



***Montessori House for Children***

*20625 Lakemont Bend Lane*

*&*

***Montessori House Elementary School***

*7233 South Mason Road*

*Richmond, Texas 77407*

**Parent Handbook**

**2017 - 2018**

**[www.montessorihouseforchildren.com](http://www.montessorihouseforchildren.com)**

**Phone 281-239-3400**

**Fax 281-239-3466**

*“Cultivating the greatest potential within every person”*



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## About Us

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### ***Purpose of This Handbook***

To provide service of professional quality to the community, Montessori House for Children (MHFC) and Elementary School (MHES) must have sound practices through which these services are most effectively offered. To simplify our two entities, MHFC and MHES will both be referred to as “School” in this Handbook.

The Parent Handbook Acknowledgment Form (included in registration) indicates your agreement with the School’s philosophy, mission, policies and goals of Montessori Education and agreement to adhere to the School’s policies contained within.

### ***Mission Statement***

Grounded in Montessori principles and philosophy, our mission is to cultivate the greatest potential within every person.

### ***History***

#### Montessori House for Children (MHFC)

MHFC was founded in 2006, a successor organization to Lakeview Montessori School in Sugar Land, TX, originally founded in 1997. MHFC is a private, non-sectarian school with an international clientele from over 34 countries. MHFC educates students aged Toddler through Early Childhood, ~18 months through 6 years.

#### Montessori House Elementary School (MHES)

The Elementary program initially began in 2013 as part of MHFC. In 2016, MHES celebrated completion of the elementary building, which now houses the Elementary School and the *Handworks Studio*. MHES is a non-profit 501(c) (3) organization, operating as part of the Montessori Education Fund Inc. (MEFI). MHES educates students aged ~ 6 through 12 years.

#### Montessori Education Fund Inc. (MEFI)

Founded in 2012, MEFI is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit corporation. MEFI has two components:

1. Operations of the non-profit **Montessori Elementary School**
2. Provider of **Educational Services** to the School and Community.

Elementary School tuition supports operations of the Elementary School (faculty salaries, educational materials, classroom furnishings, operating expenses for the Elementary School).

Contributions (fundraising and donations) towards MEFI’s general fund supports “educational services”. Educational services are those that fall under the mission and goals of Montessori - tuition assistance, community outreach, assistance towards professional development and parent education.

All contributions, donations and funds received by MEFI “general fund” are tax deductible as allowed by IRS guidelines.

### ***Philosophy***

Montessori Education is guided by the work and writings of Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952). At its core, the philosophy is simple, to *follow the child*, which assumes that every child is a unique individual who is naturally driven to grow, develop and learn. The educational goals include instilling in children a love of learning, the ability to make appropriate learning choices, and respect for oneself, other people, and their physical surroundings.

### ***Partnership Agreement***

The School works in partnership with parents to support and foster whole child development. Parent, teacher, child and school form a union based on mutual respect and support which, in turn, enhances everyone’s understanding, knowledge, and insight and offers a cohesive, prepared learning environment.

### ***Affiliations and Memberships***

#### American Montessori Society (AMS)

The School is affiliated with the American Montessori Society. Maintaining “Full Member” Affiliation is our goal and requires all Lead Teachers to hold Montessori credentials in the level(s) they are teaching.

#### Eco-School

The School is affiliated with Eco-Schools USA, at the “silver level”. Eco-Schools USA is a holistic program. Our schools strive to make environmental awareness and action an intrinsic part of the life and culture of a school; including students, parents and staff, as well as the local community. Eco-Schools USA works to extend learning beyond the classroom and develop responsible environmental attitudes and commitments, both at home and in the wider community.

#### National Wildlife Federation

The School has been designated a Certified Wildlife Habitat in our play spaces which provide water, food and shelter to the area wildlife. All students are involved in the pleasures of taking care of living things and watching them in their natural environment.

#### Katy Prairie Conservancy

The School supports the environment efforts that are ongoing in the Texas Coastal Plain region, especially by the Katy Prairie Conservancy by having our own ‘Pocket Prairie’, which benefits the ecosystem by having authentic Texas Native plants in our yards and environments.

## **School Administration & Faculty**

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6:30 – 6:00

School Hours

7:30 – 5:00

Head of School (by appointment)



### **Governance**

**MHFC** is governed by a founding Board of Directors. The strategic planning Board established the core mission and values of the School, continues to maintain alignment with the core mission and oversees the business operations.

**MHES** is part of the Montessori Education Fund Inc. (MEFI). The MEFI strategic planning Board guides the business operations, including the Elementary School (MHES), and ensures educational practices are aligned with the core mission.

### **Admin**

Head of School	Barbara Nelson
Business Manager & Founder	Pam Nelson
Admissions Coordinator	Yaneth Poo
Admin/Before/Afterschool Coordinator	Neelo Surty
Admin/Communications	Blanca Smith
Admin/Communications	Norma Angulo
School Cook	Mary Russell

### **Faculty**

The School aims to ensure that the Toddler, Early Childhood and Elementary School teachers are trained in Montessori pedagogy under the auspices of the American Montessori Society (AMS) or Association Montessori International (AMI). The School prides itself on the quality, educational depth and talent of its faculty. Teacher Bios can be found on the School web-site.

### **Montessori Credentials**

AMS Credentialed teachers have successfully completed their MACTE affiliated Montessori training.

Additionally, our faculty working at the EC level or higher, have at minimum, a Bachelor's degree in addition to their Montessori credential.

### **Professional Development**

Faculty obtains 24 hours professional development each year, which may include attendance at national or local conferences, university courses, or in-service work sponsored by the School. Donations made to MEFI contribute towards faculty professional development.

### **Faculty In-Service**

Faculty in-service days are marked on the School calendar. These days are used for a number of purposes, including workshops, faculty meetings, and preparation of the environment.

Faculty are actively working in the classrooms at least one week prior to the opening of school in the fall and several days after school dismisses for the summer, in order to prepare the classroom environments and teaching materials. A Montessori classroom is a highly enriched and complex environment that

demands much time and effort from the faculty to prepare and maintain. Consequently, Montessori schools typically devote more days to preparation than other schools do.

### ***Faculty Assignments***

Faculty includes lead guides, assistants, support staff and substitute teachers. Changes in faculty for the upcoming school year are formally announced, once contracts are signed. Any changes made after the School year begins are communicated to parents by email.

## **Parent Involvement**

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### ***Parents are Essential***

Parents are the child's first and most important educator. We believe as parents learn and experience Montessori with their child, that a powerful alliance will develop that supports each child in their quest for learning and self-fulfillment.

The volunteer force is essential to enriching the community life of the School. What one person can't do, many can and it's a great way to meet and connect other parents. Also, research provides evidence that children benefit from parental involvement in school. Not only in the area of academics (motivation, engagement, performance), but also with mental health (resilience and self-esteem) and social functioning (developing relationships). Knowing that the biggest obstacle for parents is time, we have structured events and meetings to coincide with childcare or involve the entire family.

### ***Parent Involvement Opportunities***

Volunteer opportunities are available through the Parent Association of Volunteers (PAV) and throughout the School community.

Parent Volunteer Association is made up of parents, guardian, and administrators who function as the backbone of our volunteer force and help our school to fulfill its mission and create a sense of community. Officers are elected on an annual basis. The two main goals are to build community within the School and to strengthen the MEFI through fundraising.

The PAV meets monthly, on a regular schedule, to be determined at the start of each new school year. Information is provided to parents through the "Back to School" letter and during Parent Orientation (both in August, prior to the start of school).

How can I be involved?

- Attend PAV Meetings
- Assist in coordination of an event (through PAV)
- Join the Eco-School Action team (6 meetings/year, includes gardening)
- Join the Care Committee (extends care to families within the School – in time of celebration or of need)
- Become a Room Parent

- Contact Norma Angulo at [norma@mhfcschool.com](mailto:norma@mhfcschool.com) for further information.

Room Parents have a unique opportunity to be a part of their children’s classroom experience. Many serve as representatives of their classroom in the PAV, while others offer goods and services in support of the PAV efforts.

Other opportunities include:

Classroom:

- Parent Readers (EC and Lower Elementary): Excellent opportunity to support and encourage our emergent and fluent readers.
- Cultural Enrichment: Share your cultural celebrations and customs through classroom activities.
- Library Assistants: Collect/return library books for the classroom on a monthly basis.

Whole-School:

- Drive-through Assistance: Greet arriving students in drive-through, assisting out of their cars.
- Grandparent Group: Grandparents are welcome to be a part of any one of the above-mentioned opportunities; grandparents are of great significance to our community.

## School Programs

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<b>Academic Day</b>		8:30 – 2:30	(T & EC)
		8:30 – 3:00	(EL)
<b>Full-Day</b>	Includes before/after-school care	6:30 – 8:15	(morning care)
		2:30 – 6:00	(T/EC after-school care)
		3:00 – 6:00	(EL after-school care)

### **Academic Year**

Academic and Full Day Elementary and EC programs follow the Academic School Year Calendar: [2017-18 Academic Calendar](#) (Summer sessions’ enrollment is separate).

### **Full- Year Program**

The Toddler Full-Day program is year-round: August – July (summer sessions are included).

The Toddler Academic Day program may be offered during the summer, contingent on demand.

### **Summer Sessions**

Summer sessions for Early Childhood and Elementary begin the first full week in June and end on Friday, one week prior to the start of school.

- Registration for summer sessions begins March 1
- Toddler summer sessions are included in the full-day program.

### ***After-School Enrichment Programs (EC and Elementary only)***

During the academic term, a wide variety of extra-curricular programs are offered through independent providers beginning at 2:30 pm (early childhood) and 3:00 pm (elementary). Information about these programs activities is available during parent orientation and thereafter on our web site or at the front office. Enrollment and payment of chosen programs are handled directly through the providers.

## **Admissions Policies and Procedures**

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### ***Admission Process***

- School Tour and/or scheduled classroom observation
- Application
- Student/Guide Interview (EC and Elementary Level)
- Notice of Acceptance (or waiting pool status)
- Completed enrollment (form & fees)
- Home/Class visit (T)

### ***Admission Decisions***

Children are evaluated on the basis of readiness for school and potential for success in a Montessori classroom. It is equally important to determine whether the parents' educational philosophy and goals are compatible with that of the School.

### ***Admission Policy***

#### **Elementary**

Students must be 6 years of age by September 1<sup>st</sup> to enter Lower Elementary; a list detailing readiness indicators is found on page 10 of this handbook.

Elementary students coming from our EC program or another Montessori school are given priority. Students coming from non-Montessori backgrounds are eligible for admission, based on congruence with the Montessori classroom.

Elementary student applications require the most recent progress report/report card and a confidential teacher-recommendation form. The teacher-recommendation form must be signed by the parents, for release of information, and mailed directly from the previous school, to MHES. These forms can be obtained from the Admission Office. A visit will be scheduled for the student and an informal assessment will be made of the child once the application and required documents are received.

#### **Early Childhood (EC)**

The Early Childhood community is a three to four year program, starting at three years of age and continuing through age six. Admitting children at the first year, age three, and continuing through the end of the cycle, age six, is optimal for their growth and development and will help ensure readiness for the next level. In following this procedure we are able to maintain the integrity of the classroom and offer all students a high quality Montessori educational environment.

## Toddler (T)

Children ages ~18 months up to age three may begin their Montessori experience in our Toddler Community.

### **Financial Policy**

#### **New Students:**

A non-refundable enrollment fee of \$200 is due upon submittal of enrollment forms.

A non-refundable tuition deposit\* fee is due upon submittal of enrollment forms\*

#### **Current Student Re-enrollment:**

Re-enrollment Feb 1 – 15: A non-refundable re-enrollment of \$100 plus material fees are due upon submittal of re-enrollment.

Late Re-enrollment (after Feb 15): A non-refundable re-enrollment fee of \$100 plus tuition deposit\* is due upon submittal of re-enrollment. The non-refundable material fee is due July 1.

\* The Tuition Deposit will be applied to the last month of the final academic term attended at the School, provided 30 days written notice is given. If, for any reason the student withdraws or is required to withdraw prior to the last month of the academic term the deposit is non-refundable. (For full-day Toddlers, the academic year ends in July.)

#### **Payment Options:**

Semester Payments	Aug 1 & Jan 1
10 Payments	Aug 1 through May 1**
12 Payments	Aug 1 – July 1 (Toddler full-day)
Summer Session 1	May 1
Summer Session 2	June 1

\*\*The 10-month payment schedule is formulated by: **Annual Tuition ÷ 9.5** with the .5 payment due Aug. 1 and the remaining 9 payments due Sept. 1 through May 1.

Tuition is late when received five (5) calendar days after the due date. A late fee of 10% is applied after the grace period. The school reserves the right to suspend attendance or withdraw a child if tuition is not paid within 10 calendar days of the due date. A bank service fee of \$25 is charged for returned checks.

A 10% tuition discount is applicable for a sibling (on the lower tuition)

Refunds or allowances in tuition will not be made to compensate for extended absences in the event of illness, vacations, inclement weather, school holidays or other circumstances.

Montessori House Elementary School reserves the right to terminate the enrollment contract if:

- The parent or guardian does not consistently follow policies, procedures and guidelines as stated in the Parent Handbook;
- The student's behavior, or lack of cooperation, is deemed unacceptable;
- The student poses a physical or psychological threat to themselves, staff, or another child within the school environment;
- Tuition payments are not paid;

***Withdrawal Policy***

The Tuition Deposit will be applied to the last month of the final academic term attended at the School, provided 30 days written notice is given. If, for any reason the student withdraws or is required to withdraw prior to the last month of the academic term, the deposit is non-refundable. (For academic-day Toddlers and EC/EL students, the academic term ends in May. For full-day Toddlers, the academic year ends in July).

***Student Records***

Student records must be complete prior to the child's first day and prior to the toddler home/school visits. Student records are kept in the admission office and include complete registration forms, progress reports and conference notes. All student records remain the property of the School. Student records are confidential and can only be released with written parent permission.

***Immunizations***

Each child enrolled or admitted must meet applicable immunization requirements specified by the TX. Dept. of State Health Services.

***Hearing and Vision Screening***

State requires all children age 4 by September 1<sup>st</sup> receive vision/hearing screening. The School provides this screening at the beginning of each school year or parents may obtain on their own and provide the School with results.

**Classroom Placement, Transitions & Move-ups**

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***School Considerations***

The Montessori placement process is different from what parents may have experienced in child care centers or standard schools where a placement is often determined by filling the spaces on a "first come, first serve" basis. Montessori is not a teacher-centered educational system; it is child-centered. Placement is determined by matching the skills and needs of the individual with the skills and needs of the learning community. The teacher is one part of the learning community. Other factors included are age, gender and the personalities within each community.

***Parent Requests***

The School is responsible for providing qualified and talented teachers in every classroom and works very hard to ensure that each child is placed in the environment where her/his needs will be met. **Classroom placements are based on these criteria and not on parent requests for a particular teacher or classroom.**

### ***Classroom Transfers***

Because the composition of a learning community is selected very carefully, it is unusual for children to be transferred from one class to another during the three-year cycle. However, if there appears to be a beneficial reason for a change in classroom, you will be notified and included in the evaluative process.

### ***New Student Transition***

New students normally assimilate into a Montessori environment with ease and joy. Because it takes about 30 days to establish habits and learn the routines, there is time given for this transition. The Lead teacher communicates with parents during the six-week transition to let them know how their child is adjusting.

### ***New Student Transition (Toddler Community)***

Following acceptance, your child's teacher will contact you to schedule the home/school visits. During the home visit, the schedule for transition will be discussed and a plan agreed to. Following this process of transition is a vital aspect of introducing our School to both parents and child. Ideally, the schedule is as follows:

1. 1<sup>st</sup> day, 1 hour
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> day, 2 hours
3. 3<sup>rd</sup> day, through lunch
4. 4<sup>th</sup> day, through nap
5. 5<sup>th</sup> day, regular schedule

### ***Moving-Up***

Most commonly, move-ups occur in August, at the start of the School. Occasionally, toddlers will move-up in January. Transitions during School Holidays/Breaks and the Summer Sessions are uncommon, due to merging classrooms and differences in regular lead/assistant teachers.

### **Move from Toddler to Early Childhood**

When it is determined that your child is ready to 'move up', the following process is followed:

- Parent observes the EC classroom and/or parent/teacher meeting is arranged to discuss the differences/share important information.
- The child *may* visit the EC classroom for an introduction of the new environment.
- The final move-up can be celebrated by formally moving the child's belongings from one room to another. Also, the child's records and information will be transferred to the child's new teacher.

### **Move from Early Childhood into Elementary**

The move from Early Childhood into Lower Elementary marks the end of the first plane of development and the onset of the second plane. The ideal age for entry into the Lower Elementary is six years by September 1<sup>st</sup>.

In determining a child's readiness for moving up, faculty first considers social and emotional maturity; self-direction, independence and the ability to work well with others. We also take into consideration academic development.

***Readiness Indicators Elementary (1<sup>st</sup> grade):***

*Social/Emotional Domain:*

- Understanding and experience with the process of conflict resolution
- Social awareness – the child respects others, self, and the materials in the room
- Child exhibits a fair amount of self-control and self-discipline
- The child has the desire and ability to be a leader among younger children
- The child has the ability to work independently, without the frequent direction or involvement from the teacher and has some idea regarding time management

*Cognitive Domain:*

*Math:*

- The child exhibits a strong understanding of the decimal system and place value
- Has experience and understanding of the four mathematical operations
- Has a clear understanding and experience with linear counting
- Has received upper level sensorial experiences with the geometry materials

*Reading:*

- Has committed to memory many of the phonogram and puzzle words
- Can read simple and/or complex sentences that include short vowels, long vowels and sight words
- Can express thoughts through simple written sentences and phrases

*Writing:*

- Holds a pencil correctly
- Writes legibly in cursive and is able to form all lower case letters

*Cultural:*

- Received lessons and maintains an intellectual curiosity about cultural subjects

*Other:*

- Gross motor skills are adequately developed so that the child displays bodily control and coordination.

This is a guide and it expresses an ideal for readiness on paper. In order for children to fully embrace and enjoy the elementary curriculum as it is designed, the children need to have the skills necessary to engage in extensive research.

We all also agree that holding children back can be problematic (children maturing after two years of elementary and needing to move up). If the child's social and emotional readiness is there, we agree that the child should move up.

## **Getting to and from School**

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***Timely Arrival***



School begins promptly at 8:30 am. A family considering the School should determine if their schedules and family circumstances permit consistent on-time attendance before enrolling in the School. Children arriving after 8:30 are marked as tardy. Frequent late arrival is considered problematic as it interrupts the work period of your child and others. Habitual late arrival will be addressed by the following:

1. Teacher will meet with parents directly to discuss plans for timely arrival.
2. Head of school will meet with parents to reach a solution.

We ask that discretionary dental/doctor appointment and well-checks be scheduled later in the day, so as not to disrupt the routine of your child and that of others.

### ***Arrival***

Before School Arrival – Parents are welcome to walk their child into/out of school except during designated drive-through times. When arriving prior to the morning drive-through time (before 8:15):

- Parents are to walk their child to the classroom and say good-bye at the door. This routine establishes clear boundaries for the child and eases in successful transitions. It also respects the children in the School as it minimizes interruptions.

Drive Through Arrival - The drive through lane opens promptly at 8:15 and closes at 8:25.

The safety of our children always comes first; therefore, use of the drive-through lane is mandatory for all students arriving/departing at these specific times and will be strictly enforced.

### ***Designated drive-through times:***

8:15 – 8:25	Morning Arrival
2:30 – 2:40	T & EC academic-day dismissal
3:00	Elementary academic-day dismissal

Late Arrival - Should your arrive child late (after 8:30), you will be asked to sign-in your child on the late arrival form. If your child needs help walking to class, a staff member will escort him/her to the classroom. **Parents are not permitted to escort their children beyond the lobby once class has started.**

Elementary doors lock at 8:30, students who arrive after 8:30 must be brought to the MHFC main office, parents will be asked to sign-in on the late arrival form and a staff member will escort him/her to their classroom.

### ***Dismissal***

Drive through Dismissal - Children are gathered at the entrance of the School under the covered area and walked to their car by a teacher.

### After-school Pick Up

When picking up after designated dismissal drive-through times (after 2:30/3:00): Parents pick up children from their classroom. Wait at the door and the teacher will dismiss your child once their work

is complete. Parents are not allowed in the classroom at this time as it causes frequent interruptions.

### **Late Pick-up**

In the event that you are running late, please notify the School.

*Late pick up for academic-day dismissals:* After the last car has left the carpool lane, children will be brought into the front office and a call will be made to parents. Parents arriving after this point will come into the School and sign their child out. There is a late pick-up fee of \$20 if arriving 15 minutes beyond dismissal time and \$1 per minute thereafter.

*Late pick after the School is closed (6pm):* There is a 5-minute grace period. 5 – 15 minutes late is \$20; beyond 15 minutes is \$1 per minute thereafter.

### **Separation**

To ease separation, we ask parents to establish a routine that is assuring and encourages independence:

- Help your child by keeping to a schedule
- Encourage independence such as walking on their own or helping to carry his/her belongings.
- Short & sweet goodbyes - lingering usually causes emotional distress for the child.
- Once a child enters the classroom, a teacher warmly greets him/her.

### **Drive-through Safety**

- Posted speed limit is 5 mph on driveway, parking lot and carpool lane.
- Stay in your car while in drive through.
- Pedestrian traffic is prohibited during designated drive-through times
- Children are to exit/enter on the passenger side.
- All children younger than 8 years old, unless taller than 4'9" are required to be in the appropriate child safety seat system whenever they ride in a passenger vehicle. The safety seat system must be installed according to the manufacturer's instructions. Staff will not place a child into a vehicle that does not appear to meet these requirements.
- Use of cell phones while driving is prohibited in school zones. This includes our drive through lanes. The School asks that all parents refrain from cellular use while dropping off or picking up your child.
- You are responsible for your child's safety entering and exiting the School.
- ONLY adults push the "Red Button" that releases the door lock (MHFC building).
- Parking in the 'fire lane' is prohibited.

### **Procedures for Changes in Pick-up Routine or release of Children**

- Your child will be allowed to leave the School only with parents or persons designated on enrollment form. In an emergency, or if there are temporary departure arrangements, the parent must send a written note giving the name, date and identifying information about the person picking up the child. This person must give proper identification, such as a valid driver's license. We will make a copy of their license and keep it in your child's file.

## **Policies and Procedures**

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### **Absences**

Please notify the School of any planned absences or call the front office if your child's absence is due to illness. When a child's attendance is inconsistent to the point that the child and/or classroom is adversely affected, the School will meet with the parents to reach a solution.

Please make every effort to ensure your child's regular attendance. In this regard, we specifically request that you schedule family vacations and trips to coincide with school holidays.

#### Elementary Students:

Attendance standards require a student attend 90% of instructional days per semester. Absences are calculated by day.

### **Uninterrupted Work Period**

As per our accrediting agency, the American Montessori Society, we are to uphold the standard of providing an uninterrupted work time. AMS Standard 3.9 states: *Schools are to allocate and protect large blocks of uninterrupted instructional time to support student learning. Optimal learning takes place during two- to three-hour blocks of time. Schools should make every effort to schedule enrichment programs and transition times to accommodate these blocks.*

The purpose of long, uninterrupted blocks of work time is to allow students to freely select work, eventually becoming absorbed in work that has a particular fascination for them at this point in their development. Interruptions disturb the development of the child's focus, concentration, and opportunity to deeply delve into work. During this uninterrupted work time, teachers also have the opportunity to present lessons to the children, ensuring that lessons are given and work is explored in all areas of the classroom.

### **Discipline**

The educational philosophy of the School is that real, effective discipline is one that comes from within a person. Developing this inner discipline is one of the objectives Montessori education. It is our belief that inner discipline develops in a child through active involvement in self-chosen tasks and the development of self-control. The clear organization of the physical environment; the structure, consistency, and predictability of daily school life; the indirect manner of teaching interpersonal skills through the lessons of "grace and courtesy"; the reliance on peer modeling and coaching channel positive behavior and appreciation and empathy help to limit difficulties.

Behaviors which are contrary to our CODE OF CONDUCT will be addressed immediately and appropriately:

- Disruptive behavior, which deprives others of learning.
- Intimidation, verbal abuse, physical threats and hurtful acts (such as hitting, punching, kicking or biting).
- Destruction of school property (classroom & playground equipment, supplies).

It is our belief that if the ground rules are consistently followed and positively reinforced, the necessity of external discipline will be diminished. However, when such external discipline is deemed necessary, the following will be observed without failure:

- Suggest alternative activities; re-direct.
- Persistent misbehavior in a group setting may be dealt with by temporary removal from the group, but remain in the classroom. Behavioral expectations are made very clear and the child is asked if he/she is ready to return to the group.
- Talk with the child who is in need of help, work to build understanding. Facilitate problem-solving as well exploring ideas for alternatives behavior choices.
- Teach the child that emotions are real and valid, and how to deal with them in constructive ways with kind words rather than physical responses.
- Allow for natural or reasonable consequences to take place that are understood and logical to the child, ex: Cleaning up after a spill.
- Recognize and encourage concentrated and appropriate efforts.
- Model appropriate behaviors and actions.

Under no circumstances shall any child be subjected to corporal punishment in any manner upon the body or to verbal abuse. Additionally, consequences must not be related to food, nap or toileting

While a parent is on school grounds, the above-mentioned guidelines must be followed.

In nearly all cases application of the foregoing guidelines will suffice. However, if the child still finds it difficult to function well within the community, the following procedures will be followed:

1. Parents/teacher conference to determine joint plan which addresses unacceptable behavior. Head of School will be notified of the plan with a follow-up within 1 week.
2. Parent/HOS/Teacher conference to make recommendations in regards to outside referrals and additional behavior management program(s). Parent/HOS communication on a weekly basis until determination of improvement is reached.
3. The HOS will make suggestions regarding alternative schools that may better meets the needs of the child, as necessary.

The School reserves the right to terminate the attendance of any student or family whose presence is considered by the School to be detrimental to the best interest of the School and/or children. The School reserves the right to ask a parent to collect their child from school as an appropriate action when the child is displaying harmful behavior.

Acts resulting in physical and/or verbal injury of another person are not tolerated. Such behavior is grounds for immediate exclusion from school:

1. 1<sup>st</sup> occurrence, parents must come for their child with permission to return the following day.

2. 2<sup>nd</sup> occurrence, parents must come for their child and the child must not return the following day.
3. 3<sup>rd</sup> occurrence, the child will be able to return following treatment with professional services and with a remedial behavioral plan.

### ***Dress Code***

Every Friday is **School T-Shirt Day**, a day to wear your green School T-Shirt! School t-shirts are available for purchase, please see the front office.

The School promotes an environment **free of media influences**. We ask for your support our effort to protect this environment by dressing children in attire (shirts, shorts, shoes, jackets, etc.) free of popular TV shows, movie characters (Cinderella, Spider Man, and other TV/movie stars). **Blinking shoes and shoes that make sounds are a distraction and are not permitted in school.**

Children should be dressed appropriately for weather, activities and comfort - painting, gardening, water work and food preparation takes place every day.

Leather shoes and 'tennis shoes' are most practical for our playground surface. Cowboy boots and flip-flops should not be worn, as they are safety concerns for your child and others.

### ***Confidentiality and Social Media***

It is our duty to protect the confidentiality of our students, parents and staff. Release of records, sharing information or discussion of current or former members of our community is against school policy. All who belong to the School are expected to follow this policy.

Parents who post pictures of children from the School must have permission from that child's parent to do so. Children should not be named in postings.

To maintain the professional relationship between parent and teacher, staff members are not permitted to "friend" current families within the School.

### ***Transporting Children***

Our school has a policy that no enrolled child be transported to or from the child's home to the School by faculty.

The Elementary School program includes 'going out' trips as part of the learning experience. Notifications with parental consent forms will be sent prior to the occasions. Parents will have the option of transporting their own child or will ask for transport from a parent volunteer (see Elementary Community/Chaperone).

## ***Possessions***

### What Not to Bring to School

- Clothing, books, magazines/catalogs with media related characters
- Backpacks (Elementary students **only** may bring backpacks)
- Shoes with lights
- Toys, stuffed animals and electronic devices
- Sippy cups, bottles, pacifiers, blankets or pillows
- Accessories that cause distraction for others
- Valuables

### What to Bring to School

Please see “School Communities” for specific information on items needed for school.

### ***Observation/Open Door Policy***

Parent observations are highly encouraged and scheduled during the School year, after new students have settled in (October – April). During this time, parents are able to sit in the classroom to gain a better their child’s work and understanding of the Montessori community as a whole. Please contact the front office to schedule an in-class observation.

Parents are free to visit the School at any time during school hours to observe their child and program activities. Unscheduled classroom observations are done from outside the classroom window.

### ***Babysitting/Attending Children’s Parties***

It is inappropriate for parents to employ School faculty and staff for in-home childcare. This policy is furnished in order to maintain the professional integrity of our school program. Employees may not attend birthday parties for students currently enrolled unless it is to accompany their own child.

### ***Nutrition***

All food allergies must be listed in the School enrollment forms.

The school is a low-sugar facility and food from fast food restaurants is not allowed. This policy is to be followed in breakfasts, snacks, lunches brought to school and in community celebrations (such as birthdays) and special occasions. In the event that food brought to school is not low in sugar, it will be returned home with your child.

The School serves water and milk. Drinks from home must be low in sugar, water or milk. Juice drinks and “sippy cups” are not allowed.

Breakfast is available from 6:30 – 8:00 a.m. for full-day children. Snack is offered mid-morning for Toddler and EC children and mid-afternoon (schedules vary per class) for full-day children. Food prep is also a part of the classroom, and this is in addition to snacks listed on our menu. Breakfast, snack and lunch menus are posted on the web site.

Children are encouraged to eat but will not be forced to do so. Any recurring eating problems will be discussed with the child's parent.

### ***Lunch Options***

Parents have two lunch options:

Catered Lunches are available through “*The Simply Fresh Kitchen*”. Meal options include vegetarian, dairy and gluten free, in small and large sizes. Meals are made fresh with organic and local foods (when available). Enrollment and payment are handled through the provider. Orders are placed between the 15<sup>th</sup> through 25<sup>th</sup> of each prior month. To order, Log on to [www.thesimplyfreshkitchen.com](http://www.thesimplyfreshkitchen.com).

- 1) Click “Accounts” in the top navigation bar. This will take you to the main store page.
- 2) Click the item labeled “Montessori House of Children Lunch Payment”.
- 3) Fill in the Student’s Name and Class
- 4) Select Regular or Large portion size
- 5) Select the dates you would like to order lunch for, in the section marked “Order Dates.”
- 6) If applicable, select a dietary restriction from the Dropdown menu marked “Dietary Restrictions.” If “Other”, please specify in the box marked “Comments” at Checkout.
- 7) Click the button marked “Add to Cart” and proceed to check out.

Lunch from Home - please make sure it meets nutritional guidelines set forth by state (protein, grain, fruit/vegetable) and includes the following:

- Cloth Napkin or paper napkin with cutlery
- Lunches that are perishable need to have ice-packs.
- Thermal containers must be used for warm food; classrooms are not equipped with microwave ovens.

### ***Family Supportive (Breastfeeding)***

Our school strives to support a healthy family life. In that effort, if you are nursing an infant and need a quiet place to do so, please let our front office staff know and we will happily accommodate you and your child.

## **Communication**

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As an “Eco School”, our primary form of communication is via email. If you have a change of address, e-mail, or phone number, update immediately through either the parent portal or by email to [yaneth@mhfcschool.com](mailto:yaneth@mhfcschool.com)

### ***Parent Portals***

The School uses cloud based School Management systems which parents may access for account balances, to arrange tuition payments and run reports. Access information is given at time of enrollment.

### ***Classroom Communication***

We value open and consistent communication regarding your child. During parent orientation, teachers will provide you with their contact information. In general, we use two primary forms:

- Contact via email at the address provided by the teacher during parent orientation.
- Call the front office and leave a message for your child's teacher; a timely response will be given.

Please avoid:

- Dropping by the classroom to speak to the teacher during the School day.
- Sending oral messages to the drive-through staff.

### ***Communication from School***

Quarterly Whole-School Newsletter: This newsletter will highlight school wide events, provide the community with useful information and resources and communicate school-wide information.

Monthly Classroom Updates: Classroom lead guides will provide classroom specific information to all families in their classroom.

Calendars: Whole-School Calendar (including PAV events): MRX Parent Portal and Webpage  
Classroom Specific Calendar: MRX Parent Portal & Monthly Classroom Update

Parent Conferences and Student: Lead Guides hold two required Parent Conferences per school year. Parents are free to schedule a meeting with guides any time that they want to discuss their child or the classroom. Conference reports are sent to the parents in advance of the scheduled parent/teacher conference.

E-mails: Each lead guide has a school e-mail address. Parents are encouraged to send e-mails concerning classroom questions; emails are responded to within 24 hours.

Useful Information is also available through:

Facebook page:

"Friend" our Facebook page & stay up-to-date with current events & beneficial tips!

Montessori House for Children: <https://www.facebook.com/MontessoriHouseforChildren>

Family Folder:

This folder is used for afterschool extra-curricular/miscellaneous communication; please check on a regular basis.

### ***School Closings & Other Emergencies***

Parents will be notified via email of School closings – information will also be posted on the website and updated through Facebook. In the event of a school wide emergency, parents will be sent a message via email.



**Proper lines of Communication**

For matters related to....

Contact:

School mission and goals, faculty, curriculum, academic counseling, school policies and procedures, safety and	<b>Head of School</b> Barbara Nelson <a href="mailto:barb@mhfcschool.com">barb@mhfcschool.com</a>
Tuition payment and billing	<b>Business Manager</b> Pam Nelson <a href="mailto:pam@mhfcschool.com">pam@mhfcschool.com</a>
Admissions, student records and transfer of records	<b>Admissions Coordinator</b> Yaneth Poo <a href="mailto:yaneth@mhfcschool.com">yaneth@mhfcschool.com</a>
Child’s progress, classroom activities and classroom procedures	<b>Classroom Lead Teacher</b> <a href="mailto:Teacher’s name@mhfcschool.com">Teacher’s name@mhfcschool.com</a> MRX – Parent Portal
Parent Association of Volunteers, School Observations, public relations, etc.	<b>Admin/Communications</b> Norma Ortega <a href="mailto:norma@mhfcschool.com">norma@mhfcschool.com</a>
Marketing, School Development, School/Community Events, web & social media	<b>Admin/Communications</b> Blanca Smith <a href="mailto:blanca@mhfcschool.com">blanca@mhfcschool.com</a>
Afterschool Enrichment/Program	<b>Before/Afterschool Coordinator</b> Neelo Surty <a href="mailto:neelo@mhfcschool.com">neelo@mhfcschool.com</a>
Menus, afterschool enrichment, parent resources, forms, newsletter, school calendar, etc.	<b>Website</b> <a href="http://www.montessorihouseforchildren.com">www.montessorihouseforchildren.com</a>

**Illness**

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**When to keep a child home**

We are not licensed to provide get-well care or to isolate children who cannot participate in school activities.

- If your child’s illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in the normal activities of the day (including outdoor play), your child should not be brought to school.
- If your child is required to have more than one breathing treatment/ medicine treatment per day.

If one or more of the following exits, your child may not attend school:

- The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities including outdoor play;
- The illness results in a greater need for care than caregivers can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children in care;

- The child has one or more of the following (unless a medical evaluation by a health-care professional indicates that you can include the child in the school’s activities):
  - An oral temperature of 101 degrees, ear temperature of 100 degrees, or armpit temperature of 100 degrees accompanied with behavior changes and other signs or symptoms of illness;
  - Symptoms or signs of severe illness such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea, two or more vomiting episodes within a 24 hr. period, rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, behavior changes, or other signs that the child may be severely ill.
  - Lice (live or nits)
  - Symptoms of Pink Eye (red, itchy eye(s) with discharge).
- A health-care professional has diagnosed the child with a communicable disease, and the child does not have medical documentation to indicate that the child is no longer contagious.

A complete list of communicable diseases, which would exclude a child (or employee) from attending school, can be found at: <https://www.dshs.texas.gov>

Should your child become ill during the course of the day, you will be notified immediately. You must arrange to have him/her picked up as soon as possible – we are NOT licensed to provide care for sick children. Your child will await your arrival in a safe area away from other children. If it is difficult for you to get to the School within a reasonable time (30 – 45 minutes), please designate another person to pick up your child.

Children sent home due to fever or vomiting/diarrhea must be symptom free and without need for fever reducing medicine for 24 hrs. before coming back to school. We will provide you an “Illness Report” letting you know what symptoms your child experienced at school. This note will explain the 24 hr. rule for returning to school.

If your child has been diagnosed with a communicable illness, please notify the School so that the other parents can be alerted to watch for symptoms.

***Medications***

The School administers prescription medications only. Over the counter medications will only be administered with written permission from your child’s physician.

Medications are to come into the School in their original container with prescription date, doctor’s name and child’s name. These are checked in at the front desk and a Medical Authorization Form filled out (also located on our web-site).

Any exceptions need to be accompanied by a written doctor’s note indicating dosage for the child.

Prescriptions and breathing treatments are given once daily and usually after lunch.

Medications, such as diaper rash crème etc., will be handled on a case basis.

### ***Head Lice***

Treatment: Parents/guardians should consult their physician, pharmacist or Texas Lice Squad for advice on the proper use of an approved medicated shampoo for the head lice.

Exclude from attendance: Yes

Re-admission Criteria: Student's scalp is free of lice and nits.

### ***Sunscreen & Insect Repellants***

If you would like your child to wear sunscreen or insect repellent at school, apply it to your child prior to sending them to school that morning. Those parents who wish for sunscreen or insect repellent to be reapplied in the afternoon are to provide the School with sunscreen and insect repellent. These items must be labeled with the child's first and last name and for safety reasons and will only be used on the child whose name is on the bottle. The second application will be applied in the afternoon, following lunch/rest period.

## **School Communities**

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### ***Developmental Distinctions***

Toddler and Early Childhood: Children age birth through age six are considered to be in their "first plane of development". During this period, children undergo substantial physical and psychological development. They immensely enjoy work (purposeful activity) using the concreted and sensorial materials found in the areas of the classroom. At this stage of development, children possess a natural ability to "absorb" all that is learned through their experiences within the classroom and 'construct themselves' as individuals.

Elementary: Children age six through twelve are considered to be in their "second plane of development". During this period, Dr. Montessori saw children change profoundly from the Early Childhood to the Elementary years, in how they approach each other and how they encounter their environment. This "new child" requires a new educational approach: Montessori Elementary programs build on prior Montessori year's foundation to produce successful, confident, and joyful students.

### **Elementary Community (Lower and Upper)**

The Montessori elementary curriculum was designed by Dr. Maria Montessori to give the child between the ages of six and twelve the opportunity to gain an understanding of how the universe came into being and the place of the human being in that great drama. The guide begins this through the presentation of five "great stories". These stories include the origin of the universe, the coming of life on Earth, the coming of human beings, the story of oral and written communication, and the story of numbers. These stories are a springboard from which the child begins to explore and appreciate how interesting and exciting learning can be.

The Montessori curriculum does not present isolated subjects. Rather, the child is presented with the whole, from which the parts emerge in a natural fashion. The stories are then referred to again and again as the child gains more and more knowledge. Awareness of the interrelatedness between all living things is what Dr. Maria Montessori called “Cosmic Education”. Children see themselves as part of a whole. They become aware of their relationships with other people and things, which brings them to an understanding of the responsibility they have to others.

### ***Elementary Environment***

#### Mathematics

Math curriculum is designed to help students develop: (1) a conceptual understanding of basic number facts and functions, the value of money, the meaning of time, and (2) computational and problem solving skills.

#### Language

Language curriculum is designed to help students develop: (1) the muscle control required to produce written language, (2) the listening and reading skills required to understand the tone, as well as the substance, of verbal and written communications, (3) the critical thinking required to analyze thoughts and ideas and, (4) the basic skills required to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing. Reading skills acquired at the primary level are continually enhanced through direct applications in the classroom such as literature, poetry, and book discussion groups.

Being a multi-cultural school, many languages are heard and spoken here. **Spanish is the ‘second language’ of the classroom**, with exposure to all languages of children and teachers included. Latin is also introduced in Lower Elementary.

#### Geometry

Geometry has been defined as an awareness of the relationship between man and the objects in his environment. Montessori saw the study of geometry as practical, based on the physical reality of our world. Exploration of these shapes, and their names and structure, provide the groundwork for later studies ranging outside the confines of the classroom.

#### Culture

Cultural Studies are designed to help students appreciate the impact of geography and technology upon the history of the human race. Montessori materials familiarize students with various land-forms, bodies of water, continents, countries, and capital cities. A historical perspective is reinforced through the development and use of time lines in conjunction with research projects on subjects such as “The Creation Story”, “Timeline of Life”, “Timeline of Early Humans” and “The Civilizations”.

#### Science

The Science curriculum is designed to (1) familiarize students with some of the fundamental principles of scientific investigation, (2) to strengthen their powers of observation and critical thinking, and (3) to

explore some of the basic concepts within the fields of biology, chemistry, physical science, astronomy and earth science.

### Fine Arts

The Fine Arts curriculum (art, theater and music) is designed to familiarize students with some of the great masters and to encourage the students to recognize the Fine Arts as a creative means for expressing one's observations, feelings, imagination, and personal experiences. Many of the class projects thematically relate to other academic areas. Elementary students also have weekly art class with an art instructor.

### Physical Fitness

Large running and sports activities occur in the recreation field daily. Elementary students also have weekly organized physical fitness with a physical fitness instructor.

### ***'Going Out' Trips***

"Going out" on trips are encouraged for the Elementary students. Although some outings may include the whole group, smaller group outings may be initiated under the guidance of the teacher. The purpose of "going out" is to foster independence by making connections with the world beyond their community to support ongoing classroom work. Parent chaperones may be necessary for trips involving travel.

### ***Parent Chaperone responsibilities:***

- Parents must read, agree to and sign forms for going out and/or transporting children.
- Parents must commit to escorting children from school to the field trip **and** from the field trip back to school. No side trips are permitted. Parent chaperones may not leave the group at the field trip site to return home.
- Parents must be in charge of and aware of the children they are responsible for at all times on the trip.
- Parents must follow the plan and guidelines established by the teachers prior to the trip.
- Parents are discouraged from bringing younger siblings on the field trip. They cannot give their attention fully to the students they are responsible for if they have another child in tow.

### ***What to bring to school:***

- Backpack (supplies are provided by the School)
- Water bottle (optional)
- Snack (optional)

### ***Typical Schedule***

6:30 - 8:00	Early morning care (breakfast available)
8:15 - 8:25	Drive-through arrivals
8:30 - 12:00	Uninterrupted work period (includes outdoor work/exploration)
12:00 – 3:00	Lunch/Outdoor Exploration/Specials*/work period
3:00	Academic-Day Dismissal
	Afterschool Enrichment Programs Begin (Independent providers & separate enrollment)

3:00 - 6:00 After-school care (Includes snack & outdoor exploration)

*\*Specials include nature education, art, physical fitness and Spanish. Schedules are provided at parent orientation.*

### **Early Childhood (EC)**

Our Early Childhood community is a three to four year program comprised of children age ~3 through 6 years of age. The mixed age grouping is intentionally designed to give children the unique opportunity to succeed in a miniature community, where mutual respect, caring, sharing and self-reliance can flourish. Older children are mentors and role models for the younger children. Through teaching and mentoring the younger children, their knowledge is reinforced.

Completing the cycle (through age six) is most important in both the development of the child and for the classroom dynamics. The final year within the Early Childhood Classroom (age 5 as of Sept. 1) is a monumental year and an extremely rewarding and joyous experience for the child. It not only serves as the year of culmination for all previous lessons, it allows the child to transfer his knowledge from the absorbent mind (concrete) to the rational mind (abstract). It also provides an opportunity for the child to embrace his new position of leadership and mentorship. Knowing how important his or her role is in their community builds self-esteem and confidence, which are primary ingredients for future success.

### ***EC Environment***

Early Childhood guides (teachers) prepare the classrooms to support a child's natural curiosity; encourage creativity and aid in cooperative learning. Children learn individually and in small groups. The child is free to choose work that has been introduced to him/her from the different areas of the classroom. Each classroom consists of the following areas:

#### Outdoor Environment

Our work continues into the outdoor classroom, where children have the opportunity to explore nature, gather materials for observation, garden and feed wildlife.

#### Practical Life

Exercises such as washing dishes, polishing objects, setting the table, watering plants and sewing are designed to develop self-reliance and respect for the environment. These exercises build and refine the child's sense of order, concentration, coordination and independence, which prepares the child for all other areas of the classroom. It is the foundation from which all other areas construct.

#### Sensorial

Activities in this area cultivate the senses and help the child become a keen observer. The sensorial materials develop visual, tactile, auditory and olfactory discrimination of differences. Another important aspect of this material is the preparation for more advanced skills in concepts of language, geometry and science.

### Language

The Montessori language curriculum includes all the elements of language: auditory, oral, mechanical, interpretive and grammar. There is great variety of materials in this area. The most classic of which include the sandpaper letters and moveable alphabet. Language development is embedded in the entire classroom (rather than an isolated subject) with plenty of opportunity for language in all areas of study.

### Math

Math materials are esthetically appealing, precise and simple. This is one of the most desired areas of the classroom. Concrete representation of abstract ideas and symbols help the child understand concepts and prepare him for future extensions of the work.

### Physical and Life Science

Children learn about the world through observation, experimentation and care of our environment. Young children love nature and are truly intrigued by its mysteries. We offer an abundance of hands-on opportunities for children to understand and appreciate science. Activities range from the study of animals, botany, rocks & minerals to simple science experiments and the outdoors – gardening and wildlife.

### Culture

Culture: The study of Culture and Geography start with the sensorial exploration of directionality, body awareness, weather and the calendar. From there we begin to study our world, starting with the sand paper globe, identifying land and water, then beginning to name continents, oceans and seas. The puzzle maps accentuate mapping skills and exploration of different countries and their cultures. Our Cultural studies encompass the traditions, holidays, music and food from all over the world. Our diverse community of students is always a positive and interesting advantage to our Cultural studies.

### Art, Music and Movement

The children are given an opportunity to develop their gross and fine motor skills through creative movement and art. Music is integral to our day, incorporated into much of our cultural work and often as a soothing background to our work period. Art encourages the natural desire to create. Our art program also emphasizes the *process* rather than the *product*, giving children more freedom to be creative. Music and Art have a known scientific connection to cognitive development, emotional health and academic achievement.

### ***Clothing***

Please label all clothing. We are not responsible for unlabeled clothing. The School has extra clothing should your child need a clean change of clothes. It is not necessary to send extra clothes; however, we are happy to accept clothes that you are no longer in need of to add to our school's supply.

### ***What to bring to school***

- Items of interest for "show & tell" every Friday
- Water Bottle (labeled)
- Framed family picture to display in the classroom

### ***Your Child's Work***

A majority of the work completed in the classroom cannot be sent home because their work involves using concrete materials, which remain on the shelves. This is especially true for younger children who are not able to write and/or read. We will conduct observation opportunities through the School year so that you will have the chance to see your child's work.

Older children who are working on extensions to the classroom materials will take homework that has been completed. 'Friday Folders' are used to send work home. Please help your children become responsible for returning their folder to school the following Monday.

### ***"Afternoon Worker"***

The afternoon work period (12:30 – 2:30) is open to students who exhibit a readiness for a longer workday. Prerequisites for entrance into extended-day class are:

- Strong concentration and focus
- Long attention span
- Controlled behavior
- Follows instructions well
- Sense of maturity

These attributes usually develop in a child around the age of 4 ½ to 5 yrs. When the teacher sees these developments in a child, she will extend an invitation to the child to attend the afternoon work period. Children who are "in-between" will be given the opportunity to engage in a quiet activity after a brief resting period.

### ***Reading Folder***

Children showing an interest in reading books will be sent home with a book. Please *encourage* your child to share the book with you but be careful to not *discourage* your child by forcing them to read it. Reading folders will be sent home once per week upon return of the previous book.

### ***Show & Tell***

Show and Tell is every Friday. Your child is always encouraged to bring an item of interest that will enhance our learning. Toys are not permitted.

### ***Typical Schedule***

6:30 - 8:00	Early morning care (breakfast available)
8:15 - 8:25	Drive-through arrivals
8:30 - 12:00	Uninterrupted work period (includes snack and outdoor work/exploration)
12:00 12:30	Lunch
12:30 2:30	Rest period for those who nap
12:30 1:00	Lunch clean up
1:00 2:30	Uninterrupted work period
2:30	Academic-Day Dismissal
2:30	Afterschool Enrichment Programs Begin (Independent providers & separate enrollment)
2:30 6:00	After-school care (Includes snack & outdoor exploration)



## **Toddler Community**

The toddler community provides the child with an atmosphere of freedom and respect; where his blossoming independence is encouraged. Children are given the freedom to make choices and to explore interests. While learning to care for one's self, the community and the environment the child will develop and practice skills that serve as the foundation and preparation for life.

The Guide's role in the community is to follow and observe the child; discovering his needs and interests as they are revealed. The Guide also offers assistance in a way that *helps the child to help himself*.

It is our hope that every child will leave the toddler community with a foundation of confidence, strength and independence upon which he will construct his future self.

## ***Transition into the Toddler Community***

We suggest the following schedule for introducing our community to both parents and child:

1. "Home Visit" - The purpose of the Home Visit is to establish the child/guide relationship, sharing of information about the toddler environment and a time to learn more about your child's history and behavior patterns.
2. "School Visit" – We ask the parent and child to visit the classroom for about a half hour as the child becomes familiar the new environment.
3. Gradual Transition - Over a period of (about) three to five days, the transition occurs with the child staying from just a short time in the morning to the full schedule by the end of the week.

*To ease the transition it is suggested that the child have experienced some separating from parents with either family or friends before entering the Toddler Community.*

## ***Toileting***

Children actively participate in the toileting process. The child is encouraged to remove his own clothing and diaper and is offered the use of the toilet at every diaper change. This is the beginning stage of self-toileting. Toilet learning occurs at each child's individual pace. A conference between the parents and the guide will be scheduled to discuss the switch to underwear once the child exhibits these signs of readiness:

- Continued success while sitting on the toilet
- Diaper stays dry for longer periods of time.

Once your child is wearing cloth-training pants (underwear), we ask that parents do the same at home. Putting a child back into a diaper sends mixed messages and impedes the progress that the child wishes to make.

## ***Privacy and body awareness***

Our practices are an extension of these Montessori and developmental views:

- Bodies are beautiful and natural. Children are given proper language for their body parts and have an active role in process of undressing, dressing and toileting.
- Learning to dress/undress and use the toilet includes being without clothes.
- It is respectful to a toddler to help them be clean after toileting and playing in the sand and/or mud. Summer-time outdoor play may be followed by an outdoor shower, as needed before returning to the classroom for dressing.

- The toddler classrooms are ***their own world (home)*** when at school, adults who must enter should do so with respect and understanding that they are in another's place – a child's space.

### ***Clothing***

**Please label all clothing. We are not responsible for unlabeled clothing.** Upon arrival children change from their home clothes to their school clothes, which consist of a t-shirt and cotton underpants (or diaper). Before going home for the day they change back into their home clothes.

When choosing clothing for your child, please consider the following, as it should:

- Allow for freedom of movement and be comfortable.
- Be easy to put on and remove: easy zippers to manipulate, sleeves without tight elastic, only one layer of clothing, pants easy to unbutton, large neck openings.
- Shoes should have rubber soles and easy fasteners (Velcro) or slip on. Your child's foot should fit into the shoe with minimal effort.
- Please do not send "onesies" (shirt and underwear in a single unit)
- Three changes of clothes should be kept at school at all times

### ***What to Bring to School***

For your child's first day of school, please provide the following supplies:

- 3 cotton t-shirts (one size larger than the child normally wears) clearly labeled and in a gallon sized zip lock bag
- 1 dozen (Full-Day) or ½ dozen (Academic-Day) Gerber cloth-training pants sized 2T, per semester, or as needed. (These are kept and laundered at school)
- 1 package of disposable diapers as needed
- 3-4 pictures of your child and his family (pets and grandparents too)

### ***What not to bring to School***

- Sippy cup
- Pacifier
- Blankets and/or pillow (bed linens are provided by the School)
- Pull-ups (cloth training underwear are used during the toilet learning process)
- Stuffed animals or toys

### ***Toddler Environment***

#### Entrance Area

The area just inside the classroom door is the symbolic point of separation for the parent and the child. The child exchanges kisses with mom or dad and is assured that he will be picked up later. The child is greeted by his teacher and proceeds to the cubby area for changing into school day clothes.

#### Bathroom

This area is different in that there is not a changing area but instead a bathroom with one or two toilets. Communal underpants are stored here. A child sized sink is just outside the room with a supply of soap and single use washcloths for drying hands.

#### Work Area

This area is divided into several sections. It is the largest in the environment and includes the language area, practical life materials, manipulative and expressive materials.

### Dining Area

Social exploration takes place here and children eat family style at a communal dining table. Teachers eat with the children modeling grace and courtesy. Children serve others as well as themselves.

### Sleeping Area

Sleeping mats are stored and brought out at nap time. Linens & blankets are provided by the School and are laundered weekly or as needed.

### Outdoor Area

The toddler environment opens directly onto a private and secure butterfly garden with herbs, bird feeders and play equipment. The early impressions of natural beauty, observations of living things, the joy of being outdoors and being able to easily view it from within the classroom – all give a contact with nature that no image in a book or description can ever duplicate. In time, as the toddler starts to see beyond self and his/her own needs, they will want to participate in the care of what they have come to love. From appreciation comes the desire to work with indoor plants, gardening and feeding wildlife.

### ***Typical Schedule***

6:30 – 8:00	Breakfast and Early morning arrivals
8:15 – 8:25	Drive through Arrivals
8:30 - 11:30	Uninterrupted work period (includes snack & outdoor exploration)
11:30	Lunch
12 - 2:30	Rest period
2:30	Academic-Day Dismissal
2:45 – 3:00	Full-day children arise, toileting
3:00 – 6:00	Afternoon work period (includes snack & outdoor exploration)
	Food preparation & snack
	Outdoor exploration ~ 30 minutes
	Afternoon group time (songs & stories)
	Change into home clothes

## **Classroom Life**

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### ***Homework***

Generally speaking, *homework* refers to academic work. However, we Montessori educators like to broaden the term: all work that is done at home is *homework*.

We hope that all children leaving school for the day are given time to both relax and be responsible for the activities surrounding home life.

The practice of “reading” greatly influences a students’ academic success. For our youngest children, parents model a love for reading by reading stories with their children and incorporating specific

“reading time” for the family. Children can also be encouraged to “read by picture”, practicing storytelling and imagination. Those children who have skills necessary for early reading (emergent readers) will be sent home books that are at their level – helping to make this special time successful for the child.

Homework expectations for the Elementary Community *may* include the following:

- Home and family responsibilities
- Practice daily reading
- Memorization of weekly spelling words (according to the “new rule”) and math facts.
- Classroom work will be assigned every Monday and due each Friday. Throughout each day, the students are responsible for time management and meeting their responsibilities.
- Projects of the child’s own choosing, either related to topics being explored in class or of their own interest.

*Please note: Unfinished classroom assignments will carry-over to the next day. Schoolwork is not to be worked on during parent pick-up time or while parents are waiting.*

### ***Missing Materials***

Any small object you may find in your child’s lunchbox, pockets, or folders, regardless of how insignificant it may seem (or who he says gave it to him), should be returned as it is significant to the classroom.

It is quite normal for children to pocket things, especially tiny or unusual items, so we hope you will stress only the need to return it and not mention the child’s act of removing it.

If your child goes through a period of pocketing, please help us during that time by checking carefully each day. Let him/her help you check and seal the objects in an envelope and write “for the School” on it. This may also be a sign of love for his school, or a need for security (not theft at a young age).

### ***Student Assessment***

We provide a qualitative evaluation of a child’s performance that takes into consideration the whole child, including strengths, limitations, and social, physical, and creative achievements; the education your child receives at our school extends far beyond basic skills in math and language. Traditional grades provide a quantitative evaluation of a child’s work. Grading creates an environment of winners and losers, undermining the spirit of cooperation and community. Research indicates that grading actually reduces creativity, as students aim for work that will be safe and acceptable to the adult. And therein lies a third powerful reason not to use traditional grades: the children begin to work to please the adult rather than themselves, to work for the extrinsic rather than the intrinsic reward. For these reasons, Montessori House for Children and Elementary do not “grade” children.

Beginning in the third year of Lower Elementary, children participate in a standardized achievement test. The school sends parents the results. However, we believe a child has multiple intelligences, not just those measured by achievement tests. And though we regard these tests as a reflection of how your child compares to other children in these areas, we don’t believe these tests provide a complete

assessment of your child's strengths or limitations. The areas of achievement and of difficulty noted by the staff in your child's final evaluation will contain far more valuable information about your child's abilities and unique talents.

### ***Parent/Teacher Conferences***

In the fall and spring of each year, you will have the opportunity to meet with your child's teacher to discuss her observations and recordings of your child's progress at parent/teacher conferences. The teachers use [Montessori Records Express](#) software to keep extensive records of lessons given, work practiced and mastered and future lessons planned for each child. Anytime throughout the year, if you have a question about your child's progress, please call the teacher for a discussion.

### ***Produce Basket***

Toddler and EC parents are asked to participate in the produce/flower basket rotation for children to use for morning food prep activities, snack and flower arranging. Family involvement will help to enrich our children's appreciation for good nutrition. Participation is voluntary and rotational. Elementary students plan for and prepare meals on a regular basis. Volunteer parents may help in purchasing supplies needed and/or in preparing the meals.

### ***Laundry***

Laundry of all bed linens and toddler training pants is done on-site, weekly or more often as needed. The children fold all laundry; this gives them a sense of belonging and responsibility to the classroom community.

### ***Rest Period***

MHFC provides sleeping mats, linens and a blanket. These are laundered and sanitized on a weekly basis or more often as needed. Every child has different sleep needs. Children are required to have a rest period but are not forced to sleep.

### ***Celebration of Life (Birthday)***

Birthday Party Invites – Invitations are not to go into the classroom and are not to be handed out by staff. Invitations can go directly into the family folders or sent via e-mail. Class directories are available through the parent portal.

Balloons, class decorations, goodie bags, paid entertainment and high sugar snacks are not allowed in School.

Elementary Communities celebrate birthdays through a "Me Box". On the day of their birthday celebration, your child will sit at the head of the class circle and share their "Me Box" with the other children, teachers and attending family. Some things children have brought in their "Me Boxes" include: objects that are important or meaningful to them, written lists of things they like, pictures of important people in their lives, or pictures of places they have been or would like to go. We encourage you to let your child create, decorate and fill their own "Me Box" in whatever way they choose.

Early Childhood Communities celebrate birthdays through the "Celebration of Life". The birthday child holds the globe and walking around a "sun" as a story of his/her life is read. This is a lovely and natural way to symbolically experience the passing of years. Each class has its own variation of this theme. Please talk to your child's teacher ahead of time, if you wish to participate. Pictures, simple outline

highlighting an event for each year and a low sugar snack/fruit tray may be brought to celebrate the occasion.

Toddler Communities may bring a low sugar snack to share with their class and we also suggest donating a book or other item to the class in honor of their child's Birthday.

You are welcome, if you like, to bring a small "treat" for all of the children to share after your child's birthday celebration. ***Please remember that this is a low-sugar facility -- cake, cupcakes, donuts and other sugary treats are not allowed.*** Fruits, vegetables, or a low-sugar dish representing your family's culture is acceptable. If you are not sure about a certain food item, please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher.

### ***Cultural & Community Events***

Cultural/Community events involving parents are integral to the life of the School. Many of these celebrations revolve around the activities of individual classes, while others bring the larger community together. Whether small and informal or organized for the whole school, celebrations and rituals highlight and affirm the values and vision of our school.

### ***Study of Living Things***

At School students study, observe and care for an assortment of plants, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds, fish and mammals.

### ***Water Play***

Children enjoy many aspects of water, from actual work in the indoor classroom and in our "outdoor classroom"/ (watering gardens) to playing in sprinklers and water tables. For the safety of your child, we will limit water activities to aforementioned uses and will not have wading pools on school premises.

## **Health & Safety**

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### ***Building Security***

Our school has two security systems. The first is a badge that allows entry into the foyer of the building, the second is a locked door that opens to the classrooms/common areas.

At all times except drive through times, you should use your badge. The doorbell is primarily for visitors. If you misplace your badge, the School will issue a new one for a fee of \$10/badge.

All visitors and volunteers must be checked-in through the front office and are accompanied from there by a staff member. Family members (other than parents) who wish to visit must have parental permission and should be arranged in advance. We ask all families to please keep in mind that when a child sees a family member at school, they think it's time to go home.

### ***Annual Inspection***

Building inspections are done each May by local county, fire and safety inspectors.

### ***Daily Inspection***

An admin person conducts grounds inspection on a daily basis. However, all employees are responsible for reporting anything that looks unsafe or possess a potential safety hazard. If you encounter a hazard, remove it and notify admin immediately.

### ***Training and Drills***

In accordance with State law, fire drills are conducted monthly. Severe weather and volatile person drills are conducted once every three months. Building evacuation drills to our secondary safe meeting place is held at least annually. All students and staff are required to participate in these mandated drills. The Office Staff will maintain a record of these drills. Staff/faculty will receive training on the School's Emergency Plan implementation, including their respective assigned emergency response functions and use of supplies in the disaster kits.

### ***Staff Orientation to the Emergency Preparedness Plan***

All employees are oriented to the Emergency Plan at least annually. Orientation includes a review of employees' roles during an emergency and our emergency procedures.

### ***Accidents and Emergencies***

Should your child be injured while at School we will advise you as soon as possible. Our first and immediate concern will be to care for your child. Depending upon the severity of the injury, you will be contacted and consulted about the procedures you want followed (doctor or hospital etc.). All of our staff members have been trained and certified in both First Aid and CPR.

All significant incidents, accidents, injuries and illnesses will be documented on a "Incident/Illness Report" and the parents will receive a copy to be signed; one copy will remain at school and the bottom copy will go home with the parent.

### ***Policy on Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting***

State law and licensing requirements state that childcare personnel are required to report immediately to the police or Child Protective Services (CPS) if they suspect child abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Please visit the corkboard for information and warning signs that a child may be a victim of abuse or neglect. All Employees are required to undergo annual training on laws regarding childcare professionals and the duty to report suspected child abuse & neglect. This training also includes warning signs of abuse & neglect and how to report to Child Protective Services. (CPS)

If you are the parent of a child who is a victim of abuse or neglect, please call the Child Abuse Hotline for assistance and intervention. Child Abuse Hotline (800) 252-5400 or visit [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us)

### ***Gang-Free Zone***

Texas House Bill 2086 requires all schools and child care centers to notify parents/guardians that gang related criminal activity or anyone engaging in organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of a child care center is in violation of the law and is subject to increased penalty under state law.

### ***Local Licensing Office***

(713) 940-3009

1110 Ave. G (271-6) Rosenberg, TX. 77471

The HOS has available a copy of the minimum standards for your review. The School's most recent Licensing inspection report is posted on the cork board in the middle room and can also be found at:

[www.dfps.state.tx.us/](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/)

### ***Travel Alert Status***

As you travel abroad please be aware of health and safety precautions that could prevent the spread of infectious disease. The America Red Cross advises travelers coming back into the State from SARS affected areas to stay home from work or school for at least 10 days in order to monitor any symptoms that may or may not appear. This procedure may also help prevent the spread of other contagious diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria, influenza and severe diarrhea disease. To find out more about Travel Advisories and health visit the World Heal Organization's website at [www.who.int](http://www.who.int) or the Center for Disease Control at [www.cdc.com.gov](http://www.cdc.com.gov).

### ***Smoking***

Smoking is not permitted on school property or at school related functions.

## **School Emergency**

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### **MONTESSORI HOUSE SCHOOL EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN**

The first responsibility of staff in an emergency evacuation or relocation is to **MOVE THE CHILDREN TO A DESIGNATED SAFE AREA OR ALTERNATE SHELTER.**

#### **TYPES OF EMERGENCY RESPONSES AND PLAN:**

#### **EVACUATION - Fire Alarm Sounds**

Immediate situation rendering inside of building unsafe; safety can be sought outdoors (example: fire).

- Caregiver in charge will take the clipboard with attendance.
- Check restrooms and close doors.
- Line up and count to ensure all children are present.
- Children age 24 months and younger will have additional administrative staff member present to assist in moving to a designated safe area during evacuation, relocation or sheltering/lock-down.



- Children older than 24 months, with limited mobility or who need additional assistance, will have additional administrative staff member present to assist in moving to a designated safe area.
- Evacuate the building, to the designated safe area (inside school's fenced playground, along Lakemont Bend Ln.)
- Take attendance using face/name recognition.
- Confirm all are present (green sign), if a child is missing (red sign).
- Admin (person in charge) takes the RED emergency bag (located next to the first aid kits), which contains parent and emergency contact telephone numbers, allergy information, and authorization for emergency treatment and first aid kit.
- Approval must be received before reentering building.

### **RELOCATION - Fire Alarm Sounds**

Imminent situation rendering inside and outside of building unsafe (example: flooding).

- Caregiver in charge will take the clipboard with attendance.
- Check restrooms and close doors.
- Line up and count to ensure all children are present.
- Children age 24 months and younger will have additional administrative staff member present to assist in moving to a designated safe area during evacuation, relocation or sheltering/lock-down.
- Children older than 24 months, with limited mobility or who need additional assistance, will have additional administrative staff member present to assist in moving to a designated safe area.
- Evacuate the building, to the designated safe area (MHFC will relocate to MHES and vice versa.)
- Take attendance using face/name recognition.
- Confirm all are present (green sign), if a child is missing (red sign).
- Admin (person in charge) takes the RED emergency bag (located next to the first aid kits), which contains parent and emergency contact telephone numbers, allergy information, and authorization for emergency treatment and first aid kit.
- Approval must be received before reentering building.

### **SHELTERING - 3 Whistle Blows**

Immediate or imminent situation rendering partial areas of indoor space unsafe and leaving or exiting the School unsafe (example: tornado).

- Caregiver in charge will call all students and employees into buildings.
- Caregiver in charge will take the clipboard with attendance.
- Children age 24 months and younger will have additional administrative staff member present to assist to move to a designated safe area during evacuation, relocation or sheltering/lock-down.
- Children older than 24 months, with limited mobility or who need additional assistance, will have additional administrative staff member present to assist to move to a designated safe area.
- Take shelter in designated safe areas & take attendance using face/name recognition.
- Confirm all are present (green sign), if a child is missing (red sign).
- If outside and unable to reach shelter indoors, lie flat, ideally in a ditch or depression.

- Admin (person in charge) takes the RED emergency bag (located next to the first aid kits), which contains parent and emergency contact telephone numbers, allergy information, and authorization for emergency treatment and first aid kit.
- Approval must be received from person in charge before leaving safe area.

### **LOCK-DOWN - “Lock-Down” is announced**

Immediate or imminent situation rendering partial areas of indoor space unsafe and leaving or exiting the School unsafe (example: endangering person on premises or in area).

- Caregiver in charge will summon students and employees into designated safe areas within the School.
- Children age 24 months and younger will have additional administrative staff member present to assist to move to a designated safe area during evacuation, relocation or sheltering/lock-down.
- Children older than 24 months, with limited mobility or who need additional assistance, will have additional administrative staff member present to assist to move to a designated safe area.
- Turn off lights, sit on floor and remain quiet.
- Do not leave a classroom, office, or building without approval from the police or HOS.
- Do not attempt to confront or subdue intruder.

### **IN THE EVENT OF FIRE OR EMERGENCY REQUIRING CAMPUS EVACUATION, ALL STUDENTS WILL BE WALKED TO THE SECONDARY BUILDING SHELTER LOCATION, AS EVACUATION SITE**

Secondary Safe Meeting Places:

Montessori House for Children  
20625 Lakemont Bend Lane  
Richmond, TX 77407

Montessori House Elementary School  
7233 S. Mason Rd.  
Richmond, TX 77407

### **HOW WILL THE SCHOOL COMMUNICATE DURING AN EMERGENCY:**

- **FOR FIRE OR EVACUATION**: Admin will call 911. School admin will use cell phones if power is out or if school has evacuated outside the building.
- **FOR POLICE OR EMS SERVICES**: Admin will call 911. School admin will use cell phones if power is out or if school has evacuated outside the building.
- **FOR HEALTH EMERGENCY**: Admin will call 911.
- **ROSENBERG OFFICE OF DFPS**: Admin will call 832-595-3000
- **PARENTS**: If possible, parents will be notified by e-mail and we will leave a message on the answering machine in the School office. Caregiver will use their classroom lists to make calls by cellular phone should there not be enough time to notify parents by e-mail or change the message on the answering machine. If cellular phones are inoperable, the children will remain

with their caregivers at the designated safe area until a parent or approved adult arrives to retrieve them.

**NON-EMERGENCY OR AFTER HOURS CONTACT NUMBERS:**

- SHERIFF'S OFFICE: 281-342-6116
- SCHOOL HEAD OF SCHOOL : 713-875-3347
- SCHOOL OWNER: 281-468-0160

**DFPS HAS THE OWNERS NUMBERS ON FILE:**

BOB NELSON: (281) 610-6585

PAMELA NELSON: (281) 468-0160

**HOW WE CONTINUE CARE FOR THE CHILDREN UNTIL EACH CHILD HAS BEEN RELEASED:**

Children will be kept safe and engaged until the released from evacuation, relocation or sheltering/lock-down. Activities will include storybooks, songs and games.

**HOW WE WILL REUNIFY THE CHILDREN WITH THEIR PARENTS AS THE EVACUATION, RELOCATION OR SHELTERING/LOCK-DOWN IS LIFTED:**

Whether we are in our designated safe meeting area or in our building, we will ONLY release children to those whose names are on the approved pick-up lists provided by the parents and when we have received advisement from the Fort Bend County Emergency Services.

**DISMISSAL OF CHILDREN DURING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS:**

**On walk to safe meeting place:** Once we are on route to our Safe Meeting Place, no child will be released until we have reached our destination. A parent's responsibility, should she/he arrive during our safe movement to our site, is to assist in whatever may be needed. We will release children only when we have received advisement from the Fort Bend County Emergency Services.

**Sheltering:** Should we need to 'shelter in place' or 'lock down,' no parents will be allowed in or out of the building until we receive advisement from the Fort Bend Emergency Services (listen to the radio).

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Parents will be notified, in writing, of any policy change, or change made to the Parent Handbook.

*Thank you for choosing Montessori House and Elementary School for your child's education.*