

## Parent Handbook

*"I hear, and I forget. I see, and I remember. I do, and I understand."*

*-- Maria Montessori, The Absorbent Mind*

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## **General Background**

### **History and Organization**

Montessori School of Tupelo, MS, Inc. (MST) is affiliated with the American Montessori Society. The School was founded in the summer of 2002 by Kira Grinspun, a Montessori Certified teacher with specializations in Early Childhood (3 - 6 yr. old children), Infant and Toddler (birth – 3 yr. old children) and Montessori School Management. The School is open to children of all backgrounds, without discrimination in regard to race, sex, religion, or economic origins. The School desires as much diversity among the children and staff as possible and is dedicated to furthering international and ecological consciousness. Education is viewed as “an aid to life.” Containing the full range of Montessori learning equipment, MST provides a total Montessori environment, and strives to empower the children to believe in themselves and their abilities to make a positive difference in the world they share.

The School hours are from 7:45 until 5:30, Monday through Friday. School is in session from August through May. Summer Care is available during the months of June and July with the same operating hours. The telephone number is (662) 840-9917. The school’s e-mail address is [montessoritupelo@comcast.net](mailto:montessoritupelo@comcast.net).

The School, an affiliate of the American Montessori Society, is licensed by the Mississippi State Department of Health, and maintains high standards of excellence in childcare. A copy of licensing standards about childcare programs is available for parent review in the school office.

### **Mission Statement**

Our mission is:

To provide for the children a safe, comfortable and beautiful learning environment that excites the senses, challenges the mind and nurtures independence and self-confidence.

To provide for the parents a comfortable environment ripe with information enabling them to enhance their knowledge of matters pertinent to their child’s education and development.

To provide for the staff a child-centered and resource rich environment that encourages continuing education and values creativity and pride.**Organizational Chart**

Each classroom is under the direction of a Montessori-trained teacher, who works to carry out the Montessori Program.

The organization of the school is structured as follows:

Board of Directors

Executive Director

Assistant Director

Teachers

Teacher Assistants

Classroom Volunteers

Chain of Command for the classrooms:

Comments, questions and concerns should be directed to the Teacher. If there are still unsolved issues, the Teacher or yourself will inform the Executive Director and a meeting will be scheduled with parents.

## **Philosophy**

MST's purpose is to facilitate the full development of each child enrolled while helping each child to find his place as a contributing member of the group. We believe that such development can occur only through the mature and caring modeling by teachers. The teachers foster the children's participation in maintaining their classroom and outdoor school environments.

The classrooms are family-structured, open classrooms filled with children of varying ages who have freedom to move about, to make choices within the prepared environment, and to participate in conversations with their friends. The Montessori teacher acts as a catalyst and a guide to the children encouraging them to extend their natural curiosity by removing barriers to the child's learning, and encouraging learning through exploration and manipulation. The child is allowed to work without interruption and to repeat activities as long as his or her inner timetable dictates. The teacher is an astute observer of each child's interests which may identify his "sensitive periods," times when one or more areas of the curriculum may be of special interest and therefore easier to learn. The children are

shown, individually and in small groups, new activities relating to their interests and level of development, with the expectation that each small success will motivate the child to progress to the next level of difficulty, thereby leading to an attitude of joy in learning.

Rules for the children and teachers are based on respect for self, others, and the environment. Teachers see their role as guides for each child's development to full independence. The children are respected as individuals and encouraged to make their own choices of constructive "work." In Montessori classes the child's play is taken as seriously as the work which will lead to the construction of the adult he or she will become.

The School makes every effort to encourage the children to become aware of themselves as caretakers for the planet earth and responsible members of the international family of mankind. The School stresses the need for a spirit of ecological and social responsibility and tries to model its philosophy as a caring community for children, parents, and faculty.

### **Parent Partnership**

We ask that the parents of children enrolled continue their role as their children's primary teachers by entering into a partnership with the School. Parent participation is the key to the development of your child and to the success of the school. We strongly encourage parent participation and support as it is an integral part of the Montessori Method. Each family is required to pledge twenty hours of volunteer work each year as part of their contribution to the school. Families may opt out of volunteer hours by paying the \$200 Volunteer Waiver Fee. The parents are asked to participate in the following ways:

- Maintain everyday communication with the teachers regarding any changes in their family or the child's life. For example, inform the teachers of a death in the family, marital struggles, an impending move, and the addition of new family members, vacations or any other unusual or unsettling event.
- Schedule an individual parent conference each semester.
- Continue your own education in childhood development by attending the parent meetings.
- Read books by Maria Montessori and other childhood development experts. A suggested reading list is included at the end of this handbook.
- Actively incorporate Montessori methods in the home.
- Support school activities (picnics, field trips, parent workdays, fund raising efforts).
- Volunteer to serve on committees.
- Observe your child on a regular basis and schedule a conference with classroom Teacher if needed.

## **Admission and Enrollment**

The School houses classrooms for Early Childhood (ages three years through six years), Toddler (ages 18 months to 3 years) and Infant (ages 6 weeks to 18 months). Children whose families share the goals of the school and who have sufficient maturity to be comfortable in the classroom environment are accepted for enrollment.

The admissions procedure is as follows:

- Contact the MST office to receive an information packet.
- Schedule an appointment with an MST staff member to tour the facility and have any questions answered.
- Submit the application forms, including the application fee. Any evaluation from previous schools should also be included.

Montessori School of Tupelo, MS, Inc. admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its admission policies, educational policies, and loan programs, and athletic and other school administered programs.

Following acceptance by the school, the Enrollment Agreement and enrollment fee should be returned to confirm the space for the child. Once the signed Enrollment Agreement has been returned, parents are responsible for fulfilling all terms contained in the agreement. All acceptances for enrollment are provisional during the first six weeks of each child's matriculation, during which the parents should stay in close communication with the teachers as an aid in the child's adjustment to school.

Before the first day of school, parents must have submitted a current immunization certificate from the child's physician on a Mississippi 121 Form, all applications, an emergency card, and the application and registration fees.

As school begins, please join us in recognizing your child's efforts and successes during his journey towards independence. Your encouragement and approval is key to the child's healthy self-esteem and development. We ask that parents help prepare their children for happy school days by allowing enough time for dressing and breakfast before school. It is essential that each child have ample sleep, exercise, rest, and opportunities for recreation with family and friends outside of school.

For the first day of school, your child will need the following:

- 2 changes of weather appropriate clothes, including underwear, labeled with your child's name inside
- A picture of your child to be taped on the front of the cubby (the school will provide cubbies)
- Slippers or socks to wear in the classroom, which help to create a quiet environment, and assure that fingers are not injured while children work on the floor; slippers or socks should be plain and without characters or unusual décor
- Light jacket or sweater
- Rain Boots labeled with child's name
- Diapers, Pull-ups and wipes if applicable

## **Programs**

### **Orientation**

The parents should plan to attend Parent Orientation Night just prior to school's opening. This gives you an opportunity to meet your child's teachers and see their classroom. All parents are expected to read this handbook in full and refer to it as needed. By enrolling your child, parents agree to abide by the policies as explained in this handbook. All parents should attend the Parent Education Meetings throughout the year, and participate in the fund-raising efforts. Participation in Parent Work Days and helping with special events in the classroom is a valuable dimension of parental relationship within the school community.

### **Infants**

MST offers an exceptional out-of-home setting for your infant. Our experienced caregivers provide personalized and loving care for every child. Close communication between parent and teacher is essential and helps us provide individualized care for your child. We view our relationship as a partnership—we are equally invested in your child's happiness, well-being and development. We respond to all "check in" calls with detailed information, and you leave with a daily report sheet that records feeding times, changes, and highlights from the day.

Within our safe harbor, infants and beginning walkers enjoy freedom of movement, discovery, and interaction, as they develop gross motor skills as well as confidence. As part of the Montessori curriculum, infants begin lessons that encourage sensory, language and motor development. Exposure

to these Montessori materials builds a foundation for confidence and independence, which will be expanded upon in the Toddler program.

### **Transition to Toddler**

A child who is in the Infant class may be moved to the Toddler class during the school year dependent on class size in Toddler room, age of student, and readiness of student.

### **Toddlers**

This is a program for children, ages 18 months to 3 years. This program helps the toddlers achieve a healthy separation from their parents. The children work and play in a warm and secure atmosphere. They explore an environment filled with carefully selected materials and with activities designed to help them move, speak and function independently and joyfully. Children who attend schools with programs of this nature show a much greater awareness, tenderness and helpfulness with each other than is usual at such a young age.

### **Transition to Early Childhood**

A child who is in the Toddler class may be moved to Early Childhood during the school year dependent on class size in EC, age of student, and readiness of student.

### **Early Childhood**

Preparation of the environment is vital to the Montessori curriculum. The child is encouraged to explore and learn by undertaking activities of interest to him or her. Exploration not only includes the classroom, but also the home and the outdoors. Emphasis is given to the development of personal skills and social sensitivities, the development of coordination, the ability to concentrate, and the perseverance to complete tasks. This development occurs in an atmosphere that respects the child and gives precedence to nurturing self-esteem and encouraging self-discipline.

Classrooms contain numerous learning areas in which each child is free to choose their work, and be given individual guidance and encouragement by the teacher as needed. During the morning work cycle

children learn to equate the terms “work” and “play” and enjoy working individually, in small groups, and in large groups. Learning areas in the class include:

- practical life
- sensorial
- language
- math
- art
- manipulative materials (blocks and puzzles)
- music
- sciences
- geography
- international cultural studies

Emphasis is given to the development of motor skills and the importance of harmony between mind and body for early learning.

The Montessori teacher acts as a catalyst to help the children learn through their own activity. The teacher demonstrates the material and then invites the child to try. By observing the children, the teacher will provide learning opportunities and equipment, which present experiences in tune with each child’s “sensitive periods.” Each child is shown new activities, which relate to his/her interests and level of development, so that with each opportunity to succeed the child will be encouraged to progress to the next level of difficulty.

The School is oriented toward assisting the children in developing their powers of critical analysis and creative problem solving. They are guided through the process of absorption of fact and attainment of skills, and hopefully are inspired to put their abilities to work for themselves. It is the hope that personal empowerment will encourage the children to become forces for positive change in the internationally independent world they inhabit.

## **Kindergarten**

The kindergarten age children are given the opportunity for an additional session during Extended Day. Keeping children enrolled through kindergarten is strongly encouraged, as the first two years in Montessori school provide children with the benefit of sensorial preparation for academic skills. This concrete sensorial experience allows the child to form a mental picture of the concepts that are expanded upon in the kindergarten year.

Additionally, giving the child the opportunity to be among the oldest children in the classroom allows him or her to “tutor” the younger children, often enabling the “tutor” to learn more from the experience than the ones being tutored. We encourage all parents to meet with their child’s teacher if they have questions about our Montessori Kindergarten Program.

### **Phase-In Policy**

At Montessori School of Tupelo, MS, Inc. we realize the process of separation is vitally important to the child. Our aim is to provide the opportunity for the child to walk away from the parent rather than the reverse. This initial separation from home and parent is a process that affects the child’s life and view of his world. To be true to the developing child we are asking you to take an important role in beginning your child’s year with us. Our first week together has been set aside to help the child with the process of separation. The parent or person who goes through the phase-in process should be the one to bring the child to school throughout the year or at least until the child is comfortable with separation.

During phase-in, each parent will be asked to sit on the perimeter of the classroom. We ask that you sit quietly, simply allowing your presence to provide security for your child. Please refrain from encouraging your child to separate. Allow them to sit in your lap or stay as close to you as they want for the entire session. Your job is to enjoy being with us and providing a safe base for your child. Feel free to bring a book to occupy your time.

The teacher will begin to entice the child into activity when she thinks they are ready. It is important that you remain seated and non-judgmental so that your child can separate at his or her own pace.

When your child is showing signs of comfort and ease in the classroom the teacher will ask you to leave the classroom for a short period. You will leave your purse, sweater or other personal item in the room as reassurance to the child that you are coming back.

When the teacher observes that your child has successfully separated she will let you know that you no longer need to stay in the classroom with your child. However, you are always welcome to observe your child's classroom. After your child has successfully phased-in you are welcome to take advantage of carpool for morning drop off.

Please note that the process of separation does not always take a week for some children and may take longer for others.

We realize that we are asking for a significant commitment on the part of the parents. However, we believe your time and effort will be of great service to the child. Please do not hesitate to voice your questions or concerns.

### **After Care**

The After-Care program provides working parents the peace of mind that their children are well cared for after school. Children who stay for after care will have time for snack and continuing work that was started earlier in the day.

## **Daily Procedures**

### **Punctuality**

The school expects punctuality as a part of the general sense of order that is created and maintained in the classroom. Prompt, regular attendance supports development of responsible, disciplined work habits.

Children should arrive at school through carpool between 7:45 a.m. and 8:15 a.m. When a child needs to arrive late or leave early, we ask that they do so as quietly as possible so as not to disturb the rest of the class. **Please leave or retrieve your child at the classroom door without entering.** Likewise, prompt pick-up is expected, as our teachers still have work to do after the children are gone. Children should be picked up between 2:15 and 2:30 or 5:15 and 5:30. Pick-ups after 2:30 and 5:30 will be considered late. **Late pick-ups will be assessed a late fee at the rate of \$5.00 per five minute intervals.** If a child has not been picked up by 2:35 or 5:35 and the School has not been contacted concerning the late pick up, a staff member will attempt to contact the adults listed on the child's Emergency Card.

## Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

The school provides a drop off period from 7:45 until 8:15. Drop off will be made available after the initial one week phase in period. During this time, children will be met at the car by a staff member and encouraged to tell the parent good-bye at the car. Any items that may be a distraction to the child or the classroom, ie: toys, loviess, and food, must be left in vehicle. We strongly recommend that all parents take advantage of carpool since it allows for easier and quicker arrivals.

For arrivals, please pull all the way under the covered walkway to load and unload children. During carline, the traffic on Mt. Vernon road may get backed up. To help remedy this, please use the gravel drive as part of the carline. This will allow more cars to pull into the drive and out of the street.

FOR THE SAFETY OF OUR CHILDREN, WE ASK THAT YOU PLEASE DO THE FOLLOWING:

- If possible, load and unload children from the passenger side of the car.
- Do not go around cars that are loading or unloading children.
- Do not leave your car in the circular driveway, even briefly.
- Assist the staff in getting the children in and out of the car as quickly as possible, and do not use this opportunity for extended conversation with the staff.
- Do not park on the street or in the circular drive, as this can block the carpool line and pose a safety hazard when children try to cross the street or the carpool line.

Children walking in or out with a parent during arrival and departure times must be holding the hand of an adult while in the parking lot or on the sidewalk.

Children arriving after 8:15 must be brought to their rooms by parents entering through the front door of the building. Please park your car in one of the spaces provided off the circular drive. Do not park in the circular drive or on the street. Check in briefly with your child's teacher, give your child a cheerful good-bye and reassurance that you will be back soon, and promptly leave them at the door in their classroom.

The State Department of Health requires that children be signed in and out each morning and afternoon by the parent or responsible party. Staff will hand the sign-in/sign-out sheets to the parent in the carpool line. If your child arrives late or leaves early, please make sure to sign your child in or out. The sheet will be available in the lobby for late arrivals or early pickups.

The parents should provide transportation whether individually or in car pools. When a child is to be picked up by someone other than the parents, written permission must be given prior to the child leaving. If it is a permanent arrangement, a note must be kept in the child's file at school. Only those persons listed at the time of enrollment will be allowed to pick up the child unless notified in writing of a change.

Parents are required to transport children in car seats or with seat belts as required by Mississippi law, and will be reported to the Department of Transportation for failure to comply.

### **Community Lunch and Rest Period**

A well-balanced, nutritious, catered lunch is served to all MST students. It is a MS Department of Health requirement that all children eat the lunch that is offered. This experience provides the child with a social environment which fosters a sense of community. Strong friendships develop as children work together preparing lunch and caring for the classroom.

If your child has medically dictated diet or dietary restrictions, we will work together to meet your child's dietary needs. Please provide a letter from the prescribing physician outlining the diet.

**MAKE SURE ANY DIETARY RESTRICTIONS AND FOOD ALLERGIES ARE NOTED ON YOUR CHILD'S EMERGENCY CARD.**

After the children gather for a community lunch, they lay down for a period of rest as required by the Mississippi Department of Health. Parents will provide their child's rest mat which should be taken home on Fridays to be washed and returned to school on Monday. Mats with pillow/blanket attached are preferred. After nap, there will be a snack provided for those students who stay for aftercare.

### **Clothing**

Your child should wear comfortable and easy-to-clean clothing to school, as our children often work on the floor and outside almost every day. Children should be able to take clothing on and off by themselves, and **clothing should be labeled with your child's name. All children are expected to be dressed appropriately for the weather so that they can have time outside each day except during rain.** During cold weather, please be sure to have mittens and a hat for your child. Please be sure that your

child has a pair of rain boots that will remain at school. Children may play outside even when the ground is wet.

It is suggested that the children participate in choosing what clothing they wear to school. Unusual combinations reflect the child's emerging sense of self. Many families find it helpful for this choice to be made the evening before. Please avoid clothing that restricts movement or that could be distracting to the other children.

Any unmarked clothing items misplaced or left at school will be put in the lost and found. These items are always available for you to look through in the school office, and are displayed a couple of times each year to find the owners. If not claimed, these items are donated to charity.

### **Cubbies**

The children will be provided a cubby in which to store a change of clothes. Please include **two FULL changes of clothes, including socks and underwear, and remember to change them as the seasons change.** It is also wise to keep a lightweight jacket or sweatshirt at school. Again, please label **everything** with your child's name.

### **Birthdays and Special Celebrations**

We encourage children to celebrate their birthday by making a poster of their life with the help of their parents. A picture from each year should be included, with captions explaining each picture. The poster should be brought to school on the Monday of the child's birthday week. We will talk about the pictures on the day of the celebration.

Parents wishing to attend the birthday celebration should contact their child's teacher to schedule a time. Parents are welcome to attend!! Parents wishing to bring a special snack to celebrate the child's birthday or other special occasion should notify the teacher what they are bringing.

## **Birthday Books**

In honor of your child's birthday, families have the option of bringing a book to donate to the school on the special day! Parents may inscribe the book and/or place a photo of the child in the cover. Please ask your child's teacher for suggestions on appropriate age level Caldecott winning books. Our goal is to help develop the children's love and respect for quality, well written books.

## **Field Trips**

Parents will be notified of class field trips, and asked to sign permission slips and pay the child's admission if applicable. We encourage parents to join us on these special days. However, if a parent cannot attend, the child will be transported with a seat belt or appropriate car seat as required by Mississippi law either in a MST staff or parent vehicle. Proof of liability insurance is required if staff or parents transport children.

## **School Equipment**

Every effort is made to teach the children respect and care of the learning equipment. Montessori materials are ordered from all over the world and replacement is costly. Children sometimes "borrow" pieces of the equipment to take home. The parent's responsibility is to remind the child of the need to return even the smallest pieces (beads, labels, cubes, etc.) to the classroom. Our response upon return of the equipment will be to thank the child for remembering and for caring to keep the materials in the classroom.

Toys from home are not permitted at school because they cause dissension among the children, and often become damaged or lost. Please explain to your child that school has enough toys with which to play and that his/her toys will be awaiting him safely at home or in the car. The school cannot be responsible for toys from home, and if they arrive, they will be placed out of reach when possible. Candy and gum are not permitted at school.

## **Social Dynamics and Discipline**

### **Social Behavior**

The development of self-discipline is a major focus. Teachers provide the children with models of behavior by showing respect and caring for the feelings of children, parents, and colleagues. The adults' role is to help the children meet their needs, by observing and getting to know each child in depth. In this way, emphasis is placed on the prevention of frustration or boredom, which could lead to disruptive or passive behavior.

Lessons in grace and courtesy present social expectations positively and clearly before problems arise. Rules for the children and teachers are few and quite simple, yet are kept consistent. Specific situations are related to two major principles: respect for each other and respect for the environment.

When a child is disruptive, a teacher will offer support and understanding, including an attempt to help the child understand his own behavior and alternative approaches. Children experiencing difficulty are given time to reflect on their actions and the effects that those actions have on self and others. They are then invited to join the teacher in a constructive activity as a means of reintegrating into the classroom again. Care is given to relate to the age and the developmental level of the child. Corporal punishment is never used. If unacceptable behavior recurs after assistance, the teacher will consult with the director and the parents.

### **Biting Policy**

Biting is very common among groups of young children, for all types of reasons. But whatever the reason for biting, most parents find it shocking and disturbing, and they want it to stop – quickly! Understanding why the young child bites is the first step in preventing biting as well as teaching the child alternatives to biting.

### **When Biting Occurs:**

Even our best efforts cannot eliminate biting altogether. Here are the steps we follow when one child bites another:

**For the biter:**

1. The biter is immediately removed with no emotion, using words such as “biting is not okay – it hurts.” We will avoid any immediate response that reinforces the biting or calls attention to the biter. Caring attention will be focused on the child who was bitten.
2. The biter will not be allowed to return to work/play and will be talked to on a level which he/she can understand. “I can see that you want that truck, but I can’t let you hurt him. We keep our teeth to ourselves.”
3. The child will be redirected to other work/play.
4. Staff will complete an incident report\* and notify the family of the biter when the child is picked up for the day.

**For the victim:**

1. Staff will separate the child who was bitten from the biter.
2. Special attention will be given to comfort the child.
3. Staff will administer appropriate first aid as follows:
  - Assess the wound and if it is bleeding, apply pressure directly to the wound, using a clean, dry cloth, until the bleeding stops.
  - Clean the bite wound with a mild soap and warm running water for approximately 3 - 5 minutes.
  - Rinse thoroughly, and pat dry with a clean, dry cloth.
  - Cover the wound with a clean, dry dressing.
  - Should the wound require immediate medical attention, appropriate action will be taken and parents will be notified immediately.
4. Staff will then complete an accident report\* to notify family of the victim that the child has been bitten.
5. Classroom staff will confer with the director to review the context of the biting incident, whether adequate supervision was present and whether the environment contributed to the biting incident. If changes in supervision and/or environment are warranted, then those changes will be implemented.

\*incident report is a confidential, standardized form that all staff uses to document incidents that happen at school such as first aid notification, child wellness reports, etc. in which pertinent information must be recorded for school records as well as a way to communicate with parents.

**If biting continues:**

1. Classroom staff will meet with the director on a routine basis for advise, support and strategy planning.
2. Staff will chart every occurrence, including attempted bites, and indicate location, time, participants, behaviors, staff present, and circumstances.
3. Staff will “shadow” children who indicate a tendency to bite, to:
  - Head off biting situations before they occur.
  - Teach non-biting responses to situations and reinforce appropriate behavior.
  - Adapt the program to better fit the individual child’s needs.
  - Teach responses to potential biting situations: “Stop” or “That hurts!”
4. Staff will work together as partners with the parents of both biting children and frequent victims to keep all informed and develop a joint strategy for change.
5. Teachers will hold a conference with the parents of the biting child to develop a written plan of action. Schedule follow-up meetings or telephone conversations as needed.
6. Teachers will consider early transition of a child “stuck” in a biting behavior pattern for a change of environment, **if** developmentally appropriate.

**Extreme Incidents:**

If a child is excessive in biting others or bites so that the skin is broken, we reserve the right to send the biter home for the day or longer depending upon the severity of the situation. Our responsibility is to provide a safe, healthy, nurturing environment for all of our children.

**Communication**

MST will make every effort to communicate all necessary information to the parents in the following ways:

- In order to bridge the gap between home and school, “Bridge Bags” are sent home with the child each day. Please check the bag daily for any pertinent information, and then return the bag to school with your child each morning. Any information a parent needs to return to school can be included in the bag, as the Teacher or Assistant will check them daily. **It is each parent’s**

**responsibility to make sure that the child's bag is checked daily**, so that they will be aware of what is happening at school.

- Teachers will send progress reports home for parents to review before parent teacher conferences.
- Comments and Concerns are always welcome. Please follow the Chain of Command for these, or if you desire anonymity, there are forms available in the Parent Library that may be completed and left in the office.
- Parents will receive emails to update events and happenings!
- Keep up with us on Facebook!!

### **Parent / Teacher Conferences and Observations**

The School encourages parents to visit the school and discuss the child's needs and progress as well as to understand fully the child's school experience. The teacher is pleased to discuss with parents at any time by appointment, but will not be able to discuss the child in the presence of any children, other parents, or during class time or by text or email.

An observation window is available outside each classroom. Parents are invited to observe their children at any time from the observation rooms. Please sign in and out upon arrival and departure.

Parent / teacher conferences are scheduled for the fall and the spring to discuss your child. However, additional conferences can be initiated either by parent or teacher at any time. All communication about the child should begin with the teacher. If full understanding is not reached, the Director is available for further discussion. In addition, the teachers welcome individual conferences concerning child development and family, and are available to make referrals for special evaluations or help as needed.

### **The Parent Library**

At Montessori School of Tupelo, MS, Inc. we offer a Parent Library for parents of our students. In the Parent Library parents will find books on Montessori as well as other methods and a comfortable place to meet with other parents. Please use the Parent Library rather than school hallways for parent conversations as voices from the hallways are distracting to the children in the classrooms.

## **Health and Safety**

### **Snack Policies and Daily Food Preparation**

Snacks will be provided by the school. The snack fee that is paid at the beginning of the year covers these costs.

If you would like to celebrate your child's birthday with a special treat at school, please notify the teacher of what you will bring. We will provide a snack for any child who has a food allergy to your planned treat. Remember we are a nut free facility.

Snack Suggestions:

- Rice Krispie Treats (store bought)
- Pudding cups-sugar free
- Fresh fruit

Please make every effort to keep the snack as healthy as possible, as we want to teach the children about healthy eating.

Due to licensing standards, the following foods are considered choking hazards for children under 4, and must not be part of the snack:

- Raisins
- Popcorn
- Hot dogs
- Nuts
- Uncut grapes
- Hard candy

Only food that is being provided to the class for a special occasion or birthday celebration should be sent to school, and must be store bought. The Mississippi Health Department does not allow for outside

food and drinks to be brought into the school. Please do not send your child to school with breakfast still in their hand or pocket, but allow them time to finish before coming into the school.

We serve fresh fruits and carbs for all snacks. Preparing snacks is a learning experience!!

Activities include:

Orange Juice Squeezing

Apple Cutting and Serving

Carrot Peeling, Cutting and Serving

Banana Cutting and Serving

## Health Policies

Children showing symptoms of illness are not permitted to stay at school and are sent home if symptoms appear while at school. All communicable diseases, fever, diarrhea, vomiting, or infected discharge from nose or eyes are considered reasons to stay home. **If any of these symptoms has been present within the last 24 hours, please do not send the child to school. Children should not return to school until the symptoms have been gone for 24 hours without the use of symptom-relieving medication, since use of these medicines does not keep the illness from being contagious.** Please do not ask us to keep a child in from outside play time. If a child is too sick to go outside, they are too sick to come to school. It takes an effort from all of us to keep our environment healthy!

When a child becomes sick at school, they will be separated from the other children, and a parent will be called to pick them up. If the school is unable to contact the parent(s), the others on the Emergency card will be telephoned to arrange for pick-up.

Medication will not be administered to children without written permission from the parent. In order for a child to get medicine at school, a permission form (from the office) must be completed and given to the child's teacher detailing the time and dosage to be administered. The medicine must be given to a teacher in the original container with the pharmacy label with doctor's instructions inside a zip-lock bag. When the medicine is given, the teacher fills out the log so the parent can see when they pick their child up what time the medicine was given. Permission for medication can last up to 10 days. Any child who is on medication on a regular basis must have a letter from a physician giving the school instructions.

Parents whose child has a known allergy should alert the teacher, who will alert the other staff members, to the specifics of the allergy. Written instructions from the parent on what to do in case of a reaction must be kept in the child's file. An antidote for the allergy should be provided to the school for use in an emergency.

In accordance with State Law, all staff is trained in recognizing the signs of child abuse, and are aware of the duty to report any suspected cases.

### **Extreme Weather**

In the event of snow or other extreme weather, we will follow the closing decisions made by the Tupelo Public School System.

### **Emergencies**

All teachers at school are required to have emergency first aid training and CPR training by the American Red Cross.

All children enrolled must have on file written permission for the school to authorize emergency care.

The School carries full liability and accident insurance for any person on School property. Doctor and hospital preference should be listed in the child's records, with the understanding that the School would have to take into account time factors for deciding the most appropriate choice in case of an emergency requiring hospital care.

For emergencies requiring a doctor, such as the need for stitches, the School will try to contact a parent, but meanwhile proceed with the child to the doctor's office or emergency room. If the School cannot contact a parent, the next person on the Emergency card would be contacted. For routine cuts and scrapes, the teacher will handle the problem and inform the parent upon arrival.

Parents who wish for their child to be exempt from receiving medical care based on religious grounds must have a meeting and agreement with the Board of Directors prior to the first day of school.

## **Crisis Management Plan**

Nothing is more important to us than the safety and well-being of our students. The Montessori School of Tupelo has scheduled fire, tornado, and evacuation drills. If there is ever a need to evacuate the property, our walking destination is to go to the north parking lot of the Chevron station adjacent to our property. If there is a need for further evacuation, we will transport the students to the Lee County Library on Madison St. in Tupelo.

Disaster procedure for the School is as follows:

Tornado: Sit in classroom and teacher restrooms, and hallways outside of Infant and EC rooms.

Fire: Evacuate building to designated location

## **Financial Policies**

### **Tuition and Payments**

Financial agreement is made for the August - May academic year for payment in full for ten months. In the Enrollment Agreement, each parent / guardian assuming financial responsibility for tuition payment must choose the payment plan: either monthly payments, one payment in advance of the year, two in advance of each semester, or three, as specified in the Enrollment Agreement.

Payment in a timely manner is the responsibility of the person who has signed the Enrollment Agreement. All Tuition payments will be made via bank draft on or about the first of each month. A \$25 fee is charged for returned drafts. Non-payment of fees can result in the dismissal of the child. If an emergency financial situation arises in a family, the parent should take the initiative to discuss payment problems with the Director before any payment is missed. A payment plan can be worked out at that time.

All fees are non-refundable. No reduction in fees is granted for absences due to vacations or illnesses, as the school continues to hold the child's space and to meet the fixed costs of operation.

## **Withdrawal**

The School reserves the right to dismiss any child if it is believed to be in the best interest of the child or the school. Every effort will be made to work with parents and the child to keep a child enrolled. During a conference with the parent(s), an appropriate time frame will be established to try to work out the situation with the child. If the School requests withdrawal, tuition already paid will be prorated as of the child's last day.

If withdrawal occurs at the **parent's initiation**, all fees agreed upon in the Enrollment Agreement will still be payable in full. If a child leaves school, every effort is made to fill that child's space in order to relieve the financial obligation of the parents. Please note that the withdrawn student may not attend school while waiting for the vacated spot to be filled.

## **Fund Raising**

Fundraising is an integral part of Montessori School of Tupelo. There are many reasons we support fund raising, including:

- Building a sense of community among families
- Providing sufficient funds to purchase Montessori materials (which are quite expensive), as well as making capital improvements
- Promoting the school to persons outside the Montessori community

Because some families prefer to provide time and other families prefer to provide money, we ask each family to consider how much of each they can commit, and to follow through on that commitment.

## **Other Expenses**

From time to time, parents may be asked to contribute funds in addition to tuition and specified fees. Some field trips may require the parent to pay the child's admission fee. And, as our children sometimes participate in making items to sell for fundraising, a parent may want to purchase those items made by the child before they are offered to the general public.

## **Recommended Reading**

### **Books**

Books by Maria Montessori:

- The Absorbent Mind
- The Montessori Method
- From Childhood to Adolescence
- Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook

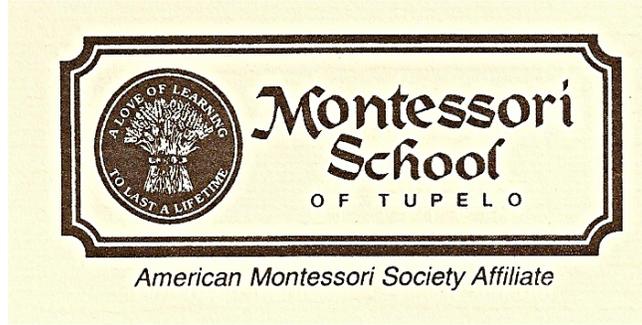
Other books of interest:

- Nurturing the Spirit in Non-Sectarian Classrooms, Aline Wolf
- Montessori: A Modern Approach, Paula Polk Lillard
- Montessori Today: A Comprehensive Approach to Education from Birth to Adulthood, Paula Polk Lillard
- Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work, E.M. Standing
- Maria Montessori: A Biography, Rita Kramer

### **Web Sites**

Below are just a few of the web sites that offer information on Montessori education:

- The Montessori Foundation – [www.montessori.org](http://www.montessori.org)
- North American Montessori Teachers' Association – [www.montessori-namta.org](http://www.montessori-namta.org)
- Montessori Connections – [www.montessoriconnections.com](http://www.montessoriconnections.com)
- American Montessori Society – [www.amshq.org](http://www.amshq.org)



**Montessori School of Tupelo  
Parent Handbook Acknowledgement and Agreement**

I have received and read the Parent Handbook, and I agree to abide by the school policies as set forth in it.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature Date