



## Family Handbook

South Huntsville Campus (S. Hsv)  
15975 Chaney Thompson Road  
Huntsville, AL 35803  
(256) 881-3790

Hampton Cove Campus (HC)  
284 Miller Lane  
Owens Cross Roads, AL 35763  
(256) 534-6469

**[www.montessorihuntsville.org](http://www.montessorihuntsville.org)**

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### **Mission Statement**

The Montessori School of Huntsville (MSH) guides children to be independent learners, critical thinkers, and tomorrow's leaders while preparing them for a life of purpose, integrity, and academic accomplishment.

### **Nondiscrimination Statement**

The Montessori School of Huntsville shall not discriminate, endorse, or affiliate with those who discriminate on the basis of age, religion, genetics, race, creed, ethnicity, color, disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or national origin.

### **Vision for MSH**

The Montessori School of Huntsville (MSH) will be well-known in the community as an accredited provider of quality Montessori education for Toddlers through Adolescents. MSH will operate as the leading exemplar of Montessori education in Huntsville. We will provide an environment that nurtures children to reach their fullest potential and teaches them to love learning, while creating a high-quality, enriching environment for staff and a welcoming, open partnership with parents and families.

### **MSH Core Values**

Our guiding principles are at the heart of our daily work with children and are the foundation of our mission and vision. As members of the Montessori School of Huntsville faculty and staff, we hold these core values:

Deep and abiding love for the child

- We meet each child with curiosity and a belief in their possibility. We trust that the child will reveal their greatest potential through engagement in an environment strengthened by secure, loving bonds.

Conscious community

- We create a welcoming, open partnership with families and the larger community that embraces difference and celebrates connection.

Educators as leaders and innovators

- We are committed to the Montessori pedagogy and as such, we are dedicated to reflective practice and continuous improvement informed by current research and best practices.

## **Contact Information**

### **Head of School: Dr. Rebecca Duke**

head@montessorihuntsville.org

(256) 384-8382 Google Voice

### **MSH School Board Chair**

chair@montessorihuntsville.org

### **Website:**

www.montessorihuntsville.org

### **Classroom Emails:**

Toddler S.Hsv: shsvtoddler@montessorihuntsville.org

Toddler HC: hctoddler@montessorihuntsville.org

Primary 1 S. Hsv: primary1@montessorihuntsville.org

Primary 2 S. Hsv: primary2@montessorihuntsville.org

Primary HC: hcprimary@montessorihuntsville.org

Lower Elementary 1: lowerel1@montessorihuntsville.org

Lower Elementary 2: lowerel2@montessorihuntsville.org

Upper Elementary: upperel@montessorihuntsville.org

### **Administrative Emails**

Front Office S.Hsv and HC: office@montessorihuntsville.org

Business Office: accounting@montessorihuntsville.org

## **Welcome**

We welcome you to the MSH community where children, families and faculty work together to create a nurturing learning environment guided by Dr. Maria Montessori's vision for world peace through the development of the child--physically, socially, intellectually, and emotionally.

## **The Structure of MSH**

The Montessori School of Huntsville was founded by Imogen Stooke Wheeler and Miriam Hoyle Gates in 1965. It operates under the auspices of the Montessori Society of Huntsville, a non-profit corporation formed by the founders of the school. When your child is accepted into MSH, you become a member of the Society. The school is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, elected by the Society members. Board of Directors meeting minutes are posted electronically in Parent Square for families to view following each meeting.

Two MSH Society meetings are held each year--one in fall and one in spring. When you sign the Handbook Verification Form, you agree to attend both of these meetings. The primary purpose of the fall meeting is to introduce the Board members and answer questions about the school. At the spring meeting, new Board members are elected, if necessary, and a presentation about the school's current strategic goals is shared with families.

MSH is proud to be an accredited school through the Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS) and Cognia (formerly Advanc-Ed). MSH is a Full Member of the American Montessori Society (AMS), a national organization that certifies guides and evaluates schools to ensure they follow Montessori principles to maintain the highest professional standards.

Our Early Childhood and Lower Elementary programs are licensed by the Alabama Department of Human Resources, requiring our compliance with the *Child Care Licensing and Performance Standards for Day Care and Nighttime Centers*. A copy of the DHR Standards is available for your inspection in the office, and the inspection report is posted.

## **A Word About Our Non-Profit Status**

As a non-profit, 501(c)(3) corporation, donations you make to the school for which you do not receive goods or services in return, may be considered tax-deductible. Your taxes or employment benefit plan may require our Employer Identification Number **(EIN): 63-0504958**.

## Admission Policies and Procedures

Children from 18 months of age through eighth grade are eligible for admission to MSH. Because the Montessori curriculum is uniquely designed based on interdependent phases of development, we encourage enrollment at an early age for maximum benefit. Enrollment is granted to children at MSH with an understanding that the family intends to commit to the duration of the curriculum cycle in which the child is enrolled, i.e. 3-5 year cycle for children in early childhood programs, a 6-year cycle for children in the elementary programs, and a 2-3 year cycle in the adolescent community.

1. **Virtual admission appointment:** To initiate the admission process, families will schedule a 20-30 minute virtual appointment with our Admission Director between September 1 and December 15 each year. Families who apply during this application period receive priority consideration for available openings for the upcoming school year. We recommend that families review ahead of this meeting the current year Family Handbook and Calendar available on our website.
2. **Submit application and nonrefundable \$150 application fee:** An application packet will be emailed to interested families following the admission interview. The completed application, fee, and requested records as applicable (see below) are required for families to move forward with the next step in the application process.
3. **Student records/transcripts:**
  - a. **Complete the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) and submit to the Admissions Director.** (included in the application packet for **toddler and primary applicants** only) The ASQ-3 is a screening tool that provides a snapshot of your child's development. The ASQ-3 supports our ability to individualize children's education and to evaluate availability of resources to meet each child's needs.
  - b. **Student Records:** If your child is currently attending another school, please request their records to be sent to the Montessori School of Huntsville ATTN: Admission 15975 Chaney Thompson Rd. Huntsville, AL 35803.
  - c. **Letters of Introduction:** For children rising to **1st-8th grades**, we request a Letter of Introduction from the child's current or most recent teacher.
  - d. **Immunization Record:** A current Alabama Immunization Record must be on file for your child's first day of school. Delays in submission of this document will postpone the start date for your child and tuition will not be prorated for days missed.
4. **Child and family interview:** Families who apply during the application period will be contacted between January and February to schedule the child and family interview. Interviews are conducted between February and March. For families who apply later in the year, interviews will be scheduled following receipt of the application, fee, and records.
5. **Notification of enrollment status:** Assuming that families, guides, and the administrator agree that enrollment is recommended, your child will be assigned

- to a class or, if enrollment is full, placed in the waiting pool for the intended program.
6. **Completion of admission documents and enrollment agreement:** Admission paperwork and the enrollment contract will be sent to the email address provided via Transparent Classroom, our online record keeping system. All admission and financial documents must be completed in full and signed before your child will be able to attend their first day of school. A supply fee is due on March 1 or at the time of enrollment if enrollment occurs after March 1.
  7. **Student Trial day:** A student trial day is scheduled for rising 1st-8th grade students.

Enrollment in MSH is renewed annually, with the student records updated and fees required each year. Currently enrolled families have priority registration in the month of December to secure their place for the next year before enrollment is opened to the community at large on January 1.

### **Program Eligibility by Age**

The Montessori School of Huntsville offers programs for children 18 months through eighth grade. Applicants to the school may be admitted to our programs based on the following ages:

#### **Toddler 18 through 36 months**

Children may enroll in the Toddler program on or after they turn 18 months of age. Children in the Toddler program must move to the Primary program by 36 months of age.

#### **Primary 2½ through 6 years of age**

All new-to-MSH children must be 3 by September 1 to be eligible for entry into the Primary program. Children moving up from the Toddler program may begin the Primary program as early as 2½ years of age and remain in the Primary program typically through their sixth birthday. The capstone year of the Primary program is referred to as the Kindergarten year. Children must be 5 by September 1 to be considered as a Kindergarten student.

#### **Lower Elementary 6 through 9 years of age**

Children may join the Lower Elementary classroom at 6 years of age. Children must be 6 by September 1 to be eligible for the Lower Elementary program.

#### **Upper Elementary 9 through 12 years of age**

Children may join the Upper Elementary at 9 years of age.

#### **Adolescent Community 12 through 15 years of age**

### **Adjusting to a New Program**

An adjustment period is expected for all newly enrolled children and children bridging from one program to the next. All toddler and new-to-MSH primary children (18 months



- Kindergarten) will have a phasing-in week at the beginning of each school year, or upon entry into either program midyear. Children returning to the primary classroom in their second, third, or fourth year will attend their regular schedule from the first day of school. Children returning to the toddler program who attend on a 12-month schedule will attend their regular schedule from the first day of school.

The phasing-in process is designed to assist children with settling into the new environment. Each child is different, and one may need more time than another to feel comfortable in a new setting. Your child's guide will contact you to set up an abbreviated schedule that allows your child to transition smoothly into the new classroom environment. Please note that the phasing-in schedule may be extended beyond the first week of school if it is determined to be in the child's best interest. Your child's guide will communicate and work with your family to ensure your child's success transitioning into their new classroom. Good communication between you and your child's guide will smooth the transition.

**Morning and afternoon extended care are not available during the phase-in week for new-to-MSH toddler and primary students.**

**Children bridging from the toddler to primary program who were previously enrolled in the full day toddler program will be considered on a case by case basis for morning and/or afternoon care during the phasing-in week.**

While the phasing-in period lasts just one week, many children need anywhere from four to six weeks to adjust to the new environment, caregivers, and routines. When a child has difficulty transitioning into a new environment, families and guides will collaborate to develop a plan of support including, but not limited to interventions, accommodations, schedule adjustments, and outside evaluations.

### **Waiting Pool**

The Montessori School of Huntsville reserves the right to accept applicants based on the following priorities: (1) Siblings of currently enrolled families (2) Children of MSH staff (3) Children of previous MSH Society members and legacies. Within each of these enrollment categories, enrollment is offered according to longevity on the waiting pool and availability of age-related space.

If the class is full, your child's name will be placed in the waiting pool upon receipt of the application fee. Once a spot becomes available your family will be notified, and you will be given three business days to respond before we move to the next family.

If the spot offered is accepted, you will have one week to complete a contract and pay all applicable fees.

## School Policies

### Arrivals and Departures

Operating hours for the current academic year are as follows:

- S. Hsv 7:30 a.m.- 5:00p.m.
- HC 7:30 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.

### Your Right to Visit MSH Campus

You have a right to visit our campus at any time and ask to see your child. Parents may not be permitted inside of classrooms but may observe from the classroom window or visit with your child in the hallway.

### Late Arrivals or Pickups Outside of Dismissal Times

We ask that you make every attempt to drop off and pick up your child during our scheduled drop off and pick up windows. Please consider this when planning appointments for your child. Families who arrive late will need to call the campus to arrange for someone to meet them outside to escort their child to class. Families who need to pick up their child outside of our pick up windows must contact the administrative team and their child's teacher to make arrangements to have a staff member escort their child to them. The best way to contact the campus is to email [office@montessorihuntsville.org](mailto:office@montessorihuntsville.org) and cc your child's classroom team. **Please do not use Parent Square to communicate early pick ups or any other information that is time sensitive.** Email is the preferred way to reach our faculty and staff. Please plan additional time in the event we are unable to meet you promptly upon your arrival. Families of children who are enrolled in school day or full day schedules are encouraged to arrange to drop off or pick up their child during the half day dismissal window (12:15-12:30).

### Late Pickups

Children who are not picked up by our stated closing time at each campus will incur a late-pick up charge of \$5 for the first 5 minutes and \$5 per minute thereafter. The fee will be invoiced to your school account and paid directly to the staff members who stayed late with your child.

### Sign-in & Sign-out

All children must be signed in and out every day. We maintain daily records of each child's attendance, as required by our licensing organization. Upon signing your child out, we ask that you gather their belongings and exit the school premises. Children who have been signed out for the day are not permitted to remain on the playgrounds, in classrooms, or other areas on campus including the front awning and parking lot. Families may use the Parent Square platform to schedule play dates or other gatherings off campus after children have dismissed.

**We will not release your child to anyone who is not authorized for pick up on the "Admission Addendum" Form unless we have written authorization from you for that specific date.** A parent/guardian must submit an email or written note to authorize a one-time pick up by an adult not listed on the child's Admission Addendum in

Transparent Classroom. Families should only add adults to their child's Admission Addendum Form who are able to have unrestricted access to their child. Unfamiliar persons will be asked to show a photo ID before a child is released to them. You may email your classroom team and cc [office@montessorihuntsville.org](mailto:office@montessorihuntsville.org) to authorize someone for pick up.

**Please do not send Parent Square messages to provide pick up authorization.**

### HC Arrival and Dismissal Schedule

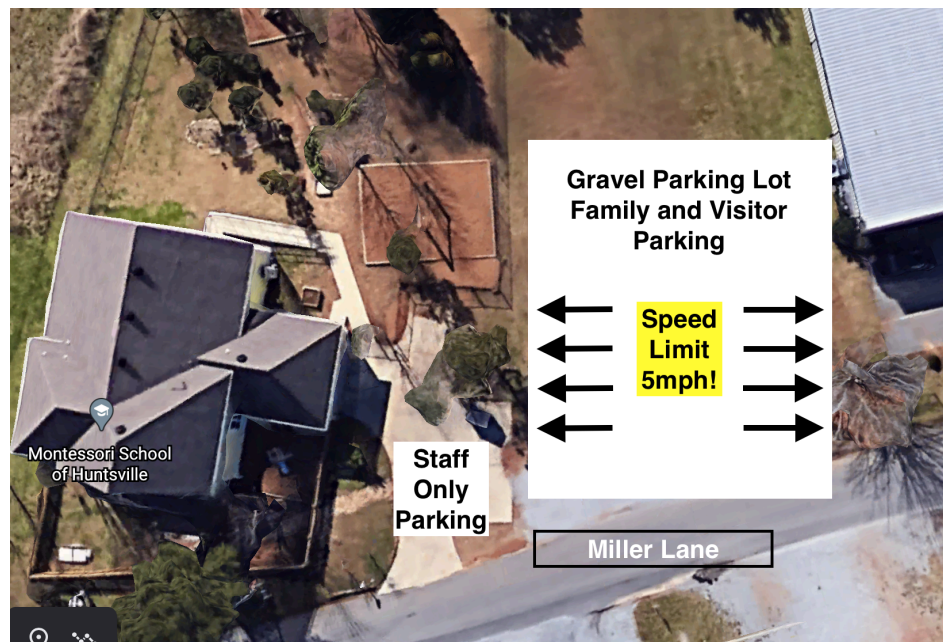
#### Arrival Windows

- 7:30-7:45 Early Arrival
- 8:30-8:45 Toddler and Primary Programs

#### Dismissal Windows

- Half Day Programs 12:15-12:30
- Primary School Day Programs 2:30-2:45
- Extended Day Programs 3:45-4:00
- Late Pick Up Program 4:45-5:00 (Primary - Upper EL only)

### HC Parking Lot Logistics



- Arrivals and dismissals should occur during the stated windows only. We understand you may occasionally need to drop off or pick up outside these windows. You will need to contact your children's teachers and/or [office@montessorihuntsville.org](mailto:office@montessorihuntsville.org) ahead of time to ensure someone will be available to receive your child. You may need to wait a few minutes or more for someone to greet you at the appropriate door. Parents should avoid knocking on classroom windows to get the attention of the

teachers. Our attention is with the children, and we may not be able to interrupt what we are doing to open the door immediately.

- The **speed limit** in our parking lot is 5MPH.
- Please **hold your child's hand** when walking in the parking lot until you have entered the playground gates.
- Ensure that you **secure the gate and replace the carabiner clip** each time you enter/exit the playground. **Only adults should open our playground gates.** This is a safety rule that we teach the children. Please help reinforce this safety practice by following it when you drop off and pick up each day.
- **Distraction-Free Zone:** Our parking lot is a cell phone and distraction-free zone. Please do not engage in phone calls (even through bluetooth), text messages, check your email, etc. Little ones are moving through these spaces and adults must remain vigilant at all times to ensure everyone's safety.
- **Please remain outside the fence or in your car if you arrive early, and promptly leave the premises once you have dropped off or picked up your child.** Parents and siblings should not be on our playgrounds during operating hours.

### **S. Hsv Arrival and Dismissal Schedule**

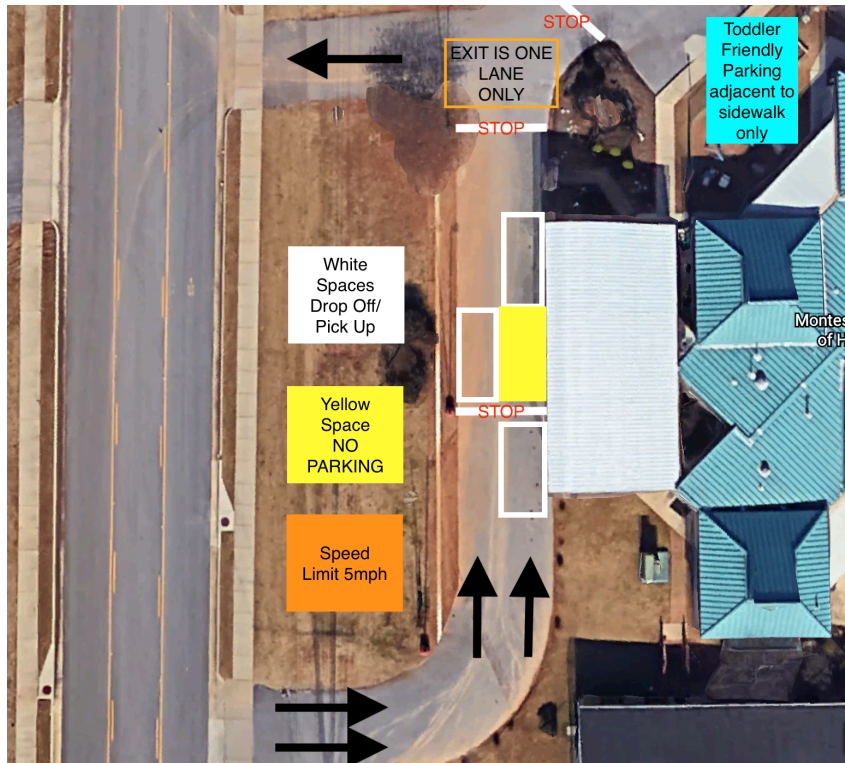
#### Arrival Windows

- 7:30-7:45 Early Arrival Program
- 8:00-8:15 Elementary and Adolescent Programs
- 8:30-8:45 Toddler and Primary Programs

#### Dismissal Windows

- Half Day Programs 12:15-12:30
- Primary School Day Programs 2:30-2:45
- Elementary School Day Programs 2:45-3:00
- Extended Day Program 3:45-4:00
- Late Pick Up Program 4:45-5:00 (Primary - Upper EL only)

## S. Hsv Carline Logistics



- **Enter** from the South end of the driveway. There are two car lanes when entering the driveway.
- **Exit** from the North end of the driveway. The exit is one lane only. You must yield to other drivers when exiting the driveway.
- The **speed limit** in our driveway is 5MPH.
- **Distraction-Free Zone:** Our driveway and parking lots are cell phone and distraction-free zones. Please do not engage in phone calls (even through bluetooth), text messages, check your email, etc. even when your car is in park in our driveway. It is our collective responsibility to ensure everyone stays safe. We all have or have had small children so we know what parking lots can be like for little ones.
- **No crossing guard on duty.** We rely on families and staff to follow the traffic patterns to keep everyone safe.
- **Drop off lanes:** Families of Primary and Elementary children may use the car lanes for drop off and pick up.
- **Toddler Family Parking:** Families of Toddler children (including those with Primary and/or Elementary children) must pull through the driveway and park in the designated parking area (adjacent to the sidewalk). Toddler families will sign in under the awning and then escort their child through the Toddler playground to the threshold of the classroom. Families should ensure that they secure the gate and replace the carabiner clip each time they enter or exit the playground. There is no covered path to the classroom in inclement weather. Please have appropriate

rain gear to comfortably walk your child to class. One family at a time inside the playground fence.

- **Observe Stop Signs:** You must come to a **complete stop** at our stop signs. No rolling stops.
- **Designated Drop Off Spaces:** There are three designated spaces in the car lane for families who are dropping off children. Please do not exit your vehicle if you are not yet in one of these designated spaces.

### **Lunches, Snacks, and Other Food-Related Policies**

We will provide a daily snack for your child. If your child stays for afternoon extended care, an afternoon snack will also be provided. Snacks will consist of two food groups, such as a protein and a carbohydrate, e.g. hummus and snap peas, cheese and grape tomatoes, and will not be heavily processed or have added sugar or dyes. Your teacher will request a set of reusable bowls or plates for your child to use for daily snack.

We do not provide cafeteria-style lunches. Please keep nutrition a priority when helping your child choose items for their lunch each day, even if you doubt that your child will eat it all. Letting your child help plan their lunch is an excellent opportunity to talk about food and nutrition. In packing your child's lunches, we ask that you follow these guidelines:

- **Please send in a lunch that does not require heating.**
- Thermoses are great if you would like to send your child a hot lunch.
- **Do not send sweets or heavily processed foods containing added sugar.** We encourage you to check the labeling on packaged foods to monitor your child's daily sugar intake. If you'd like to send a dessert for your child, send in fresh or dried fruit.
- **Do not send in peanuts--** this includes peanut butter and mixes containing peanuts. Tree nuts, including almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, walnuts, pecans, and pistachios, are allowed. If your child does have a tree nut allergy, please let us know ASAP so we can alert their classroom teachers and other families.
- **Avoid artificial food dyes** which are known to adversely impact health and behavior.
- If you choose to send juice, send only 100% fruit juice (check labels). We encourage children to drink water at meals and throughout the day. Water will be provided to all children during snack and lunchtime. Do not send sugary or caffeinated beverages.
- Label lunch and snack boxes, bags, containers and water bottles clearly with first and last name.
- Remind children that they cannot share food with others.
- Send reusable utensils and cloth napkins.
- We cannot refrigerate children's lunchboxes. Please include an ice pack in the lunch box if needed.

- **We have a pizza fundraiser every Wednesday school is in session at the South Huntsville campus. Children will receive pizza and fruit or veggie side for \$6. Ordering information and instructions will be shared with you at orientation. The pizza day fundraiser helps us send 2-3 teachers to the AMS Annual Conference each year!**

### **Rest and Napping Times**

At the beginning of the year, the youngest Toddlers may have a short morning rest/nap period around 10:00 a.m. or as needed throughout the morning work cycle. Children who attend School Day and Afternoon Enrichment schedules begin preparing for nap and rest between 12:30-1:00 p.m. These times are subject to change depending on the needs of the children and staffing. This period generally lasts until 3:00 p.m. in Toddler and 2:30 p.m. in Primary. We ask that you make every effort to respect the rest/nap schedule when planning appointments or picking up your child outside of their regularly scheduled day.

Children in the Primary program who no longer need a nap will have a rest period of 45 minutes before joining afternoon activities. Kindergarten students are not required to nap or rest, but may join the afternoon rest period if needed. Quiet activities are allowed during the rest period. We do not have separate resting and napping spaces. Resting children will be in the classroom with the napping children and must cooperate in maintaining a calm and quiet sleeping environment for their friends. *Assistants and guides will work to support all the children's needs during the rest and nap period; however, should this prove challenging for a resting child, faculty will reach out to families to discuss possible solutions, which may include shifting to the 12:30 p.m. dismissal.*

MSH provides cots and sheets for napping and resting children, but each child needs to bring a small (crib-size) blanket or other covering. If your child prefers a pillow, it must be a very small one because of storage limitations. Your child may bring a small stuffed animal just for rest time. Blankets and the cot sheet your child used will be sent home each week to be washed and returned.

### **Appropriate Use of Technology in the Classroom**

Screen time is defined as any media content viewed on mobile phone, tablet, computer, television, video, film, and/or DVD.

Screen time is prohibited in all early childhood environments, i.e., toddler and primary classrooms. Teachers may use classroom technology to play soft music during the work cycle and nap/rest times and to play audiobooks during group times provided the screen is not visible to the children. Classroom technology will be used for record keeping and to take weekly photos.

Teachers and staff will refrain from using personal devices in the presence of children, including but not limited to cell phones, tablets, and smart watches, with the exception of cell phone use for emergencies, e.g., panic alert, call 9-1-1, etc.

### **Rotation of Classroom Materials Policy**

Montessori teachers rotate classroom materials throughout the year based on the progression of the planned curriculum as well as the developmental needs and interests of the children. Many of the iconic Montessori materials are available throughout the year, such as sensorial, math, and language materials. Montessori cultural materials, e.g., zoology, botany, geography, physical science, continent/cultural studies, etc. are generally rotated monthly, while materials in practical life are rotated more frequently.

### **Early Arrival and Extended Day Programs**

MSH offers limited Early Arrival care (MC) and Extended Day programs (EXD) to families needing care before or after the Montessori school day. Due to limited availability in each program, annual enrollment is required to participate. Occasional or drop-in care is not offered. If your family has an emergency, and you need support past your child's normal hours, but within the school's operating hours, contact the front office immediately to see if care can be arranged for that day.

Full time MC and EXD is paid monthly with tuition and is considered late if unpaid by the first working day following the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month. Removal from MC and EXD programs is subject to the 180 day notice of withdrawal policy.

### **Seasonal Break Care**

Care for seasonal breaks, i.e. Fall Break, Spring Break, and Summer Session (July) is offered only at S. Hsv. Operating hours during seasonal breaks are 8:00-4:00. Early arrival and late pick up are not offered during seasonal breaks.

The HC campus is closed at this time for these breaks. Refer to the school calendar for corresponding dates. Families can secure their child's spot through the enrollment contract. Availability is limited. Program openings will be offered to other families 4-6 weeks in advance of the break.

There is no care offered during the Thanksgiving and Winter seasonal breaks. Please refer to the school calendar for seasonal break dates.

### **Screening and Assessment**

The Montessori Method of education provides a nurturing, supportive environment for children with different abilities and learning styles. Montessori education recognizes that each child learns differently and at their own pace. Montessori respects each child's unique learning path. Your child's educational plan is matched to their unique developmental level, learning style, and interests. Therefore, each child in the early childhood program will be assessed upon application to MSH, then twice annually, during the fall and spring semesters.

MSH utilizes the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3). ASQ-3 is recommended by top organizations such as the American Academy of Neurology, First Signs, and The



Child Neurology Society and is used across the world by early childhood education programs, health care practices, social workers, and more.

The results will help you see your child's developmental progress and alert you to any potential concerns that you can talk over with your healthcare provider. MSH keeps information on community resources in the parent resource library.

### **Attendance Policy**

MSH is dedicated to providing an environment that nurtures children to reach their fullest potential and teaches them to love learning, while creating a high-quality, enriching environment for staff and a welcoming, open partnership with families. One of the most valuable life skills a child can learn is taking responsibility to arrive on time. This skill can easily be accomplished and will transfer as a valuable asset for the future. One of the most important times of the school day is the morning. This is the time when guides greet the children and begin their morning routines.

### **Absences**

We ask that you inform us of planned absences and report unexpected absences by emailing your child's classroom teachers and cc'ing [office@montessorihuntsville.org](mailto:office@montessorihuntsville.org). If your child is absent from school due to illness, you must complete the [Illness Notification Form](#) within 24 hours.

**Regular and prompt attendance is required for continued enrollment in all programs and may be used in determining an offer for re-enrollment for the following school year.**

### **Absences**

We ask that you inform us of planned absences and report unexpected absences by emailing your child's classroom teachers and cc'ing [office@montessorihuntsville.org](mailto:office@montessorihuntsville.org). If your child is absent from school due to illness, you must complete the [Illness Notification Form](#) within 24 hours.

Students in grades 1-8 must arrive between 8:00 - 8:15 a.m. Students arriving after 8:15 a.m. constitute a tardy. Five (5) unexcused absences constitute one absence.

**\*\*Starting in Elementary, Alabama state guidelines mandate 12 unexcused absences are grounds for retaining a student in the same grade the following year. \*\***

When children in the elementary programs frequently miss school, they miss out on valuable lessons that can be difficult to make up later on. We understand that exceptional opportunities for travel may arise from time to time and these experiences can be enriching to children. To the greatest extent possible, we ask that you plan vacations and other planned absences around the breaks built into the calendar.

## **Early Checkout**

### **Early Childhood Programs**

When scheduling appointments, please be mindful of nap times. If a child needs to check out in the afternoon prior to school dismissal, please do so after lunch before they lie down to rest. When children check out during nap time, it disrupts the other resters.

### **Elementary Programs**

For elementary students, please check out **before 1:50 p.m.** as to not interfere with afternoon lessons.

### **Engaging MSH Staff for Babysitting, Transportation, or Other Services**

MSH staff, including substitute staff, may not be engaged by currently-enrolled families to provide any services outside of their employment with MSH, whether paid or unpaid. This includes, but is not limited to, after-hours childcare, babysitting, house cleaning, and transportation services. We understand that you place a great deal of trust in the staff at MSH, and we are proud to employ dedicated, trustworthy, and highly-qualified individuals. However, this policy safeguards our staff and reduces the risk of creating a conflict of interest. Additionally, this policy protects confidentiality of MSH children, families, and staff members and ensures the highest level of professionalism and integrity in the family-school partnership that is integral to our school culture.

### **Dress Code and Outdoor Play Essentials**

For all programs, please dress your child in comfortable clothes and shoes that are easy for them to manage and are suitable for extended periods outdoors. We go outside every day, spending at least 50% of most days in the outdoor environments, with the exception of extreme or truly inclement weather.

#### **Clothing**

Please send your child to school in clothing and shoes that they can independently manage and are suitable for extended periods outdoors.

Note for Early Childhood: Children's clothing should be simple and comfortable and should be free of any licensed characters, e.g. Frozen's Elsa, Paw Patrol, Spiderman etc. This includes socks and underwear. Flip-sequin clothing is not allowed.

#### **Shoes**

Shoes should be free of licensed characters, without lights, sounds, wheels, or other accessories, and your child should be able to independently manage them with minimal adult support. Shoes must be suitable for extended outdoor play. Your child must be able to tie their shoes independently to wear them to school, otherwise they need to wear shoes with velcro closures. We teach shoe tying in the Montessori classroom, so they will be able to practice on the dressing frames before wearing them to school.

Children should have a pair of indoor shoes to keep in the classroom. Crocs or soft-soled shoes are ideal. Slippers can be slippery on our floors.

### **Accessories**

Children should not wear or bring costume or novelty jewelry or accessories to school. Novelty headbands such as tiaras, unicorn or cat ear headbands should not be worn. Capes or other costume-like attire are not allowed.

### **School Bags**

All new students will receive a branded MSH canvas tote upon enrollment. A replacement bag may be purchased from the office for \$15.

Early Childhood: **Please do not send your child to school with a backpack.** We do not send many things home and other than lunch boxes, water bottles, and occasionally changes of clothing, there is not much to send to school.

Elementary Students: Students may bring a small backpack.

If your child travels between households, they may bring an overnight bag to school that will be put up and sent home with them at dismissal. Please send their regular school bag in addition to the overnight bag if there are items they need to bring for the school day, e.g., water bottle, etc.

### **Year Round Outdoor Play**

Many of the developmental tasks that children must achieve—exploring, risk-taking, fine and gross motor development and the absorption of vast amounts of foundational knowledge—can be most effectively learned through outdoor play. For this reason, children at MSH will play outdoors every day, with the exception of truly inclement weather. Even on cold or wet days, children will be given brief opportunities for access to the outdoors. Dressing in layers is best for ensuring comfort with changing weather conditions and activity levels. Proper attire is required. Children who do not have the clothing necessary to play outside comfortably for 15-20 minutes will be provided loaner coats, gloves, and/or scarves. If we do not have enough extra items to loan to underdressed children, you will be called to bring your child additional clothing.<sup>1</sup>

**Here are some suggestions for school clothing and outerwear for year round outdoor play:**

Daily Clothing:

- Simple, comfortable clothing that is easy for your child to manage independently, including dressing and undressing themselves, and is suitable for activities such as

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about the benefits of outdoor play see:

American Association of Pediatrics. 2007. "The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds." American Academy of Pediatrics. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2006-2697>.

playing in the dirt/sand/gravel/mud, painting, food preparation, activities involving water, etc.

- Please send extra clothes to keep at school in a one-gallon ziploc bag clearly labeled with your child's name. Please clearly label each item of clothing. Extra clothes should be appropriate to the season and include socks and underwear.
- **Do not send your child to school in costumes or clothing that resembles costumes, e.g. superhero capes, princess dresses, unicorn or cat headwear, etc. or other clothing that may be distracting to the environment or work cycle.**
- Simple, comfortable play shoes and indoor shoes that your child can manage independently.
  - Soft-soled shoes with laces or velcro-closings are ideal for outdoor play. Shoes must enclose the toe and heel.
  - Crocs or simple house slippers are ideal indoor shoes.
  - **Please do not send your child in light-up shoes/slippers, sandals, flip flops, clogs, or heavy boots.**

#### Rainy Day Outerwear:

- Rain jacket
- Rain boots

#### Fall/Winter Outerwear

- Light jacket or sweatshirt (think layers)
- Winter coat (Go for warmth *not fashion*. Many “coats” are not really intended for extended outdoor play.)
- Mittens or gloves, scarf, winter hat
- Thermal underwear--if your child wears thin pants like leggings or is particularly sensitive to the cold
- Snow bib that can be worn over clothes during the colder winter months. (Target has a great, affordable selection.)

#### UV Essentials

- Sunglasses
- Sun hat
- Sun-protective clothing

### Items from Home

Children may not bring gum, candy, money, toys, dolls, action figures or weapons (real or pretend—including pocket knives) to school. Please do not allow your child to get out of the car with such items.

Your child's teacher may invite your child to bring a special item from home on occasion to present to the class. You will be provided with examples of acceptable and prohibited

items to help your child choose something special to present. If your child has a special experience or has something special they would like to share with their friends during group time, you may reach out to the lead teacher to ask if the item is appropriate for sharing and to coordinate a day in advance.

We do not allow children to give away their things to other children. Such exchanges should take place away from school.

### **Device Policy**

Cell phones, smartwatches, and tablets may not be kept at school unless a parent/guardian has emailed the teachers about a unique situation. Any devices brought to school will be kept in a designated area of the classroom and may be obtained by the student at dismissal.

### **Things in Pockets**

Occasionally small pieces of school materials may make their way into pockets or tote bags. They may not seem significant, but they can be very expensive and take weeks to replace, causing work to be removed from the shelves. If you find any objects in your child's pockets (marbles, balls, wooden or glass beads, cubes, etc.), please return them to the school promptly. There is no need to scold younger children. Simply explain that school items stay at school.

### **Lost and Found**

A Lost and Found collection area is maintained at each campus, usually in the administrative offices. Please check it for any items your child may have lost. Be sure to put your child's name on all clothing, lunch boxes, etc. to help in their return. Lost and found items will be donated every two months.

### **Children's Birthdays**

Beginning at age three through age six in the Primary program, birthdays are observed with a Celebration of Life ceremony. A few weeks before your child's birthday you will need to ask their guide to send home the special *Celebration of Life form* on which you write a sentence or two about each year of your child's life. If your child has a summer birthday, you and the guide may decide whether to celebrate their half-birthday.

If invitations to a party are distributed at school, **all children** in the class must be invited to the party. Please do not expect guides to pass out birthday party invitations. Families may use the Parent Square platform to share birthday party information. We cannot accommodate private birthday parties on school grounds.

### **Especially for Toddler Families**

#### **Toilet Learning**

Toilet learning is part of the ongoing toddler curriculum. All toddler children will be introduced to toilet learning as part of their daily experience in the Toddler environment. The Toddler environment is structured to emphasize developing independence. Your child's guide will work with you through this process and will provide resources to guide

you to an informed understanding of the toilet learning process, if needed. It is critical that you do not discourage your child from toilet learning and follow the recommendations given to you by your child's guides.

We ask that you provide an adequate supply of diapers or pull ups, extra clothes, and underwear as requested. Please refer to the Medication section regarding MSH policy for applying diaper creams and ointments.

### **Montessori Homework<sup>2</sup>**

Homework is intended to support children and their development. This can sometimes mean familiar homework like regular practice on memory work, such as basic math tables. It should also mean expanding the creative and integrative work that the children do from the classroom to the wider world. In this sense 'homework' is any activity that augments and amplifies the curiosity and exploration of the child. Homework in this broader sense includes many activities in which children may participate with their families and peers, such as scouting, campfire, shell/rock collecting, working in community shelters, reading aloud, and sports.

Generally, homework should fall into two classes. It might be work in which some additional repetition and practice will aid in gaining fluency. The other sort can be work or activities that cannot be done in the school setting.

The Montessori classroom is rich in reading, language and mathematics activities. Children cannot bring the Montessori materials home. Therefore, Montessori homework aims to extend the classroom work into the home environment, while involving the parents and possibly other family members.

It is believed that the primary merits of homework are the establishment of a healthy work habit outside the formal classroom environment and fostering each child's innate desire to learn, to know and to be an active participant in their family and culture. It is a vital, living link between the classroom and home environments and a catalyst to growing into a member of world culture. As such, it allows all of us a window into the child's world of learning.

Montessorians are strongly committed to meeting the needs of all children. In all of our interactions, we seek to develop the child's commitment to work in a manner that is both creative and independent. We can see homework as a child-initiated activity in collaboration with their families and teacher-guides.

### **"Going Out" - Field Trips in the Montessori Elementary Program**

Children in the second plane of development, i.e. ages 6-12, are naturally curious and driven to discover the world around them and their place in it. Field trips or "going out" experiences in Montessori help children make connections between what they are learning in the classroom and the outside world. Field trips provide opportunities for independence, responsibility, and good citizenship in addition to building curiosity,

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<sup>2</sup> Dorer, Michael. "Montessori Homework." *Tomorrow's Child*, January 2016, p.17.

research skills, social-emotional skills, and more. This is a big part of Practical Life in the Elementary classroom!

Field trips may be planned well in advance or they may be more spontaneous depending on the interests of the children in the classroom and opportunities that arise in the community for further exploration of a topic. We will give at least two weeks notice for field trips. Permission slips are sent and signed through the Parent Square app.

**Field trips are part of the curriculum. They are not optional.**

We travel by charter bus to and from field trip destinations. Families may not drive their child separately or pick them up early from the field trip. Buses leave MSH promptly at the stated time. Families who arrive late to school on field trip day will be sent home and the child counted absent for the day.

**MSH teachers and staff will chaperone all field trips.**

Beginning in 4th grade, children will take an annual **overnight trip**, usually lasting 3 days. The purpose of this trip is to give children opportunities for greater independence, leadership, and collaboration, and helps to build a strong community with their peers. If your child has never been away from home overnight, we will work with you ahead of time to prepare you and your child for the upcoming trip.

## **Building a Family Partnership**

### **Community Service Hours**

Each family is required to perform 15 hours of service each year (20 hours for multiple children). This requirement is prorated for mid-year enrollments. Should you choose to withdraw your child from MSH during the academic school year, your account will be billed for any unfulfilled volunteer hours at a rate of \$20 per hour.

Your child not only benefits from the effort you contribute through service to the school, they benefit from the countless hours other MSH families have contributed each year through volunteer efforts. You may choose from a variety of jobs that can be done either at school or at home. **School Committees are an excellent way to focus your volunteer efforts in a meaningful way. Family members can choose to serve on a committee or support as a volunteer for special projects and events.**

If you choose not to contribute service hours, you may pay \$300 (\$400 for multiple children) by October 1 to cover the cost of having these jobs done. MSH families will document their hours using the Volunteer Hours section of Parent Square located under Participation. Any hours not fulfilled by April 1 will be billed at the rate of \$20 per hour on April 2 and drafted with the May tuition installment.

Community service hours are calculated based on time spent on a requested task or requested monetary contributions at a rate of \$20 per hour. Please submit receipts for goods purchased to receive credit for community service hours.

The following activities have a specific assigned value:

- Society Meeting - 1 hour per family
- Semi-Annual Family Satisfaction Survey- 0.5 hour per survey response. One survey may be submitted for each parent/guardian.

### **School Committees**

MSH Committees give families the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to their child's school experience while supporting our school mission. Families may choose to join a school committee as an active member or can be identified as a committee volunteer to support a specific committee's projects and events.

### **Montessori Society of Huntsville Membership**

Parents/guardians of currently-enrolled children in good financial standing comprise the membership of the Montessori Society of Huntsville. As members, your attendance at the fall and spring Society Meetings is vital. In addition to nominating and electing board members, this is your forum for receiving information, asking questions, discussing issues, and sharing your input with the MSH Board of Directors and school administration.

## **Communicating with MSH**

### **General Information**

Effective communication is critical to maintain a welcoming, open partnership with you and your child. Please observe the following channels of communication.

Email is the best way to reach your child's teaching team. Classroom staff check their email daily during school hours, but around class times, and will respond to emails within 24-48 business hours. Families should avoid communicating with MSH staff regarding their child via text message, Parent Square messages, or social media.

If you need immediate assistance or need to relay a message to your child's guide for that specific day, please call the office (256) 881-3790 (S. Hsv) or (256) 534-6469 (HC), or email [office@montessorihuntsville.org](mailto:office@montessorihuntsville.org). This email address will reach administrative staff at both campuses.

Lead teachers and the head of school maintain their own Calendly page for families to schedule a phone, virtual, or in-person meetings when needed. Please contact your teacher or the head of school if you need to schedule a conversation or meeting outside of listed times.



School records may be requested in writing with a minimum of 30 days advance notice. Recommendation letters, evaluation forms and written communications for similar purposes require more time and every effort should be made to give as much advance notice of such a request as possible.

### **Family Conferences and Progress Reports**

Schoolwide Family Conferences are scheduled twice a year, midway during fall and spring semesters. MSH campuses are closed on these days. Please refer to the school calendar for dates.

Progress reports for children in early childhood programs are shared before the end of the fall and spring semesters.

Families may request a conference with their child's guide at any point during the school year. You do not need to wait for regularly scheduled conferences to share information or concerns regarding your child. Conferences, whether in person, virtually, or over the phone, will be scheduled outside of the morning work cycle, during the regular school day. We encourage you to reach out to us as the need arises. You place a great deal of trust in our faculty and staff, and we care deeply about your child's and your family's experience at MSH. Scheduled communication should not feel like an inconvenience or too formal a forum for your question or concern. We believe that thoughtful communication and collaborative problem solving are made possible through scheduled interactions where both faculty and family can be prepared, present, and fully attentive. We value the opportunity to meet with you throughout the year.

**If you happen to catch your child's guide when they are available for a few moments of face-to-face conversation, please show your child the respect that they deserve by refraining from talking about them in their presence.** Your child's guide will do the same. Remember that the guide may have obligations that prevent them from spending more than a quick moment with you, but they will be happy to make an appointment.

### **Website**

The MSH website [www.montessorihuntsville.org](http://www.montessorihuntsville.org) is a good place to review the Family Handbook, school calendar, staff information, and blog. It is also a good way for you to invite your friends to learn more about MSH from the comfort of their homes.

### **Social Media**

We have a public Facebook page and a public Instagram account. If you use any of these social media platforms, please follow us!

### **Transparent Classroom**

We use Transparent Classroom (TC) as our online record keeping system. Applications for enrollment, registration forms, enrollment contracts, child information, and academic records are maintained through Transparent Classroom. Your child's progress reports will be shared via TC, in December and May. TC enables you to view the Montessori scope and sequence for your child's current program and access descriptions of lessons to help you understand or formulate questions for your child's guides regarding the curriculum.

The scope and sequence shows the curricular areas of each program and sequences lessons and materials that will be accessible to children throughout the program cycle. The curriculum for each program is extensive and it is important to understand that there is significant overlap from one program level to the next and it is therefore not necessary that a child cover all of the lessons before moving to the next program level. **The scope and sequence is not a checklist of lessons that every child will cover during the multi-year program cycle; rather, it is a roadmap of the content areas that your child will likely encounter.**

Please contact [office@montessorihuntsville.org](mailto:office@montessorihuntsville.org) if you need to update any information in Transparent Classroom, including authorized pick up lists, address or phone number updates, etc. We will provide the necessary link to update your info.

### **Parent Square**

Parent Square is our digital communication platform which provides a secure space for school-home communications. **All families will be added to Parent Square upon enrollment and are expected to check it regularly.** An app is available on most devices and daily digest settings are available to minimize notifications. This is our primary mode of communication with families for schoolwide and classroom updates, events, conference sign ups. Families can expect to receive a regular schoolwide update, “This Week at MSH,” on Sundays, and weekly updates or information from their classroom guides. Families should contact [office@montessorihuntsville.org](mailto:office@montessorihuntsville.org) for support with Parent Square.

### **Family Education**

Family education is an important aspect of our partnership agreement. We will provide opportunities throughout the school year to learn more about Montessori philosophy, child development, and current research that supports education and parenting practices. We have a family lending library at the S. Hsv campus that is available for all MSH families. If you are interested in available titles, contact the MSH administrative team. We are happy to share lists of our favorite books, what we are currently reading, as well as scholarship, magazine articles, and videos of interest.

A family education calendar is shared annually. Additional events may be added throughout the year.

### **Student Computer/Technology Policy**

MSH will utilize technology when appropriate in its elementary and adolescent programs. We are committed to teaching the skills, knowledge, and behaviors students need to be respectful and responsible in a technology rich world. Examples of tools utilized are computers, iPads, internet websites, wikis, pod-casts, and other online resources that support learning. The goal in providing internet access is to promote educational excellence by facilitating sharing, innovation, and communication. The use of technology

comes with responsibility, and those using it inappropriately might have their access restricted.

Students in the Lower Elementary-Adolescent Program will sign a computer use agreement upon the beginning of the school year recognizing their responsibility to be a good digital citizen.

### **Keeping MSH Informed**

Please let MSH know when you have changed your address, place of employment, home phone, work phone, cell phone or email address. When there is any change in the phone numbers of the persons who are permitted to pick up your child (or a change in the persons themselves) or those you have listed as emergency contacts, please email [office@montessorihuntsville.org](mailto:office@montessorihuntsville.org). We will share a link with you to update this information on the Transparent Classroom Admission Addendum. Please reach out to your child's classroom guides when changes occur in your home routine or situation, such as moving into a new home, pregnancy, a death or serious illness in the family, including pets, a parent on an extended trip, or parents separating or divorcing. Events like these almost always affect children's behavior. It helps your child's guides to be generally informed about significant events in your family and the potential impact they may have on your child, and we promise that such information will be treated with the confidentiality it deserves.

### **Suggestions, Feedback, and Stakeholder Surveys**

We welcome any feedback or suggestions you have regarding MSH and its operation. Throughout the school year, you will receive short surveys regarding your experience at MSH. Your participation is valued and appreciated. Please help us make our school the best it can be.

If you have a concern about a classroom occurrence, please discuss it first with your child's teacher. Concerns regarding MSH faculty or school operations should be addressed to the Head of School. Concerns regarding the Head of School or school governance should be addressed to the Board of Directors Chairperson, [chair@montessorihuntsville.org](mailto:chair@montessorihuntsville.org).

### **Discipline in the Montessori Environment**

In a Montessori environment, discipline is recognized as ongoing inner work refined through the planes of development and skill-building rather than through punishment or coercion. The word discipline is derived from the Latin words *discipulus* meaning learner and *discere* meaning learn. The prepared Montessori environment, classroom culture, and academic lessons cultivate inner discipline in children by promoting a sense of autonomy, belonging, and purpose. At times, however, children need additional support to meet classroom expectations or build skills needed for self-regulation.

Montessori pedagogy fosters an education for peace. Children in Montessori classrooms learn to care for their individual needs while recognizing the needs of others. In addition to setting expectations for how to treat one another in the classroom, children learn a set

of shared values within the classroom community. At every level, children learn lessons in ‘grace and courtesy,’ Positive Discipline, prosocial skills, and conflict transformation. Each of these lessons is an opportunity to develop skills for inner discipline and peace. When a child struggles to learn a particular skill or to meet classroom expectations, additional lessons may be required.

### **What is Positive Discipline?**

We believe in using Positive Discipline to guide, encourage, and support children. Positive Discipline is predicated on the belief that all children need belonging and significance and that misbehavior is often a sign that a child has a mistaken belief about how to meet these fundamental needs. The Positive Discipline framework provides educators with tools to support children in developing the capacity for navigating difficult feelings, resolving conflict, and finding meaningful ways to build and strengthen the classroom community. Effective positive discipline begins with the adult’s behavior, e.g., kind and firm limit setting, clear communication of these limits, and taking time to train the expectations so adults know that children absolutely understand what is expected of them. Faculty and staff will manage typical discipline encounters with helpful, positive solutions such as redirection, distraction, curiosity questions, reflective listening, “I-messages” / “bugs & wishes,” conflict resolution, class meetings, and helping children recognize, name, and cope with strong emotions. We strive to recognize the signs of anxiety and stress and to help children learn calming techniques through co-regulation and self-regulation practices.

All staff are trained to create a positive, secure, and consistent environment for children to learn necessary social and life skills. We consider what the child is thinking, feeling, and learning and encourage them through the process. Positive Discipline is effective long term because it teaches children important life skills such as respect, concern for others, problem solving, and how to cooperate with others. Effective communication and problem-solving skills focus on the solution rather than punishment or adult-imposed consequences. We strive to encourage children by noticing their efforts and improvements, not just their successes. When children receive interactions from adults that are characterized by a high degree of warmth and predictability, they develop good self-concepts, problem-solving abilities, and self-discipline.

Positive Discipline is based on the principles of Alfred Adler and Richard Dreikurs which align beautifully with Maria Montessori’s principles.

## *Adlerian and Montessori Principles*

Adlerian Principles	Montessori Principles
Children are social beings.	Children cannot develop apart from society.
Behavior is goal oriented.	Children do nothing without some motive.

Primary goal is belonging and significance.	Human needs and tendencies.
A misbehaving child is a discouraged child.	Misbehavior is a roadblock to normalization.
Social interest = belonging and significance.	Responsibility for oneself and the community.
Equality	Children deserve dignity and respect.
Mistakes are opportunities to learn.	Control of error.
Effective discipline is kind and firm at the same time.	Children need freedom within limits.

Positive Discipline in the Montessori Classroom – Practitioner's Course By Jane Nelsen, Chip DeLorenzo and Jody Malterre ~ Copyright 2021

### **Child Study Protocol**

Children who demonstrate a pattern of challenging or disruptive behavior, or who demonstrate a need for academic intervention, will be referred to a Child Study Team (CST) to design an intervention strategy intended to support targeted skill development. The Child Study Protocol is a collaborative, Montessori-aligned multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) that guides teachers and families in supporting children who are experiencing difficulties. Families are brought into the Child Study process through an initial family meeting. The CST will develop a written plan with specific goals, support strategies, and tools for monitoring progress. Information will be shared with families throughout the process and a follow-up meeting will be scheduled at the initial meeting. Additional meetings may be scheduled by the teacher and/or the family. The CSP promotes open, two-way communication, and families are encouraged to reach out to their child's teacher with questions or concerns about the process or their child's progress. CST recommendations may include referrals for outside services including but not limited to Occupational Therapy (OT), Speech-Language Pathology (SLP), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, General Assessment, or screening/evaluation for learning differences or disorders, as well as a request to have information from the service provider or screening/evaluation shared with the team to improve intervention strategies. Outside consultation may be requested with the costs incurred by the family.

A collaborative and supportive partnership is the best method for supporting children who demonstrate challenging behavior or who require academic intervention and should include the child, the family, guides, and administrators. Families are expected to participate in conferences, as requested, and to provide outside support as determined by the Child Study Team.

### **A Note on Teasing, Peer Conflict and Bullying**

MSH is committed to each child's success in learning within a caring and responsive environment that is free of discrimination, violence, and bullying. Our school works to ensure that all children have the opportunity and support to develop to their fullest

potential and share a personal and meaningful bond with people in the school community.

Classroom rules and expectations are developed to support positive peer interactions. ‘Grace and courtesy’ lessons, Positive Discipline, prosocial skill development, and conflict transformation are taught regularly as part of the school curriculum and our commitment to educating the whole child. Adults model expectations to reinforce their value. Children are taught the importance of respect and dignity for themselves and others within their community as well as respect and care for the learning environment.

### **What is Bullying?**

Bullying is a willful, conscious desire to hurt, frighten, or threaten. Bullying is usually a series of repeated, intentionally cruel incidents, or threats of harm, that involve the same children, *in the same bully/victim roles*. It involves an imbalance of power, either real or perceived. It can be physical or verbal and can include intimidation, inappropriate gestures or touching, and social exclusion. Due to the willful and conscious nature of bullying, children in early childhood are not typically developmentally capable of carrying out bullying and are most often involved in normal peer conflict.

### **What is the difference between bullying and other types of peer conflict?**

The chart below illustrates some differences between bullying, teasing, and peer conflicts.

<b>Friendly Teasing</b>	<b>Hurtful Teasing</b>	<b>Peer Conflict</b>	<b>Bullying</b>
Equal power	Unequal power	Equal power	Imbalance of power
Neutral	Occurs occasionally	Occurs occasionally	Occurs repeatedly, or has the potential to be repeated over time
Purpose is to be playful	Purpose is to upset	Unintentional	Intentional and serious
Funny to all involved parties	Excludes; not funny to all involved parties	Effort to resolve through withdrawal from conflict or negotiations; relationship is valued between parties	Seeks to gain power; perpetrator of bullying behavior shows no remorse; no effort to resolve; target is vulnerable

### **Assisting Children with Transforming Peer Conflict**

Families who would like support in helping their child to navigate peer conflict should reach out to their child’s lead Montessori guide. Your child’s guide is your first point of contact for sharing information or concerns regarding your child. MSH faculty are

committed to building a deep understanding of each child that honors the natural tendency of all children to be peaceful and to contribute positively to their community.

If a pattern of peer conflict emerges, guides and families will work together with children to support healthy boundaries, compassionate communication, and conflict transformation.

Families should continue to keep the Montessori guides informed, as children sometimes share information at home when they are reflecting on or processing their day that was not shared during the school day.<sup>3</sup>

## Health and Safety

### Immunization Policy

All children at MSH must have a current immunization record on file at all times. We accept a *very* limited number of religious exemptions at each campus. We encourage all families to consider vaccinations for communicable illnesses according to their physician's recommendations.

### Communicable Illness Policy

Families and staff members must complete the [Illness Notification Form for Students and Staff](#) to report illness symptoms and communicable illness diagnoses. We monitor this information so we can take necessary actions to mitigate the spread of illness within our school.

### Common Illness Symptoms and Exclusion Period Guide

Symptom	Exclusion Period	Readmission Criteria
Fever above 100.0	Until 24 hours symptom-free without the use of fever-reducing medicine and physician's clearance to return to school or 48 hours symptom-free without physician's clearance.	Return to school when the exclusion period has been met.
Vomiting or sore throat	Until 24 hours symptom-free without the use of anti-nausea or pain-relieving medications and physician's clearance to return to school or 48 hours symptom-free without physician's clearance.	Return to school when the exclusion period has been met.
Diarrhea / gastrointestinal upset	Until 24 hours symptom-free without the use of anti-diarrheal medications.	Return to school when the exclusion period has been met.

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<sup>3</sup> We recommend this linked resource from the author of *Children Who are Not Yet Peaceful*, renowned Montessorian Donna Bryant Goertz, [Preparing Ourselves to Receive Our Children's Reports of Concern from Their Community](#)

Please note that we require a written physician's diagnosis on file for seasonal allergies, asthma, or any other chronic health condition with symptoms similar to those associated with communicable illnesses, e.g., wheezing, shortness of breath, congestion. If your child has a diagnosed condition, they do not need to be excluded from school for symptoms provided no symptoms unrelated to the diagnosis are present, e.g., diagnosis of asthma but has a sore throat. Families who do not wish to provide information about health conditions must follow the exclusion guidelines above.

The guidelines above are not exhaustive. Symptoms or conditions not listed in the chart above will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. We follow the [ADPH's communicable illness guidelines for exclusion periods](#) and reporting. Certain diagnoses will require specific exclusion periods and may require reporting to ADPH for monitoring.

If your child is not able to fully and comfortably participate in school activities, regardless of symptoms or diagnoses on file, we will ask you to keep your child home until they feel well enough to return to school. This includes itchiness from bug bites or other skin irritations, headache, stomach ache, etc.

### **Updated COVID-19 Information**

People who have symptoms of respiratory or gastrointestinal infections, such as cough, fever, sore throat, vomiting, or diarrhea, should stay home. [Testing](#) is recommended for people with [symptoms of COVID-19](#) as soon as possible after symptoms begin. If a person with COVID-19 symptoms tests negative for COVID-19, they should consider getting tested for other respiratory illnesses that could be spread to others, such as flu. If tested using an antigen test, negative tests should be repeated following [FDA recommendations](#)

People who are [at risk for getting very sick](#) with COVID-19 who test positive should consult with a healthcare provider right away for possible [treatment](#), even if their symptoms are mild. Staying home when sick can lower the risk of spreading infectious diseases, including COVID-19, to other people. For more information on staying home when sick with COVID-19, including recommendations for isolation and mask use for people who test positive or who are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19, see [Isolation and Precautions for People with COVID-19](#).

### **Injuries at School**

If a child receives a minor injury at school, we will provide appropriate care. We will notify you if your child sustains an injury to the head, an injury that bleeds, an insect/animal bite or sting, or sustains a fall from playground equipment. The staff member will report what occurred (whether observed by a teacher or self-reported by the child), observable physical characteristics of the injury, first aid administered, if applicable, and observable emotional state of the child. You may choose to pick up your child to seek medical guidance or treatment based on this report. A written report of the injury will be



kept on file at the school. A member of our school staff will contact you within 24 hours of the injury to inquire whether emergency or physician's care was needed in response to the injury. Please notify us immediately if you seek emergency or physician's services following an injury at school.

### **Medical Emergencies**

MSH is committed to training all staff, including substitutes, in Pediatric CPR and First Aid. At least one staff member with current certification will be on campus during operating hours when children are present.

HEMSI emergency personnel will be called if we suspect serious injury. If it is determined that the child needs emergency treatment, they will be transported, at your expense, to the hospital that you indicated on the Admission Addendum. The staff person accompanying the child will take a copy of the Emergency Treatment Authorization while another staff member attempts to contact you.

### **Medications**

MSH will only administer medication and medical procedures when the parent or guardian has completed, signed, and dated a Parent Authorization for Administering Medication (also downloadable from our website). You must include specific information regarding what conditions require administration of the medication, exact dosage (e.g. 5mL or dime-sized amount), and the frequency (e.g. every four hours or 30 minutes prior to sun exposure). You must also note the time it was last given at home.

It is important to remember that we cannot diagnose your child. You, the parent/guardian, or your child's physician, must give detailed instructions for administering medication, even medications purchased over-the-counter. Instructions such as 'apply liberally,' 'give as needed,' or 'small amount' are unacceptable. Instead, use specific language such as, "apply 5mL to arms and legs 30 minutes prior to sun exposure." You will be asked to provide a corrected form before we can administer the medication to your child.

All medications, including but not limited to prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, sunscreen, insect sprays, medicated chapstick, must be in their original container and labeled with the child's name. Please provide a dosage cup or spoon. To avoid carrying medication back and forth between home and school daily please ask the pharmacist to put half of the medication in another prescription bottle to be left at school. Medications must be handed directly to a staff member by the person dropping off so it can be stored properly. Never send medication or items requiring a medication form, like sunscreen, in the child's bag. When no longer needed, medication will be returned to families. Medications not picked up by the last day of the school year will be disposed of.

A Parent Authorization Form is valid for no more than seven days and should be used only for medications that are needed during a short period of time. A Medical Practitioner's Authorization to Continuously Administer Medication Form (available in the office or from our website) may accompany the Parent Authorization Form. When submitted together, the forms are valid for one full year. Both forms are required to

maintain medications on campus throughout the school year such as EpiPens, sunscreen, insect repellent, allergy/emergency medications, topical creams such as lip balm, anti-itch, or diaper rash ointments.

We request that you apply sunscreen and/or insect repellent at home because of the amount of class time it takes for staff to do so. We will reapply it as directed if we have a current medication form.

### **Severe Allergies**

While the following guidelines are intended to minimize the risk of potential contact with known allergens, MSH cannot guarantee that a child will not be exposed to potentially hazardous or life-threatening allergens.

Children with severe or life-threatening allergies may be admitted to MSH. They may attend classes when the following conditions are met:

- An [Allergy Emergency Health Care Plan](#) is completed (at least annually) and on file in the office.
- An EpiPen or similar device is delivered to the school with required medication forms.

It is the family's responsibility to inform MSH in writing of a severe or life-threatening allergy and to obtain the [Allergy Emergency Health Care Plan](#) with a physician's signature. If a class has a child with a severe or life-threatening allergy, families of other children in the class will be notified, when necessary, about specific products that are not allowed to be brought into the classroom.

### **No Smoking or Tobacco Use Anywhere on MSH Campuses**

According to our licensing requirements, MSH is a tobacco-free facility. Smoking or tobacco usage, including e-cigarettes and vaping devices, is prohibited on MSH grounds. Any person using these products on school grounds will be asked to leave immediately.

### **Emergency Closings**

MSH will notify staff and families of school closings using the Parent Square platform. Emergency alerts can be shared via app notification, email, text message, and voice call. Please do not attempt to pick your child up *during* a tornado warning. During a tornado warning, children at S. Hsv will be moved to the reinforced hallway in the main building. Children at HC will be moved to the toddler bathroom and connecting storage room. These two rooms have no outside windows and are centrally located within the building.

### **Emergency Preparedness**

MSH is currently invested in a multiyear consulting relationship with a leader in emergency preparedness and crisis management. Administrative staff meet regularly with the consulting team throughout the school year to review and update emergency response

plans and communication protocols. All staff receive annual training in emergency response and biennial training in CPR and First Aid.

Emergency drills are conducted monthly. MSH holds at least two shelter-in-place and two lock-down drills during the school year. Fire drills are conducted in any month that another emergency drill is not scheduled. All emergency drills are performed in developmentally-appropriate ways and are designed to help children and teachers confidently respond to potential emergencies without creating undue stress or panic.

The architect and the Emergency Management Agency have identified the reinforced hallway at S. Hsv and the back hallway between classrooms at HC as the designated storm shelters. Buildings are certified annually by an inspector from the Fire Department.

In the event of a fire, power failure, water shut-off or other problem that would interfere with the children's well-being, families will be contacted immediately to pick up their children. **Families must pick up by the stated dismissal time or late charges will occur at a rate of \$5 for the first 5 minutes and \$5 per minute thereafter. If school is closing due to an emergency or other crisis, ALL adults will be asked to present a photo ID before any child will be released.**

In the event of a toxic spill, gas leak, earthquake or other emergency that would require evacuation of the building and area, the local Emergency Management Agency would direct our relocation and families will be contacted as soon as possible.

### **Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect**

All MSH employees, enrichment specialists, approved volunteers, and board members are required by law to report to the local Department of Human Resources any incident of suspected child abuse or neglect. The Department of Human Resources is tasked with investigating all reports of suspected abuse or neglect. Our staff and approved volunteers receive training annually in identifying and reporting abuse.

## **Annual Fund, Fundraising, and Gifts**

### **Charitable Gifts Made to The Montessori School of Huntsville**

Like virtually all independent schools, MSH cannot meet its total financial needs from tuition alone. Charitable gifts are an important and necessary part of the school's fiscal management. All MSH children benefit from the generosity of parents, grandparents, faculty, staff, alumni/ae, former parents, corporations, and friends whose faithful support through gift giving helps further our mission to prepare children for a life of purpose, integrity, and academic accomplishment.

### **Annual Fund Campaign**

Each year the Board of Directors appeals to current parents, alumni, and staff to join the board in contributing to the Montessori School of Huntsville Annual Fund. Contributions to the Annual Fund bridge the gap between tuition income and the true cost of a quality Montessori education. Faithful giving to this fund has supported financial aid, school technology, facility upkeep and improvements, and teacher/staff continuing education.

The Annual Fund is the most effective avenue of giving to the school, and we hope every family will join us in this critical endeavor.

All gifts to the Annual Fund are tax-deductible as contributions to our 501(c)3 nonprofit institution. We encourage you to give according to your family's financial means. We are grateful for any and all contributions made by our donors. We strive to earn 100% participation from board, current parents, faculty, and staff as it significantly increases our chances of receiving grants from foundations and government organizations by demonstrating that 100% of our constituents support our mission and vision.

Disbursement schedules for pledges to the Annual Fund may be designed to suit your family's needs within the school's fiscal year. Many current families commit to giving \$200-\$2,500 annually by adding a \$20 to \$250 donation to their monthly tuition disbursement. We are grateful for all contributions to the Annual Fund. Our generous community of donors support quality Montessori education in our community while keeping annual tuition rates as low as possible.

### **The Montessori Families Endowment Fund**

In 2018, Dr. Robert & Nenita Fry generously seeded our first endowment, the Montessori Families Endowment Fund. We are so grateful to them for their incredible generosity and commitment to scholarship through this long-term investment.

The Fund is managed by the [Community Foundation of Greater Huntsville](#) and donations can be received from anyone interested in supporting the longevity of authentic, quality Montessori education for children in our community. Donations are tax-deductible and the principle is protected per the policies of the Community Foundation. Thank you for considering joining Dr. Robert Fry and Nenita Fry as long-term supporters of the Montessori mission through a donation to this fund. Our small community of Montessori families are the most generous and enthusiastic in Huntsville. Thank you for being one of them.

### **Kathy O'Reilly Memorial Scholarship Fund**

The Kathy O'Reilly Memorial Scholarship Fund was created in memory of Kathy O'Reilly, former teacher, administrator and board member, who passed away in December 2009 after a battle with cancer. Kathy was at the heart and soul of MSH for 23 years. She is remembered for her delight in working with children, her compassion for those in need, and a lifelong commitment to peace education.

The scholarship fund is designed to benefit children from families with limited financial resources who would not otherwise be able to attend MSH. Recipients will be added as funds permit.

Donations are accepted year-round and are tax-deductible. If you would like to serve your community by giving a child the gift of a quality Montessori education, please contact the Head of School.

### **Employer Matching Programs**

Employer matching programs allow your tax-deductible contributions to go even farther while helping these employers contribute their tax-deductible dollars to valuable community initiatives. Please consider contacting your HR department matching programs available through your company.

### **Memorials and Honoraria**

Each school year, gifts are received to honor a special person, memorialize a loved one, or celebrate special events such as birthdays and graduations. MSH administration will notify the individual or family of these thoughtful gifts upon receipt. We are fortunate that some grandparents and other extended family generously choose to donate to our school in the interest of their family's education.

### **Gifts-in-Kind**

Gifts of tangible property or professional services may be designated by an individual donor for a special one-time project or purpose not included in the operating budget of the school. Although gifts-in-kind do not count toward the Annual Fund, their value may be tax-deductible and is always greatly appreciated by MSH.

### **No Cost to You Fundraising**

[There are simple options for contributing to our school with your purchases.](#)

### **Fundraising and Special Events**

We strive to keep fundraising and family solicitations to a minimum. All school-related groups and individuals must obtain written approval from the Head of School for any event or activity conducted for the benefit of MSH. The Head of School may delegate this approval to the Fundraising Committee.

No event or activity shall include door-to-door fundraising by children in which children would be selling items or soliciting contributions, pledges, or orders from people that are unfamiliar to them. Adults may support school fundraisers by sharing fundraising information with relatives, family friends, neighbors, etc.

## **Financial Obligations**

### **General Information**

The Montessori School of Huntsville is a 501(c)(3) institution that complies with all appropriate federal and state laws. All cash gifts to the school for which the donor receives no goods or services are tax deductible. Certain donations (such as ticket purchases), auction donations, gifts of stock, and gifts in kind are deductible to the manner and extent provided by law in accordance with IRS regulations. Upon request, the administrative office furnishes letters to donors for tax purposes.

### **Application and Supply Fees**

A \$150 Application Fee is required with each application. Currently enrolled children also pay an Application Fee when they enroll for the coming year. A \$330 supply fee is

due by March 1 for all children who have enrolled prior to that date; for children enrolling after March 1 but before the start of the school year, the supply fee is due immediately upon acceptance into the school. For children enrolling after January 1 of the current school year, the supply fee will be reduced to \$150. All fees are non-refundable and non-transferable.

### **Tuition**

Tuition is quoted based on either an eleven or twelve month academic school year, as determined by your family's enrollment preferences and contract, and is due in full on August 1 of the academic year in which you are enrolling or upon enrollment when enrolling midyear. Families may elect to have their tuition divided into equal monthly installments, e.g. August through June, or August through July (S. Hsv campus only). This means tuition remains the same during the months where there are fewer regular school days, e.g. August (Phase-in), November (Thanksgiving Break), December (Winter Break), March/April (Spring Break), and May (Memorial Day break).

If a family wishes to guarantee an open spot in a classroom for their child for a midyear enrollment, tuition will be billed beginning in August.

If a family is offered enrollment midyear, tuition will be billed in the month that they accept the enrollment. Tuition will not be prorated for children starting in the middle of the month.

Montessori School of Huntsville is wholly supported and operated from the income derived from tuition, fees, and donations.

### **Statements**

Monthly statements will be sent via email, usually five calendar days before the first of each month. Your statement will reflect monthly tuition installments dated on the first of the month and any elective charges (e.g. donations, catered lunches) from the previous billing cycle.

### **Payment Options**

- **Payment in Full by August 1 of the academic year.**
- **Payment in Installments.** Families may choose to pay their annual tuition in semi-annual or monthly installments at no additional charge. Families who wish to pay in installments must pay via ACH draft and must give a minimum of 30 days notice to make any changes to their ACH account, including but not limited to, suspensions or account changes. Requests to change ACH account information must be made by updating the ACH Authorization form in Transparent Classroom.

**A \$25 fee will be assessed for all returned ACH transactions and a \$20 late fee will be applied to your account. Accounts that remain unpaid on the tenth of the month will incur a penalty equal to 10% of the unpaid balance.**

- **Credit Card.** MSH will accept payment via credit card for families who pay tuition in full or in semi-annual installments, subject to a 3.5% processing fee. **A \$25 fee will be assessed for all returned credit card transactions and a \$20 late fee will be applied to your account. Accounts that remain unpaid on the tenth of the month will incur a penalty equal to 10% of the unpaid balance.**
- **We do not accept personal checks or cash payments for tuition and fees.**

#### **Other Fees and Charges**

- Tote Bags - \$15
- MSH Shirts - \$15

#### **Charges for Late Pick Up**

To ensure appropriate staff to child ratios as well as quality programming in our afternoon extended day programs, we ask that you make every effort to pick your child up by their stated times. We are unable to accommodate drop-in or occasional care in our toddler and primary extended day programs. Families who need regular care past their child's dismissal time should sign up for the annual extended day program.

Children who are not picked up by the time designated on the enrollment contract, and who are not enrolled in our annual afternoon care program, will incur an hourly charge for each hour or fraction of an hour they remain in MSH's care past the scheduled departure time. MSH does not bill in increments of less than an hour. Children not picked up by their stated pick up times, will be billed at a rate of \$10.00 per hour.

Children who are not picked up by the stated program closing time -- 5:00 p.m. S. Hsv, 4:00 p.m. HC--will incur a \$5 fee for the first 5 minutes and \$5 per minute for each additional minute. **This policy will apply to the adjusted dismissal time if school is dismissed early for inclement weather or other emergency.** It is your responsibility to ensure that you have provided MSH with up-to-date contact information for reaching you in an emergency as well as staying connected to MSH when severe weather is likely. All children and adults must have left the building by the stated closing times. If you know that you will be late, please call the school so we can reassure your child that you are on the way.

For families with children who are enrolled for less than five days per week, the day off is set and not transferable.

#### **Late Payments**

Any extenuating circumstances regarding late payment must be made known in writing to the Head of School.

When a family's account has an outstanding balance, the child may be prohibited from ordering lunches through our catered service or charging any elective charges to their account. No records of any kind, including report cards and test scores, will be released on behalf of any child whose account is in arrears. The Head of School, after conferring

with parents whose accounts are in arrears, may prohibit the child from attending classes until the accounts are brought current.

The Head of School has final jurisdiction in the enforcement of these policies. Every effort is made to be responsive to the needs of MSH families and to ensure fairness in the implementation of the financial policies. An unsatisfactory record of tuition and fee payment, however, is considered a factor in the decision whether to offer a family an enrollment contract for the next year. Families whose financial accounts are not current will not be extended an enrollment contract until the accounts are made current.

### **Tuition Refunds and Credits**

Refunds are not given for absences, even absences of several weeks. Refunds are not given for closings due to inclement weather or other emergencies. Tuition is based on an eleven or twelve month academic school year and is due in full August 1 of the academic year in which you are enrolling. Families may elect to divide their annual tuition into equal monthly installments. We are unable to reduce tuition for extended vacations or other prolonged absences.

### **MSH Student Referral Rebate**

MSH recognizes that our families are the best recruitment tool that we have. To show our support for your recruitment efforts, you can receive a tuition reduction of \$100 for referring a family who enrolls their child or children at MSH. Referral rebates are not applied until the referred family has completed all enrollment paperwork and paid the application fee and supply fee. You cannot receive a referral rebate for referring a member of your own household or the sibling of a current MSH student. It is the referring family's responsibility to notify the front office prior to the prospective family's enrollment so that the new family can fill out a Referral Form. Referrals will not be made retroactively. The tuition reduction applies only to the cost of tuition (no cash rebates). Two families may split the tuition reduction if both contributed to a successful referral. A tuition reduction can be given for a child re-enrolling at MSH after an absence of 2 or more years. There is no limit to the number of children a family can refer, but tuition reductions will be limited to the full tuition of the referring family for one academic year.

## **Notice of Withdrawal from MSH**

Enrollment is granted to children at MSH with an understanding that the family is committed for the duration of the curriculum cycle in which the child is enrolled, i.e. 3-5 year cycle for children in early childhood programs and a 6-year cycle for children in the elementary programs. At a minimum, the enrollment contract confirms a family's financial commitment for the full academic year, beginning in August or upon entry into the program mid-year and ending in June or July. We understand that extenuating circumstances may arise that may result in an inability to complete the academic school year.



**A family who wishes to withdraw from MSH must give written notice of intent to withdraw at least 180 days before the last anticipated tuition payment.** The written notice must be sent to the HoS and a conference will be scheduled to discuss the reasons for withdrawal and possible solutions to allow the child to remain in attendance at MSH for the full academic year.

Failure to give 180 days notice will result in an obligation to pay a withdrawal fee equal to **six** months of tuition. Notices of intent to withdraw received between the signing of the enrollment contract and August 1 of the academic year will be considered as of August 1. This means that families who have signed an enrollment contract and decide to withdraw prior to the start of the school year in August will be subject to the same withdrawal fee equal to six months tuition, i.e., August - January. Notices of intent to withdraw received from families applying for midyear enrollment between the signing of the enrollment contract and the child's first intended day of attendance, will be considered as of the child's first intended day of attendance and the six month withdrawal fee will apply.

### **Dismissal from MSH**

MSH has the right to dismiss a child if the staff determines that the child is not ready for the school program and the family is unwilling to provide support and/or services as requested by a school Child Study Team, or for other reasons including but not limited to academic, behavioral or financial concerns. MSH reserves the right to dismiss a child if it is determined that the child poses a significant risk to the safety and wellbeing of MSH children and staff. Families dismissed from MSH are subject to the terms of the enrollment contract.

## Appendices

Useful Links to Information on our Website:

- [Pre-arranged Absence Form](#)
- [Allergy Emergency Health Care Plan](#)
- [Medical Practitioner's Authorization to Administer Medication](#)
- [Parent Medication Authorization Form](#)
- [Primary Celebration of Life Form](#)
- [No Cost to You Fundraising](#)

Other Useful Information:

- [Key Philosophical Messages that Make Montessori Unique](#)
- [The Four Planes of Development](#)
- [The Montessori Teacher](#)
- [Family-Child-Guide Partnership Expectations](#)
- [Preparing Ourselves to Receive Our Children's Reports of Concern from Their Community](#)

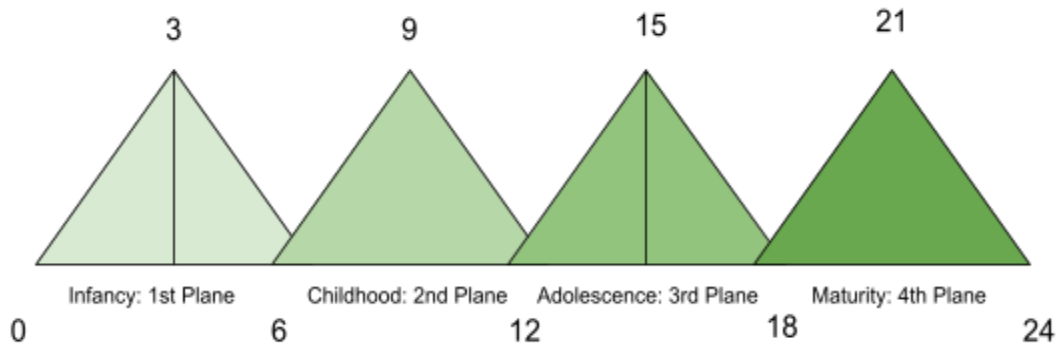
## **Key Philosophical Messages that Make Montessori Unique<sup>4</sup>**

- Deep respect for children as individuals.
- Multiage classes allow teachers to develop close and long-term relationships with their students and encourage older students to become role models, mentors, and leaders to younger students.
- An integrated curriculum is carefully structured and connects subjects within programs (e.g., history and cultural arts to maximize the opportunity for learning that builds from program to program, progressing from concrete to abstract learning).
- Independence is nurtured and leads children toward being purposeful, motivated, and confident in their own abilities.
- Peace and conflict resolution are taught daily. Children learn to be a part of a warm, respectful, and supportive community.
- Character development is a central focus of the AMS Montessori curriculum. The child creates, in a very real sense, the adult that they are to be through their experiences, interactions, and environments.
- Hands-on learning is central to the curriculum in all programs and leads to children being engaged rather than passive with their work.
- The environments are responsibly and carefully prepared with multisensory, sequential, and self-correcting materials to support self-directed learning.
- Teachers, students, and families work together as a warm and supportive community.
- Self-expression is nurtured in all children. Children experience art, music, poetry, theater, writing, and other forms of creative arts with confidence and passion.

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<sup>4</sup> *Montessori in the 21st Century*. The American Montessori Society. 2003.

## The Four Planes of Development<sup>5</sup>



### **1<sup>st</sup> Plane: Ages 0-6, ‘Early Childhood’, and Individual Creation of the Person**

This stage is characterized by the young child’s ‘absorbent mind.’ Children have a desire for physical independence (from “Help me to do it myself!” to “I can do it myself!”) and are interested in real activities with an intelligent purpose. Sensitive periods during this plane include: movement, language, small objects, toileting, order, music, grace and courtesy, senses, writing, reading, spatial relationships, and mathematics.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Plane: Ages 6-12, ‘Childhood’, and Construction of the Intelligence**

Children in the second plane of development have a thirst for knowledge, love of imagination, fascination with fairness, and a desire for intellectual independence. This is the time for ‘cosmic education,’ in which the child explores their place within the world and comes to appreciate the interconnectedness of all things. This is also the ‘bridge to abstraction’—the transition from concrete to abstract thinking. Children in this plane have a desire for intellectual independence. (“I can think it myself!”)

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Plane: Ages 12-18, ‘Adolescence’, and Construction of the Social Self**

Children in the third plane of development are characterized by self concern and self assessment. This is a sensitive period for both critical thinking and exploring social and moral values. Adolescents in this plane have a desire for emotional independence. (“I can stand on my own.”)

### **4<sup>th</sup> Plane: Ages 18-24, Beyond ‘Adulthood’, and Construction of Self Understanding**

The fourth plane of development is characterized by the construction of the spiritual self. Young adults are in the process of conscious discernment of right and wrong, seeking to discover their place within the world. Young adults in the plane have a desire for financial independence. (“I can get it myself.”)

### **Intense Change & Assimilation**

Within each plane, the child undergoes a period of intense change, followed by a period of assimilation. This also holds true within each three-year cycle. For this reason, the

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<sup>5</sup> Montessori School of Beaverton, <https://msb.org/the-montessori-method/four-planes-of-development>

third, or capstone year in Montessori classrooms is sometimes known as the ‘leap year.’ This is when students internalize all the various skills for which they have both directly and indirectly acquired during the earlier years. It is also the time when students become self-possessed learners, confident in their abilities. It’s when they emerge as leaders, eager to share their skills with their younger peers. Rising second and third year students enter the classroom in the fall with newfound confidence and autonomy, ready to take on leadership roles and greater independence. Children who move up to the next level of their Montessori education thrill at the opportunity to embark upon new and exciting journeys.

## **The Montessori Teacher<sup>6</sup>**

To work in a Montessori environment is very unlike ‘teaching’ in the traditional sense of the word. Montessori teachers do not teach. Instead, they guide; they observe; they create an environment of calm, order, joy. They know when to intervene, and above all, they know when to step back. This knowledge isn’t something most people are born with, but it is something [Montessori guides] learn during [their] training.

At the heart of the Montessori classroom is the teacher—the guide. Montessori teachers are referred to as guides because they are experts at assisting children to find their own strengths and their own capabilities through the use of practical, self-correcting materials. A Montessori teacher is adept at leading from behind. It’s an art, a skill, an ability.

Children experience dramatic changes that require different environments to meet their developmental needs. Dr. Montessori compares this process to the metamorphosis that a caterpillar undergoes to become a butterfly. Those who have completed [Montessori] teacher training understand and see what it means to ‘believe in the child,’ and how to best help all children discover the joys of learning.

Montessori Teachers...

- respect children as individuals with unique plans for development.
- create a calm and joyful atmosphere in an environment that allows each child to connect to productive work.
- give engaging presentations with Montessori materials that the children will use on their own.
- foster growth towards independence and social responsibility.
- assist children to progress at their own pace and gradually discover their potential while helping them to help themselves.

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<sup>6</sup> Association Montessori Internationale, <https://amiusa.org/the-montessori-teacher/>

## Family-Child-Guide Partnership Expectations

### The Family

#### **Lifetime Role Model**

- Models patience, respectfulness, and peacefulness
- Promotes the development of independence, responsibility and accountability of the child by modeling and reinforcing desired behaviors

#### **Respecter of Montessori Professional**

- Seeks to understand and embrace the Montessori philosophy, both in the classroom and at home
- Abides by the school's policies and guidelines
- Respects the guides' expertise in the classroom
- Reads school and classroom communications and asks questions when needed for clarity

#### **Instructional Supporter**

- Reasonably adapts home environment and routines to support developing independence and responsibility
- Commits to adapting parenting style to be consistent with Montessori philosophy
- Attends conferences, society meetings, and educational programs
- Advocates for child
- Asks the guide, "What can I do to support my child?" Follows through on agreed-upon steps.
- Allows child to take responsibility for their own education
- Commits to MSH education at minimum for the duration of the 3 year cycle to maximize full potential of the program offered, and preferably through 6th grade to fully benefit from the entire MSH curriculum

### The Child

#### **Peer Role Model**

- Respects self, others, and the environment
- Practices Grace and Courtesy
- Works toward independence
- Makes peace

#### **Montessori Child**

- Loves to learn
- Comes to school prepared and with openness and a positive attitude
- Abides by the school's policies and guidelines
- Shares ideas & interests with others inside and outside the learning environment
- Demonstrates the desire to create quality work and strive for their full potential

#### **Creative, Eager Learner**

- Seeks to learn and views mistakes as opportunities for learning
- Chooses intellectually useful and challenging work
- Pursues and develops their own interests
- Takes responsibility for their own education

### The Guide

#### **Classroom Role Model**

- Models patience, respectfulness, and peacefulness
- Promotes the development of independence, responsibility, and accountability of the child modeling and reinforcing desired behaviors

#### **Montessori Professional**

- Works with the child in a manner consistent with the Montessori philosophy
- Abides by the school's policies and guidelines
- Continues professional development
- Provides opportunities for family education regarding Montessori philosophy and curriculum
- Shares information about academic and developmental progress in a timely manner

#### **Instructional Designer, Facilitator, and Assessor**

- Follows Montessori philosophy to provide each child with appropriate and challenging work
- Uses observation and assessment to meet the needs of each child
- Seeks input from family, child, and colleagues to maximize child's learning potential
- Nurtures the child to reach their full potential
- Fosters each child's independence in daily classroom activities and work
- Expects the child to take responsibility for their own education
- Prepares the child for any school environment after Upper Elementary graduation or the end of the 3 year cycle

### **The Family**

#### **Volunteer and Society Member**

- Volunteers time, energy, and resources to identified school/classroom needs
- Serves on or volunteers with at least one school committee, attends meetings, and provides support for committee projects
- Attends biannual Society Member Meetings
- Asks guides, “How can I help?”
- Follows the lead of the classroom guide when volunteering in the classroom and respects the guide’s classroom guidelines and processes

#### **Effective Communicator**

- Has an open, honest, respectful dialogue with guides and child
- Partners with guide and child in problem solving to improve the educational experience for the child

#### **Facilitator of Problem Solving**

- Gives child the time and support to work through challenges on their own
- Asks questions to help the child solve problems rather than solving problems for the child
- Promotes the child’s care of self by setting boundaries (sleep, proper nutrition, exercise)
- Allows the child to experience logical consequences to actions, rather than using punishments and rewards

### **The Child**

#### **Community Member**

- Participates in the care of the indoor and outdoor classroom
- Guides and seeks/accepts guidance from other children as well as adults
- Demonstrates empathy and compassion
- Works peacefully to prevent and resolve conflict
- Acts as a responsible and contributing member of a greater community (family, class, school, neighborhood, city, country, world)

#### **Effective Communicator**

- Talks with and listens to guides and families openly, honestly, and respectfully
- Self-advocates
- Partners with guides and families in problem solving

#### **Responsible Problem Solver**

- Takes the time to work through challenges
- Asks critical and compelling questions in a respectful way
- Accepts responsibility for their actions
- Participates in the process of developing logical consequences
- Seeks solutions

### **The Guide**

#### **Classroom Architect, Builder & Guardian**

- Prepares and maintains an authentic Montessori learning environment
- Balances the needs of the child and classroom community
- Provides boundaries and choices and respects the child’s need for freedom within limits
- Participates in the life of the school community beyond the classroom

#### **Effective Communicator**

- Has an open, honest, respectful dialogue with the family and child
- Partners with family and child in problem solving to improve the educational experience for the child

#### **Facilitator of Problem Solving**

- Gives child the time and support to work through challenges on their own
- Asks questions to help the child solve problems rather than solving problems for the child
- Allows the child to experience logical consequences to actions, rather than using punishments and rewards



## **Preparing Ourselves to Receive Our Children's Reports of Concern from Their Community<sup>7</sup>**

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From time to time our child may tell us about upsetting things that have happened to them or others.

Or things they have seen or heard at school that are in some way concerning or puzzling to them.

How we respond may have a strong effect on our child's future perceptions and feelings as well as his relationships with peers.

Listen. Let it be. Comfort the child with a touch or a hug. Breathe.

Listen. Make a sound or a comment of interest, compassion or support.

Wait. Listen. Stay focused but relaxed. Breathe.

Our children, especially while in Montessori communities, have amazing resources for advocating for themselves and others in subtle but powerful ways.

For our children to bring forth and develop these resources they need the calm and quiet attention of our listening ear and trustful heart, a heart that cares about everyone concerned.

When we react instead of responding with calm and quiet attention...

Or when we show heated feelings of judgment against other children, our own child loses touch with those resources.

This can be the birth of our child's tendencies of bully or victim, of bystander or follower...

As well as the attraction toward melodrama, intrigue and the manipulation of the adult in social relations.

In an environment of high emotion, children may choose to act to make things worse for themselves and others.

This is in direct opposition to their natural tendencies to make things better.

Or our child might withdraw and shut down in order to exclude us.

Children have a strong need for self-agency in solving their own problems and working out their own relationships.

If our child reports repeatedly about the same child or about similar situations, it is important to let the Guide know privately.

Explain the child's concern so the Guide can keep an eye out for ways to give our child support in working through those relationships and situations.

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## **Our Child Reports About His/Her Own Experience**

*Johnny hit me.*

(First give physical comfort.) Oh, that could hurt. I'm so sorry you were hit! You'd like him to use his words. I trust he'll be learning soon. I wonder what you could do to help? What could you say?

*Jamie took the book I was reading.*

That could be frustrating. You'd like her to ask you and wait for your answer instead of just taking it. I wonder what you could do? What could you say?

*Dana called me piggy face.*

That could really hurt your feelings. You'd like her to call you by your name. You'd like her to tell you what's bothering her in respectful language.

*Colin laughed when I fell down.*

That could hurt your feelings. Maybe you'd like him to help you up when you fall down. Maybe you'd like him to ask if you're okay. Sounds like you know everyone feels better when they are concerned about others and helpful to them.

*Susan said I took her pencil, but I didn't. She yelled at me in front of everyone.*

That sounds embarrassing. Sounds like you wish she would have asked you politely about her pencil.

## **Our Child Reports About Another Child's Experience**

*Sally hit Martha.*

That could hurt! I hear you care about people's feelings. Sounds like you know how important it is to use words instead of hitting. I trust that your guide will help Martha learn to use her words very soon.

*Mabel pushed Stacy down.*

I hope Stacy's okay. Being pushed down could hurt her body and her feelings. I hear you care about feelings. You know how important it is to use words instead of pushing. I trust that your guide will help Mabel learn to use her words very soon.

*Danny took Cindy's hair bow.*

It could be upsetting to Cindy to have someone take her hair bow. I hear that you care about how other people are treated. You know how important it is to respect others' things. You'd like Danny to respect Cindy's hair bow.

*Bobby messed up David's work.*

It could be very upsetting for David to have his work messed up. Sounds like you know how much better everyone feels when children respect the work of others. I

hear that you know how important respect is to the whole community.

*Delia called Sammy “stupid.”*

That could hurt his feelings. Sounds like you know how important it is to use respectful words to other children, even when very annoyed or frustrated. You’d like children in the community to be respectful even when they have very strong feelings. I wonder what the children and the guide will do to help Delia get herself better.

*Brenda never does her work. She just bothers other children.*

You feel bad for Brenda and the other children who are bothered. Sounds like you know children feel happier when they find work they like and no one is bothered. You understand what makes the community work well. I trust that little by little Brenda will begin to find her work.

*Sven is so mean. No one likes him.*

That sounds sad and lonely for Sven. I hear you care about children when someone’s mean to them. I trust that little by little Sven will soon learn to get along better with the children.

I trust the children and the guide will find ways to help him. I wonder what you could do to help everyone make it better?

### **Our Child Repeatedly Reports Concerns about the Same Situation or the Same Child**

*Jackson was mean to me again. He’s always mean, and it’s not getting better.*

That could be discouraging for you. It could be discouraging to Jackson and to all of the children. I wonder what you could do?

I know you to be a person with many good ideas and people who could help. I trust everyone to find a way to change the situation. I wonder who could help you? What could you do?

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