



MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Parent Handbook

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Table of Contents

Parent Handbook	1
<i>Welcome to the Children’s Tree Montessori School</i>	5
Mission Statement	6
Goals for Our Students	6
<i>Section 1: What is Montessori?</i>	6
The Outcomes of a Montessori Education	6
If I Had My Child to Raise Over Again	6
Questions for Parents to Ponder	7
<i>Section 2: Morning and Afternoon Procedures</i>	7
School Hours	8
Toddler Community Schedule	8
Primary School Schedule	8
Attendance	8
Morning Arrival	9
Drop-Off Procedures	9
Dismissal	9
Late Pick up Policy:	10
Dismissal for Half-Day Students	10
Dismissal for Full-Day Primary/Toddler Students	10
Storm Closings	10
Communication	10
Starting School	11
Dress Code	11
Indoor Shoes	11
What Students Need at School	11
Coatroom Etiquette	12
Lost and found & Mysterious Objects	12
Lunch	12
Field Trips	13
Volunteer Field Trip Drivers	14
Birthdays	14
Celebrations	14
Toddler Curriculum and Environment	15

<i>Section 4: Student Health</i>	<i>15</i>
When Your Child is Ill	15
When to Stay Home	15
If Your Child Becomes Ill at School	15
Allergies	15
Medications	15
Emergency Care	16
Toileting Policy	16
Diapering Procedures	17
Cloth Diapering Policy	17
Biting Policy	18
<i>Section 5: Parents and the School</i>	<i>19</i>
A Community Built on Trust, Friendship and Mutual Respect	19
Volunteering the Gift of Time and Talent	19
Communication Between Home and School	20
Newsletter	21
Communication with Second Families	21
Observing the Classes at Work	21
Points to Look For When You Observe	21
What Did You do at School Today?	22
Parents' Days	22
Parent Education	23
Code of Conduct for Parents	23
Resource Materials	24
<i>Section 6: Academic Policies</i>	<i>24</i>
Family Conferences	25
Open Door Policy	25
Inclusion	25
Children with Disabilities	26
Children with Suspected Disabilities	26
Promotion from One Level to the Next	26
Standardized Testing	26
Transcripts	26
Privacy of Student Files	27

Non-Discrimination Policy	27
Section 7: Ground Rules	27
The Children’s Tree Montessori School’s Fundamental Ground Rules	27
Behavior Policy	29
Violence and Harassment	30
Smoking	30
Respect for the Property of Others	30
Care of the Environment	30
Rules for Safety on School Field Trips	30
Safety Drills	31
Bringing a Guest to School	31
Section 8: Financial Policies	31
Tuition Policies	31
Reenrollment	31
Financial Aid	32
Care4Kids	32
Applying for Financial Aid	32
Fundraising	33
The Spirit of Philanthropy	33
Section 9: Curriculum Scope and Sequence	34
Reading and Language Arts	34
Mathematics	36
Geometry	38
Geography	38
History	39
Science	40
Practical Life Skills	40
Sensory Training	41
Section 10: Appendix	42
Basic Elements of The Montessori Approach	42
The Montessori Classroom	42
Respect, Intelligence, and Independence	43
Montessori Teaches Children to Think, Collaborate, and Discover	43
Freedom of Movement and Independently Chosen Work	43

The Integrated Montessori Curriculum	44
Typical Class Size	44
Montessori Classes Encompasses a Three-Year Age Span	44
How Can Montessori Teachers Meet the Needs of So Many Different Children?	45
The Montessori Materials - A Road from the Concrete to the Abstract	45
Preparing Tomorrow's Innovative Thinkers Today	45
A Day In The Life a Montessori Student	46
The Children's Tree Montessori School Blueprint	48

Welcome to the Children's Tree Montessori School

Established in 1995 and incorporated as a 501(c)(3) in 2011, we have grown and learned a lot about the wants and needs of the children and families we have taught and cared for over the years. Our Montessori certified teachers offer programs for children and parents from birth to age 12. The Children's Tree provides a safe, fun and enriching learning experience for your child in a warm and nurturing environment. We are dedicated to helping each child develop within him/herself the foundational skills, habits, attitudes, and ideas that are essential for a lifetime of learning. Listed on the following pages are our school rules, regulations and health policies. These regulations will help clarify both the school's position, as well as yours, and thereby help us to create a relationship that will benefit your child. Please do not hesitate to bring any concerns you have to our attention, as we will to you.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to nurture and empower a loving community of global thinkers who embrace and honor each other. Our school motto: Be Gentle, Be Kind, Be Safe governs how we conduct ourselves everyday with others in our community.

We believe that the Montessori Method of education helps children develop a positive attitude towards school, builds their self-confidence, strengthens their ability to concentrate and fosters an abiding curiosity. We help each child develop habits of initiative and persistence by fostering inner security and a sense of order in the child.

Goals for Our Students

At The Children's Tree we help our students:

- develop a positive attitude toward him/herself, school and life
- become a self-confident, independent learner
- form habits of concentration in his/her work
- develop initiative and persistence
- achieve inner security and a sense of order
- develop his/her sensory motor skills
- learn social skills
- achieve a higher level of intelligence and imagination

Section 1: What is Montessori?

Montessori is a worldwide educational system founded over 100 years ago by Dr. Maria Montessori in Italy. Montessori education focuses on developing a child socially, physically and emotionally. Thus, learning to be kind and courteous is as important as learning to count. Learning to prepare a simple snack and clean up afterwards is as important as learning to read and write. Children are taught to work independently, as well as with others in a respectful manner. Our library contains many books and articles on Montessori education for parents wishing to learn more.

The Outcomes of a Montessori Education

Studies comparing children attending Montessori schools with those enrolled in traditional programs have focused on the following educational outcomes. Why not conduct your own little study by considering the children at The Children's Tree Montessori School.

If I Had My Child to Raise Over Again

-Diane Loomans

If I Had My Child to Raise All Over Again,
I'd build her self-esteem first, and the house later.
I'd finger paint more and point my finger less.
I would do less correcting and more connecting.
I'd take my eyes off my watch and watch with my eyes.
I would care to know less and know to care more.
I'd take more hikes and fly more kites.
I'd stop playing serious, and seriously play.
I would run through more field and gaze at more stars.
I'd do more hugging and less tugging.
I'd see the oak tree in the acorn more often.
I would be first less often and affirm much more.
I'd model less about the love of power,
And more about the power of love.

Questions for Parents to Ponder

- What were the most important factors that led you to select a Montessori education for your child?
- What are the most important goals that you have for your child's education?
- What skills, knowledge, and attitudes do our children need to be prepared as adults for living in the 21st century?
- In what way does Montessori provide our children with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that they will need to succeed in the real world?

To each of the following statements answer the questions

How well does Montessori help students develop this?

What evidence of intrinsic motivation have you observed among Montessori students?

Ability to Handle External Authority: The student is able to accept the ground rules established by external authority as appropriate boundaries in his or her interactions within the school community. These ground rules are internalized, enabling the student to function with or without the presence of the external authority.

Creativity and Originality of Thought: Students are confident using the knowledge and skills they have acquired to express their own ideas and creativity. They recognize the value of their own ideas, respect the creative process of others and are willing to share regardless of risk. Students find joy and satisfaction in self-expression.

Social Responsibility: Social responsibility requires the awareness that one's actions impact the welfare of the group and that one cannot attain complete independence and autonomy until one contributes constructively in a group process. Individuals can make a positive contribution to their community and groups within that community.

Academic Preparation: Academic preparation entails providing students with skills that allow them to become independently functioning adults and life-long learners. As students master one level of academic skills they are able to go further and apply themselves to increasingly challenging materials across various academic disciplines.

Children learn how to learn by doing—experiential learning. Students are encouraged to explore materials, integrate new concepts, analyze data, and think critically.

Confidence and Competence: The confident and competent child perceives him/herself as being successful, has a realistic understanding of accomplishment and has the ability to learn from his/her mistakes. Competence is the capability for success through taking risks, reflection and self-correction.

Section 2: Morning and Afternoon Procedures

School Hours

School hours are 8:15 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, September through June. Before and after school programs may also be available. See “Fees and Payment Schedule” for hours and costs.

Toddler Community Schedule

Our toddler program runs Monday-Friday from 8:30 – 11:45 for half days or 3:00 for full days. Parents are welcome to escort their child to the classroom or use the drop off circle. Children enjoy exploring the environment, learning how to play and work cooperatively together. In the afternoons, they eat lunch, nap and have recess.

Primary School Schedule

You have a variety of options for your child ages 3 – 6 years old. Such a variety is offered to accommodate the different learning needs of each individual child, as well as to be flexible enough to meet family needs. Please remember that a consistent schedule is important for your child's adjustment. At enrollment we will establish your child's schedule. This will be your contracted hours for the school year. If changes need to be made to better accommodate your schedule, we will discuss available options at that time.

First Year (3 –4 years old): Mon. – Fri.: 8:15-11:45; 8:30-12:30 or all day 8:15-3:00

Second Year (4-5 years old): Mon. – Fri.: 8:15-11:45; 8:30-12:30; or all day 8:15-3:00

Third Year (5-6 yrs. old): Five full days a week is required; Mon – Fri 8:15 – 3:00

Attendance

School is a special time for children to learn and develop good work and play habits. To achieve continuity and clarity for children, it is important that they follow a routine. Being on time is important. Children feel uncomfortable entering late and missing the morning lesson.

All of The Children's Tree Montessori School students, even our youngest, are expected to attend school on a daily basis, arriving before the start of the school day. Please call the school by 8:45 a.m. if your child will not be in school that day due to illness or inform the school ahead of time if you expect your child to miss school due to a vacation or other reason.

Even though The Children's Tree Montessori School is less formal and more flexible than many schools, consistent attendance and prompt arrival are still essential. Students are expected to be in class and to be present for their scheduled session as well as at other required school activities. Late arrival is disruptive and inconsiderate to the

rest of the class, and nothing can be more disruptive to a child's education than irregular attendance. Consistency and routine are important to every child's development, but they are especially important for primary students.

We depend on your family's full support in this area. If we find that your child is arriving excessively late, we will need to meet to work out a solution. One of the nice things about The Children's Tree Montessori School is that we understand that every once in a while, we all love to take a little vacation from school. While we are fairly understanding and supportive, it is still important that you keep your child's absences to a minimum. Although our program is individualized, it still depends upon consistency and continuous progress. Every time a child misses school, for whatever reason, there is a period of readjustment as he/she tries to get back into the routine of his/her work. The longer the absence, or when a child consistently misses a day or two of school, the more detrimental it becomes to his/her educational development.

We are sorry, but there are no makeup-days for sick or vacation time.

Morning Arrival

The Primary classrooms open at 8:15 am and the Toddler classroom opens at 8:30 am. The school cannot be responsible for students who arrive at school earlier than 8:00 a.m., unless they are enrolled in the Before School Care program. Any child arriving before 8:00 a.m. will be charged for before care.

All primary students are due in class by 8:30 a.m and all toddler students are due in class by 8:45 am. Please have your child to school on time; late arrivals are disruptive to our morning routine and your child's education.

Drop-Off Procedures

When dropping off your child in the morning, **PLEASE** follow these procedures to avoid parking lot congestion:

- When pulling into the driveway, stay to the right-hand side pulling forward into the marked drop off zone.
- A school staff member will meet you at your car and assist your child in getting out and to his/her classroom. You must remain in your car during the drop off circle.
- If you need to go into the school for any reason, please park in one of the parking spots and walk your child in. For all concerned, please exercise caution and awareness of traffic in the parking lot.
- Parents should not enter the classroom at drop off. It is not only disruptive to your child but to the other students in the class. Do not leave your car unattended in the drop off area. Thank you.

Saying Good-bye: Tips for Parents on Separation

Initially, it can be difficult for parents and young children to separate at the beginning of the school year. We have found that a short and positive good-bye is easiest for the child. The prolonged good-bye often makes the separation more difficult. Feel free to call the school for reassurance that your child has settled in and is adjusting well.

Dismissal

Unless we receive specific permission from you to do otherwise, we will only release your child to the people that you have specifically indicated on the release form that every family completes annually. We must receive a note, or in an emergency, a phone call, from you in order to release your child to someone not on your list. This rule also applies to students going home with school friends as well. We will require identification of anyone whom you have given permission to pick up your child if he or she is not familiar to our staff. Please make sure all your car-pool drivers and caregivers are on your release list.

We do not have adequate staffing to supervise children whose parents have requested that they not attend outdoor recess. Any child not allowed outside must be picked up prior to 11:00 a.m.

Late Pick up Policy:

CTMS is open Monday through Friday from 7:45am-5:00pm. Schedules are pre-determined before the child is enrolled. Two staff members 18 years of age or older, will remain at the school with the child at all times. Children on campus 15 minutes after the agreed upon pick up time will be charged an additional fee of \$15.00 per 15 minutes. A staff person will attempt to call the child's parents/guardians using the phone numbers provided. If they cannot be reached, the staff person will then attempt to call the emergency and authorized, alternate adults provided by parents/guardians at the time of enrollment. Children left on campus after 5:00 pm will be charged \$20 per every 10 minutes. Fees are due at the time of pick up. The local Old Saybrook police department will be called if a child is left after 5:30 and if parents or other adults specified on the permission to release forms cannot be reached. At that time the child may be released to the police. The non-emergency number for our local police department is 860-395-3140.

Dismissal for Half-Day Students

Morning students will be dismissed from school at 11:45 a.m. Please pick up your child at that time unless he/she is staying for "lunch bunch." If your child stays for lunch, pick up is at 12:30 p.m. Please ensure that you arrive early enough to allow time for the children to transition. When parents are late it worries the children. If you are going to be late, please call the school to inform us.

Dismissal for Full-Day Primary/Toddler Students

The school day ends at 3:00 p.m. Parents should pick up their children at 2:50 p.m. to allow time for the transition. At the end of the day staff cleans up and prepares to go home. We ask that you please be respectful of our teachers' time as they are heading home to their own families at the end of the day. If you need to speak with one of the staff regarding your child, please schedule a conference.

Storm Closings

If severe weather conditions make travel hazardous, school may be postponed, closed early, or canceled. The Children's Tree makes this decision independently of the Old Saybrook Public School system, but as a general rule The Children's Tree will be closed if Old Saybrook schools are closed. The decision will be announced via television on all local news channels. Early morning closings will be announced by 6:30 a.m. We're sorry, but there are no make-up days for students.

Communication

There is almost always someone in the office to answer the phones and deliver messages to the classrooms during school day hours. Voicemail is checked regularly, and we will typically get back to you within a couple of hours. Please leave a message or text the classroom phones and we will get back to you as soon as possible that day.

Office: 860-388-3536, Office cell: 860-876-6291

Please message your classroom teacher through the ProCare App.

Section 3: Everyday Life at The Children's Tree

Starting School

Many young children and their parents feel a bit nervous when they leave one another in an unfamiliar situation. A few tears may even be expected. If this is your young child's first year at The Children's Tree Montessori School, we encourage you to visit campus frequently before school to allow him or her to become familiar with the new setting. Come have a picnic one weekend. Walk the grounds. Be reassuring as you talk with your child about his or her new school.

The week before school starts, the school holds a Meet and Greet Potluck. New and returning families are welcome to come and visit the school and meet their new teachers. The first two days of school new students will have orientation from 9:00-11:00 am and returning students from 1:00-3:00 pm.

On the first day of school, please don't linger too long in the class or react with alarm if your child is hesitant about the separation. It is very important to reassure him/her about where you will be during the day, and by what time you will pick him/her up in the afternoon. Some children may be sad for a little while during the first few days, but kind words and reassurance almost always alleviate their fears. The teachers are wonderful in helping children through these situations.

Dress Code

Students are expected to dress in outfits that are neat, clean, comfortable, and appropriate for school. Younger children should dress in clothing that they can put on and fasten for themselves: pullover shirts, elastic waistbands, Velcro sneakers, etc. Young children usually cannot manage the shoulder fasteners found on overalls or one-piece clothing. The school discourages clothing with commercial characters on it, as this can be distracting for some children in class.

We try to use art supplies that are non-staining; stain stick should get out most spills

Indoor Shoes

All students need a pair of indoor shoes on their first day of school. These should be comfortable shoes, your child can put on themselves and with soles on the bottom to protect their feet from spills. Children take off their outdoor shoes and put on their indoor shoes when they arrive at school. This is to keep their feet warm and the classroom clean. All indoor shoes should be labeled with your child's name and left in his/her cubby at the end of the day.

What Students Need at School

Primary School Students

- an extra set of clothing, including socks, to be kept at school during the year, held in a wet-bag labeled with your child's name.
- a nap mat for children who nap consistently
- a pair of indoor slip- on shoes (Toms, Keds)

Toddler School Students

- three extra sets of clothing, including socks, to be kept at school, held in a wet-bag labeled with your child's name.
- a nap mat if your child stays full day
- a pair of indoor slip-on shoes (Toms, Keds)
- diapers and wipes

Toys - Toys should not be brought to school. They are most often lost, fought over, or broken.

Electronics- Cell phones, iPods, smartwatches, and handheld electronic devices should not be brought to school. Please talk to your child's teacher if you have any questions or concerns.

There will be a few costs for optional activities which are not covered in tuition or the materials fee such as: book club orders, school pictures, special extra-curricular activities, and some field trips.

- ✓ Each student is provided with a bin with their name on it. Children need a change of seasonally appropriate clothing, including socks and underwear in their bin at all times. Please remember to refresh your child's bin regularly and talk to their teacher if you are unsure.
- ✓ During winter months please have your child wear their boots to school and bring snow pants, winter jacket, mittens, and hats. These items are to be kept in your child's cubby. Hats and mittens need to go into the cubby or be placed in your child's coat sleeve or coat pockets.
- ✓ Children should always have a sweatshirt or sweater. We go outside in all weather.

Please clearly label your children's coats, snow pants, mittens, slippers, lunchboxes, etc., with their full name or first name and last initial. It is very difficult for teachers, and sometimes parents, to remember which coat belongs to whom.

Coatroom Etiquette

Everything brought to school needs to be neatly contained within your child's space. No plastic shopping bags are allowed for safety reasons. Please help your child become familiar with placing his/her mittens and hat into their coat sleeve and his/her socks in his/her shoes. This will help your child keep track of his/her things both at home and at school. At the end of the day please take all of your child's items home (with the exception of slippers). Any unlabeled/unclaimed items left at school for more than a month will be donated to a local charity. Please check the lost and found regularly. The Children's Tree Montessori is not responsible for lost items.

Lost and found & Mysterious Objects

The lost and found can be located in the office building in a bin labeled "Lost and Found".

Many of our classroom materials consist of small attractive objects that are appealing to children. If you find any "mysterious objects" in your child's possession, please return them to school.

Lunch

The Children's Tree Montessori School students bring their lunch to school every day in a clearly labeled lunch-box with an ice pack. The Children's Tree Montessori School community places great emphasis on the importance of good nutrition as the first step to a lifelong wellness education program. Lunch is a very important part of not only your child's school day, but of his/her wellness education. We need to count on you to work with your child to teach him/her about health and nutrition. Obviously, we all want to pack lunches that our children will eat. The challenge is to help them discover that wholesome, sugar-free foods can taste even better than junk food and don't have the

negative effects on our bodies. With younger children, it is a good idea to prepare food in small, easy-to-handle servings, such as cutting sandwiches into quarters, slicing up fresh fruit, and preparing bite sized slices of cheese. We allow children to eat the contents of their lunch in any order they choose. Please prepare their lunches with this in mind. Foods with a high sugar content, dyes, and empty calories will be sent home.

We recommend lunch boxes with small compartments and built-in cool packs. All uneaten foods which can be contained will be sent home. You'll want to monitor your child's lunch box to see what he/she likes and dislikes, and to determine the correct amount of food to pack. We appreciate your care in preparing a good lunch.

Here are a few suggestions to aid in the preparation of school lunches for your child. Remember: **We cannot heat up** your child's lunch. **Do not send** juice, pop or any pre packaged type beverages. We furnish water and like the child to have the opportunity to pour by him/herself. **Do not send** candy, gum, or lots of sweets. Check out our Pinterest page <https://pin.it/RN2WWj6> for ideas. * Lunch boxes are not required to contain sandwiches. Please encourage your child to help you prepare their lunch. "Food for Thought" (optional): If you feel like doing something special, include a note or funny drawing for your child. Egos need nourishment, too!

Caution: Lunchables and other packaged lunches are not only quite expensive but also extremely high in sodium and fat. Also, the children cannot usually open them by themselves and generally do not like their contents. Please put food in a container your child can open.

Dietary Needs: We are sensitive to each child's individual needs. Please make sure we are all aware of your child's allergies and food sensitivities.

Snacks

Parents rotate bringing in a week of healthy snacks and milk to be shared with the class (roughly twice a year). A snack sheet will be e-mailed and posted on the bulletin board in the entryway. If you cannot provide snacks on your designated week, please talk to a teacher about switching dates. It is very important that you bring snacks when it is your turn because well-fed tummies lead to greater concentration in our students. Each day, a snack consists of a grain item, a protein and a fruit or vegetable item. We ask that parents cut up fruit and veggies for the students. Teachers may request certain items for the classes' food prep area, for tastings or flower arranging.

Field Trips

Classes will periodically take field trips to local points of interest during the year. They are planned to coordinate with subjects being studied by a class or to take advantage of special community events. Notice of upcoming events will be sent home in advance. Parents are encouraged to help out with transportation and are welcome to join the class in these activities. If you are interested, please speak with your child's teacher.

You must sign the transportation release on the enrollment card giving your child permission to be transported and to attend a field trip. If you do not allow us to transport, we will be aware of that and require written permission in order for your child to participate. If written permission is not given, your child will not be permitted to join the outing.

Volunteer Field Trip Drivers

- Volunteer field trip drivers must have a valid driver's license and automobile insurance. Please give a copy of your license and insurance to the office as the school's insurance will not cover anyone who is not licensed and insured.
- If you volunteer to drive, please plan to stay with the group during the field trip unless the teacher(s) confirm that you are not needed to chaperone as well.
- We strongly recommend that you do not bring any younger siblings along when you drive on a field trip.
- In the event that you will be coming along to chaperone but not drive, please ride in the car to which you are assigned. We do not allow students to switch cars to sit with friends and ask you to model the rule.

Birthdays

Children love to celebrate their birthdays with their friends. We celebrate each child's birthday with "The Birthday Walk." "The Birthday Walk" is a special birthday ceremony in which we tell the class the story of the birthday child's life. We ask that each family create a time line of the birthday child's life together. The birthday child holds a globe and walks around the "sun" (a candle), one time for each year they have been on earth, while the parent or teacher narrates the pictures. Please do not bring in a treat for the birthday celebration. A common Montessori tradition is that the birthday child donates a book to the school in honor of his/her day.

Please do not send birthday invitations to school to be passed out. This often results in hurt feelings. Invitations should be sent to individuals through the mail.

Celebrations

Celebrations are emphasized by all classes during the course of the year; however, each class may add its own special touch on each celebration. Some of the annual traditions we celebrate will include:

- Back to School Meet & Greet
- Fall Festival
- Winter Celebration
- Read Across America, Pajama Day
- Beach Day
- Field Day (Primary)
- End of the Year Celebration

Toddler Curriculum and Environment

The Montessori Program provides the sense of security; nurturance and loving care that infants and toddlers need to thrive during this stage of intense learning. Since infants and toddlers are committed to achieving independence, the Directress provides responsive individual attention as your child deals with positive experiences as well as frustrations. The curriculum takes advantage of the rapid growth of fine and gross motor skills at this stage of development.

Section 4: Student Health

When Your Child is Ill

When your child is ill and won't be coming to school, please call by 9:00 a.m. that day to let us know he or she will be absent so we don't worry. Parents will be notified if your child is exposed to any ill children at school. Please let us know of anything that has happened at home or elsewhere, which may affect your child's behavior at school.

When to Stay Home

Your child should come to school healthy and able to fully participate in their school day. Your child must be excluded from school if in the last 24 hours he/she has had:

- ✓ Vomiting
- ✓ Diarrhea
- ✓ Fever in excess of 100 degrees
- ✓ Colored nasal secretion
- ✓ Communicable disease (including chicken pox and strep throat)
- ✓ Unexplained rash, blisters, or hives
- ✓ Draining from eyes or ears
- ✓ Lice or nits**

** If a student or staff member has been diagnosed with lice or lice is found on them, they will be sent home immediately and required to do a full course of treatment.

Lice and nits must be treated two times over a minimum of 9 days and daily comb outs and heat treatments are encouraged. The student or staff can return to school after the nine days as long as they are lice and nit-free. They will be checked daily for a minimum of 10 days. The family must treat the individual, the home and the car for lice based on recommendations from professionals. As you can understand this both protects the CTMS community as well as yours and helps to eliminate the very expensive extermination fees that can be accompanied by lice infestation.

If a family member has lice but the student or staff member does not have it, CTMS must be notified immediately. The student or staff member can come to school after one lice treatment. This person will be checked daily at school for a minimum of 10 days and in partnership, daily at-home checks are mandatory during this sensitive period.

For more information, you can reference these sources:

<https://www.webmd.com/skin-problems-and-treatments/lice-treatment>

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/treatment-tests-and-therapies/no-panic-guide-to-head-lice-treatment>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/head-lice/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20356186>

If Your Child Becomes Ill at School

If your child becomes ill while at school, he/she will be isolated from the rest of the group where we can evaluate him/her to see what may be wrong. You will be notified and advised accordingly and may be expected to pick up your child **IMMEDIATELY**. If you cannot be reached your emergency backups will be contacted to pick up. An ill child at school is not fair to the other parents, children, or staff and their families, nor is it fair to the ill child. If there are any questions as to your child's symptoms, call the school.

Allergies

If your child has any allergies or medical conditions, we require that your physician create a plan of action for us. This should state what the child's condition is and the steps to take in case an emergency occurs.

Medications

Except under extraordinary situations, we prefer not to administer medications at school. Please do not send in any medication with your child, including aspirin or other over-the-counter drugs, except under a doctor's instructions as explained below. Medications will be given with signed permission from your child's physician and yourself. You will also need to provide a note stating the last time the child had this medication, the amount that was given, and

when it is to be given again. You also must inform us of the reason your child is on the medication and how long the medication is required. We will provide you with the forms for your doctor to fill out. These need to be completed each time your child needs a new medication, prescription or non-prescription.

You must give your child the first dose of any new medications. We will afterwards administer medication, as directed by you and your physician in writing, with the exception of eye drops. Please inform us of any medications being given to your child.

Medications must be checked in at the office. The office checks the dates, prescriptions, and signatures, making sure the physician, parent and staff signs. The office then enters the medications into Procare. Medications are then delivered to the classroom teacher in a container with appropriate paperwork. Teachers will sign off on receiving the medications.

Emergency Care

Most of our faculty and staff are trained in first aid and CPR. In the event of any medical situation that requires immediate medical attention, we will want your child to see a doctor right away. Please remember to keep your emergency information form up to date in the office. We must be able to reach you at any time during the school day. If your child needs immediate medical attention, and you cannot be reached, your enrollment agreement authorizes us to seek medical care in your name. We will take your child to the emergency room at the Middlesex Hospital Shoreline Clinic in Westbrook (or in the event a medical emergency occurs during a field trip, we will take your child to the nearest emergency facility). Naturally, we will continue our efforts to contact you. Please be sure to keep your emergency information form up-to-date and inform the office immediately if there is any change in your address or phone number during the academic year.

Toileting Policy

Reason this policy is important: Toileting is one of the first self-help skills children learn. It is also a time in which sanitary procedures and personal hygiene are very important to reduce the opportunity for germs to spread that may cause illness for staff and children.

Procedure and practices, including responsible person(s):

- Toilets are close to classrooms and open to children who are potty trained and in training at all times.
- There are enough toilets and sinks for all children present.
- There is at least one garbage can in the bathroom with a foot-operated lid.
- The toilets/sinks are child size or adapted so the child can have easy access to the toilet/sink
- The toilets will be visibly clean and separate from children's activity area.
- Staff will make sure the toilets are cleaned/sanitized when visibly dirty and daily and assure toilet paper, soap and paper towels are always available within easy reach of all users.
- Staff will assure that all children wash their hands properly before and after toileting
- Staff will use proper hand washing procedures before & after helping children in the bathroom.
- Potty chairs will not be used because of risk of spreading germs

When does the policy apply: For all children who use the toilet.

Communication plan for staff and parents

- Staff and volunteers will receive a written copy of this policy in their orientation packets before beginning work at the center.
- Hand washing poster posted in bathrooms.

Toddlers

As children show readiness, they will be offered the use of the toilet located adjacent to their classroom with the assistance of an adult. The parents and teachers will work together to help develop encouraging opportunities for the child. Children will participate in this process, but no rewards will be imposed. Those children who are not yet ready to use the toilet regularly will continue to have their diaper changed by a staff member following the Diaper Changing Policy posted at each diapering station within the classroom.

Note: For children who are unable to use the toilet consistently, the staff makes sure to follow the diapering procedures.

Diapering Procedures

1. First wash hands with soap and water of child and caregiver– Caregiver will put on gloves.
2. Spread new paper from roll onto the changing table.
3. Open the child's diaper box and prepare with a new diaper, topical cream and wipes.
4. Place non-mobile infant or allow child to walk up steps and carefully help them to lie down.
5. Keep one hand on child at all times.
6. Unfasten clothing, remove and dispose of soiled diaper in covered receptacle.
7. Wipe child from front to back.
8. Apply cream, ointment or powder (permission from parent required in writing for specific topical used).
9. Replace clean diaper on child and re-clothe.
10. Wash child's hands with soap and water and return them to play.
11. Dispose of paper sheet in covered receptacle after each diapering.
12. Wash and disinfect diapering area after each use.
13. Remove gloves and wash hands with soap and water.

Cloth Diapering Policy

If you choose to use cloth diapers, parent responsibility is as follows:

- Provide daily, fully assembled, cloth diapers, with an absorbent inner lining completely contained with an outer covering made of waterproof material that prevents the escape of feces and urine and enough to meet your child's needs. (Minimum of 10)
- Disposable diapers must be kept on hand in case of shortage of cloth diapers. (Minimum of 6)
- To provide rubber pants that will securely cover the entire diaper area. (Minimum of 6 pair)
- To provide an airtight plastic lined diaper pail for dirty diapers.
- Provide bags to put each dirty diaper in.
- Diaper pail will be brought home daily. Remove soiled diapers which will be in separate plastic bags un-rinsed. We are not able to rinse diapers. The diaper pail must be washed and disinfected and returned on the child's next day.

Standing-Up Diapering Procedures

14. First wash hands with soap and water of the child and caregiver– put on gloves.
15. With the child standing in the bathroom, have the child pull down pants and hold up their shirt.
16. Open the child's diaper box and prepare with a new diaper, topical cream (if needed) and wipes.

17. Remove and dispose of soiled diaper in the covered receptacle.
18. Wipe the child from front to back.
19. Be sure to clean the child thoroughly especially after a BM.
20. Ask the child if they would like to try potty (if they sit down wipe the toilet seat with a disinfectant wipe when they are done).
21. Apply cream, ointment or powder if needed (permission from parent required in writing for specific topical used).
22. Replace clean diaper on child and re-clothe.
23. Remove gloves and wash your hands with soap and water
24. Wash the child's hands with soap and water and return them to play.

Biting Policy

Although biting is considered a “normal developmental phase for infants and toddlers” staff will continually do all they can to prevent this behavior from interrupting the educational setting of our classrooms. Most would view biting as a completely negative experience; however, our teachers can use these unfortunate events as “teachable moments”. Teachers will take full advantage of any opportunity to teach your child by expanding vocabulary, concepts of self-care, and the idea that all our actions have consequences.

Infant: An attempted bite: Child will be redirected to a different area with fewer children.

All other bites: Teacher’s initial response will be “no biting”. Emphasis will be on child who has been bit. Child will be examined to determine severity of bite and also comforted. Once the child has been cared for, teacher will redirect infant to an area with few children. Teacher will shadow infant without giving him extra attention.

Toddler: An attempted bite: Child will be redirected to a different area with fewer children.

A bite that results in no mark: Teacher’s initial response will be “biting hurts”. Emphasis will be on child who has been bit. Child will be examined first to determine severity of bite and also comforted. Once the bitten child has been cared for, the teacher will talk with the biter one on one. Child will then be asked to help the friend that has been bit feel better, and then redirected to a different area with fewer children.

A bite that results in teeth marks: Teacher’s initial response will be “biting hurts”. The who bit will be asked to sit with the teacher and the teacher will show them how they can calm their body. Emphasis will then be placed on the bitten child. The child will be examined to determine severity of bite and also comforted. The bite will be washed and cared for where the biter can see. The teacher will then talk with the biter one on one reinforcing proper ways to interact with friends. Child will be asked to help the friend that has been bit feel better, and then redirected to a different area with fewer children.

A bite that breaks the skin: Teacher’s initial response will be “biting hurts”. The child who bit will be asked to sit with the teacher and the teacher will show them how they can calm their body. Emphasis will then be placed on a child who has been bitten. Child will be examined to determine severity of bite and also comforted. The bite will be washed and cared for where the biter can see. The teacher will then talk with the biter, one on one, reinforcing proper ways to interact with friends. Child will be asked to help the friend that has been bit feel better and then

must stay with a teacher (will be shadowed) for remainder of class. Teacher will do this without giving the child extra personal attention that the child may see as positive reinforcement for biting behavior.

3+: A bite or attempt to bite at this age is handled in the same way: The first time a child bites, we will notify parents and together we will devise a plan to rectify the behavior. If the biting continues, we will call parents immediately to have the child picked up from school and they cannot return to school for 24 hours. If the biting cannot be controlled, we will have to terminate the child's enrollment. Parents are welcome to re-enroll the child when the biting has subsided.

Section 5: Parents and the School

A Community Built on Trust, Friendship and Mutual Respect

Once upon a time we all lived in a "Community". Children were born, grew up, got jobs, married, and raised their own children in the same town. They attended the same schools that their mothers and fathers attended as children. Perhaps they even had some of the same teachers that their parents had as children. And, for the most part, kids grew up to be decent, honest members of society. Truthfully, they had little or no choice. Anytime they strayed just slightly off the straight and narrow path, there was always someone who knew them and their family, to set them straight. Some people might consider this "meddling", but in many ways that "meddling" was a demonstration of "caring." In our fast-paced and very mobile society, it's difficult to establish the community bonds that unite people. Today many of us wish that we could re-create that same type of environment. Once we developed a sense of community simply because we lived together in the same town or neighborhood. Today, we may only know a handful of our neighbors. Our friends, and, more importantly, our children's friends, move out of one neighborhood to another or even out of town as our careers dictate. Those of us who cherish the old sense of close-knit community have to create our own by joining together with people with whom we share similar interests, concerns, and values.

You will often hear the word "community" used to describe The Children's Tree Montessori School. It offers, for those who wish one, an authentic community. Relationships tend to grow strong and friendships run deep here. Teachers, students and parents enjoy an old-fashioned sense of friendship and collaboration. This opportunity for continuity, stability, and a true sense of community within the school means a great deal to many of us at The Children's Tree Montessori School. Students know that they belong, that they are respected, and that they are cared for not only by their parents, but by the larger community of fellow students, teachers, and other parents in the school, many of whom have known them almost all their lives. The Children's Tree Montessori School brings together families who have chosen to identify with a common commitment to the shared concerns, values, and expectations they have for their children. We come from different backgrounds, but our sense of community exists in spite of, or perhaps because of it. The Children's Tree Montessori School teaches our children to understand and appreciate cultural differences and shared human values: peace, independence, human dignity, and a celebration of life in a time when it is often difficult to establish the same positive feelings of continuity, unification, and stability in our own neighborhoods. The Children's Tree Montessori School has succeeded in re-creating that positive sense of identity, mutual caring and concern among its students, teachers, and parents.

Volunteering the Gift of Time and Talent

Parents play a crucial role at The Children's Tree Montessori School. This is a community of parents and educators (many of whom are parents here too). Few schools are so open and responsive to suggestions and concerns. The Children's Tree Montessori School strongly encourages families to feel at home and to participate in the broader life of the school through social and educational activities offered by various organizations of the school. Although most

parents spend considerable amounts of time as volunteers at The Children's Tree Montessori School, there is no expectation for a set time commitment. There are some things that even money can't buy, and one of the most valuable contributions that families make to The Children's Tree Montessori School is the gift of their time and expertise. Parents, grandparents, and friends of the school are often found helping out in the office, assisting in the classrooms, serving as field trip drivers, offering a Studio, planning the next special event, coaching, or serving on parents' associations or school committees. Parents and grandparents who give of their time and talent share with their family's special memories of experiences and friendships that endure well beyond their children's graduation.

A few ways in which you can help out at The Children's Tree Montessori School

- Volunteer a few hours a week to help in the office
- Supporting Aftercare
- Lend your time and support to our fundraising efforts
- Help out in the library
- Volunteer to be an Ambassador Family to new parents new at the school
- Serve on one of the school's committees
- Help us put together the school newsletter
- Help the teachers organize field trips or special lessons
- Join us for Open Houses to meet prospective families
- Help organize special events
- Volunteer your time to help the school prepare major mailings
- Teach a studio course
- Help our students work in the Children's Garden
- Share your talents and special interests, such as a musical instrument that you play, a second language that you speak, a craft that you enjoy, or a field that you've studied
- Serve as a class parent
- Help to organize a reunion for former students and their families
- The Children's Tree Montessori School depends on our combined talents

Communication Between Home and School

During the school year the school will send home all sorts of letters, notes, newsletters, and announcements via student folders, e-mail, and ProCare.

Among them will be:

- School work, drawings, essays, reports, math work, and other papers that your child chooses to bring home
- Flyers and announcements of upcoming special events
- A weekly newsletter from the teachers

You should check your child's folder weekly.

All communications between The Children's Tree Montessori School and parents shall be considered confidential and may not be used for your own personal gain, shared with anyone outside of the school community or referenced when your child is no longer in our program. If you have information that you would like to forward to the entire student body, please submit it to the office for approval and distribution.

In keeping in line with the principles and philosophies of the school it is vital that parents refrain from gossip and bring any and all concerns to us directly.

Newsletter

A newsletter is sent via e-mail to parents weekly to keep you informed of upcoming events, policy changes and what students are studying in their classes. Please feel free to send any information you would like to share with parents to the newsletter editor. (We reserve the right to not publish any information we deem inappropriate).

Communication with Second Families

Whenever parents are separated, divorced, or for some other reason not living at the same address, we want to keep both parents informed of their child's progress and school matters. An exception may be requested by a court order prior to the child's entering school by either or both parents; the request would require full consideration of the legal ramifications and other relevant matters, to the effect that dual communication is not required, desired, or to be pursued. If granted, this exception (documented by a signed court order) would be noted in the child's permanent file and honored as indicated.

- Copies of progress reports and announcements mailed out or sent home with students will be received by both parents at their respective addresses at no extra cost.
- Invitations to school functions will be sent to both parents.
- When parent-teacher conferences are scheduled, please do not ask the teachers to conduct separate conferences for each parent. We need to communicate the same thing to both parents at the same time, as this experience can never be exactly duplicated. If either parent is uncomfortable with scheduling joint conferences, he or she should contact the office to discuss the situation. There is an expectation of mutual respect and student focus during these meetings.
- Both parents are equally welcomed at all school events.
- Free and open communication among all parties is encouraged so that everyone is fully informed.

Observing the Classes at Work

Parents are encouraged to observe the children at work. Observations can be arranged with the office. Unless arrangements have been made in advance, your child's teacher may not have time to speak with you. You will want to see the class at its normal routine and not responding to the novelty of your presence; therefore, when you visit, please sit in the designated visitor's chair in the classroom. A great deal can be learned by patient and quiet observation of your child and his or her classmates at work. During the first sensitive weeks of the school year, students (especially the younger children) are familiarizing themselves with a new routine and new environment. For this reason, we ask parents to avoid class observations during these periods. Our classrooms have observation areas where a parent can watch any time they wish. Even if your child is not in one of these classes, you will enjoy a view of the students at work and will gain a better understanding of the Montessori program. All primary classes are set up with the same types of materials and the approach is very similar from room to room. All visitors and volunteers need to sign in at the school office upon their arrival.

Points to Look For When You Observe

As you sit down to carefully observe in a Montessori classroom for the first time, what catches your eye? What do you notice on your second or third visit? How is the classroom organized? What do you notice about the layout of activities, furnishings, and shelves? Pay attention to the way the adults interact with the children. What do you notice? Perhaps during your observation, you will see the teacher correct or discipline a child. What do you notice? As you observe, try to look for any unwritten rules and procedures that the children are following. What do you notice?

Focus on a particular child other than your own. Follow his/her work during the course of at least a half hour. How does he/she spend his/her time? How does he/she select work? Hopefully you will see the teachers present several different lessons during your visits to either small groups or individual children. What do you notice about the way

they teach? What do you notice about the educational materials on the shelves and how the children work with them? What about the Montessori materials seems to be most attractive to the children?

Focus on a few different Montessori materials. What concepts or skills does each isolate? How do the teachers introduce the children to the materials?

Try to catch one child learning from another. Focus on the control of error built in to several of the materials. How do they self-correct? Try to observe a child correcting his/her own work through the built-in control of error. As you observe the children at work, do you sense that there are certain tasks that the children prefer? Are there any that they seem to avoid? How do you as an adult respond to the Montessori materials. Are you drawn to them? Do you wish that you could have gone to a Montessori school? What sort of interactions do you notice between the younger and older students?

During your observation, did the teachers spend most of their time with the younger or older students? If so, try to determine what factors led them to concentrate most of their attention on one age group or another? Do the teachers anticipate that the focus will switch? What conditions are they looking for? How does your child feel about being in a multi-age classroom? What advantages and disadvantages do you see to multi-age grouping?

What Did You do at School Today?

Have you experienced frustration when asking this question? Did you get the common answer, “nothing.” Or possibly they tell you every day that they did the same thing such as play dough or spooning beans. Don’t be alarmed. We can assure you that your child is very busy at school doing a variety of learning activities designed to support his/her development. Young children often have difficulty talking about what they do at school. They have done so many things that they often cannot sort out the specifics. Sometimes they don’t remember the name of the materials that they used, such as the trinomial cube, the metal insets, or the addition strip board. In addition to the difficulty children may have talking about their school experience, you may have noted that not many papers come home. They can be doing complex math, word building, writing in a sand tray or on chalk boards, geography, and science lessons, all with manipulative materials that will have no paper work to show you their progress. So how can you find out what your child is doing in school?

1. Ask your child questions that are more specific. “Did you do a counting lesson today? Did you build the tower or work with colors?”
2. Occasionally, park at dismissal and bring your child into the classroom to show you his/ her favorite lessons.
3. Set up a time to observe your child in class.
4. Read a Montessori book.
5. Stop in before or after school and talk to your child’s teacher, or set up an appointment for a formal conference if you prefer.
6. Come to school meetings and workshops.
7. Play school with your child at home. Sometimes children will show you through their play what they are learning.
8. Be patient. In time it will be obvious that your child is growing and learning every day.

Parents’ Days

Twice a year in the winter, parents are invited to come to school for “Look What I Can Do Night,” a special opportunity to become a Montessori child and allow the children to become your teachers. Your own child will be sure to show you his or her favorite work. At the primary level, parents will be invited to be their child’s special guest.

Parent Education

The Children's Tree encourages parents and caregivers to join them in our monthly educational seminars that focus on examples such as:

"Help me do it myself"

"Montessori Curriculum"

"The Science behind the Genius"

"What is Montessori Preschool?"

"Silent Journey"

"At Home with Montessori"

"The Normalized Child"

"Montessori 101"

"Positive Discipline"

Code of Conduct for Parents

The following is the standard against which we hold ourselves and our families. This provides information about parent recourses that affect our classrooms and greater community life. Please read carefully.

I. Parent Conduct: Families with a child or children enrolled at The Children's Tree Montessori School become part of the CTMS Community. This community thrives because **we all agree to treat each other with grace, courtesy, and respect.** Enrollment at The Children's Tree Montessori School indicates your willingness to abide by the following guidelines:

A. Privacy: Please help us maintain the mutual trust and respect we all need to keep our community healthy by safeguarding the privacy of children, parents, and staff. Passing on confidential, damaging, or hurtful information is not acceptable.

B. Conflicts: Conflicts between parents or parents and staff should be addressed in a calm and private manner, preferably in person or with a respectful note. Phone calls and e-mails should not be used to express anger, frustration, or criticism. Meetings are to be held by appointment or at a mutually convenient time.

C. Etiquette: The Children's Tree Montessori School teachers, staff, and parents are all expected to strive for high standards of etiquette and behavior. Commitments should be honored, criticism should be constructive and genial, and language should be courteous. Parking and traffic laws must be followed on school property. This keeps everyone safe and models the very best for the children.

D. Communication: When a parent has a question, concern, or grievance, he or she should make every effort to bring the issue to the appropriate person, as outlined below:

Order of contact for program, student, or classroom issues:

First: The Child's Teacher

Second: Director of Students and Faculty or Director of Curriculum

Third: Head of School

Order of contact for general school operations and policy issues:

First: Administrative Assistant

Second: Director of Operations

Third: Head of School

The use of broadcast emails to contact fellow parents about sensitive issues involving The Children's Tree Montessori School policy, teachers, staff or students is inappropriate and may be grounds for further actions.

The Children's Tree Montessori's Board of Directors is NOT involved with the oversight of day-to-day school management. When faced with questions about such issues, Board members will simply pass those concerns on to the Head of School as is "best practice" for Trustees in independent schools.

Resource Materials

Booklist for children:

- Maria Montessori: A Biography for Children, Hayes, Rayma S.
- Little Star Montessori School Supply House, Winthrop, Washington, 1986.
- Our Peaceful Classroom, Wolf, Aline D. Parent Child Press, Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania, 1991.
- Mammolina; A Story about Maria Montessori, O'Connor, Barbara, Carolrhoda Books, Minneapolis, 1993.
- A Place for You: Welcome to Your Montessori Children's House by Tricia Siudut Allen

Suggested reading for adults:

- Look at the Child, Wolf, Aline D., Parent Child Press, Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania, 1978.
- Montessori and Your Child, Malloy, Terry, Nienhuis Montessori, USA, 1974.
- At Home with Montessori, Oriti, Patricia, North American Montessori Teachers' Association, 1994.
- Montessori Education. American Montessori Society, 1994
- Parents' Guide to the Montessori 3-6 Classroom, Alene Wolfe
- Positive Discipline, Jane Nelson, Ed.D., 1-800-456-7770
- Maria Montessori: A Biography – Rita Kramer
- What You Should Know About Your Child

For further information about Montessori:

- www.amshq.org
- www.montessori.org

"The secret of good teaching is to regard the child's intelligence as a fertile field in which seeds may be sown, to grow under the heat of flaming imagination."

Section 6: Academic Policies

Family Conferences

It is very important for teachers and parents to establish and maintain close communication. Please feel free to ask questions or discuss anything related to your child's progress. We ask, however, that you understand that a teacher's responsibility during school is to the students. Morning arrival in particular is a very sensitive period when the teachers are greeting each student and setting a calm, pleasant tone for the day. Interruptions need to be kept to a minimum. If you must speak with a teacher in the morning, please make arrangements to meet before school begins. Otherwise you can correspond via a note and the teachers will get back to you by phone or will send a note to set up a conference as needed. Two family conferences will be scheduled over the year: in November, and April. Additional conferences will be scheduled upon request. Students who are in kindergarten and above will attend all conferences to review their progress and set some individual goals for the next trimester.

Individual Learning Plans: set forth specific individualized educational goals for each child that parents and teachers mutually agree to consciously work toward during the next few months ahead. The student's progress toward fulfilling his or her Individual Learning Plan will be a primary focus of subsequent conferences, progress reports, and student self-evaluations.

Evaluation of Student Progress: The Children's Tree Montessori School's Montessori curriculum is carefully structured and sequenced and the teachers maintain careful records of each student's academic progress. Because Montessori Schools do not compare students against an arbitrary standard or the performance of their classmates, we do not use familiar letter grades. We send home written narrative reports once a year in June to review the children's development and discuss how the Montessori program is contributing to their growth.

Open Door Policy

You may drop in any time your child is in our care and view your child from the observation area. We ask that you do not enter the primary classroom, as it is very disruptive to the children and our lessons. No notice for these visits is necessary. Please understand this is not a social invitation. Take into consideration your child's ability to transition easily and their adaptation to our environment. These visits may be difficult for both you and your child, if they do not separate easily.

Inclusion

The Children's Tree Montessori School welcomes and celebrates diversity. Working and playing with children and families from various religious and ethnic backgrounds, lifestyles and life circumstances fosters communication, acceptance and appreciation of differences.

Children with Disabilities

The Children's Tree Montessori School values a diverse community and therefore, strives to accommodate students with disabilities. Accommodations, which do not fundamentally alter our program or cause CTMS to incur unreasonable costs, will be made to support the student's learning at The Children's Tree Montessori School. We use the Old Saybrook Public School District consultants as one resource for children with disabilities and we welcome collaboration with other resources families may suggest.

Children with Suspected Disabilities

Should a suspected disability arise during the course of a child's education, parents and teachers are expected to work together to develop a learning plan that meets the child's and the community's best interests. All available resources will be utilized to support the child's education. When using other resources, parents may incur additional costs.

Promotion from One Level to the Next

Students at The Children's Tree Montessori School do not follow a preset curriculum for each grade level. They proceed at their own pace. As a result, the concept that a child is a first, second, or sixth grader, doesn't have the same meaning as it would in a traditional school. At the same time, we realize that children in our culture are accustomed to referring to themselves by their grade level. The Children's Tree Montessori School has established expectations for the normal baseline achievement that we expect to see in our students. While they may surpass those standards, they represent a normal index of skills and knowledge that we expect of most Montessori students to display.

Students will normally be promoted from one grade level to the next at the end of the school year if they have accomplished the goals and norms that we have established. Advancement to the next class level, for example, from the toddler to the primary level is based on an evaluation of the child's total academic, social, emotional, and physical/motor development. Because the classes can individually tailor the child's academic program to a large degree, regardless of which group he or she is placed in, the most important criteria for advancement to an older group is often the student's social adjustment, independence, work habits, and maturity. We always invite parents to work with us in reaching these decisions, and focus on what will be in the child's best interests.

Standardized Testing

Since standardized tests primarily examine a narrow curriculum in a restrictive format, they are inconclusive rather than definitive. Our curriculum is broad and our requirement is mastery, not adherence to a particular style of learning. Nevertheless, in many instances, our graduates are required to take the Secondary Schools Achievement Test (SSAT) by the independent high schools to which they apply, and the vast majority does exceedingly well. Student progress is assessed by teachers on a daily basis. Our emphasis remains on personal improvement rather than peer competition.

Transcripts

By written request, the parent/guardian or, upon attaining the age of majority, the student may ask that a photocopy of the student's file, along with completed recommendation forms, be issued to another school. Report cards and transcripts cannot be issued if a student has an outstanding balance on his or her account that is more than sixty days past due. They will be forwarded once the account has been brought up to date.

Privacy of Student Files

Student files are confidential records and are kept secure from unauthorized access. Each student file contains a log (name, date, and purpose) of those persons or agencies that have had access to the student's file. Parents or guardians may have access to the child's file by written request to the office at least 24 hours in advance. The file must be viewed in the presence of a Children's Tree Montessori School staff member, and if they disagree with any item in the file, a note may be inserted into the permanent file with their comments. Officials of the State or County Health Department and the State Department of Education may have the right to review student files without the parents' or guardians' permission. However, with a written court order, other government officials may inspect the contents of a student's file without the permission of the student or parent/guardian, and the school will inform the student and his family in writing that such an inspection has been requested or made. A copy of the student's file may be sent to an outside professional, such as a psychologist or educational diagnostician, if requested in writing by the parent(s), guardian(s), or student if he/she has attained the age of majority, with notation of pertinent papers to be sent.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Students of all backgrounds are welcome at The Children's Tree Montessori School and encouraged to apply for enrollment. The Children's Tree Montessori School does not discriminate on the basis of national or ethnic origin, creed, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation or identification or associational preference.

Section 7: Ground Rules

The Children's Tree Montessori School's Fundamental Ground Rules

As a school founded on the Montessori ideals, we assume that every person deserves respect. The Children's Tree Montessori School expects students to demonstrate kindness, courtesy, and respect toward the school and fellow students, parents, teachers, and staff.

The goal of all Montessori education is to establish safe, warm, and caring environments within which we teach students positive and appropriate ways to handle situations, rather than to assume that misbehavior and punishment are inevitable; to develop a strong sense of self-discipline, responsibility and courtesy; to develop an

atmosphere conducive to peaceful studies. When anyone at The Children's Tree Montessori School finds it difficult to follow the school's expectations about interpersonal conduct, we will quickly bring the student, family, and staff together to work toward a solution.

We follow an approach based on empowerment, mutual respect, and trust. Neither corporal punishment, nor physical or emotional intimidation, is allowed at The Children's Tree Montessori School. If anyone consciously or flagrantly violates the social contract regarding safety, kindness, and courtesy, our response is to identify the appropriate and natural consequences of their actions. For example, if something is broken, it must be replaced or repaired, preferably not by the parents alone, but by the student whose actions led to the damage.

Any student who repeatedly breaks the ground rules, or who on even one occasion endangers the health and safety of others, may be asked to leave the school by the Head of School. We have worked together to create a system of ground rules and discipline that is firm, fair, and consistent in order to help students maintain the school's values and character. All students are expected to adhere and respect them to protect one another. Teachers are trained in Positive Discipline which incorporates this philosophy of firm, fair and consistent expectations.

Our ground rules are essentially the same at every level of the school, although the language and emphasis changes somewhat for the older students. This is how we explain them to younger students. Please review these rules with your child: Be gentle, be kind and be safe to one another.

As our students get older, we explain the expectation of our ground rules as follows

- Everyone has a right to privacy and concentration. Please don't disturb anyone who is trying to concentrate on their work.
- Everyone has a right to their personal belongings. Please do not touch anything that is not yours without the owner's permission. If you accidentally lose or break something, please replace it without a fuss.
- Everyone here has the right to feel safe and secure. Please don't express anger or upset feelings in a way that insults or threatens someone else.
- Everyone here has the right to be physically safe. Please don't do anything that might hurt or endanger anyone.
- At The Children's Tree Montessori School, no one is allowed to fight, push, trip, or use any other aggressive behavior.
- Use the playground equipment as intended. For example, do not try to walk up the slides.
- Do not climb on the trees or on the railings of the tree house.
- Let everyone who wants to play join in your games.
- Stop chasing or playing scary games when asked.
- Please don't tackle or trip one another in any games
- Keep sand and sand toys in the sandbox.
- Do not throw sand or mulch.
- Do not leave your teacher's supervision without permission.
- Do not enter the parking lot or ever leave campus without an adult.
- Please do not roughhouse or play carelessly.
- Play tag and ball games in the designated play areas.
- Keep sticks and stones on the ground. Don't pick them up and never throw them.
- Keep the big building blocks on the platform or in the bins.
- Please put all balls, ropes, and other outdoor equipment away when you are finished playing with them.
- Children must be carefully monitored by their parents/ guardian's when playing on the school grounds after school. They must follow all of the rules above.

Behavior Policy

Young children are just learning how to interact, socialize, and communicate. Often children who lack impulse control or do not yet have the language skills needed to talk through a social situation will resort to some kind of physical action to get their wants met.

The Children's Tree Montessori School follows the Love and Logic, Positive Discipline, Montessori Inner Discipline methods/philosophy for discipline and will work with all children as they learn the skills necessary to play, work, and socialize together.

However, excessive aggressive behavior is not safe or acceptable in the classroom.

All aggressive behavior (refer to the next handout) that is deemed beyond a simple learning experience will be reported to the parents. We will discuss the behavior and the circumstances around the behavior as well as the way we handled the situation. All aggressive behavior incidents will be reported to both the parents of the child that initiated it and the child that received it. We do not discuss the names of the children involved. All such incidents will also be recorded in the child's file.

After a child has acted aggressively or if their behavior is deemed aggressive, a meeting between the teachers and parents will be necessary.

At this meeting we will discuss the behaviors, our observations, and what methods we will use in future situations should they arise. We will also discuss actions parents can take at home to support the child as they work through this behavior.

All children are different and each situation will be taken as a case by case basis with a plan implemented that is appropriate for that child's behaviors and needs. If the behavior does not improve within the time line established between the school and the parents, the family may be informed that this group setting may not be appropriate for their child and may be asked to leave The Children's Tree Montessori School until this behavior subsides..

Again, we will work with all children and families but we must also keep the safety and well-being of all the children in the community in mind.

If, at any time, you have questions or concerns please contact us any time by phone at 860-388-3536.

The following acts, behaviors or actions are examples of what CTMS qualify as an "aggressive behavior":

Physical: *Biting, Pushing, Stabbing, Scratching, Spitting, Hair Pulling, Tackling, Hitting, Choking*

Emotional: *Intense Anger, Frequent Loss of Temper, Extreme Irritability, Extreme Impulsiveness*

Verbal: *Use of foul words or Use of hurtful words*

Ways to help prevent aggressive behaviors:

In order to alleviate some of the triggers for aggression, CTMS has many practices in place that are known to help prevent incidences of biting in small children.

- Quality relationships: Staff develops nurturing relationships with the children and gets to know each child individually. Staff is given many opportunities for professional development to help he/she learn ways to build quality relationships with the children.
- Environmental influences on child's behaviors: Children are given opportunities to work in both small and large groups; there is a variety of work and children are taught how to take turns with "work;" the environment in a Montessori classroom is often quiet and productive which is very soothing to children; and staff are very aware of and willing to help a child that is feeling overwhelmed.
- Targeted social-emotional support: Children have a daily routine that they follow which consists of group time, time to pursue their own work, and open snack. Children learn early how to navigate classroom transitions in a way that helps them build confidence and alleviate stress. Staff talks about emotions/feelings through books and other work and teaches strategies such as yoga to help children learn to calm themselves. Emphasize the development of expressive communication skills. (Use words to express feelings) The staff is trained to observe behavior patterns and try to avoid situations that most commonly result in biting.

Drugs and Alcohol

Although we assume that it will never happen, as the school begins to extend through the higher grades it seems important to be clear about our position. We expect our students to avoid any and all contact with drugs or alcohol. This is defined to include the use, possession, or sale of any controlled substance (drug)---or alcoholic beverage. The possession, or sale of any alcohol or controlled substance, either during the school day or during any school sponsored trip, party, or function, may be immediate grounds for expulsion.

Violence and Harassment

The Children's Tree Montessori School cannot tolerate any irresponsible and dangerous behavior, acts of violence, threats of violence, emotional or sexual harassment, or verbal abuse directed toward anyone. It is absolutely illegal and forbidden to bring or carry a weapon to school or to use any common object as a weapon.

Smoking

The Children's Tree Montessori School is a smoke-free environment. No one may smoke on campus or at any school sponsored trip, party, or other activity. The Children's Tree Montessori School will do everything in its power to discourage students from ever starting. We are equally committed to protecting the rights of non-smokers and offering support and assistance to any smokers who are ready to quit.

Respect for the Property of Others

Any theft, vandalism, or damage to property, whether deliberate or accidental, must be repaired or repaid.

Care of the Environment

The entire school community (teachers, students, and administrators) is responsible for helping to maintain the order and neatness of the school environment.

- Everyone is expected to help maintain the cleanliness and order of the school.
- If something is spilled, please clean it up right away.
- Everyone is expected to help keep the school litter free by picking up any trash or belongings that you find strewn around. Do not throw trash on the ground, indoors or out.
- Students are expected to help with the daily cleanup in their class areas.

Rules for Safety on School Field Trips

Please be sure that you understand and can support the following basic safety rules. Safety is our prime concern, and we must insist that every student follow certain rules of safe and courteous conduct while being transported and on field trips.

- Passengers must wear their seat belts at all times.
- Don't leave your seat to get out until the vehicle has come to a complete stop.
- For everyone's safety, do not shout, engage in horseplay, or switch seats during the trip.
- Never stick your hand (or anything else) out of the window.
- Never throw anything out of the vehicle.
- Do not eat or drink unless given permission.
- Every student is expected to set a good example for the younger children. Watch your language and behavior. Do not curse, act foolish, or break any school rules.
- Please use earphones if you wish to listen to a radio or tape player. Remember that all of the normal school rules apply in the vehicle.
- Stay with your designated group
- Ensure respectful behavior; no tree climbing, littering, yelling, running...

Safety Drills

Random drills will be conducted monthly by the office.

- The alarm will be a special bell, which will ring continuously in the event of an actual emergency or drill.
- When the bell rings continuously, all classes will dismiss into designated areas and remain in their groups.
- The teachers will make certain the room is empty and close the doors.
- The teachers will join the class outside the building, take roll call, and notify the office of attendance.
- Students and teachers are expected to remain grouped in the designated area until informed that they may return to class.
- For more information, please ask to view our safety procedures

Bringing a Guest to School

Students are welcome to bring a friend to school for a visit, although certain arrangements must be made in advance with the teacher(s) and office. There may be reasons why we may not be able to have a guest on a given day, such as a field trip. Before the visiting day, the visiting student's parents will need to complete an emergency information form and submit to the office a note giving their permission for their child to visit The Children's Tree Montessori School. If you would like your child to invite a friend to spend a day with him/her at The Children's Tree Montessori School, he/she will need to remember that the visitor is his/her personal guest, and he/she will be responsible for her guest's comfort. He/she should see that his/her guest is not left alone. Students may invite only one guest to school on any given day. All guests must be signed in at the school office on arrival. Guests will be expected to follow the school's ground rules and dress code.

Section 8: Financial Policies

Tuition Policies

The Children's Tree Montessori School is completely dependent on tuition as its principal source of income. Student accounts must be kept up-to-date. The school will be forced to withhold any and all services to students whose accounts have fallen behind unless written arrangements have been made for deferred payment. Your cooperation is essential and very much appreciated.

This tuition is to both reserve and pays for your child's place for the school year. By enrolling your child, you are committing yourself to the full tuition year. As a courtesy we offer payment plans. No refunds or rebates will be given in the event that your child is absent for whatever reasons and no make-up days are offered.

Parents are responsible for prompt payment of all outstanding tuition and fees. Report cards and transcripts cannot be issued if a student has an outstanding balance on his or her account that is more than sixty days past due. They will be forwarded once the account has been brought up to date. Our accounting system contains a time activated program which automatically turns accounts that are more than 60 days past due over to a collection agency. Please make sure that you contact the office if you need to make arrangements before this happens so that it does not negatively affect your credit.

Reenrollment

Invitations to continue at The Children's Tree Montessori School are normally automatic but are not guaranteed. Decisions are made by the administration and faculty, based on an annual review of each student's academic progress, social and emotional development, any special needs (if applicable), along with the attitudes and values expressed by the child and parents. As always, our goal is to help each child and family find the perfect match between the student, home, and school. Reenrollment materials will be mailed home in early February and are due

back at the school by March 1st along with the annual registration deposit. If the school has not received a student's reenrollment materials by March 1st, his/her space will be made available to new students who have applied for admission to the school. No student may reenroll if there is an outstanding balance remaining on her account.

Siblings of alumni students have first priority at enrollment time. The previous account history, teacher and staff interactions, as well as if the three-year cycle was completed with the sibling contract will be taken into account when determining placement.

Financial Aid

The Children's Tree Montessori School offers limited financial aid to families enrolled in the school. Parents may fill out the application, which can be found and submitted via our web site. Financial aid decisions are based on the need of the family for the coming year. If financial aid is needed for more than one year, the family must submit a new application each school year. Applications are available after January 1st. Financial aid is defined as a reduction in tuition granted to families who have demonstrated eligibility through an objective assessment of their financial position.

1. All financial aid will be awarded on a one-year at a time basis. Students receiving financial aid cannot be guaranteed that it will be awarded in the following school year, although the Financial Aid Committee will give their applications careful consideration.
2. The maximum level of financial aid that the Committee may award to any one student may not exceed a maximum of 50% of his or her tuition.
3. Awards of financial aid cover tuition only and do not include any fees for books and materials, or special activities. Students under the age of two years and nine months are not eligible to receive financial aid.
4. Any awards of financial aid shall be credited to that individual student's account. Financial aid awards may not be given or transferred to any other student.
5. Once financial aid has been offered and accepted, the student and family shall be treated like any other in The Children's Tree Montessori School, with no special expectations nor exemptions from policy. The family may elect any of the school's three optional payment plans to pay the balance. They will be expected to pay the balance of their accounts on time, according to the payment plan selected.
6. Financial aid will not be renewed in any case where a family receiving aid fails to keep the balance of their account up-to-date.

Care4Kids

All families who are considering applying for financial aid should also apply for Care4Kids. Care4Kids is a state supplemental program that offers financial support for children enrolled in our toddler, preschool, and before and after school programs. Financial aid is not available for toddler students; however, we accept Care4Kids and other subsidy programs. Please go to the office for more information and help filling out the application.

Applying for Financial Aid

1. All applications submitted for financial aid must be received by the Financial Aid Committee on or before April 15th to be considered for the following school year.
2. Late applications will be considered if funds are still available.
3. It is the family's responsibility to ensure that all appropriate forms and supporting documents are submitted by May 1st.
4. The first step in applying for financial aid is to fill out the application requesting an impartial evaluation of your family's eligibility for financial aid in the upcoming school year. The application is located on our website:

www.childrenstree.org. The completed application should be submitted to the School as soon as possible after January 1.

5. Applications for financial aid should be received by the school office by May 1st. In addition to the on-line application, please be sure to include a letter explaining your family's request for financial aid, along with any information that will assist the committee in considering your application.

Priority in considering applications for financial aid will normally be given to:

- ❖ Families who have two or more children enrolled in the school
- ❖ Families who have been with the school for several years
- ❖ Children of faculty and staff members
- ❖ Families who both parents work full time, or one is in higher education or if one is home with a younger sibling under the age of three.

In all cases, careful consideration will be given to any special contributions the student or family has made to the life of the school. For further information, contact the school office.

Fundraising

The Children's Tree Montessori School has begun to look beyond tuition income to voluntary contributions from families and friends of the school who want to invest in the school's development. Every year we hold an Annual Campaign to generate ongoing support from the entire community for present projects throughout the school. In recent years, almost all the school's families, teachers, and staff have lent their support to the Annual Campaign.

The Children's Tree Montessori School's Annual Campaign runs in the fall of each year. For such a young school, our effort to develop a second source of funding through voluntary contributions has gotten off to an excellent start since we began in 2007. In addition to the Annual Campaign, the school sponsors an Auction. In addition to these endeavors, The Children's Tree Montessori School is engaged in an on-going capital fund raising campaign to offset the cost of adding all new facilities over the next several years.

The Spirit of Philanthropy

Why We Give to The Children's Tree Montessori School

People like us contribute thousands of dollars to worthwhile charitable organizations, like The Children's Tree Montessori School, for reasons that are as much selfish as altruistic. Why do we do it? Our voluntary support gives us a stake in the school, and a claim to some degree of influence over a place that we care about.

It gives us as parents and staff a sense of having some degree of ownership and pride. Some of us also give to The Children's Tree Montessori School because we are part of this community and feel strongly connected to it. Perhaps we also give to fulfill a very personal need to see ourselves as a patron of something that we feel is truly worthwhile. Perhaps, in helping to build something worthwhile, we gain a little place in the book of good deeds. Some of us support The Children's Tree Montessori School for reasons of conscience. We believe in Dr. Montessori's vision of global community and her campaign for world peace and human dignity. We are supporting something in which we believe. When we support The Children's Tree Montessori School we aren't simply throwing our hard earned money away. We know all too well that our resources are limited, and we give careful thought to how they are used to accomplish the most good. Most of us at The Children's Tree Montessori School, most especially the teachers and staff, tend to be people who hold strong values and deep beliefs. We believe in people, especially the promise inherent within children, and we have a great respect for what great schools can contribute to their lives. We want

to give our children and the children who follow them in the years to come an extraordinary opportunity that wasn't available to most of us when we were young. We want to make a contribution back to life. By lending our support, we hope to improve the quality of life, and help develop solutions for some of our most deeply nagging social concerns with children. Every time we make a contribution to The Children's Tree Montessori School, we are making an investment in our children's future.

Section 9: Curriculum Scope and Sequence

Today's rapid technological and social change makes it increasingly difficult for us to understand and keep pace with the modern world. This has put schools under terrific pressure to reevaluate what should be taught in an age when no one can predict the skills that our children will need when they reach maturity.

In the past, when our store of knowledge was relatively fixed and limited, the most efficient education consisted of lecture, drill, and memorization. In an era of technological revolution and social change, the foundation of a good education is to learn how to learn.

The Children's Tree Montessori School's course of study encompasses the full substance of the traditional curriculum and goes beyond to teach students how to think clearly, do their own research, express themselves well in writing and speech, and to put their knowledge to practical application. We have organized our course of study as an inclined spiral plane of integrated studies, rather than a traditional model in which the curriculum is compartmentalized into separate subjects, with given topics considered only once at a given grade level. At The Children's Tree Montessori, lessons are introduced simply and concretely in the early years and are reintroduced several times during the following years at increasing degrees of abstraction and complexity.

Our course of study is an integrated thematic approach that ties the separate disciplines of the curriculum together into studies of the physical universe, the world of nature, and the human experience. This integrated approach is one of The Children's Tree Montessori School's great strengths. As an example, when our students study the ancient Greeks in world history, they also read Homer and Bull-finch's Mythology. Literature, the arts, history, social issues, government, economics, architecture, medicine, science, and the study of technology all complement one another in our curriculum.

The Children's Tree Montessori School is a school with an innovative , academic program. While we offer a warm, supportive academic atmosphere, we set a high level of expectation for the quality of thought, work, and mastery of content and skills.

The following is a brief overview of The Children's Tree Montessori School's core curriculum in the areas of language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, sensory training, and practical life for our students age 3 through 6. Please keep in mind that this only represents an overview of the course of study, and is not meant to be complete. Since our students progress at their own pace, it is not possible to divide up the curriculum by grade levels. Also, we have not attempted, for lack of space, to include descriptions of our curriculum in the arts, music, physical education, and foreign language.

Reading and Language Arts

Pre-Reading

Due to our multi-age classroom design, our youngest students are constantly exposed to the older children in the class who are already reading. The total environment of the Primary classes (3 to 6 years-old) tends to create and reinforce in our young children a spontaneous interest in learning how to read. We begin to teach reading as soon as that interest is first expressed.

- Teachers introduce students to the scientific language of the world around them. For example, we teach the parts of the plant or parts of a fish, etc.
- The children are taught through many early approaches to listen for and recognize the individual phonetic sounds in words.
- We introduce the children to literature by reading aloud and discussing a wide range of classic stories and poetry.
- We help our youngest students to recognize the shape and phonetic sounds of the alphabet through the sandpaper letters: a tactile alphabet.

Reading

- The development of the concept that written words are actual thoughts set down on paper. (This takes children much longer than most people realize.)
- Sounding out simple three- or four-letter phonetic words. (Typically, before age 5)
- Early exercises to practice reading and to gain the concept of a noun: labeling objects with written name tags, mastering increasingly complex words naming things that interest them, such as dinosaurs, the parts of a flower, geometric shapes, the materials in the classroom, etc.
- Learning to recognize verbs: normally exercises in which the child reads a card with a verbal "command" printed out (such as run, sit, walk, etc.) and demonstrates his understanding by acting it out. As the child's reading vocabulary increases, verbal commands involve full sentences and multiple steps: "Place the mat on the table and bring back a red pencil."
- Reading specially selected or prepared small books on topics that really interest the child, such as in science, geography, nature or history.

Handwriting

Control of the hand in preparation for writing is developed through many exercises, including specially designed tasks in the use of the pencil. Such exercises begin with very young children and extend over several years so that mastery is gradually, but thoroughly, attained. The young children practice making letters from the time of their first initial "explosion into writing" at age 3 or 4:

- Moveable Alphabets made up of easily manipulated plastic letters are used for the early stages of phonetic word creation, the analysis of words, and spelling. They facilitate early reading and writing tasks during the period when young children are still not comfortable with their own writing skills. Even before the children are comfortable in their handwriting skills, they spell words, compose sentences and stories, and work on punctuation and capitalization with the moveable alphabets (Age 4-6).
- At first, by tracing letters into sand.
- Later, by writing on special tilted, upright blackboards: unlined, wide lined, and narrow-lined.
- Later, by writing on special writing tablets, becoming comfortable with script.
- Cursive writing (Typically around age 5)
- Word Processing (Normally beginning around age 6)

Composition

At an early age, before handwriting has been mastered, the children compose sentences, stories, and poetry through oral dictation to adults and with the use of the moveable alphabet. Once handwriting is fairly accomplished, the children begin to develop their composition skills. They continue to develop over the years at increasing levels of sophistication.

- Preparing written answers to simple questions.
- Composing stories to follow a picture series.

Spelling

Children begin to spell using the moveable alphabet to sound out and spell words as they are first learning to read. They 'take dictation' — spelling words called for by the teacher — as a daily exercise. The sequence of spelling, as with all language skills, begins much earlier than is traditional in this country, during a time when children are spontaneously interested in language. It continues throughout their education.

- Learning to sound out and spell simple phonetic words.

- Learning to recognize and spell words involving phonograms, such as ei, ai,
- Developing a first “personal” dictionary of words that they can now spell.
- Learning to recognize and spell the “puzzle words” of English: words that are non-phonetic and are not spelled as they sound.

Grammar

The study of grammar begins almost immediately after the child begins to read, during the sensitive period when he is spontaneously interested in language. It continues over several years until mastered. The idea is to introduce grammar to the young child as he/she is first learning how to put thoughts down on paper, when the process is natural and interesting, rather than waiting until the student is much older and finds the work tedious.

- We introduce our children to the function of the parts of speech one at a time through many games and exercises that isolate the one element under study. Montessori has assigned a geometric symbol to represent each element of grammar. (For example, verbs are represented by a large red circle.) The children analyze sentences by placing the symbols for the appropriate part of speech over each word.
- Once students have mastered the concrete symbols for the parts of speech, they perform more advanced exercises for several years with grammar boxes set up to allow them to analyze sentences by their parts of speech.
- Sentence analysis: simple and compound sentences, clauses, verb voices, and logical analysis of all sorts of sentences are studied using many different concrete materials and exercises. This normally begins about age 5 and continues over several years.

Mathematics

- Our students are typically introduced to numbers at age 3: learning the numbers and number symbols one to ten: the red and blue rods, sand-paper numerals, association of number rods and numerals, spindle boxes, cards and counters, counting, sight recognition, concept of odd and even.
- Introduction to the decimal system typically begins at age 3 or 4. Units, tens, hundreds, thousands are represented by specially prepared concrete learning materials that show the decimal hierarchy in three dimensional form: units = single beads, tens = a bar of

10 units, hundreds = 10 ten bars fastened together into a square, thousands = a cube ten units long ten units wide and ten units high. The children learn to first recognize the quantities, then to form numbers with the bead or cube materials through 9,999 and to read them back, to read and write numerals up to 9,999, and to exchange equivalent quantities of units for tens, tens for hundreds, etc.

- Linear Counting: learning the number facts to ten (what numbers make ten, basic addition up to ten); learning the teens ($11 = \text{one ten} + \text{one unit}$), counting by tens ($34 = \text{three tens} + \text{four units}$) to one hundred.
- Development of the concept of the four basic mathematical operations: addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication through work with the Montessori Golden Bead Material. The child builds numbers with the bead material and performs mathematical operations concretely. (This process normally begins by age 4 and extends over the next two or three years.) Work with this material over a long period is critical to the full understanding of abstract mathematics for all but a few exceptional children. This process tends to develop in the child a much deeper understanding of mathematics.
- Development of the concept of “dynamic” addition and subtraction through the manipulation of the concrete math materials. (Addition and subtraction where exchanging and regrouping of numbers is necessary.)
- Memorization of the basic math facts: adding and subtracting numbers under 10 without the aid of the concrete materials. (Typically begins at age 5 and is normally completed by age 7.)
- Development of further abstract understanding of addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication with large numbers through the Stamp Game (a manipulative system that represents the decimal system as color-keyed “stamps”) and the Small and Large Bead Frames (color-coded abacuses).
- Skip counting with the chains of the squares of the numbers from zero to ten: i.e., counting to 25 by 5’s, to 36 by 6’s, etc. (Age 5-6) Developing first understanding of the concept of the “square” of a number.
- Skip counting with the chains of the cubes of the numbers zero to ten: i.e., counting to 1,000 by ones or

tens. Developing the first understanding of the concept of a “cube” of a number.

- Beginning the “passage to abstraction,” the child begins to solve problems with paper and pencil while working with the concrete materials. Eventually, the materials are no longer needed.
- Development of the concept of long multiplication and division through concrete work with the bead and cube materials. (The child is typically 6 or younger, and cannot yet do such problems on paper without the concrete materials. The objective is to develop the concept first.)
- Money: units, history, equivalent sums, foreign currencies (units and exchange). (Begins as part of social studies and applied math by age 6.)
- Reinforcing application of all mathematical skills to practical problems around the school and in everyday life.

Geometry

- Sensorial exploration of plane and solid figures at the Primary level (Ages 3 to 6): the children learn to recognize the names and basic shapes of plane and solid geometry through manipulation of special wooden geometric insets. They then learn to order them by size or degree.
- Stage I: Basic geometric shapes. (Age 3-4)
- Stage II: More advanced plane geometric shapes—triangles, polygons, various rectangles and irregular forms. (Age 3-5)
- Stage III: Introduction to solid geometric forms and their relationship to plane geometric shapes. (Age 2-5)
- Study of the basic properties and definitions of the geometric shapes. This is essentially as much a reading exercise as mathematics since the definitions are part of the early language materials.
- More advanced study of the nomenclature, characteristics, measurement and drawing of the geometric shapes and concepts such as points, line, angle, surface, solid, properties of triangles, circles, etc.
- Congruence, similarity, equality, and equivalence.

Geography

Physical Geography

- The Primary Globes (Age 3-5): specially prepared globes for the very young child that isolate single concepts of globe study—how land and water are

shown, and the corresponding shapes of the continents that they learned from the puzzle maps.

- The Puzzle Maps (Age 3-9): These are specially made maps in the forms of intricate, color-coded, wooden jigsaw puzzles representing the continents, the countries of each continent, and the states of the U.S. They are presented to the children at an early age and are at first enjoyed simply as challenging puzzles. Soon, however, the children begin to learn the names of given countries, and by age 6 are normally very familiar with the continents of the globe, the nations of North America, South America, and Europe, along with most of the states of the U.S. As soon as the children can read they begin to lay the puzzle pieces out and place the appropriate name labels to each as a reading and geography exercise.
- Land & Water Formations: materials designed to help the very young child understand basic land and water formations such as island, isthmus, peninsula, strait, lake, cape, bay, archipelago, etc. At first, they are represented by three-dimensional models of each, complete with water. Then the children learn to recognize the shapes on maps and learn about famous examples of each.
- Transference to maps: Introduction to written names and various forms of maps, along with early study of the flora, fauna, landscapes, and people of the continents.
- Maps and compass: Introduction to longitude and latitude, coordinate position on the globe, the Earth's poles, the magnetic poles, history and use of the compass, topographic maps, global positioning satellite devices, electronic charts.
- An introduction to humankind's search to understand how the Earth was formed, from creation stories to the evidence of contemporary scientific research: origins, geologic forces, formations of the oceans and atmosphere, continental drift and tectonic plates, volcanoes, earthquakes, the ice ages and the formation of mountain ranges. (Age 6)
- The study of coasts and land reliefs: hills, mountain ranges, volcanoes, valleys, plains, etc.; their formation, animal life, and effect on people.

Cultural Geography

- Countries are studied in many ways at all levels of The Children's Tree Montessori School, beginning at about age 3-4. A number of festivals are held every year to focus on specific cultures and to celebrate life

together: an example being Chinese New Year, when the entire school might study China, prepare Chinese food, learn Chinese dances, and participate in a special dragon dance parade. Anything that the children find interesting is used to help them become familiar with the countries of the world: flags, boundaries, food, climate, traditional dress, houses, major cities, children's toys and games, stamps, coins, traditional foods, art, music, and history. *This interweaves through the entire curriculum.*

- Study of the regions, culture, and natural resources of the United States, including geography, climate, flora and fauna, major rivers and lakes, capitals, important cities, mountains, people, regional foods, traditions, etc. This begins at age 5 and continues at increasing depth at each level.
- The detailed study of one nation at a time. Focus moves over the years from one continent to another, as the children's interest leads them. All aspects of the nation are considered: geography, climate, flora and fauna, major rivers and lakes, cities, mountains, people, food, religions, etc.

Economic Geography

- Natural Resources of the Earth.
- Production: How natural resources are used by humankind.
- Imports and Exports: The interdependence of nations.

History & the Needs of People

- The basic needs of man are food, shelter, clothing, defense, transportation, culture, law, religion or spiritual enlightenment, love, and adornment. (This study begins at age 5-6 and continues throughout the curriculum.)
- The concept of time and historical time is developed through many activities and repeated at deeper complexity from age 5:
 - Telling time on the clock
 - Time-lines of the child's life
 - Time-lines showing the activities of a day, week, month, year
 - Family trees
 - Time-line of the Earth's history
 - Time-line from 8,000 B.C. to 2,000 A.D. to study ancient to modern history
 - The story of the evolution of the planet and its life forms over the eons is first studied at about age 6,

along with an overview of human history. This is repeated throughout the curriculum in increasing depth of study.

- Each year the child continues to study and analyze the needs, culture, technology, and social history of various periods in history. The trends of human achievement are charted, such as the development of transportation, architecture, great inventions, and great leaders.

Science

- Differentiation between living and non-living things. (Age 3-4)
- Differentiation between animals and plants; basic characteristics (Age 3-5)
- Observation of animals in nature.
- First puzzles representing the biological parts of flowers, root systems, and trees, along with the anatomical features of common animals. These are first used by very young children and puzzles, then as a means to learn the vocabulary, then are related to photos and/or the "real thing," then traced onto paper, and finally with labels as a reading experience.
- Nomenclature Cards:
 - Botany: identifying, naming, and labeling the parts of plants, trees, leaves, roots, and flowers.
 - Zoology: identifying, naming, and labeling the external parts of human beings, insects, fish, birds, and other animals.
- Introduction of the families of the animal kingdom, and identification and classification of animals into the broad families. Introduction to the basic characteristics, life-styles, habitats, and means of caring for the young of each family in the animal kingdom. (Age 5-7)
- Introduction to ecology: habitat, food chain, adaptation to environment and climate, predator-prey relationships, camouflage, and other body adaptations of common animals.
- Study of evolution and the development of life on the Earth over the eons. (Age 6 and up)
- Study of the internal parts of vertebrates: limbs, body coverings, lungs, heart, skeleton, reproduction. (Age 5-8)
- Advanced study of plants in class, greenhouse and garden: experimenting with soil, nutrients, light, etc. (Age 6 and up)
- Introduction to chemistry: Begins at age 6

Practical Life Skills

One of the first goals of The Children's Tree Montessori School is to develop in the very young child a strong and realistic sense of independence and self-reliance. Along with love and a stable environment, this is the child's greatest need. This area of the curriculum focuses on developing skills that allow the child to effectively control and deal with the social and physical environment in which he lives. There is a growing pride in being able to "do it for myself." Practical life begins as soon as the young child enters the school and continues throughout the curriculum to more and more advanced tasks appropriate to the oldest students. Early Tasks (Age 3-5)

- Dressing oneself
 - Learning home address and phone number
 - Pouring liquids without spilling
 - Carrying objects without dropping
 - Carrying liquids without spilling
 - Walking without knocking into furniture or people
 - Using knives and scissors with good control
 - Using simple carpentry tools
 - Putting materials away on the shelves where they belong when finished
 - Working carefully and neatly
 - Dusting, polishing and washing just about anything: floors, tables, silver
 - Sweeping and vacuuming floors and rugs
 - Flower arranging
 - Caring for plants and animals
 - Table setting—serving yourself—table manners
 - Folding cloth: napkins, towels, etc.
 - Simple use of needle and thread
 - Using common household tools: tweezers, tongs, eye-droppers, locks, scissors, knives
 - Increasingly precise eye-hand coordination
 - Simple cooking and food preparation
 - Dish washing
 - Weaving, bead stringing, etc.
- This process continues logically so that older students will learn such practical tasks as:
- Caring for animals
 - Dog training
 - Sewing
 - Cooking complex meals
 - Working with tools

- Making simple repairs
- Getting around on their own: Metro, buses, cabs, hiking
- Self-defense
- Making consumer purchase decisions, comparison shopping, budgeting
- Earning spending money
- Mastering test taking strategies
- Caring for young children
- Interior decorating
- Making clothes
- Furniture refinishing
- Wilderness survival
- Running a small business enterprise
- Gardening

Sensory Training

These are exercises in perception, observation, fine discrimination, and classification that play a major role in helping our children to develop their sense of logic and concentration. They begin at age 3 and are a major area of concentration typically through age 5.

- Discrimination of length, width, and height
- Discrimination of volume
- Discrimination in multiple dimensions
- Discrimination among color tones
- Discrimination among geometric shapes for shape and relative size
- Discrimination among solid geometric shapes by sight and touch
- Solving of complex abstract puzzles in three dimensions
- Discrimination of intensity and nature of sounds
- Discrimination among musical tones
- Discrimination of texture by touch
- Discrimination of weight by touch
- Discrimination of temperature by touch
- Discrimination of scents Which, in the older students, lead to such exercises as:
- Precise observation of the natural world
- Culinary discrimination
- Artistic appreciation
- Architectural appreciation
- Musical appreciation

Human Sexuality, Family Guidance, and Inclusion Policy

At The Children's Tree Montessori School, we believe that parents and guardians are the primary guides for conversations surrounding human sexuality, gender identity, and personal family values. As a Montessori school, our focus remains on academic learning, independence, practical life skills, social-emotional growth, respect for others, and the Montessori philosophy.

We warmly welcome and respect every child and family as they are. We are committed to maintaining a school environment where all students feel safe, valued, accepted, and aligned with the respectful and inclusive community we strive to create together.

Therefore:

- The school does not provide formal sexual education instruction at any program level.
- Topics related to sexual behavior, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender dysphoria are not part of the school's curriculum or classroom instruction.
- Families are encouraged to guide conversations surrounding these subjects according to their own values, beliefs, culture, and developmental expectations for their child.

- Staff may respond briefly and neutrally to student questions in an age-appropriate manner and redirect children to continue deeper discussions with their families.

As part of natural science education, students may learn basic biological concepts related to reproduction in plants and animals within the context of nature studies and life sciences. These lessons are presented in a factual, age-appropriate, and scientific manner consistent with Montessori education.

The school may also provide optional educational resources or referrals for families who wish to explore these topics more deeply at home.

CTMS remains committed to fostering a respectful, compassionate, and emotionally safe environment for every member of our community.

Section 10: Appendix

Basic Elements of The Montessori Approach

The following article is written by Tim Seldin, Executive Director of Newgate Montessori and Editor of Tomorrow's Child Magazine as well as personal mentor to Marci Martindale, The Children's Tree Montessori Head of School. Although Mr. Seldin has written this article about the Newgate Montessori School, it equally applies to life here at The Children's Tree Montessori School.

The Montessori Classroom

Montessori classrooms are bright, warm, and inviting. They are filled with plants, animals, art, music, books, and interest centers filled with intriguing learning materials, fascinating mathematical models, maps, charts, fossils,

historical artifacts, computers, scientific apparatus, perhaps a small natural science museum, and animals that the children are raising.

You will not find rows of desks in our classrooms at our school. Montessori learning environments are set up to facilitate student discussion and stimulate collaborative learning. One glance and it is clear that our children feel comfortable and at home. Students will typically be found scattered around the classroom, working alone or with one or two others. They will tend to become so involved in their work that we cannot help but be tremendously impressed by the peaceful atmosphere.

It may take a moment to spot the teachers within the classrooms. They will be found working with one or two children at a time, advising, presenting a new lesson, or quietly observing the class at work.

In her research, Dr. Montessori noted specific characteristics associated with the child's interests and abilities at each plane of development. She argued that a school carefully designed to meet the needs and interests of the child will work more effectively because it is consistent with basic principles of psychology. Rather than fight the laws of nature, Montessori suggested that we "follow the child" and allow our children to show us how to facilitate the development of their human potential.

This focus on the "whole child" led Montessori to develop a very different sort of school from the traditional adult-centered classroom. To emphasize this difference, she named her first school the "Casa de Bambini" or the "Children's House." There is something profound in her choice of words, for the Montessori classroom is not the domain of the adults in charge, but rather a carefully prepared environment designed to facilitate the development of the children's independence and sense of personal empowerment. This is a true community of young children. They move freely within the rooms, selecting work that captures their interest, rather than passively participating in lessons and projects selected by the teachers.

In a very real sense, even the very youngest students at our Montessori School take care of their own child-sized environment. When they are hungry, they prepare their own snack and drink. They go to the bathroom without assistance. When something spills, they help each other carefully clean things up. Parents are often amazed to see small children in Montessori classrooms cut raw fruits and vegetables, sweep and dust, carry pitchers of water, and pour liquids with barely a drop spilled. These little ones normally go about their work so calmly and purposely that it is clear to even the casual observer that this is their environment: The Children's House.

The Montessori classroom is commonly referred to as a prepared environment. This name reflects the care and attention that is given to creating a learning environment that will reinforce the children's independence and intellectual development.

Respect, Intelligence, and Independence

We know that young children are full and complete individuals in their own right. They deserve to be treated with the full and sincere respect that we would extend to their parents. Respect breeds, respect and creates an atmosphere within which learning is tremendously facilitated. Montessori schools believe very strongly that intelligence is not fixed at birth, nor is the human potential anywhere near as limited as it sometimes seems in traditional education.

Success in school is directly tied to the degree to which children believe that they are capable and independent human beings. If they knew the words, even very young children would ask: "Help me learn to do it for myself!" By allowing children to develop a meaningful degree of independence and self-discipline, Montessori sets a pattern for

a lifetime of good work habits and a sense of responsibility. Students are taught to take pride in doing things for themselves carefully and well.

Montessori Teaches Children to Think, Collaborate, and Discover

Our program is designed to help each of our students discover and develop his or her unique talents and possibilities. We treat each as a unique individual learner. We know that no two students will learn at the same pace, nor will they necessarily learn best from the same teaching methods, and our goal is to be flexible and creative in addressing each student as a unique individual.

At our school, students and teachers learn to collaborate in the process of education rather than mindlessly compete. Our students discover their own innate abilities and develop a strong sense of independence, self-confidence, and self-discipline. In an atmosphere in which children learn at their own pace and compete only against themselves, they learn not to be afraid of making mistakes. They quickly find that few things in life come easily, and they can try again without fear of embarrassment.

One way of thinking about the difference between our approach and one that is more traditional is to consider that while learning the right answers may get our children through school, learning how to become a life-long independent learner will take them anywhere! Our children are learning to think, observe, and reflect; not memorize and quickly forget.

Rather than present students with loads of right answers, their teachers ask the right questions and lead the children to discover the answers for themselves. Learning will become its own reward, and each success will fuel their desire to discover even more.

Freedom of Movement and Independently Chosen Work

Montessori children are free to move about, working alone or with others at will. They may select any activity and work with it as long as they wish, so long as they do not disturb anyone or damage anything, and so long as they put it back where it belongs when they are finished.

The Integrated Montessori Curriculum

Classrooms are organized into several curriculum areas, which include language arts (reading, literature, grammar, creative writing, spelling, and handwriting), mathematics and geometry, everyday living skills, sensory awareness exercises and puzzles, geography, history, science, art, music, and movement. Most rooms will include a classroom library. Each area is made up of one or more shelf units, cabinets, and display tables with a wide variety of materials on open display ready for use as the children select them. The school's curriculum is organized into a spiral of integrated studies, rather than a traditional model in which the curriculum is compartmentalized into separate subjects, with given topics considered only once at a specific grade level. In the early years, lessons are introduced simply and concretely and are reintroduced several times over succeeding years at increasing degrees of abstraction and complexity. The course of study uses an integrated thematic approach that ties the separate disciplines of the curriculum together into studies of the physical universe, the world of nature, and the human experience. Literature, the arts, history, social issues, political science, economics, science, and the studies of technology, all complement one another. This integrated approach is one of Montessori's great strengths. As an example, when our students study Africa in world history, they will also read African folk tales in world literature, create African masks and make African block print tee-shirts in art, learn Swahili songs in music, and make hieroglyphic calendars in math, as well as study African animals in zoology. Our mathematics curriculum follows a European model of unified mathematics through which students are introduced to concepts in algebra, geometry,

mathematical logic, and statistics from the early years of their education, rather than waiting until high school as is normal in the United States.

Typical Class Size

A typical Montessori class is made up of from twenty to thirty children, representing a three-year age span, taught by two certified Montessori teachers. Parents often wonder if it would not be better to organize classes into smaller groups, but there is actually a great deal of research, thought, and successful experience behind this particular model. The key is to remember that in Montessori, the teacher is neither the center of attention nor the sole source of instruction. The children are learning on their own by independent discovery and from each other, as well as through lessons presented by the teacher. This approach allows the children to explore and learn independently as much as possible. The stimulation of older children and the encouragement of their peers fuels the process, and all so often the best teacher of a four-year-old is an older child rather than an adult. Children learn best from one another. We create classes of thirty to ensure that each child will have enough classmates of the same sex and age group, as well as the stimulation of the older children.

Montessori Classes Encompasses a Three-Year Age Span

Montessori classes are organized to encompass a two- or three-year age span, which allows younger students to experience the daily stimulation of older role models, who in turn blossom in the responsibilities of leadership. Students not only learn “with” each other, but “from” each other. We find that most often the best tutor is a fellow student who is just a bit older. Some parents’ worry that having younger children in the same class as older ones will leave one group or the other short changed. They fear that the younger children will absorb the teachers’ time and attention, or that the importance of covering the Kindergarten curriculum for the five-year-olds will prevent teachers from giving the three- and four-year-olds the emotional support and stimulation that they need. Both concerns are misguided.

Working in one class for two or three years allows students to develop a strong sense of community with their classmates and teachers. The age range also allows especially gifted children the stimulation of intellectual peers, without requiring that they skip a grade and feel emotionally out of place. Each class is an essentially stable community, with only the oldest third moving on the next level each year. At each level within a Montessori school, the curriculum and methods are logical and consistent extensions of what has come before.

How Can Montessori Teachers Meet the Needs of So Many Different Children?

Montessori teachers play a very different role from those played by traditionally trained educators. While the stern disciplinarians of the past may be an endangered species, many teachers are focused on maintaining order and on covering a pre-defined curriculum. Most see their role as dispensing facts and skills to complacent students. The Montessori teacher’s role is that of a facilitator and guide. He or she is usually not the center of attention and will not normally spend much time working with the whole class at once. Her role centers around the preparation and organization of appropriate learning materials to meet the needs and interests of each child in the class. The Montessori teacher has four primary goals: to awaken our children’s spirit and imagination, to encourage their normal desire for independence and high sense of self-esteem, to help them develop the kindness and self-discipline that will allow them to become full members of society, and to help them learn how to observe, question, and explore ideas independently. The Montessori teacher is a coach, mentor, and friend. The teachers rarely present a lesson to more than one or two children at a time and limit them to a quick, efficient presentation. The objective is to intrigue the children so that they will come back on their own to work with the materials. Lessons center around clear and simple information that is necessary for the children to be able to do the work on their own: the name of the material, its place on the shelf, the ground rules for its use, and some of the possibilities inherent within it. The teachers closely monitor their students’ progress, keeping the level of challenge high.

Because they come to know the children so well, Montessori teachers can often use their own interests to enrich the curriculum and provide alternate avenues for accomplishment and success.

The Montessori Materials – A Road from the Concrete to the Abstract

The basis of our approach is the simple observation that children learn most effectively through direct experience and the process of investigation and discovery. In her studies of children's learning, Dr. Montessori noted that most children do not learn by memorizing what they hear from their teachers or read in a text, but rather from concrete experience and direct interaction with the environment. Asking a child to sit back and watch us perform a process or experiment is like asking a one-year-old not to put everything in his mouth. Children need to manipulate and explore everything that catches their interest. This led Montessori to emphasize the overriding importance of concrete learning apparatus and to the development of the Montessori materials for mathematics, sensory development, language, science, history, and geography. The Montessori learning materials are not the method itself, but rather tools that we use to stimulate the child into logical thought and discovery. They are provocative and simple, each carefully designed to appeal to children at a given level of development. Each material isolates and teaches one thing or is used to present one skill at a time as the child is ready. Montessori carefully analyzed the skills and concepts involved in each subject and noted the sequence in which children most easily master them. To facilitate the prepared order of the environment, the teacher arranges the materials on the shelf following their sequence in the curriculum flowchart. The materials are displayed on low open shelves that are easily accessible to even the youngest children. They are arranged to provide maximum eye appeal without clutter. Each has a specific place on the shelves, arranged from the upper-left-hand corner in sequence to the lower right. Materials are always arranged in sequence, from the simplest to the most complex, and from the most concrete to those that are the most abstract.

Preparing Tomorrow's Innovative Thinkers Today

In a world of rapid change and new discoveries, we can only guess at the skills our children will need to succeed in the 21st century. Now, more than ever, the essential lesson is learning how to learn. The most important years in our children's education are not high school and college, but, instead, their first twelve years of life. This is when their character and values, self-image, basic skills and knowledge, and appreciation for culture and the arts are formed. The school offers our children a world-class education, along with an education of the heart, which nurtures their self-confidence, personal creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit. It offers them the most challenging academic program that they can handle in a course of study that includes the Junior Great Books, creative writing, unified mathematics, geometry, pre-algebra, history, geography, economics, philosophy and ethics, computers, botany and zoology, the physical sciences, foreign language study, art, music, dance, and physical education. We can see our children as they truly come to love learning and begin to discover their true potential as young men and women. The school's goal is to nurture their intelligence and creativity, helping our child become renaissance individuals in the intellectual tradition of Thomas Jefferson, Buckminster Fuller, and Maria Montessori.

Granted, this lies beyond the scope of traditional education, but then our school has set out to become a rather unusual school. As families, we come to schools ours to give our children an outstanding preparation for high school, college, and life.

A Day In The Life a Montessori Student

It is dark at 8:00 on this mid-winter's morning when Teddy and Jennifer's mom pulls in to the drop off circle at The Children's Tree Montessori School. Her two children have been here since each was a toddler. She has made this trip so often over the years that The Children's Tree Montessori School feels like her second home. She works in town and typically can't leave work until after 5. Her husband teaches in the local public schools and is off much earlier. He'll pick the children up from the after-school Studio program at 4:30, but if he's late, he knows that they'll be fine until he arrives. Many working families appreciate its extended day and summer camp.

Teddy and Jennifer think of The Children's Tree Montessori School as their second family. Jennifer is one of those children who, after eight years at The Children's Tree Montessori School, speaks about Montessori with affection and conviction. Visitors often find her coming up without a moment's hesitation to greet them and offer a cup of coffee or campus tour. When people ask her if she likes it in Montessori, she will smile and say "Sure, how could anyone not love it here. Your teachers are your best friends, the work is interesting, and the other kids are like my brothers and sisters. It's a family. You feel really close to everyone." Jennifer walks Teddy, who's 4, to his morning supervision room. After dropping him off, she walks into the upper elementary class where she is a 5th grader. She joins two of her friends and sits and talks quietly waiting for class to start at 9:00. Teddy's morning supervision is in his normal classroom. After hanging up his coat, he walks over to Whelma, the staff member in charge of his room this morning until school officially begins at 9:00. He asks if there is anything ready to eat. Whelma suggests that he help himself. He scoops out a bowl of cereal from a small bin and adds milk. He takes his morning snack over to a table and eats. Children and their parents drift in to the room every so often, and gradually the number of children in the early morning program grows to about 10. After eating his breakfast, Teddy meanders over to the easel and begins to paint with Teresa, a little girl just 3 who has only joined the class over the last few weeks. They paint quietly, talking back and forth about nothing in particular. Eventually Teddy tires of painting. He is tempted for a moment just to walk away and leave the easel messy, but he carefully cleans up and away puts his materials.

At 8:30, his teachers arrive, along with several more children. Others follow over the next few minutes until all of the students and the two adults quietly move about the room. Montessori children work with hands-on learning materials that make abstract concepts clear and concrete. They allow young students to develop a clear inner image of concepts in mathematics, such as how big is a thousand, what we mean when we refer to the 'hundreds' column, and what is taking place when we divide one number by another. This approach makes sense to children. Through this foundation of concrete experiential learning, operations in Mathematics, such as addition, become clear and concrete, allowing the child to internalize a clear picture of how the process works. Teddy and another child have begun to work together to construct and solve a mathematical problem. Using sets of number cards, each decides how many units, tens, hundreds, and thousands will be in his addend. The cards showing the units 1 to 9 are printed in green, the cards showing the numbers from 10 to 90 are printed in blue, the hundreds from 100 to 900 are printed with red ink, and the cards showing the numbers 1000 to 9000 are printed in green again because they represent units of thousands.

As Teddy and his friend construct their numbers, they decide how many units they want, find the card showing that quantity, and place it at the upper right-hand corner of their work space. Next, they go to the bank, a central collection of golden bead material, and gather the number of unit beads that corresponds with the number card selected. They repeat this process with the tens, hundreds, and thousands.

The children combine the two addends in the process we call addition. Beginning with the units, the children count the combined quantities to determine the result of adding the two together. When the result is nine or less, they find the large number card that represents the answer. When the addition results in a quantity of ten beads or more, the children stop at the count of ten and carry the ten-unit beads to the bank to exchange them for a ten-bar: ten units equals one unit of ten. They repeat this process with the tens, hundreds, and thousands.

It's about 10 o'clock now, and Teddy is a bit hungry. He wanders over to the snack table and prepares himself several pieces of celery stuffed with peanut butter. He pours himself a cup of apple juice, using a little pitcher that is just right for his small hands. When he is finished, Teddy wipes off his place mat.

Clearing up his snack has put Teddy in the mood to really clean something, and he selects table washing. He gathers a bucket, little pitcher, sponge, scrub brush, towel and soap and proceeds to scrub a small table slowly and methodically. As he works, he's absorbed in the patterns that his brush and sponge made in the soap suds on the table's surface. Teddy returns everything to its storage place. When he is finished, the table is more or less clean

and dry. We have to remember that a four-year-old washes a table for the sheer pleasure of the process; the fact that it might lead to a cleaner surface is incidental. What Teddy is learning above all else is an inner sense of order, a greater sense of independence, and a higher ability to concentrate and follow a complex sequence of steps.

Teddy moves freely around the class, selecting activities that capture his interest. In a very real sense, Teddy and his classmates are responsible for the care of this child-sized environment. When they are hungry, they prepare their own snack and drink. They go to the bathroom without assistance. When something spills, they help one another carefully clean up the mess. We find children cutting raw fruit and vegetables, sweeping, dusting, and washing windows. They set tables, tie their own shoes, polish silver, and steadily grow in their self-confidence and independence. Noticing that the plants need watering, Teddy carries the watering can from plant to plant, barely spilling a drop. Now it's 11 o'clock, and one of his teachers, Kitty, comes over and asks him how the morning has been going. They engage in conversation about his latest enthusiasm, which leads Kitty to suggest another reading lesson.

She and Teddy sit down at a small rug with several wooden tablets on which the shapes of letters are traced in sandpaper. Kitty selects a card and slowly traces out the letter d, carefully pronouncing the letter's phonetic sound: duh, duh, duh. Teddy traces the letter with his tiny hand and repeats the sound made by his teacher. Teddy doesn't know this as the letter d yet, and for the next year or so, he will only call it by its phonetic sound: duh. This way, he never needs to learn the familiar process of converting from the letter name, d, to the sound it makes, duh. Continuing on with two or three additional letters, Kitty slowly helps Teddy build up a collection of letters which he knows by their phonetic sounds. Kitty leads Teddy through a three-step process. "Teddy, this is duh. Can you say duh? Terrific! Now, this is a buh (the letter b). Teddy, can you show me the duh? Can you give me the buh? Fine. Okay, what is this (holding up one of the sandpaper letters just introduced?" Teddy responds, and the process continues for another few minutes. The entire lesson is fairly brief; perhaps fifteen minutes or so. Before long, Teddy will begin to put sounds together to form simple three-letter words. Teddy's day continues just like the morning began. He eats his lunch with the class at 11:45, after which he goes outside with his friends to play in the snow, after lunch, the Spanish teacher comes into the room and begins to work with small groups of students. Eventually, she taps Teddy on the shoulder and asks him if he would like to join her for a lesson. He smiles, but graciously declines. He is too engaged in the project that he's chosen.

In the afternoon he does some more art, listens to selections from a recording of the nutcracker ballet, works on his shape names with the geometry cabinet, and completes a puzzle map of the United States. When the day is over, Teddy has probably completed twenty to thirty different activities, most representing curriculum content quite advanced for someone who after all just turned four two months ago. But when his dad picks him up at 4:50, his response to the usual question of "What did you do in school today" is no different from many children, "Oh, I don't know. I guess I did a lot of stuff!"

The Children's Tree Montessori School Blueprint

Our Fundamental Values and Beliefs as a School

The Montessori approach to learning is the educational framework at The Children's Tree Montessori School. Maria Montessori recognized that "the process" itself was paramount in learning. We embrace this idea that learning is dynamic and welcome new ideas as we grow. This document serves as a reference point for our thinking about learning at this time. We will review these ideas annually and as necessary to monitor how our choices reflect these ideals. We fully expect this document to change and we invite you to participate in this rewarding experience of discovering new ways to learn and to live.

Introduction

We affirm that education begins at birth and continues throughout life. While our emphasis is on our children, we are a center of support for all of us to continue learning and developing toward becoming whole and healthy people. Our goals for students are for them to be open-minded and compassionate, to gain a sense of themselves and others, and to understand and appreciate the diversity of the human spirit. The Children's Tree Montessori School wants students to be well trained in the basic academic disciplines, to fulfill their creative potential, and to gain satisfaction in their physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development. We want students to love learning and to value knowledge, creativity, and humor. Finally, we hope they will be responsible, critical, and caring members of a pluralistic society and recognize that they have the power and resources to effect change as well as the self-esteem and confidence to pursue their goals.

I. We believe that every member of our community has a fundamental right to be treated with respect, regardless of age or race.

A. We respect the fundamental human needs, rights, and dignity of each person, no matter how young, as a full and independent person who is engaged in the ongoing process of development. During this process, while honoring the right to self-determination, we model and encourage certain values: kindness, honesty, warmth and openness, respect for each person's uniqueness, tolerance, cooperation, good sportsmanship, and nonviolence.

B. In keeping with the true meaning of the word discipline, which is to teach, we prefer to model and encourage appropriate, kind, and considerate ways to behave in various situations.

1. We use positive reinforcement whenever possible to encourage progress and acknowledge contributions, rather than focusing on the rules and the consequences for breaking them.

2. We encourage and model ways to negotiate in conflict situations so that whenever possible everyone can win and at the very least everyone feels heard and that her feelings and needs are respected.

3. As necessary we cue and remind people of appropriate behaviors before they forget.

4. When behavior is inappropriate, and a gentle reminder isn't enough, we intervene and respectfully but firmly stop the behavior.

5. Our ultimate goal is to encourage self-discipline and self-motivation as the reasons for behavior rather than fear or motivation from without.

C. We recognize that misbehavior comes from discouragement. We therefore do not label a child as "bad," but instead try to recognize the mistaken goals of the misbehavior that usually involve an attempt at searching for a place in the family or community, even if it is an undesirable place. We then look to find appropriate ways to encourage the individual.

II. Intelligence is not rare.

A. We approach learning seeking to understand each person's uniqueness and guide her individually and at her own pace, through the range of learning skills so she fully realizes her potential. We do not subscribe to the "Bell Curve" theory for measuring performance, and respectfully submit that the vast majority of people have the intelligence and natural ability required to learn everything they need to lead full, happy, and productive lives.

B. We celebrate the natural diversity of human beings, be it in learning style, interests, or definition of what makes a happy and successful life.

III. Wisdom can be cultivated.

A. We believe that true wisdom is the ability to listen to your heart and know how best to put your intelligence to work for you. In order to achieve this goal, self-esteem, human dignity, and emotional well-being, as well as the ability to communicate and cooperate effectively with others, must be valued at least as highly as academic and material success.

B. We affirm the ideal of the renaissance person. Our ultimate goal is to produce renaissance men and women who have not only learned how to learn, but also have an innate love of learning, a wide range of interests, and an openness to new ideas and possibilities.

IV. Self-esteem is the crucial ingredient for the full expression of a person's potential.

A. Nurturing self-esteem: We strive to base every interaction between community members, from how we discipline to respecting personal learning styles and stages of development, on this principle. This is the very fabric of our community and our educational methods.

B. Learning from experience: We consciously encourage our students to not be afraid of taking risks, but rather using the countless positive and negative experiences that everyone inevitably has in a lifetime as non-threatening feedback on their progress and personal growth

C. The Children's Tree Montessori School's expectations: In all cases we set our expectations high, not asking individuals to do more than they are capable of, but consistently stressing at all grade levels the importance of careful work and pride in accomplishment. The reward is not in a quantity of work achieved but the satisfaction of work done well for its own sake. We carefully build a supportive environment for the unhurried mind to move steadily toward the pursuit of excellence.

D. Competition: We encourage the development of respect for natural abilities. While we allow people to experience failure by separating the deed from the doer in all things, from earliest times we seek to minimize any negative effect on self-esteem that failure or lack of natural ability in an area might have. We do not believe that it is either necessary or appropriate to inspire unrestrained academic pressure and scholastic competition among students. We cultivate the ability to accept success with grace, and failure or loss with dignity, and resolve to build on the experience. We ensure the right to choose whether or not to participate in competitive activities, and we stress the principles of good sportsmanship.

V. The development of a whole, healthful being requires the nurturing of our many dimensions, including the spiritual, intellectual, physical, and emotional.

A. Spiritual: While we feel it is each person's task to develop his or her own understanding of the nature of the universe and the individual's place in it, we proceed on the premise that our world is a beautiful, positive, loving place, a setting that provides the potential for each person to lead a full, free, joyful, and healthy life.

B. Intellectual: The intellect is an important tool in the shaping of our world. Through the development of our thinking abilities we refine our emotional responses, we clarify our picture of the universe, and we develop the discipline to maintain vibrant health.

C. Physical: Recognizing that the intellectual and emotional potential and capabilities of our brains are, like any other organ, dependent on a clean, healthful bloodstream, we acknowledge our place in the physical world and seek to discover, understand, and adopt the lifestyle habits most appropriate and beneficial for our bodies and minds. Among these are fresh air, pure water, exercise, sunlight, and proper diet.

D. Emotional: Our emotions are complex and powerful and it is very important that we learn to feel them fully and without fear, identify them correctly (in ourselves and others), respect them, and accept them. It is equally important, however, that we learn to harness their power and not let them control our lives unchecked.

VI. The Children's Tree Montessori School is centered around the stages of personal development.

A. Developmental stages: Our faculty is actively involved in a continuous study of human development. This study includes keeping abreast of current theories on development, regular student observation, and a constant evaluation of the curriculum to ensure that it is appropriate for the developmental stages of our students.

B. Active learning: We promote active rather than passive learning by:

1. encouraging students to pursue studies in all areas of their spontaneous personal interests;
2. using hands-on, "experiential" learning whenever possible rather than lecture and drill, whether through concrete manipulative learning materials, experimental discovery seminar discussions, independent library research, field investigation, or computer simulations; and
3. bringing the student to a sense of closure and recognition of having reached a pre-established goal for learning.

C. Passage to abstraction: To facilitate this process, we consistently work from a very concrete level of experience to the abstract. To aid students in learning, we begin by giving them the "big picture" (a sense of gestalt), and work from this toward an increasing level of detail. This concept has created a spiraling curriculum in which skills and concepts are presented and reintroduced at increasing levels of complexity and abstraction over the years.

D. External structure: As necessary we provide community members with sufficient external structure and support in a committed effort to ensure that their developmental needs are met. We do this in a manner that reflects our expectations and philosophy.

E. Computers: We use the computer as a fundamental tool for learning, not only as an element of contemporary practical life, but also as an aid in the development of logical planning and problem solving.

VII. The Children's Tree Montessori School provides a broad preparation for life, balancing academic excellence with the development of personal and practical life skills.

A. Success: We design our educational program to maximize each person's academic and personal success. We strive to encourage people to build on their strengths and personal learning styles and learn from their mistakes.

1. Academic success: We encourage skills that support independent and successful learning, critical thinking, cooperative projects, reflective reading, problem solving, library research, use of technology, techniques for effective study, test taking strategies, and techniques for focusing attention.

2. Personal success: We consider it equally important that our community members be successful human beings who can establish healthy relationships and achieve happiness in their personal lives. We teach our students to pay attention to and respect feelings, both their own and those of others. We help them to learn to solve conflicts effectively and fairly, and to express their feelings in a healthy manner. Group dynamics and communication skills are also stressed.

B. Practical life: To facilitate and encourage a sense of independence, we deliberately teach a wide range of practical life skills appropriate to each child's level of development. We regard this as a vital element affecting the design of our entire curriculum. These practical life skills include the following:

1. Eye-hand coordination and the use of simple tools.

2. Grace and courtesy: appropriate ways to handle situations kindly.

3. Practical economics: the value and use of money, including how to earn and manage spending money.

4. Technology: the safe use of technology, such as more complex tools, telephones, computers, classroom audio-visual equipment, and household appliances.

5. Transportation: As appropriate at each age level, the safe use of alternate means of transportation other than a parent's car, such as hiking and bicycling, public transportation, and driver's education.

6. Communication: the appropriate use of the technology of personal and mass communication, from writing letters to using the telephone, using the word processor, preparing the newsletter, speaking before an audience and designing audiovisual presentations

7. Household Engineering: how to clean and set tables, do dishes, cook, sew, iron, infant and child care and laundry.

8. Health and Safety: the development of sound habits of safety, nutrition and hygiene, along with the acquisition of first-aid skills and as developmentally appropriate, CPR.

C. Empowerment: We make a concerted effort to empower people, helping them to learn how to make responsible choices for themselves, to recognize that they are assuming increasing control over their lives as they mature, and to discover how to make a difference in the world around them by positive efforts and contributions to others.

VIII. We recognize that the first six years are critical to the development of one's life. "In an open environment, that is in one that is suitable to his age, a child's psychic life should develop naturally and reveal its inner secret. Unless this principle is maintained, all later attempts at education will only lead one more deeply into an endless maze." Maria Montessori.

A. We place a primary emphasis on building relationships with families as early as possible in order to help parents recognize the uniqueness of their child. We also work together to enhance the parents' ability to parent.

B. We believe that the experiences a child has both at home and at school in the first six years are the most important of his/her lifetime because here his/her self-concept and his/her concept of the world and his/her place in it are set in stone. What he/she will attempt and whether or not he/she will succeed at it are profoundly influenced by these beliefs about herself. Although we as Montessori parents, teachers and students are living

proof that changes can happen after this critical period, the changes are accomplished with a chisel and hammer on stone rather than with gentle fingers on wet clay.

IX. The Children's Tree Montessori School is designed for flexibility in its methodology and use of resources.

A. Meeting Individual Needs: We use the Montessori approach, along with additional approaches and materials from the larger non-Montessori educational community, to provide opportunities for enrichment beyond the basic curriculum. We strive for individualized pacing and adaptation of the classroom program (when possible) to meet varied styles of learning.

B. Curriculum Framework: In designing this individualized program we follow an established curricular framework that includes the school's expectations for basic academic achievement at each grade level.

C. Diverse Learning Styles: We regard a mix of backgrounds and abilities as a positive and important element in our community, and often find that because of our flexibility and individualized approach, children who may have been considered "special needs" or "learning disabled" in other environments can often experience a greater level of success within our community.

X. We strive for a balance between freedom, order and responsibility.

A. We interpret the general principle of Montessori education, "follow the child" to refer to the importance of allowing people to pursue areas of spontaneous interest whenever possible. However, if a child needs more direction at certain times or is not internally motivated in a given area, then we feel it is our responsibility to acknowledge the personal preference but to still require that the necessary work be completed.

B. To facilitate the development of independence and a sense of engagement with the community we strongly encourage participation in day-to-day classroom management, care of the environment and decision making. We seek to help each community member to see the value of commitment both to our community and to the community of man, and that the good of the individual and that of the community and each of its other members is much more interdependent than some recent cultural trends would have us believe.

C. We seek to show and teach our students that the freedom and education they receive here come with the responsibility to help others both in the community, and those less fortunate but no less deserving. To show them that the responsibility to change our world for the better lies with all of us, and that service needs to be an accepted part of everyone's life if we are to achieve this goal. Opportunities to perform community service in the community at large include, the adoption of needy families by the classes at holiday time, sharing of clothes and toys with underprivileged children, and opportunities to volunteer at nursing homes, soup kitchens and hospital nurseries.

D. As educators, parents and citizens of the world with the mutual goal of world peace we consider it our responsibility to model and encourage tolerance both to our children and to each other. Tolerance of differences in ability, in color, in culture, in beliefs, in thought, in ways of doing things, in dress and in physical appearance. Tolerance of the particular process that each of us must go through on our particular path in life, balanced with the self-esteem and self-confidence not to be threatened by these differences.

E. Ultimately, we wish for every community member to be willing to accept full responsibility for their behavior, their attitudes, their experiences, and in short for their lives. The enormous reward that comes with accepting this responsibility is the freedom to choose and create the type of person they wish to be, and the life they wish to lead.

XI. Strengthening our connection with nature and the environment is an integral part of The Children's Tree Montessori School.

A. We believe that being involved physically with nature and directly with the environment are basic to being a whole and healthy human being.

B. We consciously work to foster in each person a strong sense of belonging to the web of life. We accomplish this goal through:

1. Programs in outdoor education, and field biology at every age level in the school, using the natural setting of the campus and the wide variety of natural resources around us as a classroom out of doors.

2. Programs in gardening and small animal care.

4. We stress recycling and environmentally friendly packaging for lunches and all foods and products used in our community.

XII. The Children's Tree Montessori School embraces pluralism as a philosophy for building a diverse community grounded in knowledge that leads to understanding and acceptance of all peoples.

A. The Children's Tree Montessori School recognizes that contemporary society must embrace pluralist beliefs to meet the challenges and opportunities presented by an ever-growing world population that is integrating well beyond traditionally established cultural borders. We celebrate diversity in our community and acknowledge the unique contributions of all individuals, who enrich and inspire our personal growth.

B. We seek to develop a global perspective through the study of second languages, cultural geography, and correspondence with our sister Montessori schools around the world. We encourage families to share cultural traditions, travel experiences and international festivals. We utilize our international families as a tremendous teaching resource. This element weaves its way through the curriculum at every age level and establishes awareness that we are citizens of the world.

C. We develop a strong historical perspective through the study of prehistory and history, following an anthropological orientation into fundamental needs of humankind and the cultures, lifestyles and technology of the past. We cultivate an appreciation of family and community heritage. History sets the stage for integrated learning at every age level.

D. We are committed to making this experience truly inclusive by pursuing funding sources and endowments to offer scholarships for families who are unable to fund their child's education themselves. We hope to provide an open environment to share our values in a truly diverse community. We endeavor to reach out and invite families that have commonly experienced exclusion from high quality education. We invite families to discover The Children's Tree Montessori School and inform us of their individual needs. We sincerely explore the accommodation of children with special needs and welcome their participation when we believe that The Children's Tree Montessori School can offer the best learning environment for them.

E. Community is the invisible web that structures our pluralist beliefs. Culturally, historically and individually, our communities represent the best of our shared experiences. The Children's Tree Montessori School presents an opportunity to expand the web of inclusion in our own local community.

XIII. All forms of human communication are explored.

A. We recognize that we live in a time when the various languages of art, (visual, written, spoken and musical) particularly through mass media, have a profound impact on our lives. We develop in each person the ability to understand and filter this influence. We also believe that by developing our ability to use these languages we strengthen our self-esteem and enhance our ability to express more effectively our thoughts and feelings.

B. As educators we consciously work to encourage people to think creatively in their writing, problem solving and research.

C. Our program places great emphasis on the Fine Arts, both through the contributions of our Music and Art specialists and through classroom programs and experiences initiated by the teachers to foster art and music appreciation and creative drama.

D. As is appropriate for each age group, we encourage students to become aware of the major social, political, economic, environmental and ethical issues of our day, and having carefully considered all sides to take a responsible stand for them-selves and to explore ways of making a positive personal contribution to society.

E. We are constantly modeling and encouraging communication between all members of our community. We would like all community members to be versed in skills of active listening, negotiation, fair fighting (verbally), empathy for another person's position, and the ability to stand up for oneself and say no without guilt if someone is encroaching on their rights.

XIV. The Children's Tree Montessori School is an extended family community whose participants are supported at all levels by all others in the community.

A. We believe in the principle that those matters which affect individual community members directly impact all others in our community, we consider input from all of our community members in our decision-making processes in order to take into account the needs of our total community. We are committed to the creation of programs that stress personal development for all members of the community.

1. Parenting Center: We encourage parents to participate in programs that can help them to refine their parenting strategies, to facilitate the development of independence, responsibility, self-confidence and self-respect in their sons and daughters and in themselves. We recognize parenting as an extremely difficult, rewarding and valuable job for which we have had little preparation and for which in the modern world we get little support. We are committed to find ways to provide that support for families from birth through adulthood by the creation of a parenting center to include parenting classes and ongoing support groups as well as sharing of clothing, toys, high chairs, etc., child care swapping, and carpooling.

2. Ambassador Families: We understand the special needs of new participants in the community and the necessity of a program to match new families with ones experienced in the community to provide support and information.

3. Support for Community Businesses: We will encourage and facilitate methods for members of our community to access the services of other community members.

4. Adult Development Programs: We will establish a program of adult classes and seminars on a variety of topics guided by community interest, in keeping with our commitment to a lifelong process of learning and personal growth.

5. Commitment to the Community: We expect all members of our community, students, parents, teachers and support staff to be committed, contributing members of the community, and to show support for the rules, regulations and principles established by the community, and we are prepared to support them in this effort as in some cases it may involve a paradigm shift.