



MONTESSORI
LEARNING CENTER
Fort Walton Beach

2021-2022 Parent Handbook

Montessori Learning Center
28 Miracle Strip Pkwy, SW Suite 2
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548
850-244-1775

FEDERAL ID # 59-221-0929

Welcome to the Montessori Learning Center

The Montessori Method of education is regarded by many leaders in child development as unsurpassed in helping children achieve their full potential in academics, self-reliance, and self-respect. Individual sensorial development is an important part of this process, as is an emphasis on structured learning and group interaction.

Our Mission Statement

Providing a Montessori-based education for the development of the whole child, creating a lifelong foundation for learning.

Our Vision Statement

Creating academically established, independent thinkers becoming positive stewards of the community.

Our Core Values

Whole-child development

Community Environment

Collaborative

Nurturing

Academics

Table of Contents

Welcome to the Montessori Learning Center	1
Our Mission Statement	1
Our Vision Statement	1
Our Core Values	1
Table of Contents	2
Admissions	4
Tuition and Fees	4
Primary Preschool (3 year old class)	4
Primary Preschool (4 year old class)	5
Lower Elementary & Kindergarten	5
Tuition Payment Options & Schedule	5
Extended Care	5
Before care	6
Aftercare	6
Communication	7
Calendar	7
Safety & Security	7
Health & Wellness (Non- Covid)	8
Medication	8
School Accidents	8
Health Forms	9
Sunscreen	9
Food & Drink	9
School Closings	10
Disaster Refund Policy/Emergency Shutdown	10
Enrichment Programs	10
Parent Involvement	10
General Meetings	10
Board	11
Committees	11
Parent Involvement and Volunteering	
Why am I expected to Volunteer	11

Parent involved committee (PIC):	11
School Spirit Nights	12
Annual 5K/Fun Run	13
Taste of Spain	13
Friday School Lunches	13
General School Information	14
Dismissal time- Car Line Only	14
Phase-In	14
School Drop Off	15
School Pick Up	15
Policy on the Release of Children	16
Personal Belongings	17
School Clothing	17
Lower Elementary Dress Code	17
Field Trips	18
Outdoor Playtime	18
Birthdays	18
Classroom Observations	19
Bring your Parent to School Day	19
Conferences	19
Teacher Communication	19
Attendance	20
Requirements For Kindergarten and Lower Elementary (school age children)	20
Reporting An Absence (applies to Kindergarten and Lower Elementary)	20
Tardies:	21
Student Withdrawal	21
Discipline & Policies	21
Expulsion Policy	21
Defining and Preventing Bullying	22
Communicating Events At Home	23
Montessori Publications	24
Montessori Learning Center School Calendar 2021-2022	25
Parent Handbook Acknowledgement	27

You will be expected to sign the Parent Handbook and Acknowledgement form. The signed form must be turned in on or before Open House. Please make sure to reach the entire handbook.

Admissions

The Montessori Learning Center uses a whole-person concept when considering students for attendance to the school. Our process is designed to ensure the best selection and placement for the student, the family and the school. We have a non-discriminatory admissions policy for children who are in our Primary Preschool program (ages 3-6) as well as our Lower Elementary (1st through 3rd Grade). Currently the school is not licensed for special needs students.

The admissions process includes a personal tour of the school as well as an interview with the Director or representative staff member to answer all questions regarding the school and the Montessori Method. The final decision of admittance will be based on the interview and applications information and at the discretion of the Director. The Kindergarten Level and Lower Elementary applicants will be required to have an in classroom visit as well as take a placement test.

Siblings of former students who have completed the Montessori program and Montessori students from other schools will have priority for available openings at the beginning of each school year; for all other applicants, the date of registration will take precedence. *The Director makes the final decision of admittance to the school.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, and reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Tuition and Fees

Based on the entire school year, holidays included, tuition for 2021-2022 is as follows:

Primary Preschool (3 year old class)

8:00 AM – 2:30 PM (M-W-F) and 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM (T-TH)

TUITION: \$5650.00 annually or \$565.00/month (Aug-May)

Registration Fee (non-refundable) \$300.00

Primary Preschool (4 year old class)

8:00 AM - 2:30 PM (M-F)

TUITION: \$5650.00 annually or \$565.00/month (Aug-May)

Registration Fee (non-refundable) \$300.00

Lower Elementary & Kindergarten

7:50 AM - 2:45 PM (M-F)

TUITION: \$6150.00 annually or \$615.00/month (Aug-May)

Registration Fee (non-refundable) \$300.00

Tuition Payment Options & Schedule

Our tuition schedule is August through May. We collect tuition through ACH monthly, ACH semi annually, or ACH annually. Monthly payments are drawn from your account on the 20th of the prior month. **A \$30.00 late fee will be assessed if payment does not clear.**

\$300.00 annual non-refundable registration fee along with registration paperwork. August tuition will be withdrawn on 5/20/2022

Any additional payments collected throughout the year must be in a labeled envelope and will only be accepted by the Director and office staff. These payments may include but are not limited to: aftercare drop in, pizza Friday, book orders, etc. Any classroom activities where payment is collected, please send that payment in a labeled envelope directly to the teacher.

Extended Care

We offer extended care for our Primary Preschool 3 year olds on Tuesday and Thursday until 2:30 PM at the rate of \$15/day paid via check, cash, or PayPal. If paying by PayPal please include the 2.7% fee. The rate includes care until 5:30 PM if needed.

Before care

We offer before care from 7:30-8:00 AM at the drop in rate of \$10/day paid via check, cash, or PayPal. If paying by PayPal please include the 2.7% fee.

Our full time rate of \$175 per month will be ACH'd with the monthly tuition draws. It is offered every day that school is in session.

If your child is registered for our monthly ACH aftercare then they may attend before care at no additional charge.

Registration is required 24hrs in advance for before care.

Aftercare

We offer aftercare from 2:30-5:30 PM at the drop in rate of \$15/day paid via check, cash, or PayPal. If paying by PayPal please include the 2.7% fee. Invoices will be provided at the end of the month and you will have one week to submit payment. Our full time rate of \$260 per month will be ACH'd with the monthly tuition draws. It is offered every day that school is in session (closed for Thanksgiving, Christmas and Spring Break and teacher work days). Our aftercare program will include arts and crafts, outdoor play time, and limited organized activities. Your child will need to bring an extra snack to aftercare.

If your child is registered for our monthly ACH aftercare then they may attend before care at no additional charge.

We require notice the morning of, if you are planning to use our drop in aftercare as we have limited space. Fees will be collected on the morning of signing up.

Please note that if you are more than 10 minutes late to pick up your child from the school day, they will be admitted into our aftercare program and you will incur the aftercare fee of \$15.

Children staying for aftercare must be picked up by 5:30 PM or a late fee of \$1.00 per minute will occur.

Communication

The director communicates with families via Remind text, email, Facebook and a monthly newsletter.

Remind Text: The Remind text is not optional and is a critical way for the school to contact all families in the rare case of a school emergency. We also use it for day to

day non-emergency communication. To sign up please text: @mrsizer to 850-257-7344.

You will also need to sign up for your individual grade level. This text information will be provided to you by your child's teacher during Open House.

Email: Email is the preferred method for non-emergency communication. Please make sure your email is up to date with the office.

Facebook: We post school and event information on Facebook. We appreciate you "liking" the school to help promote us.

Newsletter: Our monthly newsletter will be emailed at the beginning of each month and archived copies will be posted on the website. It includes all the upcoming activities and important dates.

Calendar

We follow the Okaloosa County School Calendar with the exception of a few key dates: The first day of school and phase in schedule, the St. Simon's craft fair (if operational), Good Friday, and the last day of school. **Please refer to the calendar at the end of the handbook.**

Safety & Security

Our school is fully locked down during the school day. The only access is through our locked front door by a teacher or administrator. When you come to visit the school during the school day, please ring the bell outside the front door and one of the teachers will be with you shortly. Please note that masks are mandatory in the church foyer.

We will be practicing monthly fire drills in accordance with the Department of Children and Families and the Fire Marshall of Okaloosa County.

We are a part of Okaloosa County emergency notification system and receive notifications regarding weather or other emergencies from county officials. Upon their advice, we may ask you to come early to pick up your child from school depending on the nature and severity of the situation. We appreciate your full cooperation in these rare instances.

Health & Wellness (Non-Covid)

If your child will be absent please notify the school (850-244-1775) by 9:00 AM. If you do not, we are required to check in on your child based on the Department of Children and Families well child regulations.

When you have verification of the fact that your child has a communicable illness (non covid illnesses), please call the school immediately so that a notification may be sent home to inform the other parents. Your child must be fever free without the use of medicine for 48 hours before they can be admitted back to school. Please use the same guideline for vomiting and diarrhea.

If your child is out of school for more than two days, a doctor's note will be required before they can return. This is for all illnesses and no exceptions will be allowed.

In the event that you are called to pick up your child because he or she is ill, please plan to arrive within 30 minutes of being notified. If you can not arrive in a timely manner the emergency number you have indicated will be called.

Medication

If medication is needed during school hours, you must fill out the "authorization for medicine" form, medication must be in the original packaging, and all dosing information must be clearly labeled.

School Accidents

In case of an accident at school, you are to be notified immediately after first-aid is given. If you cannot be reached, the emergency number you have indicated will be called. If that person is not available, your child's doctor will be called. If the child's doctor cannot be reached, the school will call another doctor. A parent or other Guardian will be asked to sign an Accident Form at pick up.

Health Forms

A physician's certificate of your child's health and immunization schedule is required and must be on file with the school. Your child's physician will provide you with the appropriate forms. Please ensure you have Page 1 and 2 of the physical signed. A physical is good for 2 years. We must also have the authorization for the emergency medical care on file.

Sunscreen

Please apply sunscreen before your child comes to school. However, if you need additional applications you may leave a labeled bottle with your teacher. Please note that a medication form must be filled out for sunscreen.

Food & Drink

Your child will have daily snack time and it is the parent's responsibility to pack this for the school day along with a filled water bottle. Please clearly label your child's disposable snack bag with his/her name on it for easy identification (Snacks should not be kept in your child's lunch boxes.) Keep these bags small to ensure enough room for all students' snacks.

Any child staying past 12:00 will need to also bring a healthy lunch. We are unable to reheat foods.

Our goal at Montessori is to make each of our students as independent as possible. Please practice opening their drinks, food containers and other items at home. This will eliminate the need for teachers to touch your students' lunch. Plus your child will be so proud of themselves for their new found independence.

It is the parent's responsibility to provide a drink for lunch time. We encourage you to put it in a thermos with an ice pack for lunch. Please no soda or drinks from a pop can.

We are not a peanut free school. If your child has allergies please inform the director so accommodations can be made.

For Age 3: Foods that are associated with young children's choking incidents must not be served to children under 4. Examples include but are not limited to: whole/round hot dogs, popcorn, chips, pretzel nuggets, nuts, whole grapes, cheese cubes or any food that is of similar shape and size of the trachea/windpipe.

School Closings

We follow Okaloosa County school closings and will notify you via Facebook, Remind text and/or email in the event of a school closing. There are times that St. Simon's will require the school to be closed, but an advance notice will be given to allow you to plan accordingly.

Disaster Refund Policy/Emergency Shutdown

If MLC is required to close their campus due to Hurricanes, Pandemics or Terrorism we will make every effort to provide online learning. Mandated closures for the 2021-2022 academic year will not compromise our ability to provide a full and enriching program. Therefore, financial policies and tuition obligations would continue as stated in your Tuition and Registration agreement. Only unused Friday lunches and before/aftercare fees would be eligible for refunds.

Enrichment Programs

We will offer enrichment programs during school hours throughout the year. Beginning in September your child will attend art classes provided by Ms. Bethany and an instructor from Grow Your Gift will provide music and rhythm lessons.

General Meetings

There are 2 General Meetings throughout the year. Our 1st General Meeting of the year is referred to as the "Parent Meeting" and is held within a few weeks of school starting. The second one is typically at the beginning of the calendar year. It is **mandatory** that at least one (1) parent attend these meetings. Childcare will not be provided, so please make other arrangements for your children.

Board

The Board of Directors shall nominally consist of six-seven (6-7) members with a maximum of ten (10) members. The Board is composed of four (4) elected officers, two (2) members-at-large, the Immediate Past-President, when applicable, and up to four (4) additional board members for a maximum total of ten (10) members. Board members are elected for two (2) year terms with the exception of the President who must serve an additional one (1) year term in the capacity of Immediate Past-President after their two (2) year term as President. The Board holds meetings at least monthly during the school year. A description of each board position can be found in our schools by- laws.

Board elections will occur at the second general meeting. We encourage you to reach out to current board members if you or someone you know in the community would be an asset and be interested in joining the board.

Committees

The committees are run by parents and assist with the planning of school and class events such as fundraisers, field trips and class parties throughout the year.

Some of our in school events include our annual Halloween Party, Christmas Brunch, and Teacher Appreciation Week.

Parent Involvement and Volunteering

The school cannot succeed without your help. The Montessori Learning Center was established in 1978 by several parents in the Fort Walton Beach area. The school has always relied heavily on parental involvement. The school is a non-profit corporation consisting of all parents whose children are enrolled in the school, and it is administered by a Board of Directors.

We ask that all MLC families commit to volunteering to help execute at least one of our 2021-2022 fundraisers. Volunteer parents will be expected to attend the committee meetings and help on the event day. Sign ups will take place at the Fall parent meeting.

If I am paying tuition, why am I expected to volunteer?

The true cost of educating your child is more than the tuition rate. To help close this gap, we offer a variety of volunteer opportunities and require each of our school families to participate in PIC (Parent Involvement Committee). Parent volunteers can assist your child's teacher, grounds keeping/maintenance, work on school events or fundraisers, and join parent committees. There are many options. We believe that strong parental involvement is an important factor in your child's academic success. PIC hours offer an opportunity to meet your children's teachers, get to know your school and other families and to play an active role in your child's education. Sharing your time, talents and gifts with the MLC community keeps our tuition rates down and our sense of community strong.

Parent involved committee (PIC):

We founded The Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) in 2019 to provide an additional support function to the student body and staff for events, enrichment and fundraising efforts. The PIC also serves as an effective means to build cohesive parent relationships as our school continues to grow. We ask parents to sign up for at least one assignment from the PIC sub-committee list at the mandatory parent meeting in August. The assignments will include placement in the following

sub-committees: The Party Committee, Enrichment Committee, Room Parents, and the Special Event Team. The Party Committee serves to support the seasonal parties for the student body throughout the year. This will include events like the Halloween Party and the Christmas Brunch. The Enrichment Committee seeks to bring in unique learning opportunities on or off-campus to the student body through local field trips or in-house instruction by organizations like the Emerald Coast Science Center or STEM demonstrations by parents who work in STEM related fields. We aim to bring enrichment programs to the school at least quarterly. Room parents serve as an important support unit that creates a single point of contact between the teacher and all the parents in that classroom. They efficiently communicate with parents using methods like sign-up genius or group chat to help support the unique needs that may arise such as organizing field trip chaperones or assisting with the production of props for the Thanksgiving Program. The room parent also oversees that their teacher receives a small acknowledgement on their birthday and organizes activities for Teacher Appreciation week in May. Last, the Special Event team provides the muscle and know-how to pull off big fundraising events like the Fun Run and Taste of Spain with guidance from the Fundraising Committee of the MLC School Board. Parent contribution to these functions is imperative for the continued success of the Montessori Learning Center. The PIC asks parents to seek a sub-committee that best utilizes their professional and/or personal strengths.

Each month, the President of the PIC will compile a relevant update of ongoing efforts in each committee. The PIC newsletter is sent out each month alongside Teacher Newsletters to maintain effective communication with the entire parent body. The newsletter allows the PIC a platform to keep the parent body aware of upcoming events while also reflecting on tasks accomplished with the assistance of an engaged and dedicated parent core. The PIC also upholds its focus on parent relationships with quarterly Spirit Nights and Coffees, ensuring that MLC parents feel a true sense of community and belonging within the MLC family.

School Spirit Nights

The school hosts spirit nights at local restaurants and a percentage of proceeds go to our school. We encourage parents to come out on these nights and wear their school shirts, as it raises money for the school, but also it gets our name out into the community.

Annual 5K/Fun Run

Our annual 5K and Fun Run is one of our biggest money makers. It's a really fun event even if you don't participate in the run. We have lots of family activities and usually host it downtown at the landing so the kids have a great time playing as well. A few areas we need help are: finding sponsors, in-kind donations, and man hours of set up and tear down. **Each family is required to get 2 business sponsorships.**

Taste of Spain

Our annual Taste of Spain Event features paella cooked on-site, tapas, sangria, craft beer, live music, Spanish dancing, and a raffle all on the beautiful Okaloosa Sound. The party has been a huge success and really feels like a night out on the town rather than a school function. We need help finding sponsors for this event, items for raffle, selling tickets to the community, and man hours decorating and tearing down. **Each family is required to sell 2 tickets.**

Friday School Lunches

Each Friday throughout the school year students will have the option to participate in our lunch program. On designated days a student can have a hot lunch from a local restaurant . Examples of our Friday Lunches are: Little Caesars Pizza, Chick-fil-a or Tijuana Flats; fruit and a drink for \$5 a meal. You may pay by either monthly or by the semester, but unfortunately at this time it can not be ACH from your account. You may pay by Check, Cash, or PayPal. If paying by PayPal, please add the 2.7% fee. The first Friday Lunch will be September 10th. (Please refer to the Friday Lunch Schedule under the school calendar for all the dates) **A Friday Lunch Order form will be sent out at the beginning of each Semester.** We need help from parents to pick up and bring the food to the school when delivery is not available. **A sign up sheet will also be sent out for parent pick up at the beginning of each Semester.**

All monies raised will go to further develop the school. Parental involvement is critical for our school to continue to provide quality education. All parents are encouraged to participate in our school at a level that they feel appropriate.

General School Information

Classes meet Monday through Friday, August through May, and children are expected to bring their own lunches if they stay until 2:30/2:45 PM.

Primary Preschool age 3 children will meet 8:00-12:00 Monday- Friday until Thursday, September 2. Beginning Friday, September 3 the Primary PK 3 schedule will be 8:00 AM to 2:30 PM on M-W-F and 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM on T-TH with the option of Extended Care at the rate of \$15/day. The rate includes care until 5:30 PM if needed.

School age children (Kindergarten-Third Grade) school day begins at 7:50 AM. Your child is considered tardy after 8:00 AM. If you are later than 8:00 am you will need to walk your child into our building. Kindergarten students should be walked in by a parent to the office doors and ring the doorbell. Lower Elementary students should be walked directly upstairs and ring the doorbell.

Dismissal time- Car Line Only

Dismissal is at 2:30 (for PK3/4) and students should be picked up no more than ten (10) minutes late. Aftercare is available until 5:30 PM. **Any child picked up after 2:40 PM will be charged the aftercare drop in rate of \$15/day.**

School age children (Kindergarten-Third Grade) will be dismissed at 2:45 PM. If you have children registered in both classes they will be dismissed at the later time.

Teachers spend time immediately before and after class handling record keeping, cleaning, and preparing the classroom. It is essential that teachers have this time free in order to complete these duties.

Dismissal will be at 12:00 PM for the PK3 on T-TH. **Any child picked up after 12:10 PM will be charged the aftercare drop in rate of \$15/day.**

Phase-In

The new student phase-in is a very important step for the child who is first entering Montessori. The returning students will spend a week at the school first and the

new students will phase-in over a period of one week. This has been studied extensively as an optimal way to introduce new students to the Montessori concepts and environment.

School Drop Off

When a child arrives in the morning, a parent or guardian must escort the child to the door where he/she will be greeted by the Director or a teacher. Once that has been completed the Director or teacher will then escort the child into the school or onto the playground. **Your child is considered tardy after 8:00 AM (K-3) and 8:15 (PK3/4).** Please do not try to drop off children at the playground in the event their class is outside. To ensure your child's safety we take attendance from the front door only.

Children may be admitted late for a doctor's appointment or with prior approval from the teacher.

Arrival and dismissal times are not appropriate times for discussions as this greatly impedes the other parents' picking up their children. To make an appointment with any teacher, please wait until all the children have been dismissed or call/text and we will be happy to schedule an appointment at that time.

School Pick Up

Carpool schedules and a list of approved people to pick up your child must be given to the teachers by the first day of school.

Pick up will take place under the porte cochere behind St. Simon's. For efficiency, we ask that you form **two car lines for the entire length of the car line, including the area in front of the playground and the east facing parking lot. This is imperative to ensure maximum efficiency in the pick-up process and minimize any back-up traffic in the turn lane on Highway 98.** A teacher will direct you to pull forward when appropriate. You may then get out and assist in buckling your child to ensure that all of our students are safely placed in their vehicles. Please do not park before you are directed and please **DO NOT GET** out of your car to pick up your child. This is very unsafe and slows down the car pick up lines. **Make sure that your child's name is prominently displayed on a piece of paper in your car window during pick up. If your child needs help buckling then please pull forward and park.**

Please be courteous to the other parents, grandparents, and children in the lines!

The school will not accept transportation changes after 2:15 PM.

Policy on the Release of Children

If anyone other than a parent is to pick up a child, please notify the school beforehand by filling out a pick up authorization form. Please ask the person who will be picking the child up to identify himself/herself upon arrival and have photo identification available for verification.

Each child may be released only to the child's parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) to take the child from the center and to assume responsibility for the child in an emergency if the parent(s) cannot be reached.

If a non-custodial parent has been denied access, or granted limited access, to a child by a court-order, the center shall secure documentation to that effect, maintain a copy on file, and comply with the terms of the court order.

If the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) fails to pick up a child at the time of the center's daily closing, the center shall ensure that:

1. The child is supervised at all times;
2. Staff members attempt to contact the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s)
3. An hour or more after closing time, and provided that other arrangements for releasing the child to his/her parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s), have failed and the staff member(s) cannot continue to supervise the child at the center, the staff member shall call the Florida Dept. of Children and Families Abuse hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE to seek assistance in caring for the child until the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the child's parent(s) is able to pick up the child. If the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) appears to be physically and/or emotionally impaired to the extent that, in the judgement of the director and/or staff member, the child would be placed at risk of harm if released to such an individual, the center shall ensure that:
 - a. The child may not be released to such an impaired individual.
 - b. Staff members attempt to contact the child's other parent or an alternative person(s) authorized by the parent(s):and
 - c. If the center is unable to make alternative arrangements, a staff member shall call the FL Dept. of Children and Families Abuse hotline (1-800-96-ABUSE) to seek assistance in caring for the child.
 - d. For school-age child care programs, no child shall be released from the program unsupervised except upon written instructions from the child's parent(s).

Personal Belongings

Candy, gum, and toys may not be brought to school. Please check your child's pockets to see what they contain before and after school. If at any time your child inadvertently brings school material home, we ask that the item(s) be promptly returned.

A change of seasonal clothing, including underpants and socks, should be sent with each Primary Preschool (age 3-6) child to use in case of an accident. This set of clothes will be kept in a safe place at the school. Children may occasionally be permitted to bring in special items which relate to schoolwork, or special items for show and tell.

School Clothing

In addition to being neat, comfortable, and appropriate for the weather, school clothing should be easy for the child to manage by himself or herself, completely washable, and labeled with the child's name, especially in the case of coats, jackets, and sweaters. We sometimes get messy with crafts and on the playground. Please do not send your child in clothing that cannot get dirty.

Please make sure your child is dressed appropriately for the season. We have hooks in the classrooms for a sweater or jacket to stay at school if you prefer to leave one.

We allow sunglasses, hats, and earrings, but please leave all other belongings at home.

Children are required to wear rubber-soled shoes for safety on the playground.

Lower Elementary Dress Code

- Closed Toed Shoes
- Shoes must be appropriate for running and sand
- Clean Clothing without Tear or Holes
- Shorts
- No shorter than end of student's fingertips
- No Spaghetti Straps
- Tank tops are allowed, just no skinny spaghetti straps

- No inappropriate verbiage on tee-shirts, sweatshirts, or backpacks

Field Trips

In the event that there is a planned off-campus field trip, you will be notified at least fourteen (14) days in advance. A parent or guardian must be present on off-campus field trips for your preschool student to attend. We follow a 3:1 teacher student ratio for all of our school age field trips. Teachers will provide more information on any planned field trips.

There will be several teacher supervised trips to St. Simon's parish hall during the school year to practice for programs, or to play games. Parents are not required to attend these.

Outdoor Playtime

Time outdoors is an important part of a Montessori school day. It provides the fresh air needed to insure good health and aids in the development of social and gross motor skills.

Weather permitting, the children go outside several times a day. In the case of a light sprinkle or cold weather the children may still go outside for a short time. It is important to dress appropriately. Layering clothing is very helpful and seasonal jackets or gloves may be necessary.

Birthdays

Birthdays are special days and we enjoy celebrating them at school. Please remind your child's teacher a few days before the birthday so the teacher is able to plan for the celebration.

Every birthday child will be honored by participating in the birthday walk where the child (carrying a model of the earth) carries the earth around the sun (a candle in the center of our circle) for each year of his or her life. We follow up by singing Happy Birthday and the child can blow the candle out. Kindergarten and Lower elementary may choose to celebrate their classroom birthday's a little differently so please check with your child's teacher.

Your child can bring a store bought birthday snack to share with the class and should be brought at drop off.

Classroom Observations

For the 2021-2022 school year classroom observations will be put on hold. As soon as it is safe for students and staff we will gladly reinstate classroom visits.

Parents are encouraged to visit the school throughout the year. Only then can they fully understand the world of Montessori. Parents are allowed to come and observe a work time or eat lunch or snack with their child. We ask that parents notify the teacher at least two (2) days prior to observation.

Parents are asked not to observe during the normalization period, which is the first eight (8) weeks of school and children are adjusting to school and their routine. Please limit your classroom observations to no more than one time a month to allow other families the opportunity to observe.

Bring your Parent to School Day

This event is currently scheduled "Bring your parents to school day" occurs in the Fall and lasts for roughly an hour. Sign-up sheets will be available when the time comes.

Conferences

Parent/Teacher conferences occur in the Spring and will be scheduled at least once a year. However, a parent may schedule a conference with a teacher or a classroom observation at any time.

Teacher Communication

At Montessori Learning Center we encourage open communication. At the beginning of the school year, you will be provided with a school directory that lists all staff members' email addresses. Please be respectful when contacting staff. Email is always the preferred method of communication.

It is never appropriate to text or call a staff member before 7:30 AM, or after 6 PM. We also ask for you to please allow 24 hours for your child's teacher to respond to your message. No foul language is acceptable.

Drop off is not a good time to discuss questions about your child. Unless it is an emergency, an email should be used to communicate with staff both during and after school hours. Your child's teacher is in class teaching, so they will not be able to reply to text messages and phone calls received during the school day.

The exception to this rule is with administration, specifically, the Director.

The Director is available to reply to text messages from 7:30 AM to 6 PM on days when school is in session.

Please email your teacher or call the front office to schedule an in person meeting. Remember to use the proper chain of contact. If an issue occurs please contact your child's teacher first. The Director should be the last person contacted.

Attendance

Studies show that children who practice regular attendendance are more likely to be successful in the classroom and have stronger personal relationships with peers.

Requirements For Kindergarten and Lower Elementary (school age children)

Regular attendance provides students the opportunity to master required skills at each grade level. Many integral activities, including class discussions, group experiences, guest speakers, and direct instruction, cannot be simulated or replicated with written work. "Each public K-12 student must remain in attendance throughout the school year, unless excused by the school for illness or other good cause." Therefore, with the goal of promoting student success, the School District of Okaloosa County has adopted a uniform attendance policy. It is our intent to encourage honest, accurate and consistent adherence to this policy by all students, parents, teachers, and administrators.

F.S. 1003.04; 1003.21; 1003.24, 1003.26 9

Reporting An Absence (applies to Kindergarten and Lower Elementary)

When a student accumulates a total of nine (9) absences per semester, the student must have an excuse from a doctor or an official agency for each subsequent absence (i.e; Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Children and Families).

1. After the 10th, but before the 15th absence of the school year (Aug-May), the parents or legal guardian will be notified of the absences in writing.
2. After the 15th absence in the school year, a letter will be sent to the parents or legal guardians notifying them of the necessity of a doctor's excuse or an excuse from an official agency. In addition, this letter will notify parents of additional consequences for additional absences.

3. Between 25 and 30 absences your child's academic record will be reviewed by the Montessori Board for possible recommendation of repeating the current grade level.
4. The above absences do not apply if a child has been medically diagnosed with COVID 19 or other terminal illness. (Please see our COVID Policy)

Tardies:

Tardiness Parents/legal guardians will be notified when a student accumulates five (5) unexcused early checkouts and/or late arrivals within a semester. When the number of early checkouts and/or late arrivals reaches seven (7) within a semester, the parents will be requested in writing to have a conference with the Director or his/her designee. If a student continues to show a pattern of excessive tardiness then it could jeopardize your child's enrollment.

Student Withdrawal

A written notice of thirty (30) days must be given prior to withdrawing your child from the school. Additionally, there will be an early withdrawal penalty of one month's tuition. Tuition cannot be refunded, except for Military families under the SSCRA. All student accounts must be current before information will be provided to their next school.

Discipline & Policies

The ground rules of the school are:

1. No child may disturb the work of another.
2. No child may hurt another in any way.

The teacher will meet with the parents for a conference exchanging ideas to help the child in the event of a disciplinary problem. If there is a serious question of whether the child can function happily in the school, the school may set a limited "probationary" period to try to work out the problems. At the end of this period, the parents and teachers will hold personal conferences to decide what further action should be taken to best meet the needs of the child. Discipline requires sitting in a time out chair. There will be no physical punishment. Discipline cannot be associated with food, toileting or rest. It may not be frightening or severe in nature. Children may not be denied active play as a consequence of misbehavior.

Expulsion Policy

Montessori Learning Center is committed to providing a safe, nurturing environment conducive for learning and growth. We strive to ensure all of our

children are set up for success regardless of their need or developmental level. Every effort will be made to prevent the expulsion of children from the program. However, Montessori Learning Center reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of a child for the following reasons, not limited to but including:

1. Non-payment or excessive late payments of fees/tuition.
2. The child has needs which we cannot adequately meet with our current staffing patterns.
3. The child's behavior threatens the health and safety of him/herself, the other children or program staff.
4. Failure to adhere to policies and procedures as outlined in the Handbook.
5. The parent/guardian exhibits behavior which is detrimental to the health and well-being of the children and staff in a classroom or negatively interferes with the normal functioning of the classroom and/or program. This includes but is not limited to: vulgarity, intimidation, harassment, or violation of child care licensing regulations.

Defining and Preventing Bullying

People often say that teachers have eyes in the back of their heads. They don't. We can't see everything that is happening and we depend on our students to let us know when something is going on that needs to be addressed. Students are always encouraged to ask for support immediately when a situation arises at school. Teachers act as facilitators to resolve the conflict, and this is most effective when it is done immediately following the situation. If your child tells you about something that happened at school that upset them, the parents should ask the child what they did at school to resolve the problem. If the problem was not resolved, it should be addressed upon arrival the following day with the support of a teacher and both of the children involved.

How to deal with bullying depends on a lot of factors including the age of the child.

Bullying can be physical and/or verbal.

It is important to draw a distinction between behavior that is rude, behavior that is mean, and behavior that is characteristic of bullying.

Rude behavior is characterized by saying or doing something that hurts someone else. In children, this usually takes the form of social errors. The critical factor is that these incidents are usually spontaneous, unplanned inconsideration based on thoughtlessness, poor manners or narcissism, but not meant to actually hurt someone.

Being mean involves purposefully saying or doing something to hurt someone. Mean behavior very much aims to hurt or depreciate someone. Very often, mean

behavior in kids is motivated by angry feelings and/or the misguided goal of propping themselves up in comparison to the person that they are putting down. Both rudeness and mean behavior require correction, however they are different from bullying in important ways that should be understood and differentiated when it comes to intervention.

Bullying is defined as intentionally aggressive behavior, repeated over time, that involves an imbalance of power. Kids who bully say or do something intentionally hurtful to others and they keep doing it, with no sense of regret or remorse.

Bullying is not tolerated at Montessori Learning Center.

In order to prevent bullying at Montessori Learning Center, when students display mean or rude behavior, it is immediately addressed so that the behavior does not continue.

At Montessori Learning Center, we aim to prevent bullying and promote respect by teaching prosocial skills such as empathy, listening, and conflict resolution.

Communicating Events At Home

In the event that a significant change occurs in your home, please consider informing the Director as soon as possible. All information will be regarded as confidential. We will accept your judgment as to the kinds of changes which may affect your child's behavior, security, and general well-being. Common causes of distress include: either parent being away from home for any reason for an extended time; a new person living in the home; illness of either parent; illness of sibling; any hospitalization, accident, or death in the family; new caretaker or any new employee; or death of a pet.

The teacher/director will keep you informed of any significant change in the school environment which may affect your child.

Dr. Maria Montessori says in her book *The Secret of Childhood*,

"Parents have a very important mission; they are the only ones who can save their children by uniting and working together for the improvement of society. They must appreciate the mission which nature has entrusted to them."

A.M. Josten, the Director of Montessori training centers in Minnesota, Calcutta, India, and Ceylon, wrote in an editorial for a Montessori Publication:

"Educational institutions should never try to supplement parents. . . . No educational institution, much less a House of Children can even perform its tasks nor realize its aims unless it is firmly supported by the parents of the children entrusted to it. . . . Both parents and educational institutions should cooperate in

providing what is necessary for the children's development in both environments and, as far as possible, do so concretely and directly, not merely in the form of pecuniary donations or levies."

Montessori Publications

If you wish to further your knowledge of the Montessori Method of learning, the following is a partial list of Montessori related publications available in libraries and/or bookstores:

Dr. Maria Montessori	The Montessori Method Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook, Vol. I & II The Absorbent Mind To Educate the Human Potential Secret of Childhood Pedagogical Anthropology
E. Mortimer Standing	The Montessori Method, A Revolution in Education Maria Montessori – Her Life and Her Work
Dr. Claude Claremont	Spanning Space Intelligence and Mental Growth The Innumerable Instincts of Man The Chemistry of Thought
Nancy McCormick Rambusch	Learning How to Learn, An American Approach to Montessori
R. C. Orem	A Montessori Handbook A Children's House, Parent-Teacher Guide To Montessori

2021-2022 School Calendar

August 2-6 Monday-Friday	Planning Days for Teachers
August 6, Friday	Open House for All Students (Pre-Registration required on Sign Up Genius)
August 9, Monday	1st day of school for ALL Kindergarten and Lower Elementary students at 7:50am, and ONLY returning PreK students at 8:00am
August 11, 13 Wednesday, Friday	Phase-in for <u>new PreK students at 8:00am</u> *check phase-in schedule that was emailed*
August 26, Thursday	Parent meeting 5:30-7pm
September 3, Friday	PreK-3 begins full days on MWF
September 6, Monday	NO SCHOOL Labor Day
October 5-8 & 12-15, Tuesday-Friday	"Bring Parents to School" Days
October (Date TBD)	FALL FUNDRAISER
October 11, Monday	NO SCHOOL Teacher Work Day, No Aftercare
November 5, Friday	Progress Reports sent home
November 11, Thursday	NO SCHOOL Veterans Day
November 18, Thursday	Thanksgiving Feast (Students only)
November 22-26, Monday-Friday	NO SCHOOL Thanksgiving Break
Week of December 13, Monday-Friday	All Grades Christmas Program -Days/Times TBD more info to come
December 14, Tuesday	Last day to RSVP for Aftercare on Dec 17th. ALL students attending must RSVP
December 17, Friday	Half-day dismissal for Winter Break. Pick-up time @ 12:00 pm Last day for aftercare provided for 2021. <u>Must RSVP by the 14th to attend Aftercare on this date.</u>
January 3-4, Monday, Tuesday	NO SCHOOL Teacher Work Day, No Aftercare
January 5, Wednesday	School Resumes
January 17, Monday	NO SCHOOL Martin Luther King Jr. Day, No Aftercare
January 24, Monday	Returning Student registration begins
February 1, Tuesday	New Student registration begins
February (Date TBD)	MLC FUN RUN FUNDRAISER
February 11, Friday	NO SCHOOL Parent Teacher Conferences, No Aftercare

February 14, Monday	Valentine's Day Party (Students only)
February 21, Monday	NO SCHOOL Presidents' Day, No Aftercare
March 3, Thursday	Parent meeting 5:30-7pm
March 21-25, Monday- Friday	NO SCHOOL Spring Break
March 28, Monday	NO SCHOOL Teacher Work Day
April 15, Friday	NO SCHOOL Good Friday, No Aftercare
May 9-13, Monday-Friday	End of Year Programs. Days & Times TBD
May 20, Friday	Last Day of School. Released for Summer Break at 12:00pm. No Aftercare
May 27, Friday	Last day for Teachers
June 6-10, Monday-Friday	Summer Camp 9am-12pm

Parent Handbook Acknowledgement

I (we), _____ and _____, have read, understand,
Parent's Name (Print) Parent's Name (Print)

and agree to abide by the information given in the Montessori Learning Center Parent/Student Handbook. I (we) understand that the content may change or be updated by the Montessori Learning Center.

Parents' Signatures and Date

_____ **Date:** _____

Please initial by each of the following indicating you are aware of the policy.

_____ Drop off is at 7:50AM for Kinder/Lower Elementary and 8:00AM for Preschool. Kinder and Lower Elementary MUST be in class by 8:00AM and/or Preschool by 8:00AM or they will be considered late for school. I have read and I understand the drop off directions.

_____ If you are unable to bring your child to school before 9AM for reasons other than emergency situations, scheduled appointments or other reasons previously communicated with your child's teacher; please contact our office to let us know.

_____ Students must be fever free for 48 hours WITHOUT the help of any meds before they can return to school.

_____ I have read, and agree to comply with the policy for communication with staff members at Montessori Learning Center.

_____ I have turned in the School Entry Health Exam and a current Blue Immunization form (Form 680) or Religious Exemption form. I understand that my child will not be able to attend school with expired or missing forms.

_____ I understand that I am expected to volunteer on a fundraising committee and help execute the event.

_____ I am aware of the conference dates listed on the school calendar and that each teacher will hold one conference only per family on the specified days.

_____ I understand that the Montessori Learning Center reserves the right to hold any documents for students with outstanding balances.

_____ I understand that if I choose to withdraw my child at any point in the year, that I need to give 30 days notice and that I will owe one month's tuition past our last month of school. Preschool \$565.00 or Kinder/Lower Elementary \$615.00

_____ I understand and support the phase in process. (children under 5 only)

_____ I understand that I am considered late at 10 minutes after my child's scheduled pick up time.

_____ I understand that it is my responsibility to pay the late fee of \$1 per minute if I arrive more than 10 minutes late to pick up my child.