



COMMUNITY
MONTESSORI SCHOOL
- est. 1981 -

Parent Handbook

Welcome! To all of our new and returning families, we extend a warm welcome. We are so happy you have chosen Community Montessori School and are honored to be partners with you in the education of your child.

This Parent Handbook contains information about our school policies and procedures. It's important that you read it thoroughly and keep it handy for any questions that might come up over the course of the year. Note that in the interest of conciseness, CMS uses "parent" throughout this handbook to refer to any parent or legal guardian of a student. The handbook is available in the parent section of our website at www.community-montessori.org.

A Montessori education fosters a love for learning that lasts a lifetime. We look forward to a wonderful year filled with joy and growth for your child and hope you are excited to be a Montessori parent!

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ABOUT CMS

Community Montessori School was founded in 1981 and is the only AMI-member school in Georgetown. The school moved to its permanent home on Pleasant Valley Drive in 2000. We are proud of our history, our Montessori roots, and our beautiful 18-acre campus!

As a nonprofit 501(c)(3) educational organization, policies are established by the Board of Directors. The Executive Director is responsible for implementation and daily operations, consistent with Montessori philosophy. We wholeheartedly embrace the Montessori approach and are affiliated with AMI (Association Montessori Internationale), the organization founded by Dr. Maria Montessori to preserve the legacy of her vision.

CMS is a member school of both AMI-USA and AMITOT (AMI Teachers of Texas) and is licensed by the state as a childcare facility. We comply with all state regulations and follow AMI guidelines for best Montessori practices regarding class size, age groupings, staffing, classroom materials, and teaching methods.

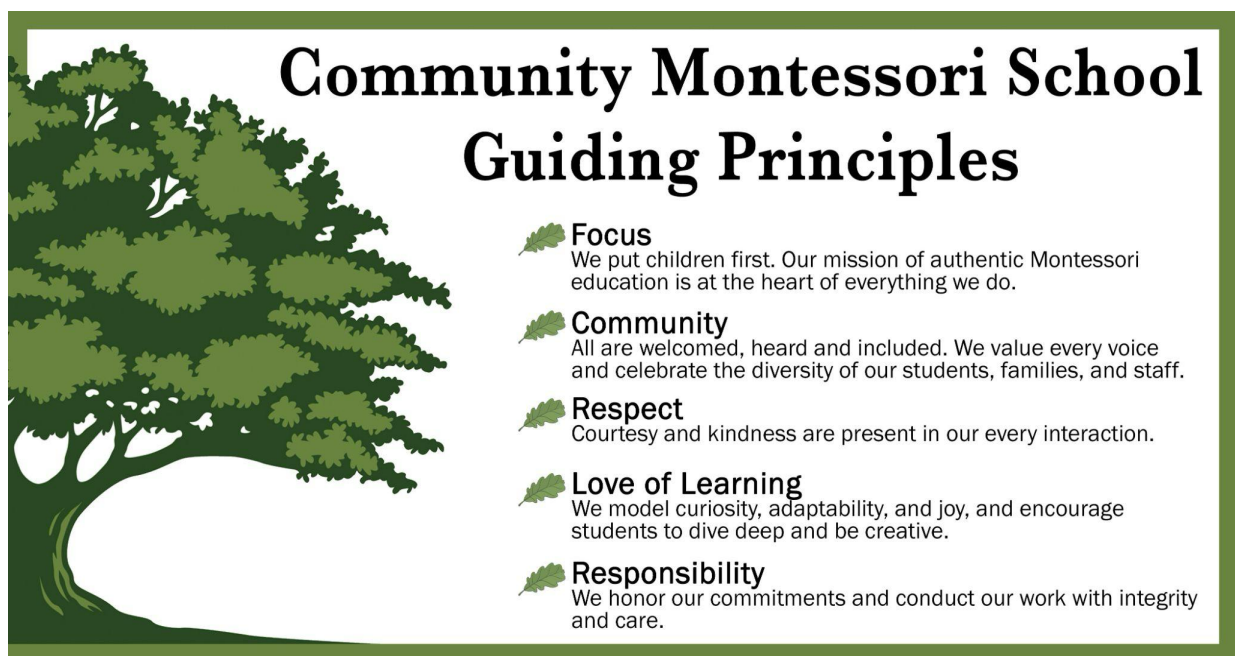
Mission, Values and Guiding Principles

The mission of Community Montessori School is to provide an authentic Montessori education in a nature-rich environment that cultivates collaboration, curiosity, a love of learning, and respect for oneself, others, and the world.

Our values reflect our dedication to the Montessori approach. As a school community, we value:

- the unique individuality of every child and the potential within them
- a culture of respect that recognizes the value of kindness
- the child's innate desire to learn, create, belong, and express themselves
- purposeful and meaningful work
- personal integrity, professionalism, and honesty
- connection with the natural world and stewardship of the environment
- education for a just and peaceful world

These guiding principles inform our decisions and actions every day. All members of the CMS community - students, families, and staff members alike - are expected to uphold, honor, and embody these principles in our daily work as a school.



The Montessori Approach

Dr. Maria Montessori was an Italian physician, innovator, and educator. She identified four distinct stages of development from birth through adulthood and created an educational system based on how children naturally learn. The first Montessori school opened in Rome in 1907. Following worldwide acclaim for the success of her method, Dr. Montessori traveled extensively, advocating for children and promoting a new perspective on education until her death in 1952. Today, there are more than 5,000 Montessori schools in the U.S., and the Montessori method is embraced in over 100 countries worldwide.

At CMS, our vision is to shape a peaceful and sustainable future through authentic Montessori education. We have deep respect for children as unique individuals and follow Montessori principles in providing:

- Prepared classroom environments tailored to specific developmental levels
- Mixed-age communities that foster collaboration and peer learning
- Child-initiated choice of activity within the guidelines of the community
- Uninterrupted blocks of work time that cultivate deep concentration
- A guide trained in the Montessori method and certified for the age level of the class
- An appropriate number of children in each class to support healthy social development

The Montessori approach calls for children to learn through active engagement with the world around them, rather than through passive experiences such as sitting and listening. We use specific Montessori materials that guide students toward “key” concepts through individualized, hands-on activity and exploration.

“The goal of early childhood education should be to activate the child’s own natural desire to learn.”- Maria Montessori

The Montessori method is holistic, encompassing everything from motor coordination to language development and social-emotional learning. We do not test students on academic subjects; instead, we look for demonstrated skills. Rather than comparing students to one another, we gauge their accomplishments based on personal growth and strive to nurture each individual’s unique talents and potential. By engaging in work that captures their interest, the Montessori environment fosters intrinsic motivation, independence, curiosity, and responsibility.

Diversity & Nondiscrimination Statement

At CMS, we celebrate diversity and are committed to creating an inclusive environment for all. Our diverse community forms a rich foundation that is essential to educating children on their path to maturity and global citizenship. Interactions across our entire school community are guided by the principles of respect, equity, inclusion, humanity, peace, and personal responsibility.

CMS prohibits discrimination and harassment of any kind, regardless of race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, disability status, gender identity or expression, or any other characteristic protected by law. This policy applies to all aspects of the school, including but not limited to employment, admissions, educational activities, and the administration of school policies and procedures.

*“The needs of mankind are universal. Our means of meeting them create the richness and diversity of the planet. The Montessori child should come to relish the texture of that diversity.”
- Maria Montessori*

PROGRAMS

Montessori Levels

CMS classroom communities are organized around the developmental stages described by Dr. Maria Montessori and include children of mixed ages. Additional information about specific class levels can be found on the [CMS Website](#).

We offer the following Montessori environments:

- **Casita** (for children 12 to 15 months up to 3 years)
- **Children's House** (for children 2.5 to 3 years up to 6 years)
- **Lower Elementary** (for children 6 to 9 years, or first to third grade)
- **Upper Elementary** (for children 9 to 12 years, or fourth to sixth grade)

Additional Programs

Extended Hours: CMS offers limited extended care before and after the school day. These programs supplement the Montessori day and, while consistent with Montessori principles like mixed-age groupings and choice of activity. They are not staffed by Montessori guides and do not include the use of Montessori materials. Pre-registration is required.

- **Early Care** allows students to arrive between 7:30 and 7:50 a.m.
- **After Care** allows students to depart between 3:15 and 5:15 p.m.

Summer Camp: CMS offers a summer camp each year in June and July, featuring a blend of outdoor play and themed activities. Registration information is available in January. Summer camp is open to currently enrolled students. Alumni and siblings of current students may register as space allows.

Enrichments: Enrichment classes are offered after school for students in the Children's House and Elementary levels. Dates and registration information are shared in our weekly Tuesday e-newsletter. Please note that CMS partners with outside providers to offer these optional programs. While we vet these partners and work hard to ensure alignment with the CMS mission, they are responsible for the content and activities.

Admissions & Class Placement

Admissions, including class placements and start dates, are coordinated by the CMS Director of Enrollment & Outreach. CMS is fortunate to have a faculty of outstanding, certified Montessori educators. Each classroom community upholds Montessori standards and is equipped with a full array of Montessori materials. Classroom placements are carefully considered and thoughtfully made by our administrative team. It is important for parents to trust the professional judgment involved in this process. Placements are made at the sole discretion of Community Montessori School. Enrollment cannot be contingent upon placement in a particular classroom or with a specific guide. All admissions-related questions should be directed to the Director of Enrollment & Outreach.

Student Transitions

Student transitions are planned by our administration and coordinated by the Director of Enrollment & Outreach, with input from the Executive Director, guides, and parents. The process typically includes observations, orientation meetings for parents, and visits for students. In general, student transitions occur within the following time frames:

- **Casita to Children's House:** between 2.5 and 3 years
- **Children's House Nap to Children's House Extended Day:** between 3.5 and 4.5 years
- **Children's House to Lower Elementary:** upon completion of year three in the Children's House classroom, typically at the start of the school year in August
- **Lower Elementary to Upper Elementary:** upon completion of year three in Lower Elementary, typically at the start of the school year in August

Learning Support Program

The Montessori method is known for offering a multi-sensory approach where individuals learn at their own pace. Our classrooms accommodate a range of ages and provide various opportunities for concepts to be learned in different ways. When students experience difficulties or are not progressing, their guide will first seek ways to address the situation within the classroom. If classroom interventions do not result in progress over a given period, the guide will discuss the issue with parents and request assistance from CMS Administration and the Learning Support Center staff.

The Learning Support Center at CMS is designed to support students ages 5 and up who benefit from the Montessori classroom but struggle academically. Our focus is on early intervention and supporting learners within the Montessori framework. We utilize observation, informal assessments, and progress monitoring throughout this process. However, we do not provide formal evaluations or diagnostic services. If a formal evaluation is required, CMS will request that families engage outside professionals for services such as dyslexia screenings, speech evaluations, ADHD and executive functioning assessments, and other related assessments.

CMS employs a Learning Support Coordinator with the skills and training to provide effective literacy support. We also collaborate with outside providers engaged by families. Fees for learning support services are billed through FACTS as part of the student's tuition plan. Services offered during the school year include:

- **Early Intervention** – Guide referral required. Includes individual assessment, small group literacy interventions, progress monitoring, and reporting. Monthly fee: \$250
- **Tutoring** – For students with a formal evaluation/diagnosis. Includes individual and small group tutoring sessions of 45 minutes to 1 hour, 2 to 4 times per week depending on student needs. Monthly fee: \$500

All CMS students in their full cycle year of Children's House and those in their beginning cycle year of Lower Elementary will be informally assessed to identify signs of potential learning differences. For some students, targeted in-class early intervention enables them to overcome difficulties and make progress. When intervention does not lead to improvement, a formal assessment is necessary to determine the student's needs and develop an appropriate support plan.

If a student requires support beyond what our staff can provide, CMS will request that parents seek outside assistance. We ask families engaged in outside services to fully disclose results to our administration and staff so we can provide appropriate classroom support. If a requested assessment or service is not obtained and the school determines that the student's needs cannot be met within our program, CMS reserves the right to terminate enrollment or withdraw re-enrollment options for that student.

SCHOOL OPERATIONS

School Hours

CMS Hours of Operation are 7:30 a.m. to 5:15 p.m.

- **Office Hours:** 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- **School Day:** 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
- **Before School Care:** 7:30 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.
- **After School Care:** 3:00 p.m. to 5:15 p.m.

Addressing Staff

At CMS, employees are addressed by their first names. This practice aligns with Montessori principles and fosters strong relationships, removes language barriers, helps children feel more confident approaching adults, and promotes mutual respect - a cornerstone of our school mission. All staff members should be addressed by their first names only, without the use of honorifics or formal titles.

Attendance & Absences

If your child will be absent, please notify us by emailing attendance@community-montessori.org. Regular attendance is vital to your child's learning. CMS observes scheduled closure days throughout the school year, as indicated on our school calendar. Family trips and vacations should be planned during these school breaks. If your child has an excessive number of absences, their guide will contact you to discuss how this may be affecting their learning. Excessive absences can significantly impact a child's progress and may jeopardize continued enrollment.

Arrival & Departure

CMS utilizes a car line system for arrival and departure with safety as our top priority, followed by efficiently moving cars through the line. Your parent orientation packet includes car tags and a map with instructions. Please display your car tag visibly to help us direct traffic. If someone other than yourself will be dropping off or picking up your child, please provide them with a car tag and ensure they understand our school rules and procedures.

Car Line Safety Rules

- Do not pass other vehicles in the car line.
- Drivers must remain inside their vehicles at all times.
- Cell phones and other devices must be off or stowed while in the car line -this applies to children as well.
- Follow the posted speed limit.
- Students must remain seated in their car seats until CMS staff safely escort them from the vehicle.

Arrival

Arrival time is from **8:00 a.m. to 8:15 a.m.** CMS staff will be outside, in all weather, to greet children and escort them safely from car to classroom. Students arriving after **8:20 a.m.** are considered tardy and must be checked in at the school office. Late arrivals must park in front of the office, call the office to notify staff, and wait in the car for assistance. Parents must remain with their child; children cannot be left unattended in the office. Excessive tardiness negatively impacts learning and may jeopardize continued enrollment.

Departure

Departure time is from **3:00 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.** Students will be seated on benches outside and escorted to cars by staff. For safety, please refrain from lengthy conversations in the car line, as staff need to focus on student safety. Please be considerate of others waiting by promptly exiting the departure area after pick-up. If you require additional time, pull into a designated parking area to avoid blocking traffic.

Early Pickup

If you need to pick up your child before 3:00 p.m., please call the office or email attendance@community-montessori.org in advance. When you arrive, park in front of the office and come inside to sign out your child. Then we will get your child from their classroom and bring them out to your car. Please allow 10–15 minutes for this process. If you arrive after 2:30 p.m., please join the regular car line, as staff are already preparing for dismissal.

Late Pick-Up

Late fees apply based on pick-up time as detailed in the CMS Tuition and Fee Schedule. Staff will wait with your child if you are late. If you are more than 5 minutes late, your child may be taken to After School Care (space permitting) or kept in the office.

Extended Hours Programs

Children enrolled in Early Care need to be walked by their parent to the designated Early Care classroom between **7:30 a.m. and 7:50 a.m.** If you arrive after 7:50 a.m. please join the car line to drop off your child. Children enrolled in After Care can be picked up anytime between **3:15 p.m. and 5:15 p.m.** Parents should park and walk to the After Care classroom door to sign out their child. If you ever want to pick your child up in the afternoon car line, please call the office before 2:30 p.m. so we can have them at the departure benches waiting for you. Please be punctual to avoid late fees, which are assessed after 5:15 p.m., as per the CMS Tuition and Fee Schedule.

Thank you for your cooperation in keeping our children safe and ensuring smooth arrival and dismissal routines.

Authorized Pick-Up Persons

Enrollment forms ask parents to list individuals authorized to pick up their child from school. CMS assumes biological parents have this right unless legal documentation on file states otherwise. Please note that authorization for pick-up is different from emergency contacts. If someone other than a parent will be picking up your child, they must be listed as an Authorized Pick-Up Person on your child's enrollment form. Staff may ask for a photo ID if the person is unfamiliar to them.

To add or remove someone from your child's Authorized Pick-Up list, please contact the CMS office. Please be aware that CMS staff members cannot be added as Authorized Pick-Up Persons without a signed release waiver on file. For any questions or clarifications, please reach out to the CMS Director of Enrollment & Outreach.

Communication & Contact Info

The main number for the school is **512-863-7920**. Our office is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Messages received after office hours will be answered on the following school day. Families with children enrolled in After Care may contact CMS staff after office hours by dialing the main number and entering the class extension code at the prompt. Please note that After Care staff are actively caring for students, so we ask that these calls be kept brief.

- **Up-to-date contact information** - It is very important that we have current phone numbers and email addresses for family members. Please contact our office if you need to update your family's information.
- **Emergency messaging service** - We use a text messaging system to contact parents and staff in the event of a weather closure or other emergency, such as a building evacuation or medical emergency on campus. In the case of a medical emergency, confidentiality and respect for the privacy of those involved are of paramount importance. All parents and staff are automatically enrolled in this system and cannot opt out
- **School directory** - Families may choose to participate in the CMS directory to support social connections among classmates. This directory is intended solely for school approved purposes. Inappropriate use of this communication tool, including but not limited to solicitation or sharing content that may be perceived as inflammatory or disrespectful, may be considered a violation of our Code of Conduct.
- **Communicable illness alerts** - These are emailed to families when their child has been exposed to a communicable illness, as required by state authorities.

For questions specific to your child, please email your child's guide directly. You can expect a response within 24 hours, or by the end of the next school day if it's a weekend or holiday. Visit the [CMS website](#) and [Facebook page](#) for calendars, events, and more information, including this handbook!

Conference Days & Observations

Conference Days are scheduled twice a year, in the fall and spring. This is a time when parents and guides can meet to discuss student progress. Conference reports are provided and become part of the student's record. Additional meetings, video calls, or phone calls may be requested throughout the year if concerns or questions arise. It is essential for parents to remain engaged and informed. **Conference attendance is required.** Only one conference per child is provided, and co-parents are expected to attend the same conference.

Parent observations are scheduled through the CMS office and offer a meaningful way to engage with your child's education. Observations are available at the Children's House, and Elementary levels and are scheduled for a 30-minute period during the morning work time. Observers must check in at the office to receive a visitor badge and observation guidelines before being escorted to the classroom. Observations are also offered to CMS staff, Montessori trainees, and outside specialists. All observers must respect student privacy. Photography and cell phone use are not permitted.

Photo Permissions

CMS staff members occasionally take photos and/or video recordings of students at school. During enrollment, parents are given the option to receive photos of their child via Transparent Classroom. Photos may be used in the CMS yearbook, which is published every spring and available for families to purchase. CMS may also use photos on our website, in school-wide emails, on social media platforms, and in printed marketing materials. Children's names are never published externally alongside their photographs.

If you have questions about photo permissions, please contact our Director of Enrollment & Outreach. Please note that other parents may take photographs of your child during class socials, festivals, or other school events. CMS cannot control or assume responsibility for how other parents choose to share such photographs on social media or elsewhere.

Parent Engagement

When schools and families work as partners, students thrive. There are many ways for parents to stay engaged at CMS. The most important ones are simple: read communications from the school, attend parent conferences, and ask your child about their day!

Our staff hosts a variety of continuing education opportunities for parents to deepen their understanding of their child's development and the Montessori approach. We encourage parents to take advantage of the expertise and wisdom our faculty offers, and to attend as many of these events as possible. Montessori education is unique in that many of its methods can be brought into the home, an experience that not only benefits children, but also strengthens the connection between families and the school.

Volunteering at CMS is a wonderful way for parents to be involved in the school community. We ask each family to aim for 20 volunteer hours per school year. Volunteer opportunities are introduced at Orientation Night and shared through weekly email communications. Have a green thumb? Help your child's guide with their outdoor space. Love connecting with others? Volunteer as a Class Ambassador. Enjoy the outdoors? Some classes go on camping trips and welcome parent support.

Please note: Volunteers working with or transporting students are required to have a background check and valid driver information on file in our office.

All parents, volunteers, and visitors on campus are expected to follow CMS policies, procedures, and our Code of Conduct.

Code of Conduct

Courteous respectful behavior is expected from all members of the CMS community, including parents. Parking and traffic rules must be followed. Confidentiality and respect for the privacy of children, families, and staff is essential. All CMS parents and volunteers should be aware that any information seen or heard at school is confidential. Any discourse with our staff, students, or other parents must be respectful. Parents are expected to follow pathways for communicating complaints or concerns about CMS staff, students, or parents in our community. Violation of our Code of Conduct may result in termination of enrollment.

Zero Tolerance Policy - CMS maintains a zero tolerance policy for harassment or discrimination of any person based on race, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, gender identity, political affiliation, disability, or ethnicity. Any violation of this policy may result in immediate expulsion, and CMS reserves the right to report the incident to the appropriate authorities. We do not tolerate bullying behavior from students or parents and such behavior will result in termination of enrollment.

Conflict Resolution

When differences arise between parents, or between parents and staff, the CMS Conflict Resolution Policy emphasizes direct communication with the goal of achieving a mutually satisfying resolution. Confidentiality is expected from all parties involved.

The use of broadcast emails to engage others on sensitive issues involving a child, family, CMS staff member, or school policy/procedure is inappropriate and may result in termination of enrollment. Inappropriate comments posted on class Facebook pages or other platforms will be removed.

Parents with concerns about the behavior of another student should follow the procedures outlined in the Student Behavior Issues section. Conflicts involving CMS staff members, families, or students should be addressed directly and respectfully by the parties involved. If a resolution cannot be reached, the matter should be brought to the Executive Director. If the concern involves the Executive Director, the CMS Board President will take the lead in resolving the conflict.

CLASSROOM OPERATIONS

What to Bring/Keep at School

The following are general guidelines for all CMS students. Your orientation packet will detail items for your child's class/level and specifics are discussed at Parent Orientation.

Food: All students at CMS bring their own lunch to school each day. Healthy eating supports active learners and promotes strong physical development. CMS is a **no/low-sugar campus**. Please do not send sweets to school - these items should be reserved for home. We encourage you to educate your child about healthy food choices. A helpful resource is the [Harvard Healthy Eating Plate](#). The habits children develop now will last a lifetime. School lunches should include healthy choices such as fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and protein.

Avoid pre-packaged, highly processed foods when possible. Please help us care for the environment by packing lunches in reusable containers and striving for zero-waste meals.

CMS is a peanut-free campus. To ensure the safety of students with food allergies, additional restrictions may be placed on certain foods within specific classrooms. These will be communicated by the office. Students with food allergies must have a current Allergy Action Plan on file with the CMS office (see the *Health & Safety* section for more information). Food preferences (such as vegan) and sensitivities (such as lactose intolerance) are addressed individually. Please make sure this information is included in your enrollment forms so we can fully support your child's needs.

Water Bottles: Water is available in every classroom for refills. Please do not send juice, Gatorade, milk, or other beverages to school.

Insect Repellent / Sunscreen: Students at CMS spend ample time outdoors. Parents are encouraged to apply sunscreen and/or insect repellent before arriving at school. If you would like your child to reapply during the day, you must send the item in its original container, clearly label it with your child's first and last name.

Storage of Student Belongings: Each CMS student has a cubby or drawer for storing personal items at school. Specifics vary by program level and are reviewed during Parent Orientation. Work produced in class is stored and sent home periodically. Students who nap have additional storage for a blanket, which is laundered weekly at school. Soiled clothing is sent home daily for laundering.

Electronics: Students should not bring personal electronic devices, such as cell phones, smart watches, laptops, or tablets to school.

Clothing & Jewelry

The Montessori method is based on prepared environments that support concentration and hands-on engagement. A child's clothing becomes part of this environment. For this reason,

please ensure your child arrives in comfortable, practical clothing that allows for movement and is not distracting to themselves or others. Children should be dressed appropriately for active play and all weather conditions, as we go outside in all kinds of weather.

The following items should be reserved for home:

- Clothing with cartoon or video game characters
- Items associated with pretend play (e.g., capes, camouflage, tiaras)
- Clothing with images that may be frightening or offensive to others
- Shoes that light up, have wheels, or high heels that limit movement
- Necklaces, scarves, or other neckwear that pose a choking hazard
- Valuable or sentimental jewelry that may be lost at school
- Diapers, including pull-ups, are not allowed at CMS

Please label all clothing items with your child's full name as initials are not always enough to identify items. Laundry markers or Sharpies work well, and [Mabel's Labels](#) are a durable, inexpensive option - plus they help raise funds for CMS! Younger students should wear clothing they can manage independently. Items like overalls and some types of leggings can be challenging for children who are learning to use the toilet on their own. Your child's guide will provide more detailed guidance during Parent Orientation.

Birthdays & Holidays

Birthdays: Birthdays are celebrated Montessori style at CMS! We focus on the child's passage through time, rather than traditional customs like cake and candles. Parents are kindly asked to enjoy those traditions at home. If you'd like to invite classmates to a birthday celebration outside of school, please use the CMS School Directory. Do not send invitations to school with your child. If you'd like to send an invitation to the entire class, our office staff can assist with sending an evite.

The CMS Library has a lovely tradition of **"Birthday Books"** - books donated by students in honor of their birthday. Selected titles are chosen based on library needs and are available for purchase in the school office. Each donated book will receive a commemorative placard inside to acknowledge the gift. Your contribution to the library is always greatly appreciated!

Holidays: Our school community is a rich tapestry of ethnicities, religions, and cultural identities. All are welcomed and respected at CMS. Students learn about a variety of customs, holidays, and traditions from around the world. However, CMS does not decorate or celebrate specific holidays. Instead, we focus on events tied to school life and world peace including the annual International Festival, Kindness Week, and the Good Earth Celebration.

We do not wear Halloween costumes at school or exchange Valentines in class.

Animals on Campus

We are fortunate at CMS to enjoy a beautiful 18-acre campus. Nature and time outdoors are a vital part of healthy child development, and our spacious grounds offer countless opportunities for exploration and learning. The fields and gardens at CMS occasionally welcome wild visitors such as rabbits, snakes, birds, skunks, lizards, and insects - and the children love observing them! Our staff teaches students to respect wildlife by not touching these animals and instead observing them from a safe distance.

CMS has a small flock of chickens that are cared for by our older students. Younger students enjoy observing the chickens but are not permitted in the chicken yard. Some classroom guides

may keep small animals, such as hamsters or fish, in the classroom. If your child's class includes an animal, it will be discussed during Parent Orientation. **Dogs are not allowed on campus** during the school day or at school events, even if on a leash.

Class Trips, Going Outs & Overnight Trips

Off campus trips are reserved for Elementary students only. Parents are notified in advance with details including departure and return times, destination, and planned activities. Class trips are typically organized for the entire class and include bus transportation. Going Outs are a unique component of Montessori education, offering student an opportunity to extend their learning beyond the classroom. These short, purposeful outings are typically tied to a specific educational topic and are initiated by small groups of students. Planning is done with assistance from their guide and transportation is usually provided by the Guide or Classroom Assistant.

Overnight trips are an important developmental milestone in the Montessori curriculum. While these trips provide valuable opportunities for camaraderie and bonding, the most significant impact lies in the sense of self-efficacy students gain by capably caring for themselves, with support from their peers and CMS staff. For this reason, overnight trips are considered part of the required curriculum and are not optional. Upper Elementary students take two overnight trips each school year. Lower Elementary full cycle students (third-year students) take one overnight trip in the spring of their final year. Information regarding overnight trips is provided at Parent Orientation.

Student Progress & Homework

Traditional academic testing is not used at CMS, as it is unnecessary in the Montessori setting, where learning is evaluated differently. Student progress is monitored through a combination of observation, informal assessments, and demonstrations of skills and knowledge. Students may demonstrate understanding by using Montessori materials, teaching peers, giving presentations or reports, and participating in classroom activities and discussions.

Guides record progress in Transparent Classroom and stay in contact with parents via emails, phone calls, and in-person meetings. Conference reports are published in Transparent Classroom twice per year, aligned with scheduled parent-teacher conferences. Specific dates are listed on the CMS Calendar. In addition, guides complete a Skills Inventory check in January, for the purpose of identifying students who may not be progressing in a specific area. Students in their final year of Children's House, along with all Elementary students, are informally screened by the Learning Support Coordinator. Parents will be contacted if any assessment indicates a potential area of concern.

In a Montessori context, "homework" is often literal - it refers to efforts to continue or extend Montessori work at home. Families are encouraged to read with or to their child each evening, support hobbies or passion projects at home to nurture curiosity and independent learning, and encourage activities such as playing a musical instrument, joining a sports team, woodworking, cooking, gardening, etc. These experiences help develop life skills and complement classroom learning. Children should also be incorporated into family chores and routines, reinforcing responsibility and real-world learning.

Safe Environments & Student Behavior Issues

CMS is committed to providing safe, inclusive, and supportive environments for all students. These environments are free from threats, harassment, and bullying, allowing children the freedom to explore, learn, and grow. The collaborative community fostered in a Montessori classroom encourages children to assert their individuality, function harmoniously within a group,

and develop empathy and mutual respect. Children learn appropriate behavior through consistent limits, strong role models, clear expectations, and positive instruction focused on what to do, rather than what not to do. CMS staff are trained to offer guidance and support as students learn to balance their own needs with the needs of others. We utilize Bullying Prevention resources from [SecondStep.org](https://www.secondstep.org/), which promote healthy peer relationships and emotional development.

Student behavior is addressed at CMS in accordance with school policies, Montessori philosophy, and professional discretion, taking into account each individual situation. When aggressive or inappropriate behavior occurs, CMS staff respond immediately. Responses vary depending on the child's age, development, and the context of the behavior, and may include verbal instruction or reminders, redirection, or mediation to help resolve conflicts peacefully. Occasional behavioral issues are a normal part of social and emotional development. However, when behavior becomes ongoing, repetitive, or significantly disruptive, CMS staff will notify parents.

We use a **Behavior Report** form to communicate with parents. When the behavior is significant or repeated, the following process is initiated to communicate with parents. This process also applies to parents who have a concern about the impact of another student's behavior on their child:

1. **Initial Communication** - The guide contacts parents (via phone or email) with specific information about the incident and steps taken at school.
2. **Follow-Up** - If the issue is resolved, the process ends here. If not, a meeting will be scheduled between the guide and parents.
3. **Meeting & Action Plan** - The guide and parents meet to discuss the behavior and develop a written Action Plan, including goals and a check-in timeline.
4. **Ongoing Support** - If the behavior improves, the process concludes. If not, a follow-up meeting is scheduled with the guide, parents, and Executive Director to determine next steps.

If behavior escalates or remains unresolved, CMS reserves the right to suspend or terminate enrollment. If outside professional support is recommended and not pursued by the family, CMS may terminate enrollment as a result. All steps of this process are handled with respect, privacy, and confidentiality.

We ask parents to respect the learning environment and refrain from contacting other families directly regarding school-related incidents. Concerns should be routed through appropriate school channels.

CMS prohibits corporal punishment or threats of physical discipline, humiliation, ridicule, or harsh/profane language, punishment related to food, nap, or toileting, and requiring a child to remain still or silent for an excessive period of time.

Responsible Use of Technology & Electronic Devices Policy

CMS students in the Upper Elementary classrooms have limited access to digital technology during the school day, and only for academic purposes. Before access is granted, both students and parents must sign the Digital Use Policy Agreement. Students in Casita, Children's House, and Lower Elementary do not have access to digital technology at school.

Upper Elementary students may use school-provided computers and devices in class under supervision. Students are expected to understand that respectful behavior applies both in person

and online. **Cell phones and personal devices are not permitted** for use during the school day. Any personal devices brought to campus must be turned off and securely stored. If a parent needs to contact their student during the day, they should call the CMS office, and staff will relay the message.

Students are not permitted to bring cell phones or personal electronic devices on off-campus school trips. CMS is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged personal devices. Any violation of the CMS Responsible Use Policy will result in revoked access to school technology resources.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Illness & Injuries

Please be considerate of others and keep your child home if they are unwell. This is greatly appreciated by fellow CMS parents and staff. While we emphasize handwashing and clean/disinfect classrooms daily, we rely on families to help prevent the spread of germs. If your child will be absent, please email: attendance@community-montessori.org. If your child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease, let us know so we can alert others in the community to be aware of symptoms. All CMS staff are CPR and First Aid certified, and receive annual training in health, safety, and communicable illness prevention.

Illness: If your child becomes sick at school, CMS office staff will call you and your child must be picked up immediately. Symptoms, temperature, and relevant information will be shared by phone and recorded on a **Parent Communication Form**, which will be sent home with your child. A child sent home with a fever may not return until they have been fever-free for at least 24 hours. CMS follows Texas Health Department regulations regarding exclusion and readmission after communicable illnesses. In some cases, additional requirements may apply, and the office will advise you accordingly.

Head lice is considered a communicable condition. Children with head lice must be picked up immediately, treated, and checked by office staff before returning to class. Parents must wait in the office with their child until they have been cleared to return to class. Tuition will not be refunded for days missed due to illness.

Injuries: If your child receives a minor injury, appropriate first aid will be administered. Details will be recorded on a **Parent Communication Form**, which must be signed at pickup. A copy will be sent home. If you need more information, please contact your child's guide or the office.

For serious injuries or those requiring medical treatment, CMS will call you immediately. In case of a major medical emergency, staff will administer first aid and call 911. Parents will be notified immediately and we will accompany your child to the hospital if necessary and stay until you arrive. It is critical that CMS has up-to-date contact information for all parents and emergency contacts. Major injuries are reported to state childcare licensing, who may investigate. CMS accident insurance may apply for school-related injuries - please contact the Business Director for details.

Medication

Whenever possible, medication should be administered at home. If your child must receive medication during the school day, parents must bring the medication to the office and complete a Medication Authorization Form that specifies the time, dosage, and any special instructions. Medication should never be sent to school with a child or placed in a child's lunchbox. All

medications are stored in the school office for safety. The only exceptions are EpiPens and inhalers, which are kept in the child's classroom out of student reach for quick access in case of emergency.

- All medications must be in the original container and labeled with the child's name. Prescription medications must include the original pharmacy label with the date, dosage, and the physician's name. Non-prescription medications must also be in their original containers and must not be expired.
- Staff members who administer medication will record the date, time, and dosage on a Medication Authorization Form at the time the medication is given. This form is kept on file in the office.
- If a student uses an inhaler under physician instructions on an as-needed basis, staff will document each use on a Parent Communication Form so parents are informed about when and how frequently the inhaler is being used.

Allergy & Asthma Action Plans

Students who have been prescribed an EpiPen due to an anaphylactic reaction must have a current Allergy Action Plan on file. This plan must be signed by the child's physician and include specific instructions for how to respond in the event of a severe allergic reaction at school. This information is shared with relevant staff to ensure they are prepared to act quickly and appropriately. Similarly, students who have been prescribed an inhaler must have an Asthma Action Plan on file, also signed by the child's physician, detailing when and how the inhaler should be administered. If a student is enrolled in additional CMS programs such as Early Care or After Care, additional EpiPens or inhalers may be requested so that appropriate supplies are available in all locations where the child may spend time.

Other allergies that are not severe or life-threatening should be documented on enrollment forms. While these may not require action plans, it is still helpful for staff to be informed so they can provide appropriate care and support. If your child has any other medical conditions that staff should be aware of, please discuss them with the Director of Enrollment & Outreach during the enrollment process.

Campus Security

The safety of our students is a top priority at CMS. We make every effort to maintain secure grounds and facilities and to implement school procedures that ensure a safe environment for all children. Everyone on campus is expected to follow CMS safety policies and procedures. Our school is inspected annually by the Fire Marshal, the county health department, and state child care licensing representatives. Evacuation routes are clearly posted in all buildings, and our staff receives annual training and conducts regular emergency drills throughout the school year. CMS utilizes a comprehensive system of safety measures including security cameras, gated entries, electronic locks, and perimeter fencing to limit unauthorized access to our facilities. Questions or concerns about campus security should be directed to the Executive Director.

Tobacco, Drugs, Alcohol & Weapons Policy

The CMS campus is a tobacco-free and vaping-free zone. The use of tobacco or vaping products is strictly prohibited anywhere on school grounds. CMS reserves the right to request drug and/or alcohol screening for any employee who appears to be under the influence while at work. The Executive Director also has the authority to send home any employee suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Similarly, any parent, family member, or caregiver who arrives on campus under the influence will be asked to leave. For student safety, CMS will not release a child to any individual who appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Weapons of any kind are not permitted on CMS property. This policy applies to all individuals, including those who are licensed to carry a handgun or other weapon. The only exception is for law enforcement officers, who are allowed to carry weapons on campus in the course of their official duties.

Emergency Preparedness

Students and staff at CMS participate in regular safety drills to ensure we are prepared for potential emergency situations. CMS follows the Standard Response Protocol system and works closely with Georgetown emergency responders to facilitate swift and effective communication and response when needed. Each classroom on campus is equipped with an intercom phone used to announce drills or emergency actions during the school day.

Evacuation drills are conducted to teach students and staff how to exit buildings safely during emergencies such as fires. Evacuation routes are clearly posted in all campus buildings. In addition to evacuation drills, CMS conducts other safety drills to prepare for scenarios such as severe weather, intruders, or other on-campus incidents.

When practicing emergency drills, CMS staff remain calm and speak to children in a matter-of-fact way, using general safety language rather than discussing specific threats. We do not share the nature of potential emergencies with children, focusing instead on skill-building for general safety. As part of our Emergency Preparedness Plan, CMS has annual site visits with the Georgetown Police Department, and campus safety procedures are reviewed annually.

Required Notifications

- Parents should note that in accordance with Texas Penal Code, the CMS grounds are a gang-free zone and any criminal offenses related to such are reported to law enforcement immediately. (We are required to report this to you by the state of Texas.)
- CMS is licensed by the state of Texas as a child care center. Our license is posted in the CMS office. Parents may ask at any time to view a copy of the Texas Child Care Licensing Minimum Standards and/or the most recent inspection report for our school. These items are available in the school office and can also be found at the Texas Health and Human Services [website](#) or by calling 512-834-3426.
- The current list of CMS staff members is posted in the office and is also available on our website.
- If a CMS employee has reason to suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, Texas law requires them to report it to Child Protective Services. The individual making the report may do so anonymously or elect to inform the Executive Director. If CPS comes to our campus to investigate a report, CMS staff will cooperate fully with their process. Parents do not have to be notified prior to a CPS officer or other law enforcement officer speaking with a child. The Texas Abuse and Neglect hotline number is 1-800-252-5400.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

Tuition & Fees Statement

Annual tuition and fees are outlined in the CMS Tuition & Fee Schedule, which is available on our website and included with enrollment forms. For questions about tuition rates for various programs, families may contact the Director of Enrollment & Outreach. Tuition is budgeted on a school-year basis and may be paid upfront in full or through an installment plan. CMS uses the

FACTS Tuition Management System to process automated tuition payments. Billing inquiries should be directed to the Business Director. In some cases, families may qualify for tuition discounts, which are detailed in the Tuition Policies section of the Tuition & Fees Statement.

Withdrawal Policy

CMS assumes that when you enroll, your child will attend for the entire school year. If parents terminate their child's enrollment at any time before the end of the school year in May, a withdrawal fee will be charged. This fee is equal to 20% of the child's total annual tuition. If the withdrawal occurs during the school year, parents are responsible for paying a prorated amount of tuition for the days the student was enrolled, in addition to the withdrawal fee. CMS reserves the right to terminate the enrollment agreement at any time, with or without cause.

Force Majeure Closures

Should events beyond the control of CMS occur including but not limited to fire, hurricane, extreme inclement weather, pandemic, terrorism, war, governmental action, or disruption of necessary utilities (such as water or electricity), the school retains the discretion to close and/or modify its operations as needed to ensure safety. In such circumstances, all financial obligations for tuition and fees remain in full effect, and tuition reductions or refunds will not be offered.

Tuition Assistance

CMS offers tuition assistance to families who are strongly committed to Montessori education but are experiencing difficulty meeting the financial obligations of tuition and fees. Awards are granted for one school year at a time and are based on demonstrated financial need. Applications must be submitted through the FACTS Tuition Management System. A non-refundable payment of \$40 is required by FACTS to process the application; this fee is not received by CMS.

Giving

CMS is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, and donations are tax-exempt. We strive to keep tuition affordable to make Montessori education accessible to as many families as possible. Tuition rates are set to cover only the school's operating expenses. For facility and program improvements, we rely on fundraising. In addition to events aimed at funding specific needs, such as new playground equipment, the Annual Fund is a giving program that supports upgrades to classroom materials, staff professional development, and facility enhancements. Every donation makes an immediate impact on our students and helps enrich the quality of education at CMS.