout the day, vocabulary enrichment is developed through the use of real objects, language cards, songs, stories and conversations.

Toddlers develop movement and self-help skills through practical life experiences such as food preparation, care of plants, carrying chairs, rolling mats and sponging tables. They are encouraged to dress and undress themselves. Through observation the children develop an interest in toilet training and are encouraged to use the toilet independently. This is a gradual process, which is handled with great sensitivity.

The environment is divided into several specific areas that are used for movement, eating, an area for cognitive materials and the bathroom. In each area materials are provided to foster coordination and control of movement, articulation of language and social interaction. The environment is designed to foster independence, trust, and individual achievement as well as a strong self-esteem.

Independence and determination, assets of a strong personality, are developed through work carried out with full concentration. This happens through activity which completely absorbs the child, and fulfills his/her urge to explore the world.

## **Toddler Class Arrival**

Your child's arrival at school has a psychological importance as a transition between the home and the child's community. Here are some ways to facilitate this transition:

Let your child walk, holding your hand from your car to the door into the classroom.

Allow your child to carry his/her own belongings or snack. This helps to build self-esteem and eventual independence.

Remember to follow your child's lead, rather than hurrying him along. A child needs to adapt according to his individual internal needs.

Please try to allow enough time so your child does not feel rushed.

To help encourage a calm transition, spend a few moments saying good-bye before knocking on the classroom door. This routine will help your child to build trust and gradually feel more comfortable with us by establishing a morning routine with you. Please be sure to always say good-bye to your child, even if you think it will upset him/her.

Once your goodbye routine is complete, have your child knock on the door (you can also knock if they are young and can't knock loud enough yet). You will be greeted by the teacher or the assistant who will welcome your child into the classroom, and they will begin the day by helping your child put away his/her belongings. We ask that parents do not enter the classroom environment so the children know this is their space.

We offer a morning only class starting at 8:00 and ending at 11:30 am, a full day from 8:00am to 3:00pm, as well as an extended day option beginning at 7:30am and ending at 5:30pm. We ask that parents please try to have your child in the class by 8:00 to start their day on time.

## **Clothes**

The children's clothing should not be an obstacle to their enjoyment of the activities at school. Their clothes should allow them to run, climb, and play freely. The children need to be able to handle their clothes independently, particularly in the bathroom. For small children, this is not possible with overalls, jumpsuits, belts, and pants with very tight suspenders or long dresses.

**Pants with elastic waists or velcro closures are the easiest type for the children to manage.**

Weather permitting, children in the Toddler community will wear underpants and T-shirts only while in the classroom.

The best shoes for outside wear are thin-soled tennis shoes, or slip-on canvas shoes. Jellies, flip-flops, crocs, and sandals are dangerous and do not allow the children to move with coordination. Please keep this kind of shoe at home. **In addition, shoes with laces are not a good choice for this age child and should not be worn.** While in the classroom the children should have a pair of water shoes to change into. This keeps socks and shoes clean and dry while learning toileting and participating in water activities.

Please do not be upset by dirty clothes. Dirt and stains are unavoidable for toddlers; neither you nor your child should feel bad about that. Just keep a good supply of everyday clothes for school and save a few nice outfits for special occasions.

The best help you can offer your child is to initiate appropriate clothing choices: "Would you like to wear these blue pants or these white pants?" This is the beginning of forming self-confidence. Sooner or later you will have to let go of your choices in order for your child to develop a sense of who he/she is. We hope that you will find these suggestions helpful!

## **Snacks**

Each morning, please bring an item to contribute to the snack basket. Some suggested items include: whole fresh fruit or vegetables, a bag of crackers, cheese, hard boiled eggs. You can bring one item if it's a sharing size (an apple for example) or enough of a small item to share (a small bag of goldfish crackers for example). Please avoid foods containing artificial colors, sugar,

salt and preservatives. Each day, the assistant teacher, with help from a few children, will prepare the food for snack time and everyone will share the items brought in. The teachers will have a list of children who have allergies so they will know if someone should not share an item.

### **The Outdoor Environment**

The toddler garden area is an environment where the children explore many aspects of nature. We hope to awaken in each child a lifelong love and respect for our Earth and all its creatures. Maria Montessori taught us to see a spiritual oneness with the child and nature. She states in *The Montessori Method*, "...man still belongs to nature, and especially when he is a child, he...draws from it the forces necessary to the development of the body and the spirit. We have intimate communications with nature which have an influence, even a material influence, on the growth of the body.'

### **Birthdays**

Your child's birthday is a special time that we enjoy sharing. Just let us know what you plan to bring and please join us at the agreed upon time or send in your camera.



# Primary

## **The Critical Preschool Years**

Early childhood education has come to accept today what Maria Montessori discovered so long ago: children under six have extraordinary powers of the mind. They have a universal, once-in-a-lifetime ability to absorb knowledge from their surroundings, just by living. They take in their environment - the physical space, the language and movement of the adults and children - with what Dr. Montessori called "the absorbent mind". The absorbent mind is at its peak of receptivity during the preschool years.

To be calm and happy, children under the age of six need to explore and discover. They see the world through "new" eyes and are therefore curious about everything. Since they learn by touching and manipulating objects, they want to touch everything! They are keenly attuned to everything that stimulates their senses: shapes, sounds, smells, textures, and tastes. They also respond to order because of their innate need to know where things belong and how pieces fit together. They want to master the movements of their own bodies by learning to balance, run, skip, and jump. They are fascinated by the customs and traditions of the people in their lives.

Because of the powers of the absorbent mind, along with the sensitive periods, preschool aged children can learn from the prepared environment in addition to direct instruction. The Montessori preschool classroom therefore allows them the freedom to choose their own work without unnecessary interference from an adult. In this environment, they learn to work independently, based on their own initiative, which builds concentration, self-discipline and self-esteem.

Before Dr. Montessori made these discoveries, it was generally taken for granted that many subjects: geometry, grammar, geography, botany, zoology, etc., were limited to older children. But Montessori education reveals the extraordinary high level of learning - both conscious and unconscious - that can come with ease to children under six. Furthermore, Montessori early childhood education not only enhances young children's knowledge in the present; it also establishes the foundations for true comprehension on a more abstract level later in life.

## **Primary Curriculum Summary**

The primary environment unifies the social, physical, and intellectual functioning of the child. It provides the child with an early and general foundation that includes a positive attitude toward school, inner security and a sense of order, pride in the physical environment, abiding curiosity, a habit of concentration, habits of initiative and persistence, the ability to make decisions, self-discipline and a sense of responsibility to other members of the class, school, and community. This foundation will enable the child to acquire more specialized knowledge and skills throughout his/her school career.

## **The Practical Life Exercises**

The Practical Life exercises assist in the child's whole development. These materials provide procedural skills of everyday tasks to care for their needs, to maintain, care for and beautify the physical environment and adapt to their cultural group. The applied exercises are:

1. Care of the person
2. Care of the indoor and/or outdoor environments
3. Grace and courtesy
4. Control of movement

Practical life exercises give the child skills needed for problem solving, independent functioning, esteem of self and others, internalization of order, power of concentration, control of body and sensorial and language development.

## **Sensorial Exercises**

The sensorial materials are designed to help the child refine the development of his senses: visual, tactical, auditory, olfactory and gustatory. They allow the child's mind to focus on one isolated quality with a concrete object. This work continues building order and improving perception, visual and auditory discrimination. It develops the child's ability to clarify, compare, identify, contrast, grade, classify and categorize. Motor control is refined, especially the pencil grasp, lightness of touch and left to right movement in preparation for writing. Language and vocabulary are enriched and memory is gained. The sensorial exploration gives the child more accurate imaginative creations and clearer abstract ideas.

## **Mathematics**

The math program is structural, correlated and sequential. The child completes work of one to ten numeration, even and odd numbers, symbolizing and sequencing. Next, the child works extensively with the golden bead materials, concretely learning the teens, tens, decimal system, the formation of complex numbers, and the concrete processes of the four operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division). The child reinforces the operations work with the math boards, charts, bead bars and the stamp game. He performs linear and skip counting (multiples) with the squaring and cubing chain materials.

## **Language**

The child comes with acquired and internalized language. We enrich vocabulary; teach the sounds of the alphabet as well as syntax and grammar. The child develops spoken and written language. We provide means and opportunities for improving communication skills, speaking and listening. Through better self-expression and understanding, the child gains self-confidence. We teach written language with two facets: writing and reading. This work starts with the sound games, and then sandpaper letters and the moveable alphabet. Writing continues with the exercises of metal inset tracing and drawing. They eventually learn to write in cursive and start journal work.

Primary children complete materials for short and long vowels, phonograms, blends and digraphs. They do reading work daily with the materials or from books. This develops fluency, flow and comprehension. They memorize sight words and perform alphabetizing work. They also perform the function of word games learning the parts of speech. We encourage reading classical literature aloud to hear the great stories and to share excellent language.

## **Cultural Subjects**

This area of work enlightens the child to become an individual oriented to his environment, adapted to his time, his place and his people. This cosmic task is done to improve the earth and life for all people on it leading to the possibility of world harmony and peace.

As a continuation and expansion of our language work, we study geography, history, life sciences, art and culture. We learn about the world, its land and water forms, the seven continents, the people, countries, flora and fauna. We use globes, puzzle maps, land water form molds, pictures, discussions, readings, stories, music and songs, art and artifacts, traditions, language, and food. In the physical sciences the children sort, classify, and label living and non-living things. They study music, Spanish. and yoga.

## **Music**

Primary children will experience music in their classroom as well as in the music room. The music teacher will provide experience in singing, movement, instruments, drama, and more. Music is not only fun, but helps to develop children's brains in a way that will help them in all areas of their learning.

## **Spanish**

Children delight in language and acquire it naturally. Our children also learn Spanish versions of familiar songs and rhymes. Latin-American folklore has a rich collection of children's songs, games, rhymes and poetry. These were inherited from different cultures in Europe, Africa and the Americas. Every Hispanic country kept its own local forms and flavor. They were handed down from one generation to the next and our students greatly benefit from sharing these traditions.

## **Yoga**

Primary children participate in yoga classes during the school year. Each class begins with warm-up stretching exercises during which the children learn the parts of the skeletal system. The Montessori philosophy of grace and courtesy is reinforced during the "strike a pose" segment of each lesson. Full attention of the class is given to each child's pose interpretation. This helps develop respect for themselves and others. Each class ends with relaxation exercises and a sharing of thoughts from each child about his/her favorite part of the day. Yoga helps to center the child, quieting and relaxing the whole body. It also helps improve self-esteem, balance and coordination.

## Classroom Procedures

### Class Hours

Morning Session            8:00 AM -11:30 AM

Full Day Session            8:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Parents should make sure children arrive promptly at our starting times. **To encourage independence, please say goodbye in the car (if you use the drop off loop) or the hallway and allow your child to enter the classroom alone.** This should be done quickly, quietly and calmly — it is an easier transition for your child. If you wish to speak to the teacher, a message is best conveyed through the school office. We highly encourage you to drop your child off in the drop off loop (those procedures are sent separately), and let them walk in on their own. There are adults and older children who can help with the door if they are not able to open it on their own. Please try this at the start of the school year. If they are struggling with this, then change to walking them to the classroom door. After a short time of doing this, walk them to the school entrance. Then transition to walking them to the gate, and then eventually the drop off loop.

### Toilet Training Requirement

It is required that children entering the primary classrooms must be toilet trained. An occasional accident is acceptable but as a rule, we do not have the staff or facilities available for diaper changing. If your child has enrolled and this is a problem, you may be asked to keep him/her at home for a while longer until this is remedied.

### Clothing

When choosing your child's clothing, please keep in mind that he or she will need to be able to **easily manage** their own clothing without assistance. Children will be involved in various activities daily, which may include tempera paint, chalk, silver polish, paste, soil, etc.; activities that may be messy for clothing and shoes. We discourage media generated clothing. Children are encouraged to wear **practical footwear** (tennis shoes with socks are encouraged) that they can wear outside while running, playing, gardening, etc. We find that sandals worn without socks are not practical. Please refrain from sending your child in boots as an accidental kick could cause injury to another child. Jewelry and accessories should be left at home as they may be lost or become a distraction. Each child needs a change of clothes, including underwear and socks, to be kept at school for emergencies. Please **label** each piece of clothing and put them in a zip lock bag with your child's name on it. Remember to replace seasonal clothing when necessary. Soiled clothes need to be replaced the next day. Any borrowed school clothing should be washed and returned as soon as possible. Your child's name should also be in all jackets and sweaters and on their lunch box. Please remind them if they have forgotten something rather than getting it for them. Of course, you may help, but this way your child will begin to feel responsible for his/her belongings.

### The Outdoor Environment

Adjoining our primary classrooms is the garden area, a carefully prepared environment. The children explore many aspects of nature. Some of the activities in the garden are watering, hammering, hoeing, sweeping, herb tasting, composting, caring for the bird feeders, and planting, weeding, harvesting, flower arranging and caring for our domesticated as well as our

visiting wild animals. If you feel your child will require an Insect repellent or sunscreen while in the outdoor environment, we encourage you to apply it before he/she comes to school. If your child needs to wear a hat outdoors, please bring one to school appropriately labeled with the child's name. We hope to awaken in each child a lifelong love and respect for our Earth and all its creatures. Maria Montessori taught us to see a spiritual oneness with the child and nature. She states in *The Montessori Method*, "...man still belongs to nature, and especially when he is a child, he...draws from it the forces necessary to the development of the body and the spirit. We have intimate communications with nature which have an influence, even a material influence, on the growth of the body."

## Snacks

Each family will be responsible to bring in snack for the class for the week a few times during the school year. You will be assigned a week, and a list of items to bring in. Each day, there will be children that prepare the food for snack. They will cut up the fruit/vegetables, cut up the cheese, peel and slice the eggs, etc.

## Lunches

Children staying for the full day and extended day bring their own lunch. Please provide your child with an easy to manage lunchbox or cooler with a cold pack. Reusable containers are recommended. Involve your child in choosing these materials so they are manageable for them. Assist your child in choosing nutritional foods instructing them as to why sweetened, dyed and processed foods are not healthy. Water is the preferred beverage and **bringing a water bottle is required.** Packaged foods such as lunchables, squeeze yogurts, fruit roll ups or gummies, packaged puddings and Jell-O cups, Capri-suns and chips should be discouraged. They are not healthy or environmentally responsible and present food as play items. The Department of Health does not allow us to microwave food for our students. Thermal containers keep food warm.

## Birthdays

Your child's birthday is a special time that we enjoy sharing. On your child's birthday, we would like you to bring in some pictures of your child showing how he or she looked at the following times:

- birth - 3 months
- at 1 year old
- at 2 years old
- at 3 years old, etc.

Snapshots are fine. As the children are seated on the ellipse on the floor, a light representing the sun is placed in the center. The birthday child holding a globe makes one trip around the sun for each year of the child's life. As he or she completes each year the corresponding picture is shown and discussed. We hope this will be an enjoyable as well as educational experience for the children. We celebrate summer birthdays at the end of the school year.

**Treats are not necessary.** Sharing a favorite story, favorite music or gifting a book, plant, shell, small vase, tray, etc., instead would be appropriate. **If you want to furnish a treat, please make healthy choices, not sweets**

## **Take Home Projects**

Generally, the children will not bring home "school work". Children are by nature process oriented. We hope they will work with concentration and interest rather than with concern for a product to be taken home. Teachers may occasionally send home finished work.

## **Reading Books**

When reading books are sent home, please allow your child to read the book to an adult. Your child's teacher will show you how best to practice reading with him/her. In the beginning, it is important to offer feedback to the teacher, especially if difficulties are encountered. Reading books should be returned daily and feedback given to your child's teacher in a timely manner.

## **Rest Time**

Children who nap after lunch may use a school mat, but should bring a small blanket and (if your child would like one) a pillow. Please **label** these items with your child's name.

# Elementary

## Philosophy and Curriculum

Please read this carefully and refer to it as long as your child remains in our Montessori elementary program. It summarizes the philosophy and beliefs that led to the development of this program. This may require new ways of thinking and talking about school on your part as a parent.

Children, even when exactly the same age, are vastly different in their abilities, levels of attainment, and ways of doing things, including learning. This leads to two conclusions of significance to a school:

1. It is artificial and usually frustrating to teach as if all or even most of the children will cover the same ground in the same length of time, or even in the same way. If we do this, some will be unspeakably bored, and others will be unable to master it.
2. Children will learn a great deal on their own, as they already have in their earliest years, if the school environment is rich enough in materials, tools, and equipment from which they can learn and through which they can express themselves. There are many more ways to learn than from the teacher's lecture and from books (though, because these are the quietest and least messy, they are often the most relied upon). Schools, especially those for elementary children, must provide this material and plenty of time for them to use it. Schools must respect the student's curiosity and particular interests; to frustrate these is to frustrate learning. Free explorations and experimentation are just as important to a child's learning as a formal writing or math exercise.

When we group different ages together in our elementary classes, it is for sound educational and social reasons. Instead of *failing* a child of seven because he did not learn what some schools think he should have learned at six, we let the age span of the class be broader; those who require more time can have it without being held back and labeled a failure. Those children of greater ability, even if among the youngest, can work ahead as far as their ability and interest carry them. All can share in many artistic, dramatic, musical, scientific, literary and social experiences. The young ones have models of superior work to look up to. The older ones can improve their own understandings, and perhaps learn tolerance and kindness, by working with younger children. Size and other physical distinctions become less important. It is alright to be different, because we have minimized the idea of an expected *norm*; life is more like it is in the world outside the school. We accept each child for who they are, and value their uniqueness rather than trying to compare them to a mythical *average*.

We are interested in each child's progressing along a wide spectrum of skills in reading, writing and math. Work habits and attitudes are as important as where they are along the continuum. They may stay in one spot for a long time before spurting ahead; this is normal child development, not cause for giving the child a failing grade or holding them back. No matter what *grade* they are in, provisions will be made for their own needs in the fundamental skills of reading, writing and computing. Indeed, we do not favor giving grades or marks. To say a child is making "D's" because they do not achieve as much as some others do, when they may be working hard and achieving well at their own level, is senseless. We will tell you (and show you with tangible work) where along the continuum your child is working, whether or not he/she is working hard, and where we would like to see improvement; we feel this is sufficient evaluation at this age.

To appreciate the discipline in these classes requires a broader concept of the word than merely ideas of control and quietness. The discipline comes from the children's own pattern of work and less obviously from the teacher as each does their job. There are a few absolute rules. We do not tolerate destruction or misuse of property. We believe in an atmosphere of mutual respect among teachers and children. When listening quietly to the teacher (or anyone else) is appropriate, it is demanded; our working procedures require less of this than in a traditional classroom. During much of the day children are allowed to move around and talk together, unless they become a disturbance. Where there is noise in the room, it is usually the noise of children working together over a project, getting materials, etc., not the noise of children *goofing off* and being uncooperative out of boredom. They are expected to help maintain the equipment and the room, to help themselves and each other as much as they are able; this expectation engenders more self-discipline and responsibility than in the traditional classroom. Each activity, study, presentation and outing contributes to the community of the class and to the *education for life* of each child. Regular attendance and full participation is an essential component of achievement. Picking and choosing which aspects of education in which to participate is an unrealistic strategy for progress.

*Above all, we believe in each child's ability to do wonderful, amazing things and that it is the teacher's job, and joy, to help the child to do them.*

*Montessori Curriculum* follows a series of Great Lessons each introducing a period of history that leads to study and research on the part of the child. These are:

- The formation of the Earth (Physics, Chemistry, Geology and Astronomy)
- The Coming of Plants and Animals (Botany and Zoology)
- The Arrival of Humans (Anthropology, Sociology, Architecture, Agriculture, History and Government)
- Language (English Grammar, Writing, Reading, Spelling, Handwriting, Geography and Literature)
- Math and Invention (Mathematics and Geometry)

No subject is studied in isolation from the others. Knowledge is intertwined even though it is discrete in its parts.

These are springboards to infinite studies, so that each year is different while the structure of our studies remains the same. Maria Montessori taught that all disciplines are



interconnected as in all life. She developed a curriculum of Cosmic Education that emphasizes the connection of all things. A Montessori education does not give the child a collection of trivial facts but rather bestows a vision of interrelated knowledge and a love of learning. The elementary-aged child is moving from an understanding of the physical world to an understanding of abstraction. Mathematics, for instance, is presented through three-dimensional, manipulative materials that reveal simultaneously arithmetic, geometric and algebraic correlations - each providing a concrete way to experience an abstract concept. Likewise, the grammar materials use symbols and visual patterns to help the child discover parts of speech and to analyze the structure, style and logic of sentences. These exercises refine reading and writing skills and lay the foundation for foreign language study. The materials for disciplines such as geometry, botany, zoology, and geography present basic terminology as the groundwork for future in-depth study. The prepared environment provides the *keys* of each discipline in a manner that meets the elementary child's need for inspiration as well as order.

Parents are encouraged to help their children develop a routine for homework completion. Hopefully, the students will become responsible for seeing that homework is brought home, completed and returned to school the next morning.

### **Music Program**

Elementary students will experience music in their classroom as well as in the music room. The music teacher will provide experience in singing, movement, instruments, drama, and more. Music is not only fun, but helps to develop children's brains in a way that will help them in all areas of their learning.

### **Spanish Program**

We emphasize oral communication, conversation and grammar lessons tailored to the student's level of proficiency, always having in mind that learning Spanish should be an enjoyable process. Spanish studies extend beyond the learning of the language to include coming into contact with other cultures. Hispanic countries are rich in their folklore and traditions as well as their inheritance from Europe, Africa and the Americas.

### **Yoga**

Elementary children participate in yoga classes during the school year. Each class begins with warm-up stretching exercises during which the children learn the parts of the skeletal system. The Montessori philosophy of grace and courtesy is reinforced during the "strike a pose" segment of each lesson. Full attention of the class is given to each child's pose interpretation. This helps develop respect for themselves and others. Yoga helps to center the child, quieting and relaxing the whole body. It also helps improve self-esteem, balance and coordination.

### **Clothing and Personal Belongings**

Students should be dressed for an active day. They are encouraged to wear practical footwear that can be worn outside while running, climbing, playing in the woods and gardening. Elementary students are very active and practical footwear is extremely important. **Open**

**heeled slides, platforms and flip-flops are inappropriate for school.** They impede graceful, quiet and safe movement. Please leave jewelry and accessories at home. They may be lost or become a distraction. All jackets and sweaters should have the child's name in them. Personal belongings such as lunch boxes and backpacks should also be labeled with their name. Students may not wear hats in the classroom. Student cell phones will be kept in the office until dismissal time. School telephones are always available if needed.

## **Snacks**

Each student will be responsible for bringing in their own daily snacks. We request nutritious items such as fresh fruits, vegetables, cheeses, etc. Elementary students have growing appetites— they need healthy proteins and carbs!

## **Lunch**

Elementary students must bring their lunch. Provide your child with an easy to manage lunchbox or cooler. We encourage you to let your child be involved in the preparation of lunches. Eating quietly and carefully is an important social skill. Water is the preferred lunch beverage and is always available. Please send in a reusable water bottle to be kept at school. Sweetened drinks, even fruit juices, are not good for teeth and are difficult to thoroughly clean up if spilled. We eat in the classroom and our afternoon work takes place on the same tables upon which lunch is served. We ask that you avoid prepackaged foods like Lunchables and Capri-Suns as they are not environmentally responsible and are often wasted. Candy should also be avoided. **Due to health department regulations we can no longer allow the children to microwave their lunches.** Foods may be warmed and sent in thermal containers. Cups, cloth placemats and cloth napkins are provided. Lunchtime is a calm, peaceful interlude during which good table manners and pleasant conversations are practiced.

## **Birthdays**

If your child is celebrating a birthday and you wish to provide a treat, you may provide Italian Ice or popsicles or something non-edible. Due to children with severe allergies, please do not bring in store purchased or home baked items.

## **A History of Montessori Elementary**

By 1919 Maria Montessori included methods and materials for six to twelve year olds in her training course. She had published *The Advanced Montessori Method*. Trained as a physician, Dr. Montessori used naturalistic observation to develop her educational ideas. Dr. Montessori watched children work for hours and always listened carefully to whatever they had to say. To her, the child was the real teacher. Her work continued to develop over the years in Barcelona, Spain; Madras, India and Laren, Holland.

Maria Montessori regarded the ages of six through twelve as the second plane of development in the child's life.

"The successive levels of education must conform to the successive personalities of the child ...individuals passing from one stage of independence to a higher one, by means of their own activity'.

For this plane she devised a plan entitled Cosmic Education which brings the child to his place within the universe. This program is ecological and life affirming. It is an intellectual journey through man's vast accumulation of knowledge through an integrated study of history and science. It is a spiritual journey through a reverence of God and the created universe. Each element in the universe is important, each is of God. Although Maria Montessori was a Catholic, her system of education emphasized the spiritual nature of mankind expressed within the cultural contexts rather than an adherence to the teaching of doctrine.

"One of the purposes of education is to relate the studies (or subjects), one with the other, around the Cosmic Center. You cannot understand biology without understanding chemistry or physics, and you cannot study life without its environment, which brings us to geography. But then again, you cannot study the Earth without its environment, which brings us to astronomy. And so every branch of study is interrelated. One with the other. And every subject is a more detailed description of the one fundamental principle".

## **Elementary Children**

Typically, elementary children can be characterized by their questioning minds, their ability to abstract and imagine their moral and social orientation, and their unlimited energy for research and exploration. Through Dr. Montessori's plan of Cosmic Education, elementary students move from the concrete through their own efforts and discovery to the abstract - thus greatly expanding their field of knowledge.

## **The Montessori Elementary Prepared Environment**

In the Montessori prepared environment, there is a variety of activity as well as a great deal of movement. In an elementary classroom, a small group of children may be using a timeline to learn United States history and another child chooses to work alone editing a composition. At other times the entire class may be involved in a group activity, such as a demonstration of a scientific concept or problem-solving in a class meeting.

Each material in a Montessori classroom isolates one quality, focusing on the concept that the child is to discover. Many materials are self-correcting, minimizing the need for adult correction. The child is able to solve problems independently, building self-confidence, analytical thinking, and the satisfaction that comes from accomplishment.

As the child's exploration continues, the materials interrelate and build upon each other. In the elementary years, new aspects of some of the materials unfold. When studying volume, for instance, the child may return to the pink tower and discover that it's cubes progress incrementally from one cubic centimeter to one cubic decimeter.

Exploration of each area is further encouraged through trips outside the classroom to community resources, such as the library, planetarium, botanical garden, science center, factory, hospital, etc. This inclusive approach to education supplies a context for understanding, fosters a feeling of connectedness to all humanity, and encourages their natural desire to make contributions to the world.

## **The Children's House Montessori School**

### **Vision**

Our vision of this school is one in which children work happily and thrive.

They are guided by loving, thoughtful adults who work hard to bring out the best in them.

Children are respected and their uniqueness acknowledged.

Accommodations are made for children who need them.

Every child feels confident, secure and responsible.

Work is joyful and the desire to work grows strong.

Compassion and empathy are modeled.

Problems are seen as challenges and problem solving skills are acquired.

As a school we are constantly evolving and open to change.

Teachers and staff work together supporting each other and the "great work we have undertaken."