



Family Handbook

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www.cedar-tree.org

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Welcome!

We are excited to welcome your family to Cedar Tree Montessori; a caring, intentional community of students, parents/guardians, teachers and staff.

Inclusive Community: School Campus

As a community, we (parents/caregivers, students, staff, family members) have a responsibility to ourselves and to each other to make choices that cultivate a safe learning environment. We teach peace and acknowledge that racism and discrimination exists. We work to learn from each other and talk with our children about our role and responsibility to care for our planet and each other. We are grateful to have you as a part of our community and are grateful to be a part of your child's learning journey.

In the following pages, you will find the answers to many of your questions about the school. More information can be found at www.cedar-tree.org, including our school calendar. If at any time you have a question or concern about your child or the school, please call our administrative staff at 360-714-1762.

Our Land Acknowledgement

The land that Cedar Tree Montessori resides on belongs to the Coast Salish – Lummi Nation and Nooksack Peoples. This unceded land hosts generations of native families who continue to nurture it, rely on it and raise families on it. We are committed to preserving the land, understanding our local history, repairing our relationships and working actively to use these values to inform our teaching, our actions and our conversations with our students. We work to gain a deep understanding and respect for the land, water and our relationship with each other and the planet.

Our Mission

Cedar Tree Montessori fosters a passion for learning and joy, supports communication skills, and encourages peace and diversity in a nurturing community.

Our Core Values

Whole Child Approach

We work to foster the development of the whole child; cognitive, physical, social, and emotional needs of each child.

Independence

Central to Maria Montessori's philosophy is the value of Independence. We work to support each student to fully engage in their learning environments and practice self regulation, self initiation and mastery.

Community

We believe that building and engaging in community benefits each child's learning experience. We see parents/caregivers as our students' first teachers and work in partnership to support each child's learning.

Diversity, Inclusion & Equity

As a school community, we believe diversity, of all kinds, fosters a stronger and more inclusive community. We are committed to fostering curiosity, conversation and celebration of every family's uniqueness. We honor each individual's identity (religious, ethnic, heritage, gender, lifestyle and life circumstances). We acknowledge that systemic racism exists and that as an educational institution, we have the opportunity and responsibility to create change for our children's future. Cedar Tree is committed to fostering curiosity, conversations and celebrating our differences. We work to increase diversity of our staff, board, and school community to better represent our broader society. We will learn from each other and talk with our children about our role and responsibility to help end racism and build skills that resolve conflicts peacefully.

Conflict Resolution

We teach and model peaceful problem-solving skills. We assist children to resolve conflicts both in the classroom and on the playground. Children take care of the classroom environment, consider the impact of their words and actions on others and frequently collaborate or help one another.

Global Perspective

We look beyond our classroom to better understand the needs of others around the world. We value cultural differences by studying history, race and communities and inviting guests in to help us learn about our similarities and our differences. We emphasize respect for nature and humanity as we share our planet's resources. We value the importance of service and participate in public service projects. Our school seeks to reduce its environmental impact by learning about and discussing our planet's needs, recycling, reusing materials and cleaning with green products.

Board of Directors

Our Board members support the vision of the school and approve policies consistent with our mission statement and core values. They help support fundraising events, monitor the budget and set annual goals and oversee planning and high level strategy for the school. There are four specific

roles for our Board of Directors: President, Vice President/Family Liaison, Secretary and Treasurer. For a list of this year's board members please visit our website: <http://www.cedar-tree.org/board>

School Culture

Each school has a unique culture that is defined by actions and values. As educators, we believe that every child has unique gifts that are revealed throughout their development. We work to get to know each child and gain an understanding of their superpowers and their learning style. Through our actions and communication, we strive to create a safe, creative, curious environment for each student to learn, grow and communicate. Our school culture is stronger when we work in partnership with families and recognize our shared role in educating our children. We celebrate our collaboration and look forward to working together.

Code of Ethics & Conduct

Cedar Tree Montessori has a code of ethics and conduct that applies to all community members and staff. This document can be viewed here: [LINK](#)

Communication

School Communication: Made Easy

Families are busy and overwhelmed with data and resources. Our goal is to support families with information that is easily accessible and that events come with reminders. Here is the short list of resources for calendar and classroom events.

- **12-month at a glance calendar** www.cedar-tree.org/family-resources
- **Family Resources on website** www.cedar-tree.org/family-resources
- **Google Calendar** www.cedar-tree.org/calendar
- **Classroom newsletter:** Each classroom sends out a quarterly email with family education information, current topics of interest and events.
- **Monthly All-School Events: emailed monthly** from Kate Ferry (you can search your inbox using "S'more")
- **Seedling** (our quarterly newsletter): All School Topics

Contacting Cedar Tree Families

Individual email addresses and phone numbers for each family can be found on Transparent Classroom and in our school directory. This directory serves as a fundraiser as well as a great resource to facilitate connections.

Mail

For all correspondence and tuition checks, please use the following address:

Cedar Tree Montessori
2114 Broadway
Bellingham, WA 98225

Online Calendar

Visit our website: <http://www.cedar-tree.org> and go to the Calendar under the Family Resources tab to see scheduled individual classroom and all school events. They are organized by month, and you can get more detailed information by clicking on a specific day. Here you will find out about classroom activities, school events, and P.E trips. If you use an online calendar, you can import these dates to your personal calendar.

Conferences & Progress Reports

We have conferences twice a year in winter and spring. Conferences offer an opportunity for teachers and parents/guardians to come together and celebrate your child's progression. Teachers will share their observations of how your child approaches learning, uses materials, and interacts with peers and teachers.

You will receive your Elementary student's progress report via Transparent Classroom. Each progress report will be stored on Transparent Classroom and can be accessed with your parent/guardian login. If you have any concerns about your child, please don't wait until your conference date to bring them up. A quick phone call or email can help us collaborate on solutions to any problems that may pop up. You will receive an email from administration with our conference schedule and invitation to sign up electronically.

Our Board of Directors

We have a dedicated group of community volunteers composed of alumni family members and current family members who gather monthly with the goal of guiding and protecting our mission. While administration and teachers guide the day to day operations, our board supports the long term health and goals of the school by overseeing financial and physical resources.

Grievance Procedure

Anyone with a concern about the actions of a staff member is asked to share their concern to the person most directly related to the conflict. If you have concerns about talking directly to that person, we invite you to contact: Carrie Bishop Cruz carrie.bishop-cruz@cedar-tree.org or our Board of Directors at board@cedar-tree.org.

Appeal Process

If after sharing concerns with a teacher and then the administrator directly, you wish to escalate your concern, you may contact our Board via the email address: board@cedar-tree.org who is designated for this purpose. When addressing a Board member who is also a parent, please indicate clearly that you wish to speak to this person in their role as a Board member, rather than a parent or friend. Board members are also bound by a confidentiality agreement and other rules governing their conduct as representatives of the school.

School Procedures

Parking

Cedar Tree is located in a neighborhood with limited parking options. The city of Bellingham requires that we do not block Irving Street and/or traffic in any way. Our neighbors at Fountain Community Church have kindly allowed us to use their parking lot for picking up and dropping off students. If there is no parking available in the Fountain Community Church parking lot, please use street parking on side streets surrounding Cedar Tree. Please be mindful of holding up traffic.

Please be aware of our neighbors and thru-traffic. All cars must be fully off the driving portion of the road when dropping and/or picking up children.

School Schedules

www.cedar-tree.org/family-resources

Field Trips

One component of the elementary Montessori program is what is called “Going Out.” Leaving the school and visiting local community opportunities allows us to expand our exploration and learning beyond our classrooms. As students develop readiness and independence, we take learning offsite and into our local community. Sometimes this is a scheduled trip and as the weather allows this is often an impromptu walk in the neighborhood or to a local park. By signing the permission form in the enrollment packet, you give the school permission to take your child on any school field trips. You can contact the teachers at any time during a field trip by contact via Remind. Please note that children are covered by school insurance wherever they are during school hours.

Each classroom will share these scheduled trips and will occasionally need volunteer drivers. Volunteer drivers must turn in a copy of a valid driver’s license, a copy of a current vehicle insurance policy and sign the required paperwork available from administration. Please see [Field Trips in the policies section](#) for more information. Please remember to drop off your child’s booster or car seat at arrival in the morning and pick it up at dismissal.

During off site trips (field trips, PE outings etc.) teachers will use “Remind” to contact a parent, if necessary. Families can access Remind through the application.

Student Food Allergies & Dietary Preferences

If your child has any food, pet or environmental (including scents and other airborne allergens) allergies, please report this on your child’s enrollment information and let your child’s teacher know so that we can create a safety plan.

Special Days

Birthdays

Birthdays are a special time for us to recognize each student's uniqueness with a celebration at school. Each classroom has a ritual created to celebrate the child by sharing photos of the child during different stages of their life. It is customary to also recognize the number of rotations the earth has made around the sun since the child was born.

Birthday Invitations

If you have invitations to a birthday party, please mail them. Anyone who has ever seen the sad face of a child who feels left out will understand the support of inclusion. For this same reason, we ask children not to talk about their upcoming birthday parties at school unless everyone is invited. The children are usually heartwarming cooperative on this issue. If you are inviting everyone in the class, passing out invitations at school or in the parking lot is fine.

Cultural Celebrations

We explore human experiences from different cultural perspectives. Looking at cultures through the theme of common human needs promotes cultural understanding. In the Montessori curriculum, there is an emphasis on connecting the geography of the countries with their peoples' choices of food, shelter, clothing, and transportation. These cultural celebrations create organic opportunities to learn about diverse backgrounds and experiences. It builds the expectation that our human experiences and differences are part of what makes us special and unique. We honor, embrace, and celebrate these differences. At Cedar Tree, we value family and seasonal traditions. We encourage families to share their family heritages. We welcome your presentations of holidays, customs, stories or foods typical of your family's culture or religion.

Respect for each person's unique experiences is a key part of the Montessori curriculum. Derogatory comments about race, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender expression or sexual orientation are not tolerated. All families are honored. If negative comments do occur, we have a class meeting on the value of all people, how such comments might make others feel, how to restore harmony and how we can handle an incident if it happens again. We may also contact parents/guardians of children involved. Through personal interactions with others, stories, role playing and recounting historical events, children learn to empathize with others different from themselves.

Holidays

We celebrate seasonal changes and learn about holidays when they have historical significance and are culturally relevant to the students in the classroom or our current studies.

Children are welcome to share items from their families' celebrations of these or any other holidays. Oral sharing is another good opportunity for children to learn that not all families have the same traditions. In all celebrations, we ask that desserts remain a special treat to eat at home with your family, due to the number of students with food allergies and sensitivities to sugar.

We encourage family members to visit the classroom and share about ethnic, religious, and family traditions. This allows students to broaden their understanding of cultural differences and similarities in a way that is relevant and impactful.

Who is in your village?

Each year we create an opportunity to welcome and celebrate the people in our students' lives (neighbors, grandparents, extended and chosen family etc.). We honor the special intergenerational friendships that exist in our students' lives. During the pandemic we had a unique opportunity to "meet" our students' family and friends on our zoom screens. We saw, first hand, the rich and mutual benefit of these connections.

Items from Home & School

Clothing & Shoes

We look for every opportunity to support your child's blossoming independence. Please send your children to school in clothing that they can manage on their own. Practice tying laces at home and we will practice at school. When children can successfully tie their own shoes, then they can wear them to school with a great feeling of accomplishment.

In Montessori schools, we do a lot of work on the floor. We remove our shoes before entering the classroom to keep outdoor dirt and mud to a minimum. Your child will wear a pair of rubber-soled indoor shoes (Example: crocs, simple slippers, etc..) while inside their classroom. These should be comfortable, easy to put on and not obstruct their ability to walk around the classroom. Indoor footwear stays in the cubbies at school. Please keep your child comfortable by replacing their inside shoes if they wear out or your child grows out of them.

We will go outside every day to experience nature regardless of the weather. A dangerous storm or poor air quality will keep us inside for safety reasons. It is very important for children to experience all aspects of their world as the outdoor environment offers fresh air, play, freedom, and larger body movements.

In cold weather, we ask children to put on an additional layer before going outside. Please send your child to school in sturdy, weather-appropriate shoes or boots that are comfortable for walking and playing. Flimsy shoes such as Crocs, flip flops, sandals, shoes with no traction, and jellies are a hazard while climbing, running or jumping.

We suggest practical, comfortable clothing, so your child is free to move and learn without feeling hindered by clothing. They will get dirty, so please do not send your child in overly fancy, or expensive clothing that will be a disappointment if it becomes stained. Please do not send your child with action figures on clothing or other distracting advertising or media features.

Money at School

Please do not send your child to school with money or valuables in order to minimize the risk of losing these items.

Technology at School

If your student has a phone or phone style watch, it will need to be inside their backpack and turned off when they arrive at school and can be turned back on after dismissal. They are welcome to use the school phone located in the office to make any necessary changes for pick up or schedule changes.

Found Items

We have many small, appealing items on the shelves that may find their way home in your child's pockets. Often this is unintentional. If you find small items such as beads, cubes, play money or unfamiliar objects, please call the school. The item may be a small, but essential piece of very expensive Montessori equipment. Thank you for your cooperation.

Lost & Lonely

Each of our classrooms has a "Lost & Found" bin that should be checked regularly for those left behind clothing items, water bottles and other treasures. Our teachers will put these bins outside on a regular basis for the parents/caregivers and students to look through. Each June, we donate all leftover items.

Financial Information

Income & Expenses

Cedar Tree Montessori is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit. Our school income comes from four sources: tuition, donations, fundraising and rental of classrooms. Each fall, the Cedar Tree Board reviews the past budget and sets the new budget for the coming fiscal year (July 1 to June 30). The Board sets next year's tuition each year in February. Tuition is 95% of our total income.

Re-Enrollment

Returning families have the option each year to reserve enrollment for their child. In order to do this you are asked to complete an enrollment agreement, pay an annual, non-refundable re-enrollment fee (equal to one month's tuition) and a registration fee.

Tuition

Monthly tuition cost represents the cost of your child's education divided among 10 months. Therefore there are months (e.g. November, December, April and June) where children are not attending but full tuition is due. Tuition is not discounted for school or family vacation, illnesses or holidays. Information on the amount of tuition and fees can be found in our website and in our Enrollment Policies. Families who sign an enrollment agreement will be financially responsible for the annual tuition.

Fees/Discounts

Families pay an enrollment or re-enrollment fee and annual fee (for P.E. and consumable materials) per child. These fees are non-refundable. Our current tuition and fees can be found on your tuition agreement and on our website: <http://www.cedar-tree.org>. Tuition discounts are available for enrolled siblings and for paying in full by August 1st.

Payment Options

Payment options can be found here.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1V50LUTLz0DOrcTvdAvYWNSdhHKTPYqqDfvD51h_ovPs/edit?usp=sharing

Additional Information

1. Tuition is due the first calendar day of each month. A late fee of \$25.00 will be charged for payments received or post-dated after the 5th, without communication.
2. Tuition is not discounted for school or family vacations, illnesses or holidays.
3. By signing our tuition agreement, you are agreeing to pay monthly or annually until the annual tuition is paid in full.
4. An unpaid tuition balance will prevent Cedar Tree from relinquishing academic files, re-enrolling or continuing services to your child.
5. Cedar Tree Montessori does not discriminate on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, religion, sexual identification or orientation.
6. All fees (material, PE and enrollment) are per student and non-refundable.

Student Withdrawal Policy

There is a financial hardship to a school's budget when a family withdraws after committing. Once an enrollment opening has been reserved for your child and you have signed the Tuition Commitment Agreement, your family is responsible for paying the annual tuition amount. If a student's needs cannot be met and it is determined by parents/guardians and the school that a student should find a different academic setting, an exception will be made to this policy and tuition will not be charged for the days not attended.

Annual Fees

There is a non-refundable annual fee per child for Children's House, Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary. This fee is due in June. The fee covers the consumable materials for the school year. This fee also covers the costs of contracting services from a variety of teachers who come to the school to teach (yoga, dance, art, music, drama, PE).

Cedar Tree strives for inclusion on all levels. We work to remove barriers so that we can increase diversity in our community and work to reflect our broader community's diversity (economic, ethnic, family constellation). Tuition is a barrier to attending an independent school and Cedar Tree Montessori has created a scholarship program that will reduce the cost of tuition for families who apply. This scholarship program is funded by revenue from our afterschool program, private donations, and through our volunteer program.

Donations

Cedar Tree Montessori School is a state and federal non-profit organization. This means that any profits are channeled back into the school. Any time you make a donation to Cedar Tree, you can request a receipt. Our non-profit tax number, as granted under section 501 (c) (3) of the federal tax code, is 91-1953283. The school can write a receipt or letter of acknowledgement for your tax records.

As a non-profit organization, we are eligible for grants and matching funds from employers with these types of programs. Please let us know if your employer has such a program when you make a donation or contribute financially to a fundraiser.

Fundraising

Our need for fundraising is generated by a deficit between our revenue and expenses. Our board attempts to ensure that the cost of tuition reflects the actual cost of your student's education and ensure that our teachers are compensated equitably. Our board of directors creates a fundraising plan for each school year to raise necessary funds to allow us to cover expenses and increase our teachers' wages. Cedar Tree strives to have fundraisers that are reflective of our mission and our community's needs. We have fundraisers throughout the year that allow families of all income brackets to participate.

Your monetary contributions to any fundraising event are tax deductible. Your volunteer time and support for these events is essential to maintaining the fiscal health of the school.

Elementary Enrichment Curriculum

Art

Cedar Tree recognizes the importance of art as an integral part of an elementary curriculum. Technical skills, art appreciation and self expression through a variety of media are the goals of art instruction.

The Lower and Upper Elementary art programs contain the following elements:

- The study of elements of art or art history and related student projects
- Instruction in techniques of drawing and painting
- Creation of hand crafts

Art activities are available in the classroom and change throughout the year as choice activities. Art projects follow the progression of areas of study.

Fine Arts

We have a Performing Arts Specialist that teaches drama and music to elementary students. We include specialists who come to Cedar Tree to teach Spanish, mindfulness, movement and outdoor education. In addition to these weekly classes, classroom teachers incorporate music and movement into the classroom activities. The Elementary has a ukulele for each student and percussion instruments to learn basic rhythm reading. We enjoy daily use of piano, song and exploration of music.

Physical Education & Movement

Our P.E./Movement program is designed to accomplish the following goals:

1. Spending time in nature and establishing a positive association with the outdoors.
2. Getting exposure to different types of movement and games that may become lifelong activities (for example, rock wall climbing, yoga, dance, ice skating, walking, biking, hiking etc.)
3. Students have an opportunity to explore movement as a creative expression and/or an expression of personal power.
4. Students can practice cooperation, sportsmanship, health and safety.
5. Acquire knowledge that will encourage the maintenance of a healthy, active lifestyle.

Spanish

We include Spanish instruction in our Kindergarten and Elementary classrooms. These classes are taught by a specialist Spanish teacher. Our classes are intended to be fun, interactive and expose children to both culture and language through games, songs and folklore.

Personal Technology at School

"Off and Away" is our policy for all personal technology (games and phones). Phones and watches with internet access should be left at home. If they come to school, they should be turned off and put in backpacks. If a student can demonstrate to a teacher that all notifications can be silenced, then the watch (only) can remain on their person. Our school phones are available for any student who needs to contact a parent/guardian about emergent issues related to pick up, illness etc. If a student brings and uses their personal phone at school, a reminder of the expectation will be given and a parent/guardian will be notified. If it happens a second time, there will be a parent/guardian meeting with teaching staff.

Family Involvement

Families are our students' first teachers. You have an important role in your child's learning journey. We are excited to work together to support your child's Montessori education. We work to cultivate and celebrate an inclusive and diverse community and create opportunities for families to be involved and get to know the community. We have opportunities for family members to volunteer in our Elementary classrooms; gather at picnics and playdates; attend classroom visits; and take part in parent/guardian education meetings.

Service to our Community

Working together to care for the school campus and classrooms fosters a feeling of shared responsibility and community and offers organic opportunities to get to know each other. Each classroom will share a list of classroom volunteer duties at the family orientation. We will share an ongoing list of helpful classroom specific, grounds or maintenance jobs along with errands that are needed. Families are asked to commit **5 hours of volunteer service** to Cedar Tree or \$300 over the course of each school year. Hours must be completed before the end of the school year and the charge of \$300 will be billed if these are incomplete. Additional information on volunteer

opportunities and recording your volunteer hours is available on our website at www.cedar-tree.org/family-resources.

Share Your Family Traditions & Talents

Maria Montessori believed that young children should study the similarities and differences between communities around the globe in order to build an early and growing awareness of our diverse, interconnected world. We invite you to come into your child's classroom to share your hobbies, skills, family traditions, passions. Please arrange your visit with the teachers.

Field Trip Volunteers

We also need drivers for our field trips. Transportation to and from field trips may include: parent/guardian or teacher drivers, Whatcom Transit Authority buses, or walking. We always attempt to walk or use public transportation if at all possible. We take into consideration the routes and schedules when we plan field trips and work diligently to avoid disrupting and inconveniencing the Cedar Tree parents/guardians' busy schedules. We use parent/guardian drivers as a last resort after evaluating and exhausting all other options.

When we take public transportation or walk, we still need extra adults for supervision. If you would like to drive on a field trip, please let us know. You must have a seat belt for each child. School policy requires families to provide booster seats or car seats for children under 4' 9". You must also furnish the school with a copy of your driver's license and current car insurance required by our insurance company.

School Observations

After the first two months of school we welcome observations by appointment. You may find that your child wants to sit next to you as they work. Or, you can try to be a "fly on the wall" in the corner. Either is fine. Please be warned that your child's behavior with you present may not be the same as when you are away. If you would like to observe, please call to check the day and time with the teachers after November. We like to schedule only one parent/caregiver observation at a time when possible.

Events

At the beginning and end of the school year we host school picnics. In addition, we offer "Family Nights" as a time for your child to show you what they have been working on in class. Parent/Guardian Nights are for adults only, with an education or parenting topic. Work parties can be indoor or outdoor, with or without children joining in. We also look forward to annual events such as the talent show and our science fair. As well as being mutually fun events, these nights are successful fundraisers for Cedar Tree. Please visit our website (www.cedar-tree.org) and go to the "Calendar" tab. This online calendar will give you a month by month view of upcoming events.

You may wish to organize your own all-class or all-school potlucks, play dates at the park or family excursions. We want to encourage any social events that build a stronger parent community. If you wish to organize an all-class or all-school event, you can email us for a schoolwide email and/or for publication in the newsletter.

Health & Safety

Additional information on Health & Safety practices and procedures can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/124N3_Qdhelf4n_QN_fPWTMbfzAdg7PrX8BCn797WKh4/edit?usp=sharing

- Allergies
- Communicable Diseases & Staff Flu Shots
- Community Health Policy
- COVID-19 Safety
- Emergency
- Head Injury Protocol
- Handling/Dispensing Medications
- Immunizations
- Keeping our School Community Well
- Student Accidents

Threat & Safety Assessment Procedures

Our most up to date procedures can be found here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lIEddLXao-ZGAZ42nSHte5Fx7sc8kZzNw-H8mTJUoxA/edit?usp=sharing>

Emergency Items

We ask that parents/caregivers bring a photo and card/letter in a paper envelope at the beginning of the school to share with your child in the event of any major disaster. We will return these cards and photos at the end of the school year.

Schoolwide Communication for Emergency

Cedar Tree Montessori uses a text tree service called "Remind". Each Cedar Tree family will receive an invitation to join this text tree for the school year. We will use this to communicate schoolwide emergencies and school closure days due to unforeseen circumstances, including snow days. Teachers will occasionally use the classroom specific Remind text tree to remind families of a field trip or other day-of event that requires action and preparation.

School Closures

Inclement Weather

Our school community lives across Whatcom and Skagit counties and we do our best to make a measured determination about school closures that both prioritizes safety for our staff and families and recognizes the strain that school cancellations place on families. When considering whether to close school we assess: road conditions for staff and students as well as street and playground conditions at school (playground and classrooms). If it is determined that we need to close school, we will send a notification to all families by 6:30am via Remind Text Tree.

If we have school and there is snow on the ground, we're going to want to play in it! Please label ahead of time gloves and hats as there will be plenty of them around. A warm layer under a wind/water-protective shell is ideal.

In case of a power outage, we have flashlights and lots of windows for natural light. Although we have gas heat, the heat is circulated by fans which use electricity. If loss of electricity prevents us from keeping your children warm or if snow falls so rapidly during the school day that the teachers suspect cars will not be able to get to school by dismissal time, school will be closed early. Staff will stay with students until each one is picked up. We will use the emergency contact list to call people to pick up the children. Please make sure your emergency contacts information is up to date in Transparent Classroom.

Grief, Trauma and Family Transitions

Change and loss are an unfortunate part of life. Please let us know if your child experiences any life altering changes that you believe may impact their time at school so that we can provide additional support, as needed. Together, the teacher and child can put together a plan for when the child feels overwhelmed at school.

Emergency and Safety

We practice three kinds of safety drills: earthquake, fire and lockdown during the school year. In the Lower Elementary, we also address personal and physical safety, safety at home, and calling 911 in emergencies. For more information on our Safety Drills, please visit:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/124N3_Qdhelf4n_QN_fPWTMbzfAdg7PrX8BCn797WK4/edit?usp=sharing

Student Support

Supporting Students in the Classroom

What is Dysregulation?

When we feel vulnerable and dysregulated we are no longer able to gain access to the rational part of our brain in order to use tools for problem solving and emotional regulation.

Supporting Sensory Sensitivity and Emotional Regulation in the Classroom

We have tools in the classroom that provide support for focus/concentration and sensory needs such as: headphones, weighted vests, materials that foster movement for hands and body and quiet spaces to retreat to. These are tools that help keep us all feeling safe, use flexibility to problem solve and regulate our response to emotions in a way that supports us and our peers. None of these tools work 100% of the time.

We use our surroundings as a tool and may change the environment as a way to eliminate an audience, decrease stimulation and/or to maintain a peaceful classroom. This could include going outside or to a quiet spot to talk one on one.

If a student remains "stuck" after a period of time and is unable to respond to redirection and this impacts other student's ability to learn, we may reach out to family and ask that a student go home and return the next day with a fresh start. We save that for the times we have tried all the above without success.

We use positive discipline techniques and attempt to incorporate choices with the goal of helping students acquire new tools and an opportunity to practice them. We use these as alternatives to giving students rewards and/or consequences. Positive Discipline Resources:

- <https://www.positivediscipline.com/products/positive-discipline-book/>
- <https://www.positivediscipline.com/products/positive-discipline-classroom-book-revised-4th-edition/>

The Montessori Method of education provides a nurturing, supportive environment for children of all abilities and learning styles. This includes children with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, and neurodivergence. Teachers will learn through observation how your student approaches learning and what strengths and challenges exist. If we notice an obstacle to learning, we will reach out to schedule a time to share observations and any adaptations teachers have made to facilitate learning. Together, teachers and families can create a support plan which could include students getting support outside the classroom (such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, psychological assessment or cognitive testing).

We believe in the importance of "fit". Not every brain learns the same way and not every child learns equally well in a Montessori setting. If it is determined that a student's needs cannot be met within the classroom, we will arrange a meeting with parents/caregivers to explore this further. Every attempt will be made to meet a student's needs and this may include a recommendation to a different learning environment. Accommodations will be made, provided: the classroom has the resources to support the student's needs, the student's actions do not keep others from learning and that the child does not pose a risk to themselves or others.

Accessing Federally Funded Specialized Instruction Accommodations and Modifications for Learning: Service Animals or Emotional Support

Montessori education allows for teachers to make specific modifications to lessons, materials and the learning environment to meet the specific cognitive, social and emotional needs of each student. In some cases, when learning obstacles are identified, students, teachers and/or families request additional support outside the classroom. Together, teachers and family members meet to identify obstacles in learning and brainstorm support services. Students at Cedar Tree can access Special Education from the student's attendance area public school. In order to determine eligibility for federally funded services (tutoring, physical, speech or occupational therapy), families need to contact the department of special education services from their attendance area school district. Bellingham Public Schools uses a [Special Education Referral Form](#)

Service Animals:

The use of a service animal is a protected right. A service animal is considered to be an animal trained to do a specific task that a person is physically unable to complete. Schools are required to allow service animals in school. This would not be considered an accommodation under Section 504, but instead a civil right of any student, visitor or staff member.

- [Prohibiting Discrimination in Washington State Schools](#)
- [Bringing Animals onto Campus](#)
- [BPS Policy on Service Animals](#)

Emotional Support Animals:

Some school districts consider the use of an ESA through a 504 plan. 504 Plans are formalized accommodations that ensure that a student has equitable access to a learning environment. 504 plans are typically available to students with a broader range of disabilities, including attention deficit disorders which may result in the use of an Emotional Support Animal. Families would be encouraged to contact their attendance area school district to request a special education assessment for eligibility. Bellingham Public Schools uses a [Special Education Referral Form](#)

School Policies

Information on School Policies can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/124N3_Qdhelf4n_QN_fPWTMbzfAdg7PrX8BCn797WKh4/edit?usp=sharing

1. Accident Policy
2. Anti-Harassment Policy
3. Bullying
4. Cedar Tree Smoke-Free, Drug-Free Policy
5. Child Protection Policy
6. Confidentiality Policy
7. Effective Communication & Conflict Resolution Expectations
8. Enrollment Policy
9. Non-Discrimination Policy
10. Non-Violence Policy
11. Request for Individualized Student Support
12. Staff Code of Ethics/Misconduct
13. Student Behavior
14. Student Dismissal Policy
15. Student Support Policy
16. Student Withdrawal Policy
17. Whistleblower Policy

Pets in the Classroom

We have witnessed the many social and developmental benefits that result in children having pets in their prepared environment when it is supervised and intentional. For these reasons classroom teachers may choose to host an animal in their classroom when there is no negative impact to the health of students within that classroom.

School Photos on the Internet

We have a policy at school that we do not upload photos to the Internet, without family approval. Teachers and staff take photos of students during the school day and share them with each student's parents/guardians. By consenting to a photo release, a parent gives Cedar Tree Montessori the right to photograph their child and to use photographs of their child in only school related publications including classroom updates and school newsletters. These photos will not be used on the website, social media or brochure. Teachers and staff will do their best to take photos that protect a student's privacy.¹

Effective Communication and Conflict Resolution

Cedar Tree is committed to the education and wellbeing of each student. We use resources such as [Positive Discipline](#) and [Whatcom Dispute and Resolution Center](#) to learn from and practice effective communication and conflict resolution.

Positive Discipline

We use tools from Positive Discipline when responding to students' needs that cultivate belonging, independence and respect. Grounded in Adlerian psychology and Montessori pedagogy, this approach to Montessori classroom management cultivates intrinsic motivation, responsibility, and social awareness. Through consistent, respectful guidance and thoughtfully designed structures, educators strengthen children's sense of capability while fostering a supportive and connected classroom community – creating environments where freedom and responsibility grow together. <https://pdmc-montessori.org/>

Conflict Resolution

[Conflict Resolution Tips from WDRC](#)

WHAT: Misunderstandings, miscommunication and differing opinions will happen. When concerns arise we ask families, staff and students to practice mindful communication.

WHY: We care deeply about each member of our community and believe we all deserve to feel respected and heard.

HOW: Share concerns respectfully with the person most directly involved.

¹ Our current observation process occasionally involves direct communication via Zoom with prospective families. We take the utmost care to ensure that the privacy of each student is respected.

WHERE and WHEN: Quick questions can be done effectively without a meeting (afterschool check in). Arrange a face-to-face meeting to discuss concerns and grievances, rather than relying on email or other written communications.

Steps to follow to resolve conflict peacefully: (use [Conflict Resolution Tips from WDRC](#))

- Schedule a meeting to discuss concerns when necessary.
- Share your observations from your own experience.
- Share your feelings and needs.
- Speak with respectful tone and words.
- Share what you hope to change.
- Work towards resolution.

Continued Concerns:

- If after attempting to resolve the conflict with your child's teacher you do not experience a satisfactory resolution, please reach out to our administrator to arrange a meeting.
- Following a meeting, If a parent/guardian is not satisfied with the administration's response to a concern you may contact the board of directors Vice President who acts as a Parent Liaison.
- We objectively consider the interests of ALL students, de-escalate behavior and create a safety plan to ensure the safety of our school community at all times.
- Privacy: We respect each student's privacy. The Family Educational Rights Act ([FERPA](#)) protects the rights and privacy of students and family members. This means there are limits to what information we will share with a parent when issues arise.

Conflict Resolution Between Children

When conflicts arise between students, we use a conflict resolution model. We teach this model in the first few weeks of school each year and support students to use these strategies on the playground and in the classroom. At first the teacher may need to model the steps and suggest language to the children. Eventually children learn to solve many problems themselves. Some older students even help solve the problems of others. We also spend time introducing concepts from Positive Discipline.

Ways to support conflict resolution using Positive Discipline Techniques:

- **Observations** (speak from your own experience, be curious and assume best intent) "It looks like Jay is feeling really sad."
- **Feelings:** Help children identify and verbalize their feelings using "I statements". "I felt sad when you told me I couldn't play with you".
- **Seek to understand:** Actively listen to each child's perspective on the problem.
- **Brainstorm:** Guide children to generate their own solutions or compromises.
- **Create an action plan.**
- **Discuss consequences and what needs to be done next** (apology etc.)
- **Follow up:** Check in with students to see if the solution is working and reinforce any success.

During conflict resolution, the children must agree to solve the problem and listen to each other (A cooling off period may be necessary before this can happen). One child states an observation (vs. a judgment) about the behavior and their feelings about the issue. The second child does the same.

Children are encouraged to state these in "I- statements" as in "When you stood in front of me in line, I felt angry." The two children brainstorm solutions to the problem. Finally, they choose one solution that is agreeable to both children. If one child cannot agree to the solution, they must come up with a counter suggestion until both can agree. Later, we check in to see how the solution worked.

Child Abuse

State law requires teachers to report all known and suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services. Child abuse or neglect is defined as any injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or negligent treatment or mistreatment of any child by any person such that the child's health, welfare or safety is harmed. Hitting a child hard enough to leave a mark is considered child abuse. School policy prohibits teachers from using corporeal punishment to discipline students. Please see our discipline policy.

Our employee policy contains rules to prevent sexual mistreatment of students and employees. These include fingerprint and background checks on all employees and dismissal for employees engaged in inappropriate sexual behavior. As a precaution, we allow one student at a time in the bathroom when the door is closed. This includes adults as well. At recess time, children must first check with an adult before using the bathroom to prevent two children from using the facilities at one time. However, two children may use the bathroom to wash hands with the door open.

Education and conversations at home about your child's changing body, and establishing body boundaries about good and bad touch are effective measures to protect your child from physical and sexual abuse. Ask your librarian for good, age-appropriate books on this topic. At school, we teach the children that no one has the right to touch another person's private parts and that includes other children, relatives, teachers, and adult friends. Children are asked to tell a trusted adult immediately if this happens to them. If at any time you suspect your child may be engaged in sexual play or sexual harassment at school, please tell a teacher immediately.

State Board of Education

We undergo fire inspection, maintain copies of important records, submit enrollment information to the state including ethnicity and immunization status, file credentials, and guarantee a minimum of 1,000 hours of instruction in standard curriculum areas.

Statement of Non-Profit Status

Any time you make a donation to Cedar Tree, you can request a receipt and deduct the amount on your taxes. Our non-profit tax number, as granted under section 501 (c) (3) of the federal tax code, is 91-1953283. *As a non-profit organization, we are eligible for grants from other non-profit agencies. If you have a grant idea or know of grant funds available to schools, please let us know.*

Statement of Non-Discrimination

Cedar Tree Montessori School admits students from families of any race, color, national and ethnic origin, religion, gender and gender expression or sexual orientation to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded to or made available to students of the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin, religion, gender, gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation in hiring practices, or in administration of its educational policies, administrative policies, financial aid and loan programs, or any other school programs.

Statement of No Religious Affiliation

Cedar Tree Montessori is not affiliated with any religious organization. Cedar Tree does not teach religious doctrine.

Prejudice Free School Campus

As a community, we (parents/caregivers, students, staff, family members) have a responsibility to ourselves and to each other to make choices that cultivate a safe learning environment. We teach peace and acknowledge that racism and discrimination exists. We work to learn from each other and talk with our children about our role and responsibility to care for our planet and each other. We are grateful to have you as a part of our community and are grateful to be a part of your child's learning journey.