



# **FAMILY HANDBOOK**

## **2024 – 2025**

### **Vermont Street Campus**

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Portland, OR 97219

503-246-5495

Fax: 503-246-5496

### **Lake Oswego Campus**

4515 Parkview Drive

Lake Oswego, OR 97035

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#### **Mailing Address:**

PO Box 2232

Lake Oswego, OR 97035

**[www.westhills-montessori.com](http://www.westhills-montessori.com)**



*Dear Families,*

*Welcome to the West Hills School community! Within this handbook you'll find information and resources to prepare your family for the new school year and support you throughout your time here. The information and policies referenced herein were created to assure safety, harmony and cooperation within our school community. I encourage you to keep this resource handy and reference it often, and please reach out with any questions or for clarification; I value your feedback. With my best wishes for a year of friendship, discovery and growth!*

*In partnership,*

*Anne Blickenstaff, Head of School*

#### **Family Handbook Statement**

The purpose of the handbook is to provide useful information about the policies and procedures of our school, our programs and our philosophical approach. Please take time to read it thoroughly, as answers to the most common questions are contained herein, as well as an overview of the fundamental tenets of our Montessori approach to working with your children. This handbook is provided as a convenience to our families and does not create a contract or any contractual obligations between the families and the school.

**Policies in this handbook will be reviewed throughout the year.  
Any updates will be shared with our parent community.**

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## GENERAL SCHOOL INFORMATION

**WEST HILLS MONTESSORI SCHOOL**  
Federal Tax ID (FEIN) : 93-0595003

**Vermont Street Campus**

4920 SW Vermont Street  
Portland, Oregon 97219  
Main: 503-246-5495  
Fax: 503-246-5496  
Email: [VermontStreet@WestHills-Montessori.com](mailto:VermontStreet@WestHills-Montessori.com)

**Lake Oswego Campus**

4515 Parkview Dr.  
Lake Oswego, OR 97035  
Main: 503-636-1408  
Fax: 503-636-0288  
Email: [LakeOswego@WestHills-Montessori.com](mailto:LakeOswego@WestHills-Montessori.com)

**Can We Reach You at All Times?**

Please make sure that each parent and caregiver enters all the school phone numbers into their cell phones so that, if we need to reach you, our call will show up as coming from the school (rather than as an unidentified number).

**The Vermont Street Campus phone lines:**

503-246-5495  
503-246-1346  
503-246-5496 (fax)

**The Lake Oswego Campus phone lines:**

503-636-1408  
503-636-0119  
503-636-0288 (fax)

**Website:** <http://www.WestHills-Montessori.com>

**Facebook:** <http://www.Facebook.com/WestHillsMontessori>

### STAGGERED ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL TIMES

VERMONT STREET CAMPUS	LAKE OSWEGO CAMPUS
<p><b>Primary Morning Arrival:</b> 8:30-8:45 am – Fig and Willow Rooms 8:45-9:00 am – Laurel and Maple Rooms</p>	<p><b>Morning Arrival:</b> 8:30-8:45 am – Hawthorn and Maple Rooms 8:45-9:00 am – Alder and Juniper Rooms</p>
<p><b>1:00 Dismissal:</b> 1:00 pm – Laurel and Maple Rooms</p>	<p><b>Dismissal times will not be staggered:</b> 1:00 – 1:00 dismissal 3:00 – 3:00 dismissal</p>
<p><b>3:00 Dismissal:</b> 2:45 pm – Fig and Willow Rooms 3:00 pm – Laurel and Maple Rooms</p>	<p><b>PM Care Programs:</b> 3:00-4:00 pm – Toddler Program 3:00-5:00 pm – Primary Program</p>
<p><b>Elementary Morning Arrival and Dismissal:</b> 8:15-8:30 am – Morning Arrival 3:15 pm – Dismissal</p>	
<p><b>PM Care Programs:</b> 3:00-5:00 pm – Primary Program 3:15-5:00 pm – Elementary Program</p>	

## FINANCIAL AND TUITION INFORMATION

Annual tuition is budgeted over a 9 ½ month school year and is based on class time only. Families may elect to pay yearly or monthly. Monthly billing for all students will be issued by our office by the fifth of each month. Tuition is due, one month in advance, before the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. No tuition allowance is made for illness, vacation, holidays, facilities closures, or school closures due to inclement weather. Invoices will be sent out via email on a monthly basis.

**Tuition:** A non-refundable payment for September 2024 tuition (not including extended care services) due on March 15, 2024. A non-refundable payment for ½ June 2025 tuition (plus extended care services) due by August 15, 2024, or upon enrollment.

**Withdrawal:** We require three weeks written notice prior to withdrawal of your child from school. There is a three week tuition charge if no notice is given. Notice is required up to the last day of the school year.

**Late Charges:** Children who are picked up later than 10 minutes after class dismissal will be charged a late fee. Our PM Care program closes promptly at 4:00 pm for our Toddler Program and at 5:00 pm for our Elementary and Primary Programs. The late charge is \$20 per 10 minutes or any portion thereof, per child.

**Online payments:** West Hills Montessori is pleased to announce a more convenient, secure and expedient way for families to submit payment for tuition invoices. Future invoices emailed to you will display a 'Pay now' button below the amount and date due fields. Choosing this option will take you to a screen where you will be prompted to enter your banking information. By choosing this online payment option (ACH payment) you will incur a \$1.00 processing fee, which will be assessed on your next regularly scheduled WHMS tuition invoice. Please be aware that your financial institution may assess their own additional fee.

We are excited to offer this enhanced payment option; but, please be assured that you may continue to pay by check or bill pay through your personal checking account

**Returned Check Policy:** Any check that is returned to the school from the bank will be assessed a \$35.00 service charge on the first attempt, \$40.00 on any subsequent attempts and all applicable late fees.

**Delinquent Tuition Policy:** In order for us to meet our financial obligations, we depend upon prompt payment of tuition. **A \$45.00 charge will be assessed on overdue accounts after the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month.** If an account should become delinquent by 30 days, families will need to provide a written plan to make payments current outlining any extenuating circumstances resulting in the delinquency. The payment plan must be submitted to the Business Office within 5 days of the delinquent tuition notification. For accounts in arrears exceeding the late payment policy guidelines, parents or guardians will agree to pay all costs of collection of delinquent payments, including, without limitation, reasonable collection agency fees, attorney's fees and court costs. Amounts that remain unpaid after 60 days of the invoice date will result in the suspension from school of the child.

**Delinquent Tuition from Previous Year or from Summer Program Policy:** Parents wishing to re-enroll students for the following school year must have their financial commitments up to date. Re-enrollment applications of students whose tuition payments are delinquent will be placed on conditional acceptance until their tuition is current.

### Payment Schedule:

- Due upon acceptance (March 15, 2024): September 2024 tuition deposit due (non-refundable)
- 1/2 June 2025 tuition and 1st Activity Fee Installment is due August 15, 2024 (non-refundable)
- October 2024 tuition is due September 15, 2024
- November 2024 tuition is due October 15, 2024
- December 2024 tuition is due November 15, 2024
- January 2025 tuition is due December 15, 2024

- February 2025 tuition and 2nd Activity Fee Installment is due January 15, 2025
- March 2025 tuition is due February 15, 2025
- September 2025 tuition and extended care services deposit due (non-refundable) is due on March 15, 2025
- April 2025 tuition is due April 15, 2025
- May 2025 tuition is due May 15, 2025

## SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND OVERSIGHT

At the heart of our work with children is the successful partnership between home and school. At West Hills Montessori School, we make it a priority to support and nurture this relationship.

West Hills Montessori School is governed by a Board of Directors who serve on an appointed and voluntary basis. The Board determines school policies in the areas of long range and strategic planning, finance and administrative accountability; always keeping in mind the responsibility of providing a quality experience for every family and child who participates in our programs.

The day to day operations of each school campus are the responsibility of an Administrative Team at each school campus. The Head of School, with the Program Director, Elementary Program Director, Office Director and the Administrative Assistants at the Vermont Street Campus and the Head of School with the Office Director and Administrative Assistant at the Lake Oswego Campus comprise the Administrative teams. The Founding Administrator is available, in an advisory role, for the council and corporate support for both West Hills sites.

### ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP

Working together these teams lead the schools to fulfill our mission of providing an outstanding Montessori education and positive experience for all who attend West Hills Montessori Schools.

#### Administrative Team – Vermont Street Campus, 503-246-5495

Anne Blickenstaff, Head of School – extension 16, [anne@westhills-montessori.com](mailto:anne@westhills-montessori.com)

Delila Olsson, Program Director – extension 17, [delila@westhills-montessori.com](mailto:delila@westhills-montessori.com)

Ashley Keneller, Elementary Program Director – extension 18, [ashley.keneller@westhills-montessori.com](mailto:ashley.keneller@westhills-montessori.com)

Melissa Wilcox, Office Director – extension 10, [vermontstreet@westhills-montessori.com](mailto:vermontstreet@westhills-montessori.com)

Pam Byrne, Accounting Manager – [pam.byrne@westhills-montessori.com](mailto:pam.byrne@westhills-montessori.com)

Maggie Albertson, Bookkeeper, extension 22, [maggie.lee@westhills-montessori.com](mailto:maggie.lee@westhills-montessori.com)

#### Administrative Team – Lake Oswego Campus, 503-636-1408

Anne Blickenstaff, Head of School – [anne@westhills-montessori.com](mailto:anne@westhills-montessori.com)

Kelsey Silva, Office Director – extension 10, [kelsey@westhills-montessori.com](mailto:kelsey@westhills-montessori.com)

Pam Byrne, Accounting Manager – [pam.byrne@westhills-montessori.com](mailto:pam.byrne@westhills-montessori.com)

Maggie Albertson, Bookkeeper – [maggie.lee@westhills-montessori.com](mailto:maggie.lee@westhills-montessori.com)

### AFFILIATIONS, CERTIFICATIONS, MEMBERSHIPS

- Association Montessori Internationale – Membership
- North American Montessori Teachers' Association – Membership
- National Association for the Education of Younger Children – Membership
- Oregon Federation of Independent Schools – Affiliation
- Oregon Montessori Association – Affiliation
- Oregon Department of Education – Registered Private School/K-6
- Oregon Department of Early Learning and Care – Licensed Child Care Center
- Oregon Green Schools – Premier Level



## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of West Hills Montessori School is to prepare learning environments that foster curiosity, inquiry, cooperation and peace. It is our goal to respect and empower every child in our care, supporting the development of fundamental habits, attitudes, and skills that foster individual growth, creative thinking, and social responsibility. Our program is dedicated to the education of children ages 15 months through 12 years old, according to the principles and curriculum developed by Dr. Maria Montessori.

## SCHOOL OVERVIEW

### GOALS & OBJECTIVES:

Our primary goal is to help shape young people who understand and appreciate the world around them and who, as a result of acquired knowledge and the felt experiences of learning in community, are compelled to make the world a better place. We guide children toward independence and peaceful sociability and support them in developing a lifelong love of learning.

Every child in our program is empowered to reach their individual potential through:

- Engagement with specially prepared environments that meet their needs
- Ever-increasing levels of independence to build self-esteem
- Participation in community with children and adults of many ages and abilities
- Development the fundamental character values of compassion, empathy, and kindness
- Deep and open-ended exploration of personal interests
- Integration of learning across study areas including cultural, creative, academic and physical
- Forming links between the classroom and nature, individual needs and the needs of others, the community and the larger world around us

Our greatest wish is that each of our students develop the emotional, social, spiritual, physical and intellectual skills to live the lives they were born to live.

### HISTORY

West Hills Montessori School was founded in 1968 for the benefit of the children and families in our community. Our first primary classroom was started by Beverly Davis and Nancy Hildick, with the help of the West Hills Child Care Center, according to the principles and philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori. Since then, the West Hills Montessori community has grown from 8 students to an enrollment of 275 children at two campuses, guided by more than 40 dedicated faculty and staff.

Growth has come in many stages. The Vermont Street campus began by offering one small morning class in the original Main building, formerly a church structure, gradually expanding to a longer day class and additional classrooms, a summer program and, eventually, into all day and extended day classes with before and after school care. Popularity of the program led to two expansions of the Vermont Street campus; construction of the West Building in 1977 and the East Building in 1988 made room for additional Primary (3-6) classes as well as the establishment of our Montessori Elementary program beginning in 1998. Our Vermont Street campus sits on nearly two acres of land, allowing for spacious indoor spaces as well as abundant outdoor spaces for the children to work and play.

In September 2003, our learning community further expanded to include a second campus in Lake Oswego at 4515 Parkview Drive. We were able to offer several additional Primary classes serving Lake Oswego and surrounding areas and, in 2012, we opened our first Montessori Toddler Community, serving children ages 15 months – 3 years old, at the Lake Oswego campus. The Lake Oswego campus currently offers three Primary classrooms and one Toddler Community, along with after school care.

In an ideal model, school is an extension of home; a place where knowledge and experience may be sorted and classified to give more meaning to home and community life and ignite a child’s curiosity and passion for lifelong learning. For over 50 years, West Hills Montessori School has provided students with diverse and dynamic learning environments that support each child’s social, emotional and intellectual development. We are proud of our story, which continues to unfold; and grateful your family is a part of it.

### **OUR APPROACH**

Our Montessori approach acknowledges it is *how*—and not *what*—we learn that most shapes our development and influences future success in school and in life.

### **THE MONTESSORI METHOD**

The Montessori Method was established decades before early childhood education was a course of study in our universities. After more than 100 years, the Montessori Method continues to work because it draws its tenets from observable and inherent human developmental principles.

Montessori’s core tenets, that effective learning is self-directed, and that education calls for development of the “whole person”, have never been more important than they are today. While independent studies show that Montessori students perform academically as well or better than more traditionally educated peers, we believe it is their demonstrably better life skills that best prepare our young people for a complex and fast-changing world.

### **ABOUT DR MARIA MONTESSORI**

Dr. Maria Montessori was an early 20<sup>th</sup> century educator and physician from Italy. Her first *Casa de Bambini*, (Children’s House) was established in Rome where her revolutionary discoveries about the young child’s interests and abilities elicited positive response from educators around the world. Her observation that “meaningful work” was essential to a child’s normal development was the cornerstone of her philosophy.

The Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) was established by Dr. Montessori in 1929 and is the governing body for Montessori education throughout the world. During the 1940’s, Maria Montessori’s son, Mario helped to create elementary level materials and guidelines for instruction. During this time Maria noticed that many of the attendees listening to her son’s lectures had small children with them, and she began the Assistance to Infancy course to meet the needs of our youngest children. Together the Montessori’s developed philosophical and pedagogical guidelines and curriculum that address children’s development from birth through adolescence.

We are fortunate to have an AMI teacher training center here in Portland – [Montessori Northwest](#) which offers training and credentials for Toddler through Elementary levels.

## **OUR COMMITMENT TO ANTI-BIAS AND ANTIRACISM**

Maria Montessori expressed a key objective of education: to support human beings with the enormous task of inner construction. She thus compelled the teachers of her method to look within themselves, to dismantle beliefs that do not serve humanity.

We believe it is important to recognize our responsibility as educators, parents, and caregivers who are working together to raise children in this society. The systemic racism and bias which is present in our awareness at this time is not new, but does bring elevated consciousness of the necessity of educating for anti-bias and antiracism.

Therefore, our administration, faculty, and staff are focused on anti-bias, anti-racist inquiry in our continuing education, in order to be best prepared to guide the children. Within our Montessori learning community, anti-bias, anti-racist education will be central to our work with our students in the months and years to come. We are actively updating our Toddler, Primary, and Elementary bookshelves to reflect the vast diversity of our world, with characters and storylines representing BIPOC, AAPI, Latinx, LGBTQ+, and Disability Communities. We will be continuing to grow our library, keeping

in mind the variety of personality traits, identities, and family structures within our school community. The books we choose to include will offer accurate language, relatable stories that affirm each child's identity, as well as stories which offer a view of others' experiences.

While diversity, equity and inclusion are cornerstone values of Montessori education, and of our community, we know there is much work to be done. As Maria Montessori herself said, education is the path to peace, and our administration, faculty, and staff are actively engaged in research and dialogue to find the best resources to guide us in this vital part of our work.

It is imperative that the children in our lives have opportunities to learn about and talk about their identities as they become people of their time and place, in order to connect with others with kindness and empathy. These are vitally important conversations for us as adults, as well. We want children to build a foundation of confidence and inner strength, which we particularly must nurture from birth to age 12. In our Montessori classrooms, we will focus on the four goals of anti-bias education: Identity and Diversity (Toddler and Primary), and Justice and Activism (Elementary).

### **RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL TRADITIONS**

West Hills Montessori School is not affiliated with any religious institution and does not provide religious studies. All classrooms offer the opportunity for children to learn about the many cultural traditions that are reflected within our community and through their broader cultural studies.

### **NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

West Hills Montessori School welcomes and celebrates diversity. We believe that working and playing with children and families from various ethnic and religious backgrounds, lifestyles, and life circumstances fosters open communication, acceptance, and appreciation of differences.

West Hills Montessori School welcomes students and staff of any race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion and family constellation to all programs and activities at the School. Our School does not discriminate on any basis in its education, hiring, admission or any other school administered policies. It is our goal that West Hills Montessori reflects the rich diversity of our community, including varied cultures, economic status and individual or special educational needs.

## **ILLNESS**

***Please do not send your child to school when they exhibit any signs of illness.*** Home is the best place for a sick child. We will also strongly encourage any child on campus with any signs of illness to wear a face mask indoors, and it will be at the discretion of the classroom staff to send home any child who appears to be ill or who cannot manage their symptoms (for example; excessive coughing, constant runny nose, lethargy).

These guidelines also pertain to any sickness that your child may have over the weekend. Though this is sometimes inconvenient, our Illness Policy dramatically reduces the incidence of illnesses school wide and are guidelines set forth by the Oregon Department of Early Learning and Care. Your cooperation is appreciated.

If a child is well enough to attend school, the child will be expected to go outdoors with classmates for scheduled play time. Separate supervision cannot be provided for children whose parents request that they stay indoors.

After confirmation from your doctor, report any communicable disease to our office as soon as possible in order that we may alert other parents and take precautions to prevent the condition from spreading. Parents of other children in the class or campus community will be notified of communicable diseases if there has been an exposure in the classroom (confidentiality will be maintained).

Whenever a child has a communicable disease that poses a threat to public health, **a doctor's written certification that the disease is no longer communicable is required before returning to school.** These infections include, but are not

**limited to; Chickenpox, Diphtheria, Hepatitis A, Measles, Meningitis, Mumps, Pertussis, Rubella, Salmonella, Scabies, Shigellosis, Shiga-toxigenic Escherichia coli, Tuberculosis, Typhi Infection, open or draining infections infected by Staphylococcus, Streptococcus, or Coxsackieviruses (Hand, Foot, & Mouth).**

The School reserves the right to exclude any child that they believe is still contagious from conditions including, but not limited to:

- COVID-19
- Bacterial Conjunctivitis (Pinkeye)
- Giardiasis
- Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease
- Parvovirus B19 (Fifth Disease)
- Parasites or Worms
- Pediculosis (Head Lice)
- Pneumonia
- Polio
- Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)
- Rash on skin, inside mouth, ears, nose or throat
- Ringworm
- Strep Throat and Streptococcal

#### **CAMPUS COMMUNICATION**

Current guidelines from OHA and the Oregon Department of Early Learning and Care state that we are not required to notify families of a positive case of COVID-19. However, for the care of our community, we believe in transparency; therefore, you can expect updates from us as positive cases are reported within our community.

#### **OUR CLEANING PROTOCOLS**

Our buildings are professionally cleaned every weekend. We have MERV 13 filters installed in our HVAC systems as an extra layer of protection and have routine maintenance on our HVAC equipment which includes changing our filters regularly. All of our classrooms are also equipped with portable air purifiers that have HEPA filters and, weather permitting, windows are open as much as possible for extra ventilation. We sanitize each classroom, including materials, at least once a week, or more as needed, as well as sanitizing all tables, bathrooms and highly touched surfaces at least once daily.

#### **FACE MASKS**

Face masks for children ages 3 years and up, as well as for staff members, will be optional indoors and outside. We support individual choice to wear a face mask.

#### **WHEN A CHILD BECOMES ILL AT SCHOOL**

In case of illness at school, our staff will follow these steps:

- Listen carefully to the child's description of the illness. Help the child to feel reassured and comfortable.
- Try to identify the symptoms. We use a thermo scan thermometer to record the child's temperature.
- If possible, isolate the child until someone can take him/her home. Isolation areas include; office, library or child care room.
- Parents will be notified and are expected to pick their child up as soon as possible. If it is impossible for a parent or guardian to be reached, we will call the emergency back-up contacts listed on the registration form so that the child can be picked up promptly. Emergency numbers should be kept up-to-date in your child's school file.

Please use the following guidelines for your child's health and school:

### WHEN SHOULD I KEEP MY CHILD HOME?

Childs symptoms	Child may return to school
Positive case of COVID-19	After a positive COVID-19 test, individuals may return to school <b>after 24 hours if both are true:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Symptoms are getting better overall, and</li> <li>● The individual has not had a fever (and is not using fever-reducing medication).</li> </ul> Individuals will be required to mask for the next 5 days after a positive test while indoors.
Temperature of 100.0°F or higher	A child with a fever over 100.0° may return if fever free for <b>24 hours</b> without the aid of medication.
Vomiting at least one time, where there is no explanation for the vomiting	A child who vomits without explanation may return <b>48 hours after the last episode of vomiting</b> or with written clearance from a licensed healthcare provider.
Diarrhea, which means 3 or more watery, bloody, or loose stools in 24 hours, the sudden onset of loose stools, or a child is unable to control bowel function when previously able	A child with diarrhea may return <b>48 hours after diarrhea resolves</b> or with written clearance from a licensed healthcare provider.
Severe or persistent cough	A child with severe or persistent coughing may return after symptoms are improving for <b>24 hours</b> or with written clearance from a licensed healthcare provider
Chills, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, and/or new loss of taste or smell, headache, sore throat, rash, muscle or joint pain, or signs of a cold or illness (congestion, clear runny nose, feeling unwell, lethargic)	A child may return <b>24 hours</b> after resolution of symptoms or with written clearance from a licensed healthcare provider.
Colored drainage from nose, eyes, or any other part of the body	Discharge must be gone or child must have been on antibiotics <b>for 24 hours</b>
Yellow color skin, eyes, or unusual urine	Symptom free
Strep throat diagnosed by a licensed healthcare provider	Antibiotics for at least 24 hours
Surgery or other change in health status	Medications or accommodations provided to school staff and a letter from a doctor that states the child may return to school
Skin lesions that are severe, weeping, or pus filled either on skin or inside mouth, ears, nose or throat	Symptom free or on medication for at least <b>24 hours and with no open wounds</b> , including inside of the mouth or nose
Eyes that are red, inflamed or have discharge	Symptom free or on medication for at least <b>24 hours</b>
Severe pain	Symptom free for at least <b>24 hours</b>
Unusually sleepy, lethargic	Symptom free
Not able to fully participate in activities of the classroom	Able to participate fully

## RETURNING TO SCHOOL FOLLOWING AN ILLNESS OR ACCIDENT

Whenever a child has been ill or injured and has been away from school or arrives with symptoms of illness, the parent must inform the classroom staff of the circumstances upon their return to school. Parents and staff will decide if the child is well enough to attend class and if the child is admitted, the parent or designated caretaker must be available to return to school promptly should the staff observe the child is not well. Among the circumstances that preclude admission are; vomiting, diarrhea, bleeding, indication of pain, red/drainage eyes or any condition listed previously.

## MEDICATIONS

Medications, prescription and non-prescription, may be given to a child at school under the following conditions:

- A signed, dated and written authorization is completed by the parent(s).
- Prescription medication is in the original container and labeled with the child's name, name of drug, dosage, directions for administering, date, physician's name and expiration date.
- Medication shall be taken orally, topically or via EpiPen.
- Non-Prescription medication is clearly labeled with the child's name, dosage, expiration date and directions for administering.

If a parent requests that the school provide their child with medication that cannot be taken orally, topically or via EpiPen, we will review each request on an individual basis and will decide, at our sole discretion, whether we are willing and capable of complying with the parent request and what additional conditions, if any, we will need from the parent or guardian to satisfy to complete the request.

## HEAD LICE

Head lice are a common occurrence in young children. We ask that parents contact the school if lice or nits are found on your child's head.

If head lice/nits are found on a child at school, the following steps will be taken:

- Parents are notified immediately and are encouraged to pick up their child from school to avoid transmission.
- The child's head must be treated to remove head lice and nits.
- To help our combined effort to eliminate head lice, a notice will be sent stating that a case of head lice has been found and parents will need to check their own child's head. To avoid infestation it is important to inspect all family members for the next four weeks and treat if affected.

## SUNSCREEN

We need your help in protecting your child's skin from the sun! Please apply a generous layer of broad spectrum sunscreen of at least 30 SPF on your child **prior** to arriving at school on sunny days. **If you signed the sunscreen permission on the Google Form: School Year Information you may send a labeled tube of sunscreen to school for your child.** Sunscreen will be applied as necessary. A staff member will assist children ages 15 months-6 years of age with sunscreen application. Children over the age of six may apply sunscreen themselves under the direct supervision of a staff member. Sunscreen will not be shared and please help children over the age of six in the process of application so they can be as independent as possible with sunscreen at school.

## ALLERGIES/MEDICAL CONDITIONS

Our goal is to keep students as safe as possible and to make staff, parents and students aware of their allergies and/or medical needs and their consequences. Parents inform us of their child's allergies/medical needs on a form required for all students. Families are asked to assume primary responsibility for the management of these allergies and other medical conditions. Families are asked to complete an "Allergy Action Plan" and/or medical emergency instructions that specify:

- Symptoms of an allergic reaction or medical need
- Actions for minor reactions

- Actions for major reactions
- Emergency contacts
- Parental and physician releases

If necessary, parents are asked to provide medication with instructions, and to provide training on how to administer medications for those staff members who work directly with their child. Our school has an emergency action plan in place should the need arise. Listed below are the guidelines and responsibilities that West Hills Montessori School will follow.

### **School's Responsibilities**

- Review the health records submitted by parents and physicians.
- Assure that staff who interact with the student on a regular basis understand the child's allergy/asthma/medical needs and can recognize symptoms, as well as know what to do in case of an emergency.
- Make sure that medications are appropriately stored and accessible in a secure location central to designated school personnel.
- Be prepared to handle a reaction and ensure that there is a staff member available who is properly trained to administer the necessary medication during the school day.
- Review policy/prevention plan with staff, parents/guardians and student (when age-appropriate) and physician after a reaction has occurred.

### **Classroom Guidelines**

- No peanut or tree nuts (in any form) will be used in classroom activities or lessons.
- All materials and surfaces will be washed and sanitized periodically throughout the day.
- All surfaces where food is prepared and/or consumed will be disinfected after each use.
- The children in the classroom will be asked to wash their hands before and after snack and any other time food is being eaten or used in the classroom.
- When a child with a life-threatening food allergy is enrolled in a classroom the School/guide will write a letter notifying parents in the classroom of the allergy and clarifying guidelines of the school's food allergy and snack policies.
- Elementary Community – For "Going Out," field trips and hikes, a staff member with proper EpiPen training will accompany the child with the severe allergy. The staff member will carry the medication (EpiPen) and a cell phone in case of an emergency.

### **Staff Guidelines**

- Staff will see that all guidelines for the school's food allergy and snack policies are strictly adhered to.
- Staff will request, from parents, written information about their child's food allergies.
- If necessary, staff will receive proper EpiPen training.
- Staff have a plan to notify all substitutes about student's food allergies (including the Allergy Action Plan).
- Staff will ensure that children wash their hands with soap before and after snack, lunch and any other time when food is being eaten or used in a project.
- Staff will thoroughly wash or replace snack storage containers/shelves prior to the first day of school and periodically throughout the year.
- Staff will keep individual snacks provided by parents of children with food allergies separate from classmate's food.
- Staff will assure that children with severe food allergies eat their snacks/lunches at tables that are "allergy-free."
- Staff will ensure that children with severe food allergies do not clean tables or areas other than their own after snack, lunch or other times when food is present.
- Staff will consider children with severe food allergies who report an illness as a "red-flag" for a possible allergic reaction.

## **Families' Responsibility**

- Notify the school of the child's allergies/asthma/medical needs.
- Work with the school to develop a plan that accommodates their child's medical needs at school, including completion of our "Allergy Action Plan." This plan asks parents to provide written medical documentation, instructions and medications. Parents are responsible for keeping this form and all medication current.
- Parents must provide instructions for the school staff to administer EpiPen/EpiPen Junior (if required to treat allergic reaction).
- Replace medications after use or upon expiration.
- Educate child in the self-management of their allergy/asthma including:
  - Safe and unsafe foods
  - Strategies for avoiding exposure to unsafe foods
  - Symptoms of allergic reactions
  - How/when to tell an adult they may be having an allergy-related problem
  - How to read food labels (age appropriate)
- Come to school every time there is a reaction.
- Review policy/procedures with school staff, the child's physician and the child (if age appropriate) after a reaction has occurred.
- Parents must provide "safe" foods for snack and special occasions.

## **Guidelines for Children with Food Allergies or Restricted Diets (Age Appropriate)**

- Should not trade food with others
- Should only eat foods brought from their home
- Should be proactive in care and management of their food allergies and reactions based on their developmental level.
- Should notify an adult if they eat something they believe may contain the food to which they are allergic.
- Will notify an adult of any feelings of illness (symptoms) immediately.

<b>EMERGENCIES</b>
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## **WHEN A CHILD HAS AN ACCIDENT AT SCHOOL**

In case of an accident we do the following:

1. Attend to the child.
2. Call the child's parents or designated persons indicated on the enrollment form.
3. Seek administrative assistance.
4. If necessary, transport the child for medical aid:
  - Child's physician as indicated on their form
  - The nearest Emergency Care Facility
  - Hospital
  - Ambulance
5. At all times continue to try to reach the child's parents.

## **FIRE PROCEDURES**

In case of fire we do the following:

1. Activate the fire warning bells. Pull down the red handle at any pull station located throughout the buildings.
2. Evacuate the buildings immediately. Each class has an emergency exit plan. Children and staff practice for quick exit by conducting monthly fire drills. Classes lineup by the exit door and go directly outside. One staff member leads the line while the second staff member exits at the end of the line. Office/ Administration staff exit last after checking bathrooms, kitchen and hallways
3. Outdoor stations. Each class has an assigned location to gather outside.
4. Roll call. Guides take an immediate head count followed by roll call to individually identify each student.



5. Nap time exit. Administration and one staff member will go to the nap room to assist the nap room staff and children to exit the building.

## **EARTHQUAKE PROCEDURES**

In case of an earthquake we do the following:

1. When the ground begins to shake – DUCK, COVER and HOLD ON! Children move away from windows or anything heavy that could fall. Classes practice these drills throughout the year.
2. Following the earthquake, we will evacuate the buildings immediately using our emergency exit plan posted in each classroom. All staff and children will meet in a designated open space. Office/Administration will exit last after checking that the building is empty.
3. Roll call. Guides take an immediate head count followed by roll call to individually identify each student.
4. If the buildings are unsafe to enter we will remain outside until parents come for their child.
5. All of our staff have current First Aid and CPR training in case of an emergency
6. Each family is asked to list an out of state contact (of at least 100 miles) as there is a higher possibility of being able to telephone people outside of the area following a natural disaster.
7. If the need arises and we must vacate the school grounds, posted notification telling parents where we have relocated will be on classroom/main doors at the Vermont Street campus and the front doors at the Lake Oswego campus.

## **LOCK DOWN EMERGENCY**

In case a lock down emergency occurs, we will do the following:

1. We practice this drill with all the children and staff by going into an area of the classroom that is away from glass and hazards.
2. We do calming activities like reading stories, singing songs and being silent.

## **SAFETY DRILLS**

As a school community we conduct fire drills monthly and an alternate emergency drill every other month.

## **EMERGENCY SUPPLY KITS**

Families will provide the following for their child in a **quart size bag labeled with their child's name:**

- 2-3 granola bars
- 1-2 jerky sticks or individual jerky packets (optional)
- Special treat for comfort such as a lollipop (optional)
- Family picture
- [Emergency and Natural Disaster Contact Form](#)

This kit will stay at school for the school year and will be stored in your child's classroom. Please provide items that are shelf stable.

The school will provide: Emergency blankets, emergency drinking water pouches, glow sticks and ponchos.

On campus, we also have an emergency kit with the following items: AA and AAA spare batteries, battery operated radio, flashlight, first aid kit, hand sanitizer, tissue, wet wipes, and a whistle.

## **MISSING CHILD POLICY**

West Hills Montessori takes the safety of children very seriously and will take every precaution necessary to ensure that the children in our care are never unaccompanied. Staff will undertake periodic head counts indoors and during outside playtime. If in the event of a member of staff not being able to account for a child's whereabouts the following action will be taken:

To ensure that children are not lost while in our care:

- Carefully supervise children at all times
- Maintain appropriate staff/child ratios at all times
- Closely monitor children in and out of the classroom and building
- Closely monitor children during outside playtime
- Ensure that visitors in the building are supervised at all times

In the unlikely event of a child going missing on the premises, the following procedure will be followed:

- Staff members will immediately undertake a search of the building, outdoor play areas, and the immediate vicinity.
- The Head of School and Program Director will be notified immediately.
- The daily attendance form will be checked to make sure the child has not been collected.
- Doors and gates to be checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- If, following a thorough search of the building, outdoor play areas and the immediate vicinity, the child cannot be found the police will be called and the child's parents will be notified without delay.

### **CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

All school employees must report or cause a report to be made when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused (ORS 418.750).

Abuse means:

- Physical injury caused by other than accidental means.
- Neglect which leads to physical and/or emotional harm.
- Sexual molestation (ORS 418.740).

## **CAMPUS SECURITY AND SAFETY GUIDELINES**

Security features are in place to protect children, staff and families. Parents are given a code to access the front gate at our Vermont Street campus and front doors at our Lake Oswego campus. Only staff are given a code to access the back gate at the Vermont Street campus. These codes are updated yearly and are not to be shared with anyone outside of this community. Parents or guardians dropping off or picking up their child(ren) will use the code to access campus, which remains locked at all times. Visitors to campus are required to wait at the gate until they are greeted by a staff member.

During the school day, children are not to leave their classroom or building without the permission of their supervising adults (guide and assistant). However, freedom of movement within the classroom is part of the Montessori approach to education. At the Vermont Street campus, immediately adjacent to the classrooms are outdoor environments that act as extensions of the indoor environment and, as such, are open to the children in accordance with the ground rules of their class. Children are asked to remain within sight and/or sound of their supervising adults. Older (Elementary age) children earn the freedom to walk to other parts of the building or campus during the day, but always travel in pairs and with permission of the supervising adults. Each classroom has a non-electronic monitoring system that lets the supervising adults know the whereabouts of each child.

**The safety of our students depends upon the awareness and daily practice of every adult in this community.** Therefore, we ask every adult on campus, including parents and guardians, to commit to upholding and maintaining the measures we have put in place to keep your children safe:

- **Never share the entry keycode with children or any other family members or friends**, except adults who will be regularly dropping off or picking up your child from school.
- **NEVER allow children to touch the keypad** to gain entrance to the property (Vermont St) or building (Lake Oswego).

- **NEVER allow children to touch any of the exit mechanisms on the gates or doors.** When children can use the security features in the company of their parents or caregivers, they get the impression that it's ok for them to use them at other times.
- **NEVER allow children to play near exit doors, gates, nor to swing on exit doors or gates.** Please take time to firmly establish safety guidelines that reflect what the children are learning at school: no child should ever touch any part of the exit door or gate, with or without an adult, at any time of day, for any reason.
- **Maintain visual and auditory contact with your child during arrival and dismissal times.**
- **Please always give your full attention to your child.** When you arrive on campus in the morning, until our staff has assumed responsibility for your child, you are the adult in charge. Likewise at dismissal, once our staff has signed your child out you are the adult in charge of supervision.
- **Staff members will only release children directly to parents or another authorized adult.** Once the staff releases a child to an authorized adult, that adult will assume responsibility for that child's supervision. Children should never leave buildings or go to the playground without the direct supervision of the adult in charge. Always maintain visual and auditory contact with your child during arrival and dismissal times.
- **If parents are separated or divorced,** the school will assume that either parent may pick up the child unless the school is:
  - Furnished with a copy of a current Court Order which establishes other custodial arrangements for the child, and
  - Guides and staff are advised of the custody arrangement. If the Court Order is only a temporary order, when it expires it will be assumed either parent will again be able to pick up the child.

#### USE OF PARKING LOTS

We are fortunate to have safe, off-street parking at both campuses. In order to keep our parking lot safe and the flow of cars moving, we ask parents and caregivers to use *extreme caution* and follow these important guidelines:

- **Observe the 5 MPH speed limit!** When in the parking lot, we ask that all drivers adhere to this speed limit for the safety of all children.
- **Observe directional arrows in parking lots.** ENTER and EXIT at the appropriate locations. For the safety of all, it is imperative that drivers follow this pattern.
- **When backing up or out of a parking space, proceed very slowly.**
- **NEVER allow children to move through the parking lot unattended!** Children must be accompanied by an adult.
- **NEVER drop children off at the gates/door unless staff are in attendance and available to receive your child.**
- **NEVER leave children unattended in your car.** Oregon law states that children under 10 years old may not be left alone in a car for any period of time.
- **Keep the car locked while you are on school premises. Keep keys, purses, and personal items with you.**
- **DO NOT BLOCK entrances to lots by waiting for available space;** if no parking space is available, please continue moving and loop around a second time. If still not available, please utilize street parking (Vermont Street campus).
- **To allow for the flow of traffic, please keep "parking lot conversations" brief or take them away from school grounds.**

**Lake Oswego Campus:** The first four (narrow) parking spaces closest to the front door are reserved for **COMPACT CARS ONLY**. Please do not pull into these spaces under any circumstances unless you are driving a small, compact car.

#### NO CELL PHONE USE ON CAMPUS AND IN PARKING LOTS

Children are able to transition into and depart from classrooms more easily with their parent's full attention. Being fully "present" is one of the most grounding and greatest gifts we can offer children. Therefore, we ask that parents **DO NOT** use cell phones while inside our school building, in our parking lots, or in our campus outdoor areas.

Likewise, in order to keep the flow of traffic moving through our lots, please refrain from cell phone use until you have exited the parking lots.

## **FAMILIES USE OF PLAYGROUND**

Our playgrounds will be closed for before and after school play for a variety of reasons. Closing the playground allows for ease of transition for those children still at school, our children in the nap/rest program to have a quiet environment, and will keep the traffic in our parking lots moving and offer more available parking spaces at arrival and dismissal times.

We are fortunate to have neighborhood playgrounds nearby, should you want an extended outdoor playtime for your child, that have well-equipped play areas:

- Vermont Street: Gabriel Park
- Lake Oswego: Westlake Park and Waluga Park

## **AUTHORIZED PICK-UP PERSONS**

Only persons listed on your enrollment form may take your child from school. Please notify the school in writing or an email if persons other than you or those listed on your enrollment form will pick up your child. If staff have not yet met an authorized pick-up person, we will ask to see their driver's license or some form of identification before releasing your child to them.

## **VISITOR POLICY**

All individuals are subject to approval by our Administrative Team before entry is permitted. All visitors must check in at the front office with: Name, date, and time in/out.

The following may enter West Hills Montessori buildings:

- Students
- Parents
- Staff members
- Developmental/Educational personnel providing services to children
- Maintenance Personnel
- Prospective parents
- State Licensing/Regulators/Inspectors
- Emergency Medical Personnel

## **ANIMALS ON CAMPUS**

No animals are allowed on campus unless pre-authorized by the administration.

# **GENERAL PROGRAM PROCEDURES AND POLICIES**

## **ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES**

A staff member will be available to greet children and parents and to assist in the arrival and departure process. Letting a child into school grounds through the gate or leaving a child at a classroom door, without a staff member present, is not acceptable.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Your child's classroom guide will take attendance in the morning, counting your child present when they enter the classroom. Please email the Office Director if your child will not be coming to school and what illness (if any) they have.

- [vermontstreet@westhills-montessori.com](mailto:vermontstreet@westhills-montessori.com) (Vermont Street campus)
- [lakeoswego@westhills-montessori.com](mailto:lakeoswego@westhills-montessori.com) (Lake Oswego Campus)

By law, all kindergarten and Elementary-aged children must attend school a specific number of instructional hours to receive an adequate education. There is a state requirement for the number of instructional hours during the school year. Long vacations should be scheduled during school closures.

Please make every effort to routinely arrive on time for the start of the school day. Late arrivals are difficult for the child as well as for the rest of the class. Please make every effort to be punctual. Early departures and/or late arrivals from already generous vacations make it hard to create a sense of closure and solidify new beginnings with individual students and the class as a whole. Please keep this in mind when you create your vacation plans. Should you contemplate taking your child out of school for a trip, please notify your child's guide and the School in writing as early as possible.

### **Attendance in the Primary Extended Day Class (9:00-3:00)**

The Montessori Primary (Children's House) program uniquely serves the needs and development of children ages 3 – 6. *This program includes what is commonly referred to as the Kindergarten year in traditional schools.*

West Hills Montessori School's outstanding Extended Day Program is tailored to children aged five and six years old. This very special year of Montessori preschool offers five and six years old children opportunities for leadership while also expanding their academic knowledge and competency through deeper explorations in geography, science, advanced math and language, and cultural topics. Smaller extended day class sizes allow guides to focus on important social-emotional aspects in preparation for the children's successful transition to first grade.

On or slightly before their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday, every primary child will transition into the Extended Day (9:00 am-3:00 pm) class. Prior to joining Extended Day, the Guide will look at the child's physical stamina and ability to succeed at social integration in the Montessori extended day. Participation in the Extended Day portion of our classes is based on age and readiness. Extended Day provides an important rite of passage for older primary children and is integral to the benefits derived from a full-cycle Montessori experience.

**Every 5 and 6 year old child in our Primary program is required to attend Extended Day.**

### **Napping Program**

As mandated by the Oregon Department of Early Learning and Care, all full day (9:00 am-3:00 pm) children under 5 years of age participate in the school napping/resting program. A nap is not provided for children in the 9:00 am-1:00 pm program.

Children enrolled in the nap program are welcome to bring one small stuffed animal or comfort item along with a crib size blanket, no bigger than 30" x 48". **All personal items need to be labeled with the child's name and sent in a reusable bag.** We ask that large comfort items and pillows remain at home. Due to storage space and guidelines set forth by the Oregon Department of Early Learning and Care, we are not able to properly store large items at school. If large comfort items, large blankets, or pillows are brought, we will send them home at the end of the day and ask that a smaller replacement, if applicable, is sent the next day. Blankets and comfort items will be sent home at the end of each week to be laundered.

The school will provide a resting mat and sheet for each child. Resting mats and sheets are cleaned weekly or more often as necessary.

Children who do not sleep after 20 minutes of rest time, or those children who awake early, are provided with an alternative quiet activity. Daily records are kept of the children's resting patterns. For our Primary Program, these logs are kept in the check in/check out notebook and are available for review by parents. For our Toddler Program, these are sent home as part of their daily journal entry.

### **Vermont Street Campus - Primary Nap**

Children enrolled in the napping program will either rest in the Rainbow Room or in a designated resting space in a classroom. In general, the Rainbow room is for those children who need to sleep each day. The children's rest time is from 12:45-2:45 pm, with the actual nap time from 1:00-2:15 pm.

### Lake Oswego Campus - Primary Nap

Children enrolled in the napping program will either rest in the Daycare Room or in a designated resting space in a classroom. The children's rest time is from 12:45-2:45 pm, with the actual nap time from 1:00-2:15 pm.

### Lake Oswego Campus - Toddler Nap

The toddlers rest in their classroom immediately following lunch. Their rest time is from 12:45-2:45 pm.

## FOOD

### PACKING SCHOOL LUNCHES

When you visit a Montessori classroom around lunchtime, you're likely to see children preparing their own tablespace for a meal, waiting for everyone to be seated before they begin eating, and offering each other courtesies like attentive listening, begging one's pardon, and helping to clean up a spill. In these ways, we are establishing positive habits around the practical and social aspects of mealtimes.

We believe that children are not only capable but also drawn to the gracious rituals of shared meals. Our mealtime routines reflect that belief. The greater the child's level of independence, the more they will enjoy and benefit from mealtime rituals in a Montessori setting. Parents can support this process in the following ways:

- Invite your child to help pack their lunch ("would you prefer an apple or a banana for your fruit today?")
- Including balanced portions of healthy proteins, grains, veggies and fruit to support your child's optimal learning.
- Choose appropriate portion sizes - uneaten portions of food will be sent home, to help you with planning.
- Utilize reusable containers & flatware to support our Green School sustainable practices.
- Containers, including water bottles, should be easy for your child to open and close independently.
- Mark all lunch bags, containers, and water bottles with your child's name.

Please remember that sweet treats are best left for home. Healthy eating at school is a great way to support your child's learning potential. Children who are best able to self-regulate are often those who are well-rested and adhere to a healthy diet which includes a mix of protein, fresh fruits and fresh vegetables. When possible please try to avoid packaged food and opt for less processed versions.

### MILK PROGRAM AT LUNCH

We provide families with the option to participate in the milk program for a yearly fee. 2% milk (not organic) is served at lunch time. Families either opt in or out of the milk program on the Google Form: School Year Information.

### SNACK

**Toddler Snack:** The toddlers gather together in small groups at around 10:00 am to enjoy their snack. The children are encouraged to use their developing skills of independence, practical life and grace and courtesy when serving their individual snacks. Snack selections will include foods from the following three food groups: proteins, grains, and fruits/vegetables. The suggested snack food list is chosen by our teaching staff, with a goal of selecting foods that have a high nutritional content, and to facilitate a social experience for the children. Each toddler will learn how to set a table and clean up a table space following the meal/snack.

**Primary and Elementary Snack:** Our Primary and Elementary students bring their own snacks each day for their morning snack and afterschool snack if they are a part of our PM Care program. Please send snack items labeled and separate from your child's lunch. We encourage you to send food in reusable containers, such as reusable zipper pouches, that are easily opened to promote independence and easily stored in your child's lunchbox.

### FOOD PREPARATION ACTIVITIES

When you visit a classroom, you are likely to see children preparing foods of all kinds: chopping apples, steeping a cup of tea, or slicing bananas or carrots to enjoy. In elementary classrooms, food preparation takes on larger and more complex

proportions. Regardless of the age of the child, helping to prepare and serve food, and sharing food as a community, are important and meaningful rituals that serve a purpose that is broader than simply providing nourishment; though that is an important purpose as well.

## INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICIES

### **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

We will make a decision to remain open or to close based on the safety and driving conditions around each campus. School closure announcements can be found on local television, our school website ([westhills-montessori.com](http://westhills-montessori.com)), our school voicemail, via Basecamp, as well as through the Flash Alert website ([www.FlashAlert.net](http://www.FlashAlert.net)) and the Flash Alert app.

Our 9:00 am-1:00 pm and 9:00-3:00 pm classes will use the late opening schedule as follows. Dismissal times remain the same.

#### **One hour late start**

##### Vermont Street Campus

- 9:15-9:30 - Cedar, Ginkgo, and Redwood Rooms
- 9:30-9:45 - Fig and Willow Rooms
- 9:45-10:00 - Laurel and Maple Rooms

##### Lake Oswego Campus

- 9:30-9:45 - Hawthorn and Maple Rooms
- 9:45-10:00 - Alder and Juniper Rooms

#### **Two hour late start**

##### Vermont Street Campus

- 10:15-10:30 - Cedar, Ginkgo, and Redwood Rooms
- 10:30-10:45 - Fig and Willow Rooms
- 10:45-11:00 - Laurel and Maple Rooms

##### Lake Oswego Campus

- 10:30-10:45 - Hawthorn and Maple Rooms
- 10:45-11:00 - Alder and Juniper Rooms

### **EXTREME HEAT AND COLD - OUTSIDE GUIDELINES**

If temperatures rise about 90°F, we will limit outdoor playtime for the children. Accordingly:

- If temperatures are between 90°F and 99°F, our classes will spend 20 minutes outside at a time or pursuant to advice of the local authority.
- If the temperature is 100°F or higher, children will remain indoors for their play time.
- If temperatures reach about 110°F, school may be closed for the safety of our students and staff.

If temperatures fall below 30°F, we will limit outdoor playtime for the children. Accordingly:

- If temperatures are between 20°F and 30°F, our classes will spend 20 minutes outside at a time or pursuant to advice of the local authority.
- If the temperature is 20°F or lower, children will remain indoors for their play time

### **AIR QUALITY**

If the air quality in our area reaches these levels, we will adjust accordingly:

- Orange - Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups: Our classes will spend 20 minutes outside at a time.
- Red - Unhealthy: Children will remain indoors.
- Purple - Hazardous: Children will remain indoors and school may be closed.

The lung health of the children in our care, as well as our faculty and staff, is the most critical factor in our decision-making process. Because children are typically more active outdoors than adults and, therefore, breathe in more air per pound of body weight, their exposure to air pollution is greater. Therefore, even healthy children are considered to be a sensitive group for ozone and particle pollution. In addition, children's lungs are still developing, and continue to develop until they are finished growing. Studies indicate that air pollution can affect this development. Children are also more likely than adults to have asthma, which can be aggravated by air pollution. This may lead to health impacts such as increased medication use and increased visits to health care providers, including emergency rooms.

We will use the [Airnow.gov](https://www.airnow.gov) website and app as our air quality reference along with the [OHA Public Health Guidance site](https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PreventionandPromotion/Pages/Child-Health-Advisories.aspx). We will also refer to this [Oregon Health Authority chart](#) to help guide our decision making.

## TOILETING INDEPENDENCE AND CLOTHING

### BATHROOM INDEPENDENCE REQUIREMENT

***Every child in our Primary and Elementary programs is required to be independent with toileting.*** Primary and Elementary classrooms are not staffed with extra adults to help children with wiping or dressing; therefore, every child attending these programs must be fully independent in their use of the toilet, including dressing/undressing and managing the sink and the toilet.

### Supporting Toilet Independence at Home and School

With clear modeling, even the youngest child can learn to wipe and clean up after a potty accident. They can drop their soiled clothing into a hamper that is accessible to them. They can take a pair of clean underwear from a low drawer or shelf, at their level, and put them on. They can flush a toilet. They can wash and dry their own hands.

For those new to toileting it's enough of a challenge to get to the bathroom in time without facing the added obstacle of fussy clothing and difficult closures. Please take care to dress your child for toilet independence by choosing easy to manage elastic waistbands, easy fitting pullover shirts and shoes that the child can put on and take off without adult assistance. Shoe laces are not appropriate until your child knows how to tie bows. For children who are still learning to manage their clothing independently, it is best to avoid zippers, suspenders, tights, and buttons.

***Toileting instruction and support is part of the Montessori Toddler program; therefore, there is no requirement of toilet independence in the Toddler (Alder Room) community.***

### CLOTHING

We ask that all parents take the time to help support these guidelines by discussing expectations with your child prior to the start of school. Thank you for your support of peaceful, purposeful school experiences for every child. **All clothing should be clearly labeled with the child's name.**

In keeping with the Montessori philosophy of peace, we ask that all parents refrain from dressing their children in clothing that depicts superheroes or other aggressive characters. We have observed that such clothing can lead to excessively rough playground games, teaching violence as a way to solve problems, and the exclusion of certain children from activities. Clothing depicting animals (such as dinosaurs or unicorns), sporting events, or sporting heroes are acceptable.

### Clothing Policy for Toddler and Primary (15 months - 6 years)

Children's clothing should allow for a child's freedom of movement. Children who are developing independence and are toilet trained should be dressed in clothing they can put on and take off easily. Allowing children to dress themselves, fasten their shoes, or zip up their jackets helps promote independence and self-confidence.

Our days at school are filled with trips outside to the playground, arts and crafts, gardening, and other activities that



have the potential to be messy. Clothing should therefore be weather-appropriate and easily washable. We recommend that your child dress in comfortable two-piece sets in lieu of jeans, overalls, party dresses, or other items, which may hinder movement or be difficult to clean.

### **Clothing for Elementary Students (6 - 12 years)**

We encourage children in Elementary to dress for comfort and mobility rather than style. Elementary-aged children work both indoors and outdoors; when indoors, the children work sitting in chairs at desks and on the floor. Their clothing should support their active engagement in work both indoors and outdoors. Elementary children are outside daily; dress should reflect preparedness to be outside daily; rain, shine, cool, and warm. Please make sure to dress in layers and that outerwear (jackets, hats, etc.) is adequate when the weather is cold.

#### **Guidelines At a Glance:**

- Children are supported to select clothes that are appropriate for the weather and that take into account the activities of the day.
- Clothes should cover the chest, torso, and undergarments, and not distract the wearer due to the need for adjustment.
- Backless and strapless clothing is not permitted, nor is clothing that shows a bare midriff.
- Clothing with images or language that promote violence, alcohol, weapons, tobacco, drugs, or other inappropriate behavior is not allowed.
- Articles of clothing with political images or political language are not allowed.
- Pajamas are not appropriate wear for school, except on a designated "Pajama day."
- For school trips and other special activities on or off campus, guides will advise students of appropriate attire.

### **FOOTWEAR**

***Please choose footwear that enables your child to move with coordination and ease.*** Sturdy soled sneakers and sandals work best in the active environments at school. Flip-flops, light-up shoes, clogs/Crocs, cowboy boots, and slick-soled boots or high heels are highly impractical for school and could result in injury when worn during active playground times. Likewise, these footwear choices tend to be clunky and distracting within the classroom environments as well, so we encourage you to keep them at home. Excessively long shoelaces and double knots are an added obstacle to any child's movement, and should be avoided. If a child's clothing or footwear is an impediment to independence or a distraction in the classroom, the child will be asked to change.

### **RAIN & COLD WEATHER GEAR**

Weather permitting, children are outside every day. Please make sure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather. It is a good idea to send a raincoat with a hood daily, marked with your child's name, since weather can change dramatically and without notice. For young children, gloves encourage more independence than mittens.

### **CHANGE OF CLOTHES**

Children in our Toddler, Primary, and Lower Elementary programs should have at least one complete change of clothes at school. Your child's guide will communicate about extra clothing storage before the start of the school year. All clothing should meet the clothing guidelines found in this handbook, and be able to be managed independently by the child. All clothing should be marked with your child's name.

### **JEWELRY & OTHER ACCESSORIES**

Children should not wear or bring jewelry to school, because it is easily lost or broken and is potentially dangerous if it gets caught on classroom or outdoor equipment. Other items such as purses, lipsticks, toys, and money invite distraction and should be left at home. If these items should inadvertently come to school with your child, they will be put aside for safekeeping and returned to the child or the parent at the end of the school day.

### **PERSONAL ELECTRONICS POLICY**

***West Hills students may not bring personal electronics of any kind to school.*** Personal electronic devices such as mobile phones, personal music or video players, video games, laptops, cameras, iPads, smart watches, etc. can be a significant

disruption to the work of students and guides. As with any school policy, we strive to preserve the peacefulness and productiveness of the classroom environments. We greatly appreciate your support.

**At Home:** Based on research on the effects of screens on children’s attentiveness, relationship skills, and self-regulation skills, we request that children have NO television, video game, or computer activity in the morning before school, and that screen time be limited at home, especially during the school week.

If these items should inadvertently come to school with your child, they will be put aside for safekeeping and returned to the child or the parent at the end of the school day.

## ENROLLMENT

### COMMITMENT

It is our intent that all enrolled families commit to long-range educational goals and completion of the program in which their child is enrolled; which is typically three and, sometimes, four years at each level. We encourage Primary families to have their child complete the full cycle, which includes the Kindergarten year. We likewise encourage primary families to explore the unique benefits of a Montessori elementary experience.

### INTEGRATING NEW STUDENTS

“Phasing-In” is a technique used for the initial orientation of new students to our Toddler, Primary and Elementary programs. This technique has proven successful in Montessori classrooms throughout the United States. A positive “Phasing-In” experience is one of the most important influences in a process that will guide each child to a happy and successful school year.

During the first few days of school, the returning toddler, primary and elementary students attend classes with their communities. This gives our experienced students a chance to become reacquainted with their guides, classroom environments, materials and fellow classmates. They can discover and relate to any changes in the environment or staff and settle into their work before the new and younger students begin.

After these first few days we will begin “phasing-in” our new students in small groups each day. This will enable our staff to give these children additional attention and encouragement as they start school.

“Phasing-in” happens when a child first begins in West Hills Montessori’s Toddler, Primary or Elementary program, and again when a child transitions from one program to the next. We do not make adjustments in tuition for this brief period of “phasing-in.”

### ENROLLMENT FORMS

We are required by law to keep an **up-to-date** file for each student enrolled in our school. **The following completed forms must be in our office prior before your child begins school** (pursuant to State of Oregon/Child Care Division Statute, ORS. 414-300-0040):

- ✓ School Enrollment Form
- ✓ School Enrollment Contract
- ✓ State of Oregon Immunization Form (see below)
- ✓ Allergy Action Plan and/or Emergency Instructions for Medical Conditions (if applicable)

### IMMUNIZATIONS

In January, 1982, the State of Oregon implemented a law regarding the immunization of all children enrolled in a school, day care, nursery school or facility. An immunization form has been provided to all schools for parents to fill out and return. This form is part of the child’s permanent record. Each child must have an immunization form on file at school.

Failure to have an up-to-date, signed immunization form on file can result in expulsion from school. Space is provided on the form for medical exemptions.

The schedule of immunizations is as follows:

A child 18 months or older entering preschool needs:

4 DTaP, 3 Polio, 1 Varicella, 1 MMR, 3 Hepatitis B, 2 Hepatitis A, 3/4 Hib

A student entering Kindergarten or Grades 1-5 needs:

5 DTaP, 4 Polio, 1 Varicella, 2 Measles, 1 Mumps, 1 Rubella, 3 Hepatitis B,  
2 Hepatitis A

A student entering Grade 6 needs:

5 DTaP, 4 Polio, 1 Varicella, 2 Measles, 1 Mump, 1 Rubella, 3 Hepatitis B

Many children at our school will fall into a category of “up-to-date-but-incomplete.” Please notify the school office when your child is given an updated vaccination so your child’s record can be kept current.

If you claim a non-medical exemption to school immunizations, the law requires parents or guardians to receive education about the benefits and risks of vaccination before claiming the exemption.

Parents and guardians have two options to receive this education:

1. Talk to a healthcare practitioner. The practitioner can sign a Vaccine Education Certificate.
2. View the online vaccine education module. At the end of the module, print a Vaccine Education Certificate.

The parent must turn in the Vaccine Education Certificate and a completed Certificate of Immunization Status to the child’s school or childcare. The Certificate of Immunization Status is the official immunization record that the school or childcare maintains.

For additional information regarding non-medical exemptions visit: [Oregon Health Authority: Vaccines and Immunizations](#)

## GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE POLICY

Within the framework of mutual respect, we protect every person’s right to be physically and emotionally safe at school. Therefore, no act of aggression or disrespect toward another will be ignored. Adults help mediate disputes between children, giving only as much help as needed for the children to manage resolution on their own.

### **COMMITMENT TO PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE**

It is our primary goal to help shape young people who understand and appreciate the world around them and who, as a result of acquired knowledge and felt experiences of learning in community, are compelled to make the world a better place. To that end, our work with children includes many opportunities for the development of self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy.

The Montessori’s method of education is unique in part because of its emphasis on the practices of peace. We understand that if we model and expect the children to regard themselves and others with respect and empathy, they will naturally grow into responsible, compassionate adults. And we understand that as the children gain awareness of themselves and all beings as equally important in the overall web of life, they come to understand that hurting another causes damage to the entirety of the web.

This commitment to peace is reflected in the careful preparation of our classroom and outdoor environments, where we invite children to engage in reality-based activities which bring them into closer contact with the natural world. Our commitment is likewise reflected in our learning materials, books, games, and sharing; all of which are carefully chosen to avoid themes of violence and aggression.

We do not use any screens or digital media in our toddler and primary classrooms; and only in very limited ways, for the purpose of extended research and keyboarding skills, in our elementary community.

We ask our school families to join in our commitment to non-violence by monitoring their child's screen time and exposure to violent themes in games, toys, books and digital media. We encourage offering creative and active alternatives to video games and screen time and to help children to choose age-appropriate, non-aggressive literature, toys and games.

## **OUR PHILOSOPHY ON GUIDANCE**

We know that children with self-regulating skills are more resilient; better able to cope better with life's stresses and to make decisions based on an intrinsic sense of right action, rather than in response to external influences. We likewise believe that, out of an intrinsic and well-developed sense of right action, children gain compassion and empathy. Therefore, supporting this process is at the heart of our Montessori work with children.

### **The Role of the Child: Learning to Express Needs and Manage Impulses**

Young children have a strong and developmentally appropriate need to express their will at the same time as they are learning to manage their impulses. For a young child, it can be challenging to wait; it takes time to learn that gratification is often delayed. This developmental dynamic can result in some uncomfortable (for both child and adult) behaviors such as screaming, hitting, resistance, and refusal to cooperate. While the three-year-old may be very aware, their behavior is not based upon reasoned thinking but, rather, upon impulse.

### **The Role of the Adult: Model Calmness, Compassion, and Self-regulation**

Children become proficient in the skills of self-regulation through imitation of the adult role models (parents and guides) in their lives. When adults model the ability to calm down in the face of big emotions, it helps children to calm down. Likewise, when our children see us engage in calm problem solving, they will learn to respond to problems in peaceful ways. And when they see us speaking and acting in ways that consider the feelings of others, they are more likely to become compassionate and empathetic people.

Therefore, the primary work of the adult is to establish kindness, empathy and compassion as the foundation of our interactions with children; to provide them with clear, kind, and consistent models of empathy and compassion for others.

### **Ways to Help a Child Who is Dysregulated**

It can feel challenging to the adult to model calm, clear, consistent responses in the face of a young child's natural impulsivity or uncomfortable behavior. Out of a desire to make the uncomfortable behavior stop, there may be an adult impulse to *react* rather than *respond* to the child.

If an adult reacts to a child's emotional intensity with our own intense emotions, we essentially abandon the child in their moment of greatest need. Another choice is possible:

When a child hits, pushes, resists or refuses a request, we must not take it personally; instead, recognizing the child's behavior as *a cry for help*. From this vantage point, the adult might consider the questions; "*What need is the child expressing in this moment?*" and "*How can I help?*"

**Practice Emotional Maturity.** Respond to perceived emotional chaos with calmness, recognizing the moment will pass. We help children develop mastery over their emotions by modeling mastery over our own. Emotional intensity from the adult can turn a momentary act of impulsivity into a chronic behavioral issue. Children need us to be the leaders on whom they can rely for emotional safety and stability.

**Never punish behavior:** Punishment is shaming and only serves to create fear, resentment, and distrust in the adult/child relationship. Instead of punishment, offer clear and consistent limits. Without limits, the child is not truly free.

**Set and hold clear, consistent limits.** When we do not set a definitive boundary, the result is more testing and less comfort and confidence for the child. By contrast, when adults provide clear, kind and consistent limits, a child can find their way forward with increased independence and confidence.

**Don't ignore or allow disrespectful or hurtful behavior toward self or others.** Rather, provide logical consequences and assistance to support the child in learning to self-regulate within the clear limits we have established.

**Choose Words that are Clear, Kind, and Consistent.** Children need to know that we will not allow them to hurt themselves or others; that we are there to support them until they can shift out of hurtfulness or aggression. Avoid over-explaining when speaking to children under the age of 6; they are not yet reasoned in their thinking, and too many words cause confusion. Some examples of phrasing that is kind, consistent and clear:

- "It looks like you're disappointed because things didn't go as you imagined. I understand. But I won't allow you to hit. I will help by holding your hands until I see you're able to stop hitting."
- "I won't let you hit me. That hurts. I'm going to put you down until you show me you can be peaceful with your hands."
- "It's time to go. Will you walk to the car yourself or do you need my help? Looks like you need help, so I'm going to pick you up and carry you."

Children engaging in games that include physical or verbal aggression, gunplay, imitation fighting, wrestling or physical martial arts, will be gently but immediately interrupted and redirected to peaceful activities. Our staff members are trained to present clear, realistic and non-violent subject matter to the impressionable young children in our care.

### **Aggression Behavior and Discipline**

West Hills Montessori is a welcoming and inclusive space where we do all that we can to ensure the safety of the children and provide them with an optimal learning experience. In our mission to educate children for life, we prioritize the development of emotional intelligence, problem-solving skills, and the caring and compassion that is necessary for a purposeful, meaningful life.

Inevitably, part of this work with children may address aggressive behaviors. Young children can act quickly and impulsively and, in most cases, respond positively to gentle adult redirection and clear, consistent limits in the environment. Developmentally, biting, hitting, etc. are particularly common for children aged 16 months to three years-old, and less common for children aged 3-12 years; for this reason we hold developmentally appropriate perspectives on these behaviors across our program levels.

We believe in a preventative approach to discipline. Children are expected to behave safely, respectfully, and responsibly, according to their stages of development. Behavior outside these expectations is typically addressed through Grace & Courtesy (role-playing) lessons, conversation, redirection, and/or increased scaffolding, as deemed appropriate by the Guide (teacher) and administrative support team.

Relational aggression in the form of any persistent behavior that harms others or threatens damage to relationships or to a child's feelings of acceptance, friendship, or group inclusion, is also taken very seriously within our school. Relational aggression includes unwelcome teasing, name-calling, excluding, humiliating, spreading rumors, playing harmful practical jokes, threatening to isolate or harm, disrespecting another's property, coercing, or manipulating power in a relationship.

When physical or relational aggression occurs, the child's family will be contacted to discuss the incident. When aggression is repeated, the parent may be called to pick up their child. Time away from school may result if the problem continues to threaten other children and the physical and or emotional wellbeing of the community. Usually this is a brief time, until the behavior is under control.

In cases of serious and/or ongoing behavior problems, including disruptive behavior, physical aggression, and relational aggression, parents can expect the following steps:

1. The Guide will call a meeting with the parents to address concerns and develop a solution-oriented action plan.
2. Subsequent meetings may be held to evaluate progress.
3. If the behaviors continue, a meeting will be called with the Guide, parents, and Program Director. If deemed necessary, the child may be referred for outside support, such as counseling or behavioral assessment.
4. In the rare case of extreme or persistent behavior issues that resist improvement, suspension or termination of enrollment may be deemed the best course of action.

### **SUSPENSION OR EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL**

When a child is physically or emotionally dysregulated to the point of causing harm, steps may be taken including redirection, lessons in emotional skill-building, removal from the site of the difficulty and, on rare occasion, **removal from school**.

West Hills Montessori School reserves the right to require the withdrawal of any student for reasons including, but not limited to, behavior that is deemed detrimental to other students or the school community and programs.

## **COMMUNICATION**

During school hours, our first priority is bringing our full presence to the children. We also know that we cannot do our best work with the children without the full partnership of parents. Therefore, we are absolutely committed to regular, transparent communication with you, and to actively co-creating a strong home-school partnership. Please take time to carefully read this section, which outlines the channels of communication and best practices.

### **CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION**

We will use various means to communicate with you (phone, email, newsletters, written notes, conferences, progress reports, online school communication site etc.). Each guide will let you know how best to contact them; all our guides use email.

- **Basecamp is our all school communication platform.** The intention of Basecamp is to provide a space for parents to connect, communicate, and build community. Basecamp consolidates school information into one place, provides a platform for easily sharing ideas and resources, and allows for ease of communication within each classroom community. Features include an easy-to-access calendar, a Basecamp Mobile App, a Message Board as well as a direct messaging (chat) function, and central location for accessing the West Hills Family Handbook, School Directory, Campus and Classroom Newsletters, Enrollment forms, Medication Authorization forms and other important school communications.
- **Class Newsletters:** Individual class newsletters are published monthly and sent via Basecamp.
- **Information Bulletins:** Memos, announcements, and events are posted to Basecamp throughout the year and on classroom bulletin boards.
- **Montessori Musings** is our all school newsletter, published monthly and filled with useful information and resources to support your family's Montessori experience.

### **COMMUNICATING WITH GUIDES AND ADMINISTRATION**

We value frequent, timely, and open communication and feedback from our families. We trust you will reach out and tell us if there are ways we can better serve your child and your family.

*We ask that you communicate directly with your child's guide whenever possible.* Sometimes a child's development presents important issues to consider and discuss. Working directly with the guide in a spirit of collaboration is the most

effective way to communicate and problem-solve, and serves to build a positive and reliable partnership between home and school. West Hills Program Directors are also available to participate in and support lines of communication.

### **COMMUNICATING AT ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL TIMES**

During the school day, classroom Guides are focused on the children. It is imperative that the classroom adults be 100% present to the needs of the children at these transition times and during the school day. Therefore, please do not engage the classroom adults in lengthy chat during arrival and dismissal times. If you have an immediate need to speak with your child's Guide, call or stop by the school office and we will arrange for the guide to step out and speak with you.

### **INCLUDING ADMINISTRATION IN YOUR COMMUNICATION**

At times, a parent/caregiver or guide may feel the need for another perspective on the issues under discussion. If that is the case, either the guide or the parent may arrange a meeting to include the parent, guide, and a member of the administration. Whenever an outside specialist—such as a speech and language pathologist, tutor, educational diagnostician, psychologist, occupational therapist, or physical therapist—is working with your child or conferring with you and the guide, the school expects the administration to receive copies of written reports and to attend conferences in order to broaden the support network for the child.

### **PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Parents are asked to meet with their child's guide for formal Parent/Teacher conferences by Zoom or in person twice annually, in the Fall and Winter. These individual conferences provide a forum for parents and guides to discuss all phases of your child's development; social and emotional, as well as academic.

The purpose of these meetings is not merely for reporting a student's progress, but to exchange information necessary to facilitate guidance of each child. It is a means of strengthening the partnership between home and school, which is the basis for mutual cooperation that is necessary for the holistic development of each child.

Throughout the year informal conferences by phone or conversation provide part of the on-going communication between parent, guide and administrator. Additional parent/guide meetings are held whenever the need arises.

While Fall and Winter conferences are intended to give you an broad overview of your child's experience at school, an *optional* Spring Conference is offered to parents who need extra support in preparing for an upcoming transition (such as from Primary to Elementary) or to check in about another current issue.

### **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PARENTS**

The most productive way to support the school climate of trust is to communicate concerns openly and constructively, and with respect. Intimidation, threats of violence, or disrespectful behavior towards staff, other parents, guardians, or any child will not be tolerated. Should a parent or guardian be unable to cooperate and conduct themselves in a respectful, calm and non-threatening manner, their child(ren) may be dis-enrolled.

### **DISCRETION**

Safeguarding the privacy of our students, parents and staff is of the utmost importance to West Hills Montessori School. Please support our environment of trust by keeping staff and parent emails and phone numbers confidential. Please only use contact information for school-related business, unless you have received administrative permission for more casual contact. Please respect our staff's personal time away from work and understand that responses to school related communication may not occur after school hours or on weekends.

### **CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND GRIEVANCE POLICY**

Parents who have a grievance or concern should attempt to resolve the issue through direct communication with the staff involved. Often this type of communication clarifies and resolves the situation immediately.

In the unusual case where direct communication does not affect a positive outcome, please take the concern to a supervisor for resolution. This may be done in written form with the knowledge that any such documentation may come before the administration.

If you are dissatisfied, please submit an account of the grievance to the Head of School. All written communication will be treated with strict confidentiality. **The Head of School maintains final responsibility for all grievances. The Head of School's decision is final and binding.**

## SCHOOL WORK COMING HOME

Every classroom guide determines the regularity with which children will bring any finished work home. In most cases, parents should not expect to see work coming home from school more than once a week; and, in many cases, it will be less often than that. Please trust that your child's guide is carefully overseeing this process with your child's best interest and optimal learning experience in mind.

### **PROCESS VS PRODUCT**

Maria Montessori observed that for children, the process of learning is far more meaningful than the end product; because it is the process that engages their curiosity and ignites within them an intrinsic motivation to keep exploring their interests. It's easy to observe this delightful phenomenon in a Montessori classroom – and also at home – when a child may meticulously create a piece of artwork only to toss it aside or leave it at school... because they are in the flow of the “process.” The product is not the point.

Enjoying the process of learning and exploring is easy for children, until they become conditioned to value product over process. Which is why it behooves us as educators and parents to refrain from profusely praising a child's painting, drawing, story or dance. As much as we want to validate our children, we create an unhealthy attachment to producing something - *anything* - when we post every new piece of art on the fridge or gush over a child's spontaneous creation.

In our Montessori Toddler and Primary classrooms, many of the essential explorations in which your child will be engaged do not have any kind of tangible product at the end: work with the sensory materials, explorations of nature, vocabulary enrichment, care of the classroom, the lessons in grace and courtesy, the process of learning to communicate one's thoughts and to listen with attention. We wholeheartedly support the child's innate experience of presence by honoring this essential process.

### **TALKING ABOUT WORK COMING HOME: TODDLER & PRIMARY**

Adults naturally want to know what's happening at school, to understand the benefits our children are deriving from their Montessori experience; so much so, that we may press for information by posing product-oriented questions such as “*Did you get a new lesson?*” or “*Did you paint me a picture?*” Questions such as these will often yield unsatisfying responses such as “*Nothing*” or “*I don't remember*” because children live in the moment, in the process, and don't tend to linger on earlier events. By sharing something you observed or experienced in your own day, your child may, in turn, choose to share details of their day with you; or they may not. And that's okay. It can take patience and trust on the part of the parent to allow children to share on their own timetable. Meanwhile, check in with your child's guide as often as you need to feel comfortable. If you can learn to trust the unique process unfolding within your child, you will later be grateful to witness the infinite rewards of your child's intrinsic motivation.

### **TALKING ABOUT WORK COMING HOME: ELEMENTARY**

Much of the work in the elementary is completed over several days, or even weeks. The process is the focus of the work, rather than the product. When your child brings work home from school, their emotional connection to the work will vary. While your child may treasure some items, other things might seem insignificant. We know that intrinsic motivation develops when children work for themselves, rather than for the feedback or approval of an adult. A part of that is allowing children to share what is most important to them about what they have learned or created, and also making space for them to decline the invitation to share.



Your child's guide will have a system for work coming home and here are some suggestions for what to do when it arrives at home:

- Some families schedule time to talk about the child's work, and with that may come an invitation to display something they created (for example, on the refrigerator or in one of these [fillable frames](#)). Children benefit from being included in determining a timeline for the recognition of their work. It could be a set amount of time (such as one week), or circumstantial (such as a plan to replace the piece with their next work that comes home). Sometimes a child may not be able to explain their work easily, so honoring their efforts by inviting them to display it if they feel so drawn is a low key way to acknowledge effort without judgment.
- Children often like to revisit their completed work, so it is helpful to create an accessible storage space for past projects and school work. This could be a binder and/or a storage bin with a lid. A 1½" 3-Ring Binder with plastic page-protectors (to act as pockets for the work) works well for storing papers, while a bin offers a space for their larger art and 3-dimensional creations. In the binder, some families enjoy writing a page about the week to use as a divider between weeks of work, or in place of work if none was produced that week. This method supports the important understanding that it is the process, not the product, that matters most in learning (and life).
- Some work is large or perishable in a way that makes it impractical to keep. We recommend taking photos of important processes and projects, which can be later used to compile a yearbook of this child's learning experience. These could be instant-developing photos, like a Polaroid, taped to a page with a handwritten explanation of the work, placed into the Work Binder, or photos uploaded and printed as a photobook at the end of the year. Again, the focus remains on chronically the process rather than accumulating piles of product.

#### **AT-HOME WORK**

Our children work and play all day at school; their learning is dynamic and integrated, and very much tied to their explorations and research during their school day. To balance out these extraordinary efforts at school, it is appropriate for them to have plenty of independent, unstructured time at home. For this reason, we do not assign our students homework of the traditional sort.

However, we do acknowledge that the work they do at home is integrally important to their overall development as contributing members of their families, school communities and, eventually, society.

*At-home work* promotes independence and social graces, which enhance the child's ability to navigate the freedom and responsibility of the classroom. The work the child does in the home helps the child experience the value of their contribution to the household. In preparing your child for their homework responsibilities, discuss and practice the steps as needed, until the child can be fully independent and responsible for the task.

#### **Age-appropriate Homework for Younger Children:**

##### **Toddler and Primary (15 months – 6 years)**

- Wiping up spills
- Putting away toys
- Dusting
- Helping to put away groceries
- Watering plants
- Preparing a small snack (cutting bananas, for example)
- Loading the dishwasher
- Setting the table
- Folding dish towels
- Matching and rolling socks
- Weeding the garden
- Feeding pets
- Cleaning windows
- Making their bed
- Washing and slicing fruits and vegetables

**NOTE:** an array of child-sized slicers and other practical life tools are available from Montessori Services ([www.MontessoriServices.com](http://www.MontessoriServices.com))

As a child enters the elementary years (6-12), or the “second plane of development,” their ability to contribute at home is elevated. However, the elementary child is no longer deeply interested in or enticed by repetition or routine without a recognizable purpose. Instead, they are more drawn to big at-home work that utilizes their skills of rationale and their fascination with the larger world. At the same time, basic chores that help to build independence and responsibility should be expected.

At school, the children contribute to the upkeep of their classroom environments by doing jobs like sweeping, mopping, taking out the trash, and preparing the room for lunch. They are certainly capable of doing similar chores at home.

### **Age-appropriate Homework for Older Children:**

#### **Lower Elementary (6 –9 years)**

- Assisting with meal planning and preparation
- Setting the table for meals
- Vacuuming
- Raking leaves
- Loading the washing machine
- Folding and putting away clean laundry
- Sweeping the floor
- Helping to wash the car
- Tidying their bedroom
- Tidying the bathroom

#### **Upper Elementary (9– 12 years)**

- Meal planning and preparation
- Vacuuming
- Raking leaves
- Loading the washing machine
- Folding and putting away clean laundry
- Sweeping and mopping the floor
- Washing the car
- Cleaning the bathroom
- Caring for pets
- Clearing the table and putting away leftovers
- Cleaning their bedroom
- Making their own lunch
- Scrubbing the toilet
- Carrying groceries in from the car
- Helping to plan weekend activities
- Planning and decorating for celebrations and holidays
- Creating budgets for outings or trips

## **SHARING, BIRTHDAYS, AND CELEBRATIONS**

### **SHARING**

Parents will learn about individual classroom sharing schedules and routines at back-to-school nights and in class newsletters. Children are naturally drawn to share details of their lives outside of school with friends at school. We honor

storytelling as an essential element of culture and, therefore, verbal experiences are valued even more than objects; though, often, a child may choose to bring an object to share that relates in some way to their story.

Sharing should be initiated by the child, not forced by the parent.

**Support your child’s meaningful sharing experience in these ways:**

1. **Help your child by discussing interesting experiences they might choose to share with the class.** Emphasize simplicity and correct terminology. Sharing comes more naturally when the child experiences regular opportunities to talk about their life and their day. Family mealtimes and bedtime are wonderful occasions to initiate sharing.
2. There may not always be enough time for everyone to share on the same day. Sometimes a child will have to wait to present their sharing on another day. The experience of waiting, of delayed gratification, helps to build patience and resilience; two essential emotional life skills.
3. When choosing objects for sharing, select items from which the entire class might benefit, such as:
  - a. Something your child has made
  - b. Natural specimens (rocks, shells, flowers, leaves, nests, animals)
  - c. Carefully selected, reality-based books
  - d. Items from other cultures
  - e. Interesting pictures, posters, newspaper articles etc.
  - f. A favorite piece of music (CD)

**Items not allowed for sharing:** Toys, money, weapons, electronics, and/or make-up.

**BIRTHDAYS, HOLIDAYS, AND CELEBRATIONS**

Birthdays, holidays and upcoming transitions are all milestones worthy of acknowledgement in the life of a child. The Montessori philosophy reflects universal acceptance of all people and appreciation of differences. Cultural diversity is highly valued at West Hills. Holidays are explored culturally and historically as special times for sharing traditions. Music, art activities, poetry, literature, true life stories and special snacks may be part of these special events.

We emphasize the celebratory nature of holidays, encouraging community participation, understanding, and appreciation. Traditional symbolism is used as a tool for exploration, not as an expression of religious devotion or mere decoration. Child-initiated activities, discussions, and questions are supported, and parents are encouraged to inform their child’s guide of what and how they celebrate holidays.

**Celebrating Birthdays at School**

Within our Montessori philosophy we view birthdays as very special history lessons that honor each child’s unique life story. A typical Montessori-style birthday celebration involves a simple, beautiful ritual in which the community gathers to acknowledge the birthday child with thoughtful observations and expressions of appreciation.

Like everything we do in our Montessori classrooms, birthdays are acknowledged in calm, process-focused ways that do not overwhelm, but rather orient the children with language, natural science, and connection to honor the child’s unique and precious life. This is not a birthday party at school; each classroom has its own guidelines for birthday celebrations that should come home to you from the classroom. When in doubt, contact your child’s guide for more information.

Children often like to leave their imprint on their class: it is special for them to know that they have given something to be kept permanently in the classroom. A child’s birthday is a wonderful time to give an item to the classroom, such as a book.

### **Birthday Parties**

If you are giving a birthday party for your child and plan to invite children from the class, it is better to invite only a few, or to invite them all. When many are invited, but not all, some feelings get hurt. Please mail or email the invitations; do not send them to school for distribution.

### **Moving Up - Toddler, Primary, and Lower Elementary**

On the last day of every school year, in our classrooms we acknowledge that we will never again be together in quite the same way. As that day approaches, children may experience many emotions. For the youngest children, who do not yet fully understand the concept of future time, the notion of “moving up” is foreign and may be confusing or unsettling; especially because most of them will be returning in the fall and re-joining the same classroom.

For this reason, in the Toddler and Primary classes, we keep our year-end discussions focused simply on celebrating community togetherness. On the last day of school, classroom communities of children and adults will gather, sing songs and share stories in honor of the connections and friendships and experiences they have shared. They may even share a special snack. Typically, this intimate gathering is shared by children and staff within their own classroom community. We do not offer “graduation” ceremonies for children in Toddler, Primary, or Lower Elementary Classes. In keeping with our Montessori philosophy, and with awareness that the youngest children, especially, do not understand the arbitrary term “graduation,” our year-end classroom gatherings are simple and reality-based and will not include banners and hats and party favors or sugary treats.

### **Year-End Classroom Celebrations**

It is customary for classroom communities to gather near the end of every school year to celebrate the school year together. Watch for year-end celebration invitations and notifications from your child’s guide and your Basecamp classroom group.

### **6<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduation**

When a child completes the 6<sup>th</sup> year in Elementary, they will be honored in a ceremony commemorating the completion of their years-long Montessori experience and their transition to Middle School. Details of the ceremony will be determined by the Upper Elementary guide together with the children who are graduating.

## **PARENT EDUCATION AND SUPPORT**

At West Hills it is our desire to partner with parents who understand and embrace the mission of the school. To that end, we offer a variety of ways to learn about our Montessori approach through orientation events, ongoing educational events, and community gatherings. It is both our hope and our expectation that parents attend regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences and parent education events, and familiarize themselves with the philosophy, policies, and procedures contained in the Family Handbook and other school publications.

From experience we know that children thrive when the values from home and school work in harmony, with both environments supporting the other. Opportunities for parents to become educated and involved in this partnership include but are not limited to the following events.

### **PARENT ORIENTATION**

- **Summer Early Orientation for New Parents via Zoom:** Each summer we offer Early Orientation sessions for parents of incoming primary and elementary students. These sessions, specific to each program, provide parents with targeted guidance and support in preparing for their child’s transition to school.
- **Back to School Night:** In the Fall each class holds a Back to School Night for classroom specific information and the opportunity to meet families. These programs familiarize parents with different curriculum areas of the classroom, daily schedules and address individual questions. New and returning families are highly encouraged to attend. Each Guide will provide more details in their welcome letter before the start of the school year begins.

- **Journey and Discovery Experience:** The immersive Journey and Discovery Experience is a time for connecting with other families for an up close, hands-on Montessori experience that mimics what your child experiences at school. This is a parent only event and often fills very quickly, so be sure to respond right away when you receive the invitation and RSVP form as capacity is limited.

## **PARENT EDUCATION**

- **Classroom Open House Events:** These fun events are an opportunity for the child to be the parent's guide as they show parents and guests around their classroom and provide a glimpse into what they're currently learning.
- **Parent Education Events:** Throughout the school year we host various parent educational gatherings. These events may include presentations of Montessori philosophy, curriculum and materials; or dialogues focused on extending Montessori principles to parenting and home life.
- **Parent Coffee and Conversations:** These morning gatherings, hosted by members of the administrative team, allow for deeper explorations of a variety of timely parenting topics. These lively discussions allow parents to connect with one other and explore ways of supporting your child's optimal Montessori experience.
- **All School Parent Education Events:** The school holds Parent Education events on issues that pertain to parenting and related subjects of interest. Guest speakers and staff members are invited to share on subjects of their expertise.
- **Book and video lending library:** We have a collection of titles on Montessori education and Parenting available in our lending library in the Administrative Cottage on the east end of the Vermont Street campus and in the library at the Lake Oswego campus.

## **AGES AND STAGES QUESTIONNAIRE (ASQ) - TODDLER AND PRIMARY**

We implement the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) twice a year to coincide with our Parent/Teacher conferences for our Toddler and Primary aged students. The ASQ screening tool is easy to use, family friendly, and identifies social-emotional and developmental strengths, as well as concerns. It provides a reliable and accurate screening for children ages birth to six years old and is considered the gold standard in both pediatric and childcare settings.

Families will receive an online link to complete the questionnaires online. The month on the two questionnaires may be different based on your child's age and the different age ranges for the two assessments. You may need to only complete one questionnaire (ASQ:SE-2) because your child has aged out of the ASQ-3 program or no questionnaires because your child has aged out of both (ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE-2).

Your child's Guide will discuss the results with you during your Fall and Winter Parent/Teacher conferences.

## **REQUESTS FOR LEARNING AND BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT**

Montessori education is a model of individual responsiveness that depends upon careful observation and knowledge of each child we serve. Children may exhibit challenging behaviors such as opposition or resistance to guidance, tantrums, or avoidance, for a whole variety of reasons that are as unique as each child. Sometimes, however, we observe a pattern of behavior that becomes an obstacle to a child's social, emotional, or intellectual growth and development. In such a case, we work in partnership with the child's family to create a support plan between home and school. As Montessori educators, we are not trained or qualified to identify or diagnose underlying causes of chronic behavior. We are not trained counselors or licensed therapists. Therefore, in some cases, we will request an outside professional assessment to gain understanding and tools to best serve a child.

When a child and family are working with an outside support professional, it is customary for the classroom guide to be in direct communication with that person/organization in order to successfully collaborate in support of the child's experience at school. In this case, parents are responsible for facilitating communication between the school and other members of the child's care team. Over the years we have compiled a living document which lists vetted professionals and organizations that provide outside support services for cognitive and behavioral assessment, sensory therapy, speech and language therapy, reading and dyslexia support, and others.

*Reach out to us to request the most current version of the Learning and Behavioural Resources list.*

## PARENT/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Parents and guardians play an integral role in building and enriching the culture of the West Hills Community. As a parent of a West Hills student, you are automatically added to the Basecamp communication platform for your campus and classroom. Through Basecamp, as well as classroom newsletters, you will learn about community events and activities happening throughout the year. We encourage all parents to connect with the community. Toward the end of summer, we publish the school year calendar and update events on Basecamp.

### Parent Participation in Classroom Activities

Do you have a special talent, career, hobby, area of interest, or cultural heritage? We would love to know about it! Please be encouraged to reach out to your classroom guide and discuss the possibility of coming to share your passion with the class. Scope and structure of sharing depends upon the specific age group and can be best explored directly with the classroom guide.

### PRIMARY: Room Parent Roles and Responsibilities

Every year we invite one or two parents to become Room Parents for their classroom community. Typically, Room Parents serve in this position for one school year, though some parents choose to continue in the role for multiple years. Duties of the room parent may include helping to welcome new families into the West Hills community, coordinating one or two social events for the classroom community, working with the administration to explore topics of interest to the parent community. Additionally, Room Parents are directly responsible for checking in regularly on Basecamp, and posting classroom updates from the Guide.

### ELEMENTARY: Room Parent and Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities

In addition coordinating social events for the classroom community, working with the administration to explore topics of interest to the parent community, and posting classroom updates to Basecamp, Elementary Parents may have added responsibilities for helping to coordinate parent volunteers for specific kinds of direct classroom support.

We count on parent support to help support Elementary field trips, gardening projects, class picnics, special holiday projects, cooking activities, off-campus trips to support student research, and more. Please reach out to your child's guide, or the classroom Room Parent, if you would like to be on the parent volunteer list.

### ELEMENTARY VOLUNTEER DRIVERS NEEDED

Going-outs are small interest-based field trips that support children's research projects. Enabling the children to plan these trips, and to take their learning beyond the walls of the classroom is an important part of a Montessori Elementary classroom's culture. The robustness of our going-out program depends on parent volunteers (like you!). Your participation provides more opportunities for an enriched Montessori experience for our students. Every volunteer driving is required to complete the following steps prior to driving students:

1. **Criminal background check with the State of Oregon. Background checks can take up to several months to process. Apply <https://oregonearlylearning.com/providers-educators/providers-educatorschr/#apply1>.** Please notify the school as soon as you have completed the registration process, which includes fingerprinting.
2. A copy of your current driver's license.
3. A copy of your current auto insurance card. Coverage must include minimum liability limits.

## OUR MONTESSORI PROGRAMS

**TODDLER PROGRAM (ages 15 months – 3 years):** The connection between mind and body is integral to the development of our youngest students. Therefore, the Montessori Toddler classroom is a rich educational environment filled with

activities that provide critical stimulation for whole body and mind development and promote independence. From washing hands to watering plants, arranging flowers to preparing snacks and meals, children are engaged in real-life practical activities designed to support physical and cognitive development within a nurturing community. Working in concert with young children's innate sensitivities to language and order, teachers introduce a wide range of vocabulary and guide children to choose and complete tasks that build competence and confidence. Toddlers in the program learn basic skills of living in community and gain confidence through increased self-expression and engagement with the world around them.

**Next Steps:** when they are ready, in terms of personal independence and social awareness, students move up from the Toddler Community to the Primary Class (ages 3 – 6).

**PRIMARY PROGRAM (ages 3 – 6):** The three-year Primary cycle serves early childhood stages of development and their accompanying sensitive periods. "*Help me to do it by myself*" is the Montessori Primary child's innate goal, and an entire area of the classroom is devoted to "practical life" activities that support them in meeting that goal: preparing food; opening and closing fasteners from buttons to bows to buckles; washing tables; cleaning spills; and various kinds of handwork such as sewing and weaving. As children learn to take care of themselves, they gain a sense of confidence and mastery that propels them forward in their future learning. As well, the Primary classroom contains carefully designed materials that invite children to explore and put names to a variety of sensations: size, color, shape, texture, scent, sound, and more. Children take pleasure in games of organization: sorting or ordering objects, counting beads, etc. Other activities provide physical, tangible introductions to the mechanics of language (parts of speech, etc.) or to concepts of number (the decimal system and basic mathematical operations). During this time of rapid language acquisition, the Montessori Primary curriculum provides materials to introduce and name many aspects of the wider world: Puzzle maps teach about oceans and continents and countries of the world. Collections of pictures and artifacts introduce categories of plants and animals, peoples and cultures, music and art; all of these build knowledge and appreciation for the beauty and diversity of our world. Sandpaper letters allow younger primary children to learn the sounds and shapes of the letter of the alphabet in preparation for later reading and writing, and they use the moveable alphabet to "write" their own stories even before their hands are able to successfully direct a pencil. Children who remain through the full Primary cycle usually become very confident and competent in expressing themselves in writing, even eventually creating their own written stories and compositions. Older children help younger children solve problems, both assisting the younger children's education and confirming their own learning and empowering them as leaders in the community.

**Next Steps:** Children who attend the Primary class and have developed the requisite academic skills, inquisitive mind, confident manner, and strong independent work ethic, will be invited to apply for placement in West Hills Elementary program (ages 6–12).

**ELEMENTARY PROGRAM (ages 6 – 12):** The Elementary classroom offers the child more than any curriculum requires. While the Primary classes were devoted to the physical and tangible, Elementary classes build upon ideas introduced in the Primary to explore the universe through the power of the imagination. The cultural subjects (astrology, astronomy, biology, chemistry, economics, geography, geology, government, history, philosophy, physics, political science, sociology, etc.) are not broken down into separate subject matters but are treated as an integrated curriculum. Development of skills in language, mathematics, fine and performing arts, physical education, music and foreign language occur within the cultural subjects. The community of children, ages 6-12, is supported by experienced A.M.I. trained faculty and qualified support staff.

Stories, impressionistic charts, and evocative materials give a sense of the size and age of the observable universe, the steady progression of life on Earth, the variety of terrain and climates on our planet, and the saga of human evolution, invention, and civilization. The Guide (teacher) tells stories ("Great Lessons") which lay out a general organization for knowledge, then invites the children to investigate details and relate them back to the whole.

The same impulse that led the Primary child to insist "*Help me to do it by myself*" for physical tasks—putting on a coat, or carrying a chair, or opening a door—now moves into the moral realm. Elementary students want to independently investigate grace and courtesy, rules of behavior, and roles in a group. Their questions move from the Primary "What is

that?" to the Elementary "Why is that?" Cause and effect, connections and consequences, are of paramount interest. Classroom materials direct these intellectual and social explorers to the interrelated roles in any society or ecosystem: the give and take that allows for a balance between plants and animals, or predator and prey, or farmers and merchants. As in the younger classes, students learn by doing.

Elementary classes hold regular class meetings, called **Circle of Friends**, to democratically work through community issues and solve problems or address questions in a collaborative, community-focused way. Adults act as moderators and facilitators, helping students learn how to negotiate solutions that respect everyone's thoughts and feelings and maintain a smoothly functioning classroom community. In this way, Elementary students develop values of empathy and compassion, along with real-world skills of compromise and diplomacy that will serve them throughout school and life.

### **The Importance of "Going Out" and Overnight experiences in Elementary**

Exploring and integrating the world outside the classroom are integral aspects of the elementary Montessori experience.

Maria and Mario Montessori's vision for the elementary child involved a purposefully limited classroom environment where key lessons provide compelling jumping-off points for additional exploration and research. The Montessori "Going out" experience is designed to fuel a child's innate curiosity and foster independence and resourcefulness through real-life learning opportunities. As children pursue deeper study in areas of interest, they naturally move out into the real world to gather additional information and experience of their subject. Their classroom work may lead them outside to interview an expert, visit a museum, or otherwise explore a topic of interest. Overnight and camping experiences further build independence, social cohesion, and resourcefulness within elementary classroom communities.

**Next Steps:** Students who have gained an appreciation for the enormous scale and resources of the universe through the Montessori Elementary curriculum are ready to explore their place within that world as they move on to their individual middle school experiences. Children who complete a full-cycle Montessori elementary experience are uniquely prepared for continued success and joy in learning and in life.

## **RECOMMENDED READING FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS**

Contact a member of the Administrative team if you would like to borrow a book from our lending library.

***The Montessori Child: A Parent's Guide to Raising Capable Children with Creative Minds and Compassionate Hearts*** by Simone Davies and Junnifa Uzodike. Guidance for parents of children ages 3 - 12 on how to encourage their child's innate curiosity and independence through connection, collaboration, and joy, while creating a family life with fewer distractions, complications, and screens.

***The Montessori Toddler*** By Simone Davies. Step-by-step ways to cultivate daily routines with ease, like brushing teeth, toilet-training, dealing with siblings, losing the pacifier.

***Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius*** by Dr. Angeline Lillard. Dr. Lillard explains the scientific basis for Montessori's Method, presents the studies that show how children learn best, and reveals why and how Montessori works so well where many traditional educational practices fall short.

***Positive Discipline in the Montessori Classroom*** by Jane Nelsen and Chip DeLorenzo. Positive Discipline is designed to help young people become responsible, respectful, and resourceful members of their communities. The tools are practical, accessible, and effective, and they align with Montessori beliefs and practices.

***Montessori Madness*** by Trevor Eissler. Provides a meaningful glimpse into what distinguishes the Montessori approach from other systems, including the public system of education, and underscores how this approach uniquely meets the needs of children.



***Raising Human Beings: Creating a Collaborative Partnership with Your Child*** by Ross W. Greene. Renowned child psychologist explains how to cultivate a better parent-child relationship while also nurturing empathy, honesty, resilience, and independence.

***Punished by Rewards: The Problem with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise, and Other Bribes*** by Alfie Kohn. Drawing on a wealth of psychological research in favor of meaningful, intrinsic motivators such as belonging and community.

***Understanding Montessori*** by Maren Schmidt. Explains the common sense approach of Montessori education to aid the child's natural process of growth and learning.

***At Home with Montessori*** by Patricia Oriti. A beautifully illustrated description of lessons and dialogue parents can apply at home, which align with our Montessori approach.

***How to Talk so Kids will Listen and Listen so Kids will Talk*** by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish. Offers parents and teachers effective ways to inspire children to be self-directed, self-disciplined and responsive to the excitement of learning.

***To Educate the Human Potential*** by Maria Montessori. Provides adults with an understanding of the child's needs after the age of 6.

***The Advanced Montessori Method II*** by Maria Montessori. An introduction to the materials and techniques Dr. Montessori devised for teaching older children. In seven separate sections she explains the use of the Montessori materials in teaching grammar, reading, arithmetic, geometry, art, music and poetic metrics.

***The Child, Society and the World*** by Maria Montessori. A collection of speeches and lectures by Dr. Montessori provide contextual understanding of the theories and working methods of one of the most important educationalists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

***From Childhood to Adolescence*** by Maria Montessori. Dr. Montessori examines the educational needs of the older child, the adolescent and even the mature university student.

## SUPPORTING MONTESSORI AT HOME

*"The essence of independence is to be able to do something for oneself."* Maria Montessori

The Montessori philosophy can be applied to all areas of life, far extending the boundaries of the classroom. Developing independence leads to confidence. When a child can be an active participant in the daily life of a classroom and a family, they come to understand the value of their presence and become more aware of the greater needs of the whole.

### **Provide order in your child's environment.**

Young children especially demonstrate a need for consistency and repetition, which is why in Montessori primary and toddler classrooms we avoid including superfluous objects, and why everything has its place. Young children thrive in orderly environments and, even older children strongly benefit from a structure in which their things are organized. Order builds independence and confidence.

Is your child's room cluttered? If you say, "please put your pencils away," will your child know exactly where to put them? Children's bedrooms will ideally not contain more things – toys, books, construction and expression materials – than the child can reasonably manage to keep in order. If your child has more toys or materials than can be managed independently, consider rotating them. If, for example, a child's toys, clothes or books are found lying on the floor rather than put away, those items might be removed for a period of a few days or a week, and only brought back out after an agreement has been made in which the child will be responsible for putting them away after use.

**Avoid doing anything for your child that they can reasonably do for themselves.**

*“Help me to do it myself”* is the mantra of the young child. The human tendency for independence is so strong that it is often the cause of parent-child conflicts. Watch for it at home; help your child to be as independent as possible in the areas of care of self, care of the environment, and helping others. Dr. Montessori stressed that the greatest obstacle to development is the well-meaning, over-helpful adult. Remember her maxim: *“Every useless aid prevents development.”*

As your child acquires new skills, withdraw your help unless it is truly needed.

**Teach by teaching, not by correcting.**

When a child is having difficulty mastering an activity or skill, rather than pointing out what is being done wrong, instead demonstrate the activity using very slow and isolated movements or, for an older child, using slow and precise explanations.

**Read aloud to (or with) your children every day.**

Reading aloud to your child every day, even if only for 15 minutes, is paramount. Children benefit from seeing the adults around them spending time reading, whether it be a book, or the newspaper or magazine. When we read in the company of children, we adults are modeling the value of the written word. This is an excuse to set aside more time for reading that book you got for your birthday or renewing your newspaper subscription.

**Allow (and expect) your child to contribute to the care of the home.**

Children who regularly help prepare the meals, care for and clean their home space, plant and tend to a garden, care for pets, and prepare for family celebrations and gatherings, tend to become compassionate and empathetic adults. Organize your home so that there is a place for your children in each room. Provide hooks and hangers at the child’s level so they can be independent in managing their garments, child-sized furnishings for their inclusion and comfort, and the necessary tools that allow them to safely and confidently participate in all aspects of family life.

Children want to participate in family life. Involving your child in family responsibilities is a social lesson in being part of a group. Tasks can be optional for younger children (toddlers) and may develop as defined agreements as children get older.

**At Home with an Elementary Child:**

Elementary age students gain independence, confidence and competence by acting on their curiosity and by taking responsibility for their own learning, under the guidance of Montessori teachers who are trained to integrate the teaching of subjects, not as isolated disciplines but as part of comprehensive, interdisciplinary education.

At home, you can likewise support your elementary child’s independence, responsibility, expanding awareness and lifelong love of learning in the following ways:

- The elementary age child desires broader and in-depth social experiences. Successful peer relationships are extremely important. It is a time when welcoming your child’s friends into your home and planning for contact with their peers is very satisfying and meaningful.
- Your elementary age child’s intellectual powers are increasing along with physical capabilities. Previous concrete experiences have paved the way for a more mature abstract understanding, and intellectual curiosity is limitless. Open communication and the exchanging of facts and discoveries will allow your child to compare, deduce and arrive at independent conclusions.
- The elementary age is the first step in independence from the family. Not that the child is leaving their family behind but is necessarily stepping out of the role of little child within the family. Physically, they are now comfortable with adult sized surroundings and can begin to take on some responsibilities that contribute to family life. As independence and maturity occur, allowing your child some privacy within the family will be a satisfying experience.

- Family outings into the broader community can be exciting and informative adventures. Allowing your child to initiate or at least participate in the planning makes outings that much more meaningful.
- This is a time when your child is striving for more independence in both action and thought. Don't worry too much if your child doesn't seem to care about their appearance and if good manners are somewhat unpredictable. Rather than constantly correcting or imposing your authority, focus on modeling the values, beliefs and social graces that you wish to see expressed by your child. And try to have humor and compassion when they miss the mark.
- Because "going out," field trips and overnights are a key aspect of the elementary curriculum that build on the skills of independence and responsibility, please take the time to talk and plan with your child at home; emphasizing your trust in their ability to manage themselves even when they are away from home. Nothing affects a child's success as much as knowing the adults in their lives believe in them and in their capabilities.
- Utilize the Parent Directory and your classroom's Basecamp group as a resource for arranging social gatherings and playdates.

***Learning is a community endeavor, and we are glad you're here learning and growing with us!***