

The Montessori Schools of Central Texas



Parent Handbook

Primary & Lower Elementary

The Montessori Schools of Central Texas



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Welcome to The Montessori Schools of Central Texas

Celebrating 37 Years of Excellence in Education

Welcome to the Montessori Schools of Central Texas (MSCT). The Board of Directors, staff, and faculty warmly welcome you and your child to our school. We believe you have made a wonderful decision for your child, and we encourage you to participate fully in all MSCT has to offer your family.

Please read these guidelines carefully. They are presented to enhance your understanding of our program, as well as the procedures by which our school operates. Bear in mind that these guidelines will be continually reviewed and evaluated. As children “learn by doing,” so do our faculty and administration. We always hope to strengthen our program by being active participants in these experiences.

Since children’s basic needs are diverse, effective programs must be comprehensive in scope. All phases of life for the developing child move simultaneously, each affecting and being affected by all the others. A Montessori program is primarily child-centered, offering protective and supportive services to the child and to his or her family. This parent handbook is meant to serve as a reference, providing you with information that will be useful to you and your child during the school year. Please keep it in an accessible place and refer to it as needed. Of course, you are always welcome to ask questions or make constructive suggestions.

We are pleased to serve your family and are privileged that you have chosen us to care for your child. Thank you for allowing us to share in the academic and intellectual development of your child, and to be one of the first educators in their life.

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Mission Statement

The mission of The Montessori Schools of Central Texas is to provide children with the academic and social skills, as well as the moral judgment, to successfully achieve their personal goals and potential so that they may positively impact society.

Goals and Objectives

The main objective of The Montessori Schools of Central Texas is to provide a carefully planned, stimulating environment which will help children develop foundational habits, attitudes, skills, and ideas which are essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning.

The specific goals for the children who attend our school are as follows:

- Develop a positive attitude toward school and learning.
- Develop a sense of high self-esteem.
- Build habits of initiative, persistence, and independence.
- Foster inner discipline and a sense of order.
- Develop socially acceptable behavior.
- Acquire the basic skills necessary for a lifetime of learning.
- Help develop each child's innate, ultimate potential through high self-expectations.

How Montessori Children Learn

“Scientific observation then has established that education is not what the teacher gives; education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual and is acquired not by listening to words but by experiences upon the environment.”

Dr. Maria Montessori, Education for a New World

Learning is facilitated in our comfortable, home-like setting which is attentively filled with developmentally appropriate materials that contribute to the growth of self-motivated, independent children. Each class contains a range of ages and abilities; more experienced children share what they have learned with younger children, who in turn enjoy the daily stimulation of older role models. In helping others, these peer teachers reinforce their own skills and experiences through the responsibilities of leadership. Children care for each other in a warm atmosphere of acceptance and joy; adults consciously and delicately nurture the development through their caring and compassionate characters.

Each class operates on the principle of “freedom within limits.” Children are free to work at their own pace, alone or with others. We encourage a balance of active, self-directed learning with small group collaboration and peer teaching, so that children will problem solve, see natural connections in knowledge, and create new ideas. Children in this environment learn to make decisions at an early age, to reason, cooperate, negotiate, reflect, and understand. Through direct experience and the process of discovery and investigation, children learn most effectively - and attitudes toward learning remain positive and enthusiastic, not overwhelming.

Philosophy of Education

Montessori education is a philosophy with the fundamental tenet that a child learns best within a social environment that supports each child’s unique development.

Maria Montessori, M.D., the founder and developer of what is called “The Montessori Method of Education,” based this new education on her scientific observations of young children’s behavior. As the first woman physician to graduate from the University of Rome, Dr. Montessori became involved with education as a doctor treating children. Then in 1907, she was invited to open a childcare center for the children of desperately poor families in the San Lorenzo slums of Rome. She called it “a children’s house,” and based the program on her observations that young children learn best in a home-like setting filled with developmentally appropriate materials that provide experiences contributing to the growth of self-motivated, independent learners.

Dr. Montessori’s dynamic theories included such revolutionary premises as:

- Children are to be distinctly respected as individuals that differ from one another.
- Children create themselves through purposeful activity.
- The most important years for learning are from birth to age six.
- Children possess unusual sensitivity and mental powers for absorbing and learning from their environment, which includes people as well as materials.

Dr. Montessori carried her training throughout the world, including the United States, as early as 1912. After an enthusiastic first response, interest in the U.S. waned until a reintroduction of the method in the mid-1950s.

The basic premise in the Montessori philosophy of education is that all children carry within themselves the person they will become. In order to develop physical, intellectual, and spiritual potential to the fullest, the child must have freedom: a freedom to be achieved through order and self-discipline. The world of the child is full of sights and sounds that at first appear chaotic. From this chaos, children must gradually create order, learn to distinguish among the impressions that assail their senses and slowly but surely, gain mastery of themselves and their environment.

Dr. Montessori developed what she called the “prepared environment,” which possesses a certain order and allows children to learn at their own pace in a non-competitive atmosphere.

Dr. Montessori also recognized that the only valid impulse to learning is the self-motivation of the child; children move themselves toward learning. The teacher prepares the environment, directs the activity, and offers the child stimulation, but it is the child who learns and is motivated through the work itself to persist in a given task. If Montessori children are free to learn, it is because they have acquired an “inner discipline” from their exposure to both physical and mental order. This is the core of Dr. Montessori’s philosophy. Social adjustment, though a necessary condition of learning in a traditional classroom, is not the purpose of education.

The years between birth and six are the crucial years in which children learn the rules of human behavior most easily. These years can be constructively devoted to teaching the child good manners and habits, so that they may take their place in society as a productive and responsible citizen.

Patterns of concentration, established in early childhood, produce a confident, competent learner in later years. The Montessori teaching method teaches children to observe, think, and judge. It introduces children to the joy of learning at an early age and provides a framework in which intellectual and social disciplines go hand-in-hand.

About Montessori Schools of Central Texas

The Montessori Schools of Central Texas was founded in 1982 as a private nondenominational Christian school for young children, and is an educational auxiliary of Marantha Bible Church of the City of Killeen in Texas. It is an incorporated, nonprofit, tax-exempt school licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS) and is affiliated with the American Montessori Society. Our approach to education focuses on the Montessori teaching method and encompasses the very best practices of current early childhood and elementary educational theory.

Advisory Board

The Board of Directors ensures that the school operations are consistent with Montessori philosophy and are in the best interest of its students, parents, and teachers. The Board reviews the annual operating budget, conducts all fundraising activities for the school, and promotes the school among the community. It is the duty of the Board to approve a long-range plan for the school, as well as set and evaluate annual goals for the School. All matters of grievance or conflict are handled through the policies set forth in this handbook.

School Headmaster

The school's leadership carries out the broad educational policies established by the Board of Directors. The leadership determines the methods for carrying out Board policies, creates operational policies and procedures, and oversees the business operations. The leadership also develops and evaluates student programs and services, provides administrative and professional leadership for faculty and staff, orchestrates external relations, oversees the maintenance and repair of the facility and grounds, and has overall responsibility for day-to-day operations of the school and its programs. The leadership is responsible for developing and maintaining a supportive and respectful relationship among all staff and parents, as well as open and complete communication with all.

Staff

At MSCT, each classroom has a lead teacher and an assistant. Each lead teacher is Montessori certified for his or her appropriate age-leveled class. Occasionally, the need will arise to use a Montessori intern until certified. Assistants have on-the-job training or have been certified through the AMS Assistants' Workshop, and have received other training at MSCT with the lead teachers.

TDFPS Licensing

Located in the school office for your review is a copy of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services *Minimum Standards* under which we are licensed. Posted in the hallway is a copy of our most recent licensing, fire, gas line, and health inspections. You may contact our TDFPS licensing representative, Sharron Pender, at 254-939-4107. The TDFPS website is located at www.dfps.state.tx.us. The Child Abuse Hotline can be reached at 800-252-5400.

Classroom Environments

At MSCT, the children are provided with environments that are clean, child-sized, and beautiful. The children feel a sense of order around them whether on the school grounds or in the classroom. Each activity is an inviting object that calls to be used. It is our gift of beauty to the children that helps foster respect and pride for their surroundings and provides a peaceful, responsible attitude at school. This important attention to the classroom environment is the first sign that the children entering the community will be respected. In our rooms you will find classic works of art, not cartoons. You will see wooden furniture instead of plastic chairs and tables in loud colors. At lunch or snack time, the children set the tables with place mats, plates, and glasses. With these opportunities to use real objects and not toys, the children feel important and confident and treat these materials with a spontaneous respect that awes most parents observing the children for the first time.

Class Size

Classes are varied to allow each age group a number of peers and to reinforce the need and ability of the child to become self-reliant and independent. The classroom is truly a community in which the teacher is neither the center of attention nor the sole source of learning. The teacher is there to ensure that each child is exposed to all areas of learning and that he/she is given those lessons at the right time. Class size varies among classes based on square footage, enrollment, and staff-to-child ratio according to the State's *Minimum Standards*.

The Primary School Years (3 to 6 years)

The primary classroom day begins each day at 8:30 a.m. and ends at 2:30 p.m. The class has access to Montessori materials the whole day, and also has cooking, gardening, and outdoor activities.

The goal of the primary environment is to be a catalyst for, and so cultivate, the child's own natural desire to learn. This objective is approached in a variety of ways:

- By encouraging the child to experience choice because through decision-making the child is empowered with intrinsic motivation and self-discipline.
- By guiding the child "to do it by myself," the child's basic need for independence is satiated. Independence is most clearly experienced by being allowed to make choices.
- By helping children believe they are capable and competent; therefore, positive attitudes toward learning are formed and last a lifetime. Making choices strengthens the child in his/her ability to think and act for him/herself.

The primary class is indeed a child's world, geared to the size, pace, and interest of boys and girls between the ages of three and six. Sounds and movements abound in the class as children actively explore, manipulate, and investigate in order to see, hear, feel, and personally know their world. "Learning by doing" is the foundation of the Montessori approach. Thought and movement are considered integrated and interdependent. Dr. Montessori, like both Aristotle and Piaget, believed that the hand is the chief teacher of the child; the mind must be hand-made. Although individualized instruction is emphasized in the Montessori classroom, group collaboration and cooperative learning are also encouraged; children often engage in small group work.

Children have ample opportunity to practice burgeoning skills to the extent they feel is necessary. Nature instills in the primary child a strong desire to repeat an activity over and over, and with each repetition, new observations are discerned and stronger physical and mental muscles develop. Concentration appears with repetition; with heightened concentration, learning takes place naturally and in due time.

It is a well-established fact that primary children mature at very different rates and their periods of readiness for academic subjects vary a great deal. Dr. Montessori believed that learning experiences should not be tedious, but should occur naturally and joyfully at the proper moment for each individual child. The Montessori approach to education teaches children to think, ask probing questions, and seek creative answers. Montessori teachers encourage children to be actively engaged in the learning process and to not accept mediocrity.

The class can be thought of as a learning laboratory, organized into several curriculum areas, among them:

- Practical Life (social graces and courtesy, movement, and art)
- Sensorial
- Language
- Mathematics
- Cultural (geography, history, Bible, zoology & botany, social studies, and music)

Simpler tasks are mastered before complex ones are introduced. Many materials involve the child in tasks that facilitate eye-hand coordination and small muscle control. Throughout the curriculum, one finds a web of indirect preparations that enhance the learning process.

Practical Life - These simple exercises have complex aims: to develop order, concentration, coordination, and independence. With carefully designed activities, children joyfully learn to care for themselves and their class environment. The tasks of buttoning, transferring quantities, polishing, preparing - all subconsciously develop accurate eye-hand abilities, later needed for reading and other academic pursuits. Children soon develop courtesy, graciousness, poise, and self-control, as vital interest in purposeful activity almost always breeds social maturity.

In the Art area, children are introduced to art history and art studio. As they explore the world of arts and crafts daily through the media of paint, clay, paste, color, and use of simple tools, creative and individual expression are emphasized.

Sensorial - Sensorial exercises, with their wide variety and many uses, provide purposeful movement and aid in muscular coordination. A child becomes aware of details by he or she is offered opportunities to redefine texture, colors, and dimension. One-to-one correspondence in matching/sorting and grading/discerning differences - these are necessary cognitive preparations. Intelligence is built as the child learns to distinguish, to categorize, and so relate new information to what he or she already knows. Children move through the structured materials independently, challenging themselves and gaining confidence. "Never let a child risk failure unless he/she has a reasonable chance of success," Dr. Montessori cautions; carefully planned success motivates further learning.

Language - The Language area is designed to enrich a child's vocabulary, conversation, and to establish a personal interest in reading and reading comprehension. As the child works with everyday living and sensorial foundation exercises, he/she develops many reading readiness skills. The child shows an interest and a comprehension of activities preparatory to written language, and the teacher provides the child with an opportunity to explore letter sounds and formation.

The Montessori unique approach to language development is a carefully respectful, individualized response to each child's natural desire to absorb language and communicate.

Mathematics - The purpose of the Mathematics area is to follow the child's basic need to seek order and logic in all things. Children count with enthusiasm, and that enjoyment is channeled to a concrete understanding of math facts and concepts. Later, the school age child can make abstractions and truly understand the theoretic rules of math.

Our math materials are firmly based in process, not product. The child grasps (literally and figuratively) a personal mathematical understanding through extensive use of manipulatives.

Culture - These exercises help the children gain an awareness of the world around them by exploring other countries and their customs, food, music, climate, language, and animal life. This helps to raise their consciousness about other cultures and to gain an understanding and compassion for all people of the world.

Geography - The Geography materials include large manipulative puzzle maps. Gradually they learn the names of many of the countries as well as other information about climate and products. The maps illustrate many geographical facts concretely. Children also learn about land formations, such as lakes and islands by making these formations.

Zoology and Botany - In Science, the children's natural curiosity is stimulated through discovery projects and experiments that help the children draw their own conclusions. The plant and animal kingdoms are studied in an orderly fashion to foster a love and appreciation for all living things.

Bible – The “Good Shepherd” program is presented with hands-on materials that focus on God's love and care for each of His children. Bible stories are non-denominational in content and allow for self discovery.

Music – Daily activities in music, both spontaneous and planned, include an exploration of musical instruments, composers, and music of many nations and styles.

Physical education - P.E. is daily activity, as children are led in various activities to help develop gross motor skills such as running, walking, jumping, and walking with purpose and balance.

Primary Class Daily Routine

- 6:30 – 8:00 **Before School Program** – Children are welcome to engage in manipulated activities.
- 8:00 – 8:30 **Classroom Preparation** – As children continue to arrive, they may participate in classroom responsibilities, feed the classroom animals, and socialize.
- 8:30 – 8:50 **Circle Time** – The students sit in a circle as a group. We open the day in prayer, present group lessons, or social grace and courtesy lessons. We sing a variety of songs, participate in movement activities, and review classroom rules.
- 8:50 – 11:00 **Independent Work Time and Morning Snack** – The children choose work in which they have already had a lesson, or they receive a new lesson. The teacher circulates, interacting with students, assessing work, giving lessons, and redirecting students. During this time, individual snack is readily available, along with activities in the outdoor environment.
- 11:15 – 12:00 **Lunch** – The children participate in lunch preparation, eat, and clean up their areas. Lunch preparations include formal and informal settings.
- 12:00 – 12:30 **Recess & Gardening Activities**
- 12:30 – 2:15 **Rest Time** – The younger children lay down to rest and take a nap.
- 1:00 – 2:00 **Story Time/Afternoon Work Time** – Older children read a book independently or participate in a work period.
- 2:15 – 2:30 **Circle Time** – All children gather for a short circle time to receive a group lesson or listen to a story read by the teacher or an older child.
- 2:30 – 3:00 **Afternoon Snack**
- 3:00 – 4:30 **Recess and Classroom Preparation** – The children participate in responsibilities to prepare the classroom for the next school day. After work, they enjoy free time activities.
- 4:30 – 6:00 **After-School Activities** – Children enjoy working with manipulated materials.

The Lower Elementary School Years (6 to 9 years)

MSCT elementary classes begin at 8:30 a.m. and end at 3:30 p.m. There is one elementary class on campus, for children ages 6-9, or 1st-3rd level. The elementary children have a three-hour work period in the morning for individual and small group lessons and projects, and a two-hour work period in the afternoon. They have a bi-weekly physical education class in which fitness and sports skills are practiced. In addition, they have weekly Spanish classes with materials in each classroom for follow-up work during the week.

Dr. Montessori describes the elementary-age child as a very different being from the younger, primary child. In Montessori's view, successive levels of education must correspond to the successive stages of development of the child; the educational approach for students between the ages of 6 to 9 is not a direct continuation of what has gone before, although it is built upon the foundation laid in early childhood.

Three important tendencies emerge at the elementary age: the passage of the child's mind from concrete to abstract reasoning, the birth of a moral sense, and the intensification of the drive to explore one's natural and social environment. The child at this stage of life shows a growing capacity for tackling problems, reasoning, socializing, and harnessing the imagination.

Dr. Montessori pointed out that morality has a practical side that governs social relationships and a spiritual side that presides over the awakening of the child's conscience. Questions of right and wrong are considered in class meetings, which serve as arenas for discussions of fairness, rules, and procedures. The class meetings also encourage cooperative effort. This is the stage during which the child's sense of justice is formed, and these experiences help children build and internalize a moral code.

Physical & Motor Development - Freedom of movement, open work space, and uninterrupted blocks of time for individual and group projects all help to support the 6 to 9-year-old's need to gain control over his or her growing body, as well as the child's drive toward autonomy.

Physical exercise through non-competitive sports and games helps develop large-motor coordination while emphasizing the benefit of teamwork. Children at this age love physical challenges.

Montessori materials are still available to help refine small-motor skills in writing, math, and science. As the child grows, the many hands-on projects of the curriculum will provide increasingly sophisticated and challenging small-motor exercises.

Cognitive Development - As the child matures during these elementary years, the Montessori curriculum focuses on the following:

- The child's growing ability to abstract from concrete information.
- The drive to develop and to be accepted by one's peer group.
- Children's fascination with all aspects of their culture and with the grandeur of the world at large.

- Montessori elementary studies are based on a cultural curriculum which integrates history, geography, mathematics, science, biology, language, art, music, computer, and Bible studies. This interdisciplinary approach helps children build creative and critical thinking skills.

The assignments, projects, and field trips include individual work, small and large group cooperative work, and decision making and evaluation. At the upper elementary level, seeds are planted for advanced concepts in math, as well as physical and earth sciences.

In keeping with Montessori's process-oriented educational philosophy, assessment of a child's performance is based on a systematic collection of information, including observations by teachers and parents, portfolios containing examples of work, and conferences. Parents receive written progress reports at regular intervals, usually three times during the academic year.

Impact of Montessori Elementary Education on the Child - A child who has completed a Montessori elementary program will have developed competence in both the social and cognitive areas. The student will have experienced first-hand the value of working cooperatively in a community where there is trust. The student will have learned that one may use both concrete information and one's own imagination to explore the world, and understands the importance of taking responsibility for one's own work and creating a personal code of morals.

Mathematics - While most math programs are oriented toward the teaching of arithmetic rules and practices, the Montessori Method focuses on developing a comprehensive understanding of the patterns, concepts, and skills underlying the system of mathematics.

Every new concept is presented with manipulative materials and the student is asked to record the steps of the process and demonstrate the underlying thinking for the problem. The goal is for the student to move from the concrete manipulation of objects to making a picture or some other form of representation to the final stages of working with abstract symbols.

How the student feels about mathematics and themselves will have a dramatic effect on their continued learning and future academic and personal success. Students must understand and excel in mathematics if they are to cope with this technological age.

Language – Language is an important part of the entire Montessori curriculum. Its treatment as a separate subject comes only at the point in which it is necessary to give clarity to the child's mind – that is, to give him or her conscious awareness of language so that it may be used more effectively. Once the child has the understanding that writing is a graphic form of language, work will center on spelling, word study, penmanship, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization. The real experience in reading and writing comes through the child's work in other areas of the curriculum, such as geography, history, botany, zoology, etc.

Because children have different cognitive styles, they are provided with a different means for learning to read within the environment. In this way, the child will be able to select the components of reading which fit his or her cognitive style and put them together in the way that is best for him or her. Once reading is mastered, the child expands into learning to love literature and poetry, reading for information and pleasure, and learning to write well-reasoned arguments and creative writing.

Social Studies – Our social studies program flows naturally from within the innate tendency of young children to constantly reach out, seeking to understand the world in which they find themselves. The goal is to teach children in an experiential manner about the way other people live, their points of view, and how to negotiate with one another to live with respect and integrity. The integrated studies curriculum broadens the scope to include geography and history in a formal sense as well as a view of education, entertainment, economics, science, music, and art in integrated studies such as the Middle Ages, Ancient Civilizations, and the Civil Rights Era.

Science – The major goal of the science program at our school is to give children a good foundation on which to build scientific literacy and problem solving skills. Our basic philosophy is that children learn best from active involvement with real materials. Integrated curriculum areas include biology, zoology, botany, microbiology, measurement, earth science, chemistry, and physics. Field trips to outdoor sites are chosen for their relevance to the units being studied. By the time a child leaves the Montessori elementary program, he or she has had experience with the major sciences.

Computer Education – The ultimate goal at MSCT is for children to use computers and other related technology as a medium for creative expression and as a basic tool for communication. Computer skills are taught in conjunction with integrated studies, humanities, writing, science, and math to enhance the use of computer skills in communication and creative activities. The school's connection to the internet is a research base for students.

Art – Our art program is based on a sequential curriculum that stresses expressive outcomes. This curriculum includes both traditional hands-on studio art activities and art history experiences in which students become acquainted with significant late 20th century artists and art movements.

Activities are developmentally appropriate and include virtually every medium. Children explore clay, drawing, figure drawing, pastels, paints, construction, and architecture among others.

Elementary Class Work Goals

Students are expected to complete daily and weekly work goals in the areas of math, language and culture based upon their developmental and academic levels. Teachers will meet with students at the beginning of the school year to plan their work goals based upon their developmental level and their ability to complete work.

First Level Weekly Work Goals – The overall goal for the first level student is to complete 25 to 30 pieces of work per week. Daily work goals should include approximately 2 language, 2 math, and 1 culture work. After completing the weekly work goals, the student has the free choice of work.

Language work can include a phonics reading activity or reading comprehension work, handwriting lessons, grammar, or a word study. Math would include one operations work and one facts work daily. In operations, students learn a concept such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division. In facts, students learn through repetition their math facts in addition and subtraction. Cultural work would be the focus on the current unit of study or something that follows the child's interest.

In addition to daily independent work, small group or whole group lessons would be added to the work plan for the day. Usually there is an immediate follow-up activity from a small group lesson, therefore counting as an independent piece of work.

Initially, the teacher guides the first level student on when and what work to do, but as the year progresses, these students will become more independent.

Second Level Weekly Work Goals – The overall goal for the second level student is to complete between 30 and 35 pieces of work per week. They will maintain a balance of activities in all subject areas in order to develop as a well-rounded, enriched learner and to prevent deficits while promoting strengths.

Weekly work goals include the following:

- Language: 3 phonics, 3 reading, 4 writing/spelling, 2 word study, 3 grammar
- Math: 3 operations, 3 facts, 2 word problems, 2 geometry,
2 fractions/money, 3 practice cards
- Culture: 2 zoology, botany, earth science, 2 history, 2 geography

These weekly work goals will result in approximately 6 to 7 works completed per day. The student should complete six works per day, then have free choice of work. Along with the first levels, the second level students attend small and large group lessons, which may or may not include a follow-up activity. The students are much more independent at planning their work week, but the teacher guides them when necessary.

Third Level Weekly Work Goals – The overall goal for the third level student remains similar to second level students in terms of number of works to complete per week, about 35 finished pieces. More emphasis will be placed upon advanced research and writing activities, including different types of writing and moving from beginning paragraphs to multi-paragraph papers by the end of the year. Likewise, more independent projects may be assigned with required work outside of class time. Assignments will be required and deadlines will be given to aid in the child’s development of responsibility.

These students are now developing as independent, focused learners whose intellect is capable of more abstract work, whose social skills are capable of cooperative group activities, and whose academic skills must be sharpened.

Skills that will be focused upon include:

- Language: Mechanics in writing, handwriting, reading and vocabulary development, grammar, spelling, and oral communication.
- Math: Concepts and proficiency of operations and the related fact work, application of concepts in linear counting, fractions, time, money, measurement, and working with charts and graphs.
- Culture: Independent and group projects relating to the topic of study which may include oral and written reports, an interactive project (such as a game or play), or a drawing or model.

Work Plans – Each student will maintain a monthly work plan to meet their daily independent work goals. The teacher will review the work plan with the student on a weekly basis to ensure the work goals are met. At the conclusion of the month, examples of work completed will be filed in the student’s portfolio for parental review and for tracking the student’s progress.

Arranging for Work during an Absence

Teachers are more than willing to prepare work for the student. However, they need adequate planning time to prepare an individualized work schedule. Please notify the office in advance if you know your child will be absent and include the request for take-home work. Teachers will make copies and have your child’s work available for pick up during their planning period.

Field Trips (Goings Out)

Field trips are off-campus experiences related to the classroom curriculum. Teachers plan a field trip or special project activity for each of their major units of study. A permission slip explaining the objectives of the trip are sent to each parent as trips are planned. The admission price for each field trip will be taken from the field trip fund established at the beginning of the school year by the student’s parent. *State regulations require that all students and chaperones wear a school shirt on field trips.* Parents are welcome to chaperone field trips. In the event you do not desire your child to participate in a school-planned field trip, you are responsible for making other child care arrangements for your child during the event. Children are not permitted to remain at school.

Elementary Class Daily Routine

- 6:30 – 7:30 **Before School Care** - Students who arrive during this time will need to be dropped off at the Primary 1 classroom, which is located in a separate building on the south side of campus. Students will be encouraged to work on game projects or read quietly.
- 7:30 – 8:30 **Before Class Preparation** – Students may now be dropped off in the hallway of the main building and may walk up the stairs to their classroom. Children complete classroom preparation tasks and record their journal topic.
- 8:30 - 8:45 **Raising of the Flags** – After raising the flags, the children open the day with prayer, the pledge of allegiance, and roll call.
- 8:45 – 9:15 **Group Meeting** - The students come together in a circle for journaling. Students may then share their responses to the journal topic. Students mark the passage of time and have an opportunity to discuss any significant upcoming events for the day. A group lesson on the current unit of study is presented.
- 9:15 – 11:15 **Independent Work Time** - The children choose work they have already had a lesson on or they receive a new lesson. The teacher circulates, interacting with students, assessing work, giving lessons, redirecting students.
- 11:15 – 12:00 **Lunch Preparation and Lunch** - Students put away work and prepare for lunch. The classes eat outside picnic-style. In the case of inclement weather, the students eat in their classrooms.
- 12:00 – 1:00 **Physical Education/Outdoor Activities** - The students participate in P.E. twice weekly but spend time on the playground daily. Practical life, animal care, and garden and flower care activities are available for students to gain an appreciation of our natural world.
- 1:00 – 1:30 **Campfire (Story Time)** - Children relax indoors while listening to a chapter book read by a peer.
- 1:30 – 3:00 **Afternoon Work Period** – Students finish work started during the morning work period. Small group lessons in Spanish are scheduled on a weekly basis during this period.
- 3:00 – 3:30 **Community Meeting** – Students straighten their assigned shelves, complete their class jobs, and meet to lead and discuss any class business.
- 3:30 – 5:00 **Recess, Gardening and Afternoon Snack** – Students are dismissed to the playground for outside activities and a nutritious snack.
- 5:00 – 6:00 **After-School Activities** – Students transition to the Activities Room for After-School Care and can choose to work on game projects by themselves or with others, or read a book.

School Policies and Procedures

Registration

The Montessori Schools of Central Texas admits students of any economic and social class, racial and ethnic heritage, and religious beliefs. Children who are between 3 and 6 years of age by their start date, and are completely potty trained and independent, will be considered for our Primary program. Students who are between the ages of 6 and 8 years of age by their start date will be considered for our Elementary program.

The following is a list of the steps in our admission process:

1. Interested parents will need to make an appointment for a tour at our school by calling 254-771-1116. School tours are scheduled Monday-Thursday at either 9:00 or 9:30 a.m. During your visit, we will explain about our school programs in more detail and answer any questions you may have. Tours usually last approximately thirty minutes.
2. As an option, we accommodate observations of our classrooms as a scheduled appointment. Scheduling should be made through the school office. Observation times are individual to each classroom and are scheduled during the morning “work period.”
3. When you decide to apply for admission, complete the application form and return it with the non-refundable \$100 application fee and \$100 assessment fee. Applications will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis as long as spaces are available. Upon receipt of the application, you will be contacted to schedule an assessment for your child, as well as two one-hour class visits that must be completed before the planned start date.
4. At the time of the assessment, you will be given an enrollment packet with registration paperwork. These forms should be submitted as soon as possible, preferably at the time of the first visit, along with the nonrefundable \$400 supply fee, and for elementary students, the \$50 field trip fee.
5. Following our collection of the paperwork and fees, you will be given an enrollment contract, which will need to be initialed, signed, and returned. The headmaster will sign the contract, the yellow copy will be returned to you, and your child will be enrolled and may begin class on the agreed upon start date.

Waiting List – If placement is not immediately available for enrollment, your child may be placed on our waiting list. To be placed on the wait list, the child must be assessed, and the application and assessment fees paid. In order to provide a smooth transition for new students and the existing classes, open enrollment is available June through August and during mid-term in January.

Children who are on the waiting list for the current year must reapply for acceptance the following year. The application fee will transfer to the following year if we are unable to provide a space for your child due to a full class.

Hours of Operation

The Montessori Schools of Central Texas classrooms are open from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and the office is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Children may arrive upon opening, but not later than 8:30 a.m. and may be picked up anytime between 2:30/3:30 p.m. (primary/elementary) and 6:00 p.m.

Late Pick-up - Parents that pick up their child after closing, based upon our school clock, will be assessed a late pick up fee of **\$1.00 per minute late**. You will be billed for the late fee, and payments are due within 24 hours.

To ensure adequate staffing at all times and to comply with *Minimum Standards*, drop-in service is not available.

Tuition and Fees

Tuition and fees are based on an annual rate established by the School Board. Returning parents are encouraged to pay annually and receive a discounted rate. However, there is a monthly payment plan for first-time parents and returning parents, as needed, through the ACH monthly draft. School programs are for five days per week, according to the published school calendar, for a 10-month school term (August – May). Tuition and fees will remain the same for the entire program selected. There will be no reduction of tuition or fees for absences, holidays, withdrawal, or disenrollment. Tuition and fees are not prorated irrespective of the start or drop date during the month.

Late Payment - Monthly payments are through bank drafts (EFT) on the 2nd of each month. Late payment accounts will be charged at a rate of 10% of the monthly payment.

Insufficient Funds - Checks or bank drafts returned for insufficient funds will be charged \$30.00 per return, in addition to the late payment fee. Returned bank drafts and checks will be automatically resubmitted for collection. Bank drafts and checks returned a second time must be redeemed in cash within 24 hours to maintain enrollment.

Withdrawal Procedure

Parents are financially responsible for the entire contract period in which they have enrolled their child. The following steps will be taken to withdraw your child from the school:

1. Submit a 30-day written notice to the headmaster, along with a forwarding address if moving.
2. A statement of your account will be mailed to your forwarding address reflecting any payments due.
3. Parents have ten (10) days to settle their account.
4. After account closure, a final statement will be mailed to the parents.
5. Accounts with outstanding balances will be referred to the Small Claims Court for resolution.

Disenrollment

We reserve the right to disenroll any child if the Board of Directors determines that disenrollment is in the best interest of the school. We also reserve the right to disenroll any child for non-payment of tuition or fees. *The Montessori Method of education is not always appropriate for every child; therefore, we accept each child on a 30-day trial basis. The terms and conditions of the enrollment contract apply regarding tuition and fees.*

Classroom Policies

Transitions

At each level of transition within our school, children are moved according to four determining factors: age, physical changes, social readiness, and cognitive abilities. When a child transitions, he or she should be ready in these areas, as determined on a case-by-case basis.

From Primary to Elementary - Transitions are made only in June or August. There are no mid-term promotions. Set transition months allow for new children to have early group lessons with other new children. Children approaching age 6 are moving from the First Plane of Development into the Second Plane of Development.

Transition Process – The headmaster is involved in the class placement process. The elementary teacher meets with a primary teacher to discuss transition candidates. The child visits the elementary classroom and an assessment is given by the elementary teacher to gauge readiness.

Adjustment Period

All parents should be aware that young children beginning school are just starting to develop social skills, and that our approach assists children in this developmental process. While we aim for peaceful environments each day, some instances of disruptive behavior do take place. This is considered normal since children of this age are learning to get along with others. However, when a child has had several instances of aggressive behavior, the teacher will notify the parents and together they will make a plan to better support the child's needs. If the situation persists, a meeting will be scheduled between the teacher, parents, and headmaster. At this time, a request may be made for further help in the form of outside assessments and/or a shorter day for the child, and a timeline for improvement will be set. If progress is not made within the given timeline, it may be in the best interest of the child for the parents to seek a more structured environment where the child can be more successful.

Safe Environment Policy

There are many ways to foster children's development as they work through the process of forming their personal identities. The focus of our effort is to provide students with the experience of true community involvement, and to help them recognize how to assert their individuality while working in a community based on common Montessori values and principles. The school's environment allows significant space and resources for the children to work out this balance for themselves. Some issues affecting the community as a whole are handled through group meetings, monitored and directed by the teacher and led by the children.

Our school does provide clear boundaries to help children as they develop this balance and to shield children in the community from threatening situations. As part of our safe environment, MSCT will ensure that the teacher provides an environment that enables and encourages children to report threatening behavior. Our community is not able to grow properly with emotional, verbal, or physical threats present. The procedure for handling such a situation varies between the primary and elementary levels.

A safe environment includes:

- An environment that enables the child to report threatening behavior
- An environment where the child knows how to report threatening behavior
- An environment where MSCT investigates and reports to the family should a child tell only their parent

Threatening behavior includes but is not limited to:

- Physical aggression
- Verbal abuse

In the primary environment, a child exhibiting threatening behavior will be immediately corrected, and they will remain with the teacher until they are able to return to work. If the behavior is exhibited three times that day, the child will be removed from the classroom to the office. The child will be allowed to return to the community after it is clear that he/she understands how his/her behavior needs to change to function within the community. This may include a meeting with the headmaster. The parent will be notified. If the behavior occurs again, the parent will be contacted and the child will need to leave the school for the day. Bullying will not be allowed under any circumstance.

At the elementary level, a child exhibiting threatening behavior will be immediately removed to the office. The child will be allowed to return to the community after it is clear that he/she understands how his/her behavior needs to change to function within the community. This may include a meeting with the headmaster. The parent will be notified. If the behavior is exhibited another day, the parent will be contacted and the child will need to leave the school for the day. If a child is asked to leave the school twice, a meeting to discuss and correct the situation will be arranged between the teacher, the parents, and the headmaster. Bullying will not be allowed under any circumstance.

If a child brings an implement to school that could harm another child, the implement will be confiscated and the parents will be called immediately. If that same child returns with another tool that is harmful, the implement will be confiscated, the parents will be called and the child will go home for the day. A meeting to discuss and correct the situation will be arranged between the teacher, the parent, the child, and the headmaster.

Classroom Entrance and Exit Procedures

Students learn more when the environment is free from distractions. Please take note of the entrance and exit procedures to ensure additional safety, as well as limit classroom distractions. To help minimize distractions, tardy students should be brought to the administrative office and an office person will escort the child to the classroom. Cell phone usage is very distracting; therefore, please turn off your cell phone before entering the building or leave it in your car.

Main Building:

Parents of enrolled students will be issued a code to unlock the side entrance door. Visitors to our campus will use the doorbell. Tardy students will get a tardy slip from the office **before** they enter the classroom. As a reminder, students are allowed three (3) unexcused tardies per semester before suspension. Medical and dental appointments are the only excused absences. Students enter and exit the classroom independently.

Security codes will occasionally change and be emailed to parents of currently enrolled students. In order to continue our safe environment, parents are required to keep the code secret from anyone who is not on the authorized pick-up list, including students.

Primary:

Parents of students enrolled in the primary program will pick up their child by knocking on the entrance door. The teacher inside the classroom will answer the door. Authorized pick-up persons will identify themselves and the teacher will lead the child to the door for dismissal. The door to the classroom will be locked as soon as the school program begins each day.

Elementary:

Parents of students enrolled in the elementary program may pick up their child by waiting outside of the second-floor elementary classroom and gaining the attention of the teacher. Authorized pick-up persons will identify themselves and the teacher will ask the child to clean up their work and prepare to leave. Students enter and exit the classroom independently.

All Classes:

Students learn more with fewer distractions. Therefore, parents should say their “goodbyes” at the door and students enter the classroom independently. Communication is important; however, child supervision is that much more important! Teachers have a planning period daily to answer questions. If your communication cannot wait until the afternoon, you may contact the office and we will send your message as soon as possible.

Students need to finish the school portion of each day in order to limit distractions. If your child has a doctor’s appointment or other necessity before school has ended for the day, come to the office and a staff member will quietly bring your child to the office for dismissal.

Primary School Program Hours: 8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Elementary School Program Hours: 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Discipline Policy (TDFPS)

The definition of discipline is teaching or learning; it has no positive or negative meaning itself. The voice of challenging behavior speaks through the child’s actions, their behavior. We begin to help children by listening carefully to what they tell us with their actions. Discipline must be individualized and consistent for each child, appropriate to the child’s level of understanding, and directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.

MSCT uses only positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourages self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include the following: 1) using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior, 2) reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements, 3) redirecting behavior using positive statements, and 4) using brief supervised separation from the group, when appropriate for the child’s age and development, which is limited in duration.

There will be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. Staff members are prohibited from using these types of discipline:

- Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment
- Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training
- Pinching, shaking, or biting a child
- Hitting a child with a hand or instrument
- Putting anything in or on a child's mouth
- Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child
- Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language
- Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed
- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age (Texas Administrative Code, Title 40).

Incident Reports

A report will be presented to you for your signature if your child was injured, or if behavior modification is needed. We enlist the support of our parents to help correct misbehaviors, in order to allow the safest environment possible. Incident reports are kept in each child's file for documentation purposes.

Repeated Misbehaviors

If a child continues to injure themselves, others (to include biting), or the environment, or damage or destroy materials, and MSCT has diligently tried to correct a child's misbehaviors, as well as enlisted the support of the parents, a meeting will be called with the parents to establish a timeline for behavior modification. Should the behavior continue, MSCT will have no choice but to suspend the child each time the behavior is exhibited. Parents will be required to pick up their child within thirty minutes of being called. Suspensions will depend upon the seriousness of the behavior and the agreement between the Director and the parents to modify the behavior.

Damaged or Destroyed Materials

If a child damages or destroys classroom materials or furniture due to misbehavior, the parent will be notified and a request for reimbursement will be given to the parent for prompt payment.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is extremely important to your child's total development. Parents should notify the school office by 9:00 a.m. if their child is unable to attend school. If a student must be away for any length of time for reasons other than illness, parents should contact the school in advance to discuss the situation.

If a child's absence is due to a contagious disease or illness, the parent must immediately contact the school advising us of the condition and situation. This is a licensing regulation, as well as a safety precaution, for all children and staff.

Elementary Students - The State of Texas includes in its definition of legal absences: student illness, sickness, or death in the immediate family, impassable roads, religious observance, or attendance at health care facilities. Other absences are considered truancy.

Students are required by Texas state regulations to attend a minimum of 90% of the number of scheduled school days based upon their first day of enrollment whether or not the absence is excused or unexcused. Therefore, based upon this state regulation, students are permitted 18 absences per academic year (August – May) before he or she is considered delinquent. In addition, students arriving after 9:00 a.m. without a medical excuse are considered absent for that school day. Failure to maintain this requirement will result in the following:

First Year of Enrollment: Should a student fail to attend a minimum of 90% of scheduled school days per first academic year of enrollment the student will remain in the present grade level. Should the student transfer to another school, private or public, a recommendation will be sent to that school noting the non-compliance with the state law.

Second Year of Enrollment: Failure to attend a minimum of 90% of scheduled school days per second academic year of enrollment will result in immediate dismissal from The Montessori Schools. The person(s) financially responsible for the student’s tuition will remain contractually responsible for the remaining tuition balance, as stipulated on the enrollment contract.

**Texas State Mandates for Elementary Absences
(August – May)**

Month of Enrollment	Allowable Absences Thru End of Year
August	18
September	16
October	14
November	12
December	10
January	9
February	7
March	5
April	3
May	1

Tardy Policy

Emergencies are understandable; however, it is imperative that children arrive at school no later than 8:30 a.m. Promptness in a child’s life is very important. Children who arrive late and/or picked up late feel awkward and uncomfortable. Tardiness is disruptive to the teachers and classes in session; therefore, *we can only accept children after 8:30 a.m. with a doctor’s note, or by previously calling the headmaster to advise us of your emergency situation.* Students arriving after 8:30 a.m. must obtain a tardy slip before they enter the classroom. Students are allowed only three excused tardies per semester; after this time, parents are asked to bring their child to school the next day.

Electronic Devices Policy

Cell phones, MP3 players, iPods, cameras, and other electronic devices are not permitted at school. All other items of value should remain at home, as the school and other students will not be responsible for lost or damaged goods.

Dress Policy

The Montessori classroom is a prepared environment. The materials, the furniture, the pictures and posters, the books, and the music have all been selected to create a space which is conducive to concentration, higher-level thinking, and creative expression. Our intention is to always incorporate only the finest and most enduring manifestations of our culture. The clothing worn by the children becomes a part of the environment and can have an effect on the children. Just as we would not hang posters on the wall of popular movies, TV, or video themes, we also ask that you reserve shoes or clothing with such depictions for use outside of the school. We prefer plain T-shirts, but those depicting elements of nature, flora or fauna, the arts, sports, or travel are acceptable. We are confident that the child will not be deprived of fads and pop culture by their exclusion from the classroom.

Comfortable clothing should be worn at all times. Often children want to wear slip-on shoes to school. These shoes can hinder a child's participation in running and climbing activities that are important for their fitness and play. It is recommended that the children wear tennis shoes whenever possible. Children who are unable to tie should wear Velcro style shoes. Children should be dressed in clothing appropriate for the season. Fall and winter clothing should be layered to accommodate the daily temperature changes.

Extra Clothing - Each primary child should have ONE COMPLETE CHANGE OF CLOTHING in his or her cubby at all times to allow for wetting or other accidents (food or paint spills). If an accident should occur, a replacement set of clothes must be brought to school the next day. Extra sets of underclothes are always necessary.

Please label all clothing!

Indoor Shoes - Children need to leave at school a pair of slip-on style indoor shoes for use in the classroom. Suggestions include Velcro tennis shoes, ballet slippers, crocs, etc. House shoes, flip-flops, and slippers are not allowed. MSCT is not financially responsible for misplaced or lost shoes.

Primary & Elementary Students - It is recommended that your child wear simple play clothes to school. Jeans, pants, and shorts allow children the freedom to run and climb on the playground and sit cross legged on the floor in the classroom. Students should wear shorts under dresses and skirts to help prevent embarrassing situations. Clothing with suggestive or inappropriate slogans, and superhero depictions are not permitted. Halter-style tops or spaghetti string tops may be worn with a shirt over or under this style.

Students are required to wear or keep a pair of lace or Velcro style tennis shoes (slip on or backless styles are not permitted) and socks for daily physical education activities. Cowboy boots, jelly shoes, flip-flops, and clogs do not stay on feet at all times, especially when running, nor do they provide enough traction on steps or ladders; therefore, they are not permitted on the playground or in the classroom.

Hair - The length of hair for boys should not fall below the top of the collar of the shirt when loose. Hair paint, colored extensions, permanent colors not of natural-born colors, or distractive styles, such as a Mohawk, should not be worn to school.

All Students - It is our desire to create a distraction free environment for your child; therefore, the following items are not permitted at school:

Backpacks	Bells on shoes or clothing
Flashing lights on shoes	<u>Rub-on tattoos or body stickers</u>
Face painting	Hair paint
Lip gloss or other make-up	Toys or stuffed animals
Money	Costume jewelry
High heel or platform shoes	Flip flop shoes
Cowboy boots	Super-hero or cartoon clothing
Cleats	Roller skate shoes
Purposely squeaky shoes	Extremely long shoe laces
Candy or gum	

Precious stone jewelry should not be worn to school. Aside from the risk of loss, it is a safety issue. Staff members will not be liable for jewelry.

General Procedures

Arrival

Between 6:30 and 8:00 a.m., each parent is to escort their child into the main building and ensure that a staff member has acknowledged their child's arrival.

Car Door Program (Suspended SY 2018-2019)

Between 8:00 and 8:30 a.m., students may be dropped off in front of the building to a staff member. When arriving at our school, parents must pull their vehicles onto 27th Street and form a single line parallel to the curb. Students must be ready to depart the car with breakfast finished. Children should be released from the curb-side of the vehicle only. Parents should remain in their car and a staff member will escort the child from the vehicle. After a child leaves the vehicle, parents should pull out and then the other cars will reposition themselves for drop-off. Staff members will escort children through the playground to their respective classrooms.

Safety Concerns - Please do not pull in front of any vehicles in line, *no U-turns or double parking*, and exit through the American Legion parking lot across the street on the left. Please park in the designated parking lot across from the school if you would prefer to walk your child into school.

If you need to come inside the main building between 8:00 and 8:30 a.m., please park across the street.

Dismissal

You will need to sign your child out at time of pick-up. Elementary students will be released through the front office should you need to pick up your child at times other than normal dismissal periods. Between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m., parents may pick up their child at the Activities Room in the main building by entering through the north-facing side door (main building entrance door).

At the end of the day, when you pick up your child:

- Parents are to wait **outside** the classroom and **quietly** make their presence known to the staff member.
- Parents may then need to wait until the child has completed their work and put it away before departing.
- Visit with other parents **outside** the classroom.
- Adults must accompany their child out the door to the parking lot.
- Please keep cell phones put away while inside the school.

Parents should arrange to have conferences with teachers and administrative personnel at designated conference times or after 3:30 p.m., **NOT** upon arrival or departure of children. This is to ensure adequate supervision of the children at all times, and to ensure confidentiality.

Parents should check their child's lunch boxes or cubbies daily for items that have been sent home. Soiled clothes will be returned for washing in the zip-lock bag provided by the parent.

Children will be released only to their parents or to those whom the parents have listed as authorized pick-up persons. Parents must notify the school if a child's pick-up person is changed. All first-time people picking up a child MUST show the staff a valid photo ID before the child may be released to them. No child may be picked up by anyone under eighteen (18) years of age; **this includes siblings**. Children will not be released to any person that appears under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Also, a child will not be released for transportation on a motorcycle or scooter. The Temple Police Department will be called if this becomes an issue. Children will not be released to staff members of MSCT.

Sign In/Out Log

All persons picking up children from the school are required to sign the child out on the sign-in/out log on a daily basis. A legible printed first and last name and signature must be provided on a daily basis. Staff members will sign your child in each day.

MSCT assumes all biological parents are able to pick up their child from the school, regardless of names listed on the enrollment form. If there is a legal document stating otherwise, MSCT must have this document on file. This includes divorce decrees stating the child is in the custody of one parent, or court restraining orders. MSCT cannot refuse the right of a parent to pick up their child without this documentation.

Early Release from Class

It is important that your child remain every day until the conclusion of class. We understand that occasionally you may need to pick up your child early for a doctor's or dentist's appointment. If your child should need to be released from class early, please go to the school office and inform the office assistant that your child needs an early release. The office assistant will then get your child from their class and bring her/him to the school office for you. This will prevent interruption of the class in progress.

Snack Program

The primary children participate in the preparation of a nutritious morning snack each day. We serve fresh fruits and vegetables for the morning and afternoon snack periods with limited carbohydrates. Snacks which expose our children to interesting and appealing foods originating from the country or food group currently being studied are incorporated.

Morning snack takes place individually or in small groups, with no special time set aside for "snack time." The class has a snack table which accommodates small groups. Children set out their own snack, pour their own drink, and socialize while eating. Children discipline themselves, for the most part, to a single serving and decide with their own "internal clocks" when they are ready to have snack. Likewise, children may choose to continue their work uninterrupted until they finish and then decide to have snack.

Both primary and elementary children are served an afternoon snack each day. This snack is usually eaten by the class as a group while sitting in circle. As with morning snacks, the foods offered in the afternoon are also nutritious and filling.

Lunch

We would like for your child to have the most enjoyable day possible. One of the ways you can help with this is by sending a nutritious lunch. It has been our experience that those children who bring empty-nutrient foods and sweets are those who have a more difficult afternoon.

Involve your child in planning, preparing, and packing lunches to encourage their knowledge about nutrition, their creativity, and to avoid complaints about choices.

A good lunch should provide variety and satisfy one-third of a growing child's daily nutritional requirements. This means one selection from each of these five groups: protein, dairy, fruit, vegetable, and grain.

Children need to bring a **ready-to-eat**, picnic-style lunch in an **insulated lunch bag** each day (no warm-ups). Elementary students are provided a lesson in using the microwave for reheating foods (no cooking). Each lunch brought from home must contain a protein, a grain product, a fruit, and a vegetable. To meet the other nutritional requirements, the school will provide milk for the children's lunches. All food brought to school should be nutritious, fresh, and easy for the child to eat. Foods that are high in preservatives (i.e., Lunchables), sugar, or salt should be eaten away from school. Solid foods should be *precut* into safe and manageable pieces for young throats. *Please do not send drinks in your child's lunch.* It is not necessary to pack eating utensils or napkins as the school will provide these items.

A food allergy emergency plan signed by a physician is required for any child suffering from allergies or related illnesses that prohibit him/her from eating certain foods, including milk. It is the parent's responsibility to provide alternate dairy products for children whose physician has determined an allergy to dairy.

Containers - Lunch items need to be packed in an easy-to-open container that allows the child to open it independently. *Children are not permitted to bring food items in pop-top or metal rimmed lid containers.*

Please note that tomato sauce is not considered a vegetable, nor are fruit flavorings considered a fruit, by state guidelines.

Please exclude drinks, cookies, cake, candy, donuts, fruit roll-ups, pie, Nutella, Jell-O, chips, chocolate pudding, frozen pizza, microwavable meals, food to be cooked, and go-gurt (yogurt, pudding, or other products in squeeze-type tube).

Parents are responsible for ensuring their child brings a lunch to school on a daily basis. If your child happens to forget their lunch, you will be contacted to bring a lunch for your child to school in a timely manner. The school is unable to provide lunches for students.

Lunch Suggestions

Grains

Wheat bread or crackers
Granola
Nutri-grain bars

Protein

Any meat
Peanut butter
Soup (in a thermos)

Rice cakes
Pasta
Chex mix
Graham crackers
Rice

Beans and hotdogs
Boiled egg
Tuna fish
Nuts
Tofu

Fruit

Any fresh fruit
Dried fruit
Applesauce

Vegetables

Any raw vegetable or salad
Any cooked vegetable
Pickles

Rest Period

Following lunch, students will be on the playground for approximately 30-45 minutes. Once the students return inside, those children ages three and four settle down for a rest period. State regulations require that nap mats be waterproof or washable; therefore, if a child destroys their nap mat, the parent will be notified to replace it by the next school day.

Children may bring a small, thin, child-size blanket for resting, if desired. Pillows and sleeping bags/mats are not allowed by state regulation. Blankets must be labeled with your child's name with indelible ink or printed tags. Blankets are to be taken home each Friday to be washed.

Children ages five and older will have a quiet period after playground time that will involve either reading or working independently on their lessons.

Personal Supplies

A personal supply list will be given and explained upon enrollment. It is the responsibility of the parent to bring all personal supplies, marked with the child's name, by the child's first day of class and to maintain consumable supplies and changes of clean clothes. All student are encouraged to wear their school t-shirt on Fridays unless a special spirit day theme has been announced.

Birthday Celebrations

Since every child's birthday is important, their special day can be celebrated at school during the morning group period. A birthday letter will be sent home prior to each child's birthday explaining the celebration and birthday story. Parents are welcome to attend their child's celebration. This event is a celebration, not a party.

On birthday celebration day, our tradition for the birthday child is to present their class with a realistic book in honor of their birthday. This enables the child to learn the value and pleasure of giving rather than just receiving. Parents wishing to participate in this tradition should inscribe the book with the child's name and birth date in the cover of the book. We appreciate books of interest to our current units of study, or with realistic pictures.

Children can enjoy a special birthday snack at school. In an effort to adhere to a more nutritional approach and to avoid difficulties with allergies to peanuts, chocolate, etc., and with sweets (cake, cookies, etc.), please do not bring traditional birthday cakes, cupcakes, candy, ice cream, or cookies. We suggest a creative nutritious birthday treat.

Snack Ideas for Birthday Celebrations

Mini muffins
Popcorn
Cheese and crackers
Banana bread
Fruit and dip tray
Vegetable and dip tray
Fruit or sausage kolaches

Animals

Animals are included as an integral part of the Montessori environment. In our environments, you will find a variety of fish, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. The children receive valuable lessons in caring for the needs of their classroom pets, and are then allowed to care for the fish and mammals in our environments. After caring for the animals, children are directed to wash their hands.

School Pictures

Each fall, individual and class school pictures are taken by a trustworthy photographer. These photographs are available for purchase from the photographer's company at a reasonable cost. Parents are under no obligation to make this purchase.

Release of Student Information

Written parental consent must be obtained for releasing information to community agencies or professional personnel outside of the school. Records such as test scores, health data, attendance records, and narrative progress reports will be forwarded to the school to which the student transfers upon receipt of written consent of the parents, provided that their tuition balance is current.

Confidential information about any child or parent shall be privileged communication and shall be respected with regard to utmost confidentiality.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

We believe that parents are the child's first teachers. We encourage close relationships between parents and staff members so that we can learn about each child and his or her unique qualities, and also understand the family customs and traditions that have helped to shape his or her life.

At conferences, we hope a discussion and exchange of ideas will occur. Observations about the child's cognitive, physical, social, and emotional growth are presented, and a plan for helping with the child's present challenges may be established. Conferences are scheduled throughout the year and are convened formally at least twice during the school year. In order to ensure that the parent(s) and teacher may speak freely, children are not part of the conference and alternate child care should be arranged.

Class Observations

Parents are welcome to observe their child's classroom (the best days to observe are Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday). An observation chair is provided in each classroom and mothers are welcome to nurse their babies during observation periods. There are also observation booths available with one-way mirrors outside of certain classrooms for use at any time. Most children

enjoy having a parent to visit - meeting friends and teachers, seeing their favorite activity, and experiencing school Montessori-style!

It is helpful to remember, however, that children do not act the same when their parents are in class with them - behavior can be surprising. Please recognize that observations are not true indicators of a child's progress within a group.

Please stop by the school office before observing your child's class to receive an observation form. We appreciate your comments on the form. Please remain in the observation chair during your time in the classroom.

Parent Communication

MSCT Website: montessorischoolsofcentraltexas.com

The school website is a good source for general information about MSCT. It includes, among other information, school events, monthly newsletters and calendars, and other helpful links. The website also has a Parent Portal that is only accessible with a password. The password will be emailed to all parents at the beginning of each semester, and may also be provided upon request. You may also contact the school headmaster through email at the following addresses:

director@templemontessori.com Dr. Jerry O'Donnell, Headmaster

Group E-mails

The office sends out weekly emails to families regarding weekly lesson plans, service opportunities, updates on school activities, and reminders of school events. Families are strongly encouraged to regularly check the email account they provided the school on the Enrollment Information form.

Calendar and Newsletter

Parents will be sent a copy of the new calendar and newsletter each month via email. Both the newsletter and calendar are posted to our website for your review on the Parent Portal page. Hard copies are available upon request.

Messages

Staff members can be reached by calling the front office after 3:00 p.m. daily at (254) 771-1116. The office personnel will connect you with the requested staff member, if that individual is available. If not, you may leave a request for the person to call you. If the office personnel are unable to answer the phone at the time of your call, please leave a voicemail with your name, number, and reason for calling. Voicemails will be checked on a daily basis.

Messages for a teacher or special instructions for any day should be written and given to the office assistant to be distributed to your child's teacher. Verbal messages **cannot** be acted upon, as they are less effective and parts may be forgotten by either speaker or listener.

Inclement Weather Advisories

Our concern is always for the safety of both child and adult. Our weather procedures have always been developed with safety as our primary concern.

During the winter season, please remember the following: for emergency school closings or late opening information, listen to local radio and/or television stations. Our school will follow the same weather closing procedures as Temple ISD. Late openings will be based on our 6:30 a.m. normal operating time. Therefore, with a two-hour delay, the school will open at 8:30 a.m.

Health and Safety

Immunizations and TB Requirements

Each child enrolled in The Montessori Schools of Central Texas must meet applicable immunization requirements specified by the Texas Department of Health. All immunizations required must be for the child's age and must be completed by the date of admission.

As needed, The Bell County Health Department can require that children enrolled in a child-care facility be screened for tuberculosis.

Hearing and Vision Screening

We provide an annual hearing and vision screening to meet the requirements of the Texas Department of Public Health. If a child is four years of age or older by September 1st, a screening must be given. They are administered at no charge and parents will be notified of the results.

Illnesses

Staff members are unable to accept a child who is ill or who has a condition that is questionable. Parents should keep children home who have experienced the following symptoms within the previous 24-hour period:

Fever (over 101°F)	Undiagnosed rash
Diarrhea	Eye infection
Vomiting	

Children returning from an absence should be well enough to participate in the full program, including outside play, or they should remain at home until this is possible.

Children who become ill during the school day will need to be picked up within 30 minutes of notification.

Parents must leave correct information regarding work and THREE emergency numbers where someone can be reached at all times. As changes occur, parents are to inform the school of any updates in address or phone numbers.

Absence Notes - Upon a child's return to school after a contagious illness, a physician's note is required for re-admittance. Please notify the school office if your child will be absent due to an illness, or for any other reason.

Students should only have appointments during the school day when it is absolutely necessary. When an appointment does occur within the school day, please advise your child's teacher with a written note of the time you will be picking up your child.

Medical Procedures and Forms

If your child requires medication, you must complete a medication documentation form and give the form and medication, in its original container, to a staff member. **DO NOT** place medication in your child's lunch bag. Medication will be administered after the lunch period. We are unable to dispense medicines **as needed**. Over-the-counter medications will be administered according to the label directions. Please be sure to label all medication with your child's name and date. Medication documentation forms can be completed up to a 30-day period.

To ensure students are properly supervised at all times, we are unable to administer medication such as breathing treatments and/or other medical devices.

First Aid

Every effort will be made to ensure the safety of your child, but accidents may occur. Parents will be notified for emergency situations. If a parent cannot be reached, the emergency numbers you have indicated will be called. The child's doctor is the next to be called if emergency numbers are not reached. Upon the advice of the doctor, or if the need warrants such a trip, the child may be taken to the emergency room of the nearest hospital. Health records and emergency treatment release forms will be carried to the hospital. Parents will be asked to meet the child and staff member at the hospital as soon as possible.

Emergency Preparedness Plan

The purpose of the emergency preparedness plan is to ensure the safety of children enrolled in MSCT during an emergency, with respect to emergency evacuation and relocation. This plan addresses several types of emergencies that could occur in this area, is not limited to only natural events such as tornadoes, floods, wildfires, or earthquakes.

Employees of MSCT will be made aware of the plan during their initial orientation. Parents of enrolled students will be informed at the parent orientation meeting and a copy will be made available for review upon request.

The headmaster is responsible for implementing the emergency preparedness plan. In the headmaster's absence, the staff member assigned to be in charge will lead the emergency evacuation and relocation, if necessary. The assistant teachers in each classroom are responsible for the following items: roll-call sheets, the emergency notebook with contact information that includes the names of parents and telephone numbers, and a first aid kit and flashlight.

The emergency preparedness plan will be practiced as a minimum as follows:

Fire Drill: A fire drill will be practiced monthly with a safe evacuation of three (3) minutes or less.

Lock Down Drill: A lock down drill will be practiced at least once every three months.

Severe Weather: A severe weather drill will be practiced at least once every three months.

All drills will be documented to include the date of the drill, time of the drill, and length of time for the evacuation or relocation.

Emergency Evacuation and Relocation Diagrams are posted in each classroom and at exit doors from each building. In an emergency, the staff will move the children to the designated safe area for that type of emergency. Children will be evacuated in a quiet and orderly manner to the designated exit in the classroom and led to the safe area by the responsible staff member. Children will not be prodded to move but will be verbally prompted to move quickly by walking to the designated location.

The designated alternate shelter for MSCT is American Legion Post 133, 1300 South 25th Street, Temple, Texas 76504, Telephone 254-778-9789.

The emergency telephone number for MSCT is 254-394-1522. Children evacuated or relocated from MSCT will be accounted for by the daily roll-call sheet maintained in each classroom.

Fire Safety

Our policy is to provide for the physical well being and safety of every child, and to regularly instruct each child and staff member in fire safety. The school meets all fire requirements as mandated by law. Monthly fire drills are conducted during the school day. There is to be no smoking anywhere on the premises, school grounds, or on field trips at any time.

Partnership with Parents

*“Montessori is a way of life encompassing the development of the whole child.
The parent, therefore, has a vital role to play in the educational process.”*

*David Kahn, President,
North American Montessori Teachers Association*

Children are largely dependent on their families for identity, security, care, and a general sense of well being. Good communication between parents and teachers helps to build mutual understanding, which provides consistent guidance for the child. A partnership between parents and teachers forms a basis for mutual problem solving about concerns, behaviors, and observations. It enhances the learning process in both the home and the school by strengthening ties.

Parent Forums

Parent education events are held regularly on a variety of topics; some are classroom oriented and some are open to the entire school. We encourage your attendance, as an understanding of Montessori theory and curriculum enhances your child’s development within MSCT and your home. Parents will be asked to attend two types of events:

- **Parent Orientation** – An introduction to The Montessori Schools and what it offers each family.
- **Parent Enrichment Meetings** – Each class will hold individual meetings to explore the Montessori curriculum and how it benefits each child.

At least one Silent Journey or Discovery event will be offered during each school year. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend a Silent Journey and/or a Discovery event as early in their child’s Montessori experience as possible. Childcare is available for students enrolled at MSCT during parent forums.

Parent Involvement

All quality schools need volunteer and financial resources to help achieve their goals. The school is a nonprofit organization that has only two basic means of support: the dedication of the faculty and staff, and the commitment and generosity of our families. Thanks to the outstanding support of many people, our school has accomplished a great deal since its founding. It is our goal to maintain this commitment and service to the children of our school. We invite you to join us and be a vital part of our school. We need your continued support, and your children will reap the benefits of your participation.

Parents are encouraged to become actively involved in the school as parent volunteers. Parents are asked to assist with fundraising events and work with the administration and faculty to support classroom activities. Parents complete various volunteer jobs around the school and grounds, aid in the classrooms, and consult with the Board of Directors in many areas. Parents or other designated adult family members are asked to volunteer 20 hours per academic year per family.

Parent Committees

Parent participation plays a significant and crucial role at The Montessori Schools of Central Texas. It provides a means through which parents can meet and get to know each other better and work together with the staff and students for the benefits of all children. This list below summarizes major volunteer activities. Committees meet at scheduled intervals. Please check your monthly newsletter and/or calendar for specific dates and times.

Helping Hands Committee - This committee assesses the needs of our facility and implements necessary maintenance and repairs. They endeavor to improve the school buildings and surrounding grounds. Parents with an interest in gardening and/or landscaping and who are willing to assist classrooms with gardening projects and campus beautification are also welcome.

Development and Advertising Committee – This committee administers and directs annual fundraising and advertising campaigns. They coordinate and conduct special fundraising events, as well as generate and implement new ideas for fundraising projects.

Classroom and Staff Support - The foundation of the classroom support responsibilities include welcoming new parents, recruiting volunteers within their class for school events or special class projects, and assisting with classroom parties and teacher appreciation activities.

Donations

Donations made to the school are tax deductible. MSCT is a 501(c)(3) corporation. You will receive from the office a receipt of donations for tax purposes. Non-monetary donations can also be documented for tax purposes. Forms for this purpose are available from our front office personnel.

Policies for Staff and Parent Volunteers

Ethics and Confidentiality Code

When Maria Montessori says to follow the child, she directs us to consider the needs of children, and to provide for those needs. We know that children need guidance, and that they need role models to follow. In our capacities as MSCT staff members and as volunteers, we are obligated by our hearts and minds to continually act in ways that we would have the children emulate. In this same spirit, everyone who works at the school, whether as staff member or volunteer, should be aware that all information read, overheard, or observed is strictly confidential and should not be shared with anyone that is not authorized to receive that information.

Supervision Policy

No child is to be left unsupervised at any time. The teacher's responsibility begins when the parent or responsible adult brings that child into the classroom or to the playground and does not end until the parent or responsible adult collects the child at the end of the day.

Driver Policy

Parents are to be responsible for arranging for the transportation of their children to and from school at the beginning and the end of each school day. The Montessori School staff and employees may not provide transportation for students to and from the MSCT facility at the beginning and end of each school day.

Chaperone Responsibilities for Field Trips

If you would like to volunteer to assist on one of our field trips or if you would like to have your elementary child participate in our field trips, please note the following chaperone responsibilities and requirements:

1. The entire group travels in a caravan to and from the field trip site.
2. Children may not sit in the front seat of a vehicle unless the vehicle is without an air bag or it can be turned off.
3. Children must be seat-buckled at all times.
4. Children must use an inside voice while in a vehicle.
5. When arriving at our destination, children should be dropped off at the entrance, if possible. If crossing through a parking lot, children and adults should hold hands and walk to the entrance.
6. Children of chaperones must follow the class rules. No special favors, foods, gift shop items, etc.
7. At least one adult in the vehicle must have a cell phone. Cell phone numbers are collected by a teacher prior to the field trip for communication purposes.
8. To participate in a school field trip, children must be enrolled in the Montessori Schools of Central Texas lower elementary class, or be at least 18 years of age to be a chaperone. As this is an extension of our elementary learning experience, childcare arrangements for siblings or other non-participants will need to be made prior to field trips.
9. No smoking permitted to, during, and from field trips, per *Minimum Standards*.

Abuse and Neglect Policy

If an employee or MSCT volunteer suspects that a child is being abused or neglected, Texas law requires the staff member to report it to the TDFPS or a law enforcement agency.

To help deter an act of abuse or neglect, all employees undergo a criminal history check that includes a search of the TDFPS central registry of reported cases of child abuse and neglect. Our staff also undergoes FBI fingerprinting, as required by TDFPS. The staff does not prevent parents from visiting the facility during its hours of operation, and interactions between staff and the children can be observed.

Drug and Alcohol Policy

The Montessori School's policy dictates that MSCT be free of alcoholic beverages or controlled substances. Each employee undergoes a pre-employment drug screen and random drug screens while employed.

Sexual Harassment Policy

MSCT seeks to assure that it maintains a workplace free of sexual harassment and intimidation. The school has a zero-tolerance policy for vulgar, abusive, humiliating, or threatening language, practical jokes, or other inappropriate behavior in the workplace. MSCT will not tolerate the harassment of any employee or non-employee by another employee or non-employee or Board member for any reason. Non-employee violators of this policy are subject to expulsion from the school facilities when harassment occurs on the premises. Furthermore, MSCT may report violators to the appropriate authority for civil action. Any harassment observed should be reported promptly to the school director.

Conflict Resolution Policy

The staff and administration of MSCT desire to support and promote healthy and timely communications focused toward developing solutions in all interactions. For answers to your questions and solutions for your concerns, please refer to the following items below for direction:

Matter related to:

Your child's progress
Classroom activities and schedules
Classroom procedures
Montessori education
Academic policies
Parent conferences
Parent education

Admissions information
Classroom observation schedule
Registration
School calendar
School schedules
Student records
Student finances
State regulations

First contact:

Classroom teacher

Office assistant

Headmaster

Facilities
Faculty and staff
Fundraising
Governance
Legal matters
Montessori education

Parent organization activities
Volunteering
Annual Giving program

Parent coordinator

If more help is needed, resolutions should follow these steps:

1. If you have questions regarding your child, ask the teacher. Please leave a message on the voice mail system or in writing. Teachers are your first resource to answer your questions and resolve your concerns.
2. If the communication with the teacher by telephone does not answer your questions or resolve your concerns, please request a parent conference with the teacher.
3. If the communication with the teacher by telephone or conference does not resolve the issue, please address your question to the headmaster, who can assist in resolution of the problem. Written positions will be requested from both parties.

We desire to provide a healthy and safe school experience for all students. When areas of concern are addressed quickly, collaboratively, and with care, we will be able to support your student and family in developing appropriate solutions.

Acknowledgment of Operational Policies

MSCT will add or change operational policies during the year as necessary. You will be given written copies of these changes. Just as you have acknowledged the receipt of the operational policies in this Parent Handbook on the Student Record form, we will request you sign your understanding of any revised policies. It is a regulation of TDFPS that this acknowledgement is kept in your child's file.