



Community Montessori School

500 Pleasant Valley Drive
Georgetown, TX 78645

Community Montessori School's 2026 - 2027 Family Handbook



Welcome to Community Montessori School	5
About Community Montessori School	6
Our Mission	6
Our Guiding Principles	6
Focus	6
Community	6
Respect	6
Love of Learning	6
Responsibility	6
Our Shared Commitment: Family and School Partnership	7
The Guide-Family Partnership	7
What Families Can Expect from Their Child's Guide	7
Communication with Families	7
What Guides Can Expect from Families	8
Supporting Independence at Home	8
The Classroom Community	8
What Families Can Expect	8
Classroom Observations	9
What the Classroom Community Can Expect from Families	9
The School-Family Partnership	9
What Families Can Expect from CMS	9
What CMS Can Expect from Families	10
Our Commitment to One Another	10
Hours of Operation	11
Arrival and Departure	11
Car Line Safety	11
Morning Arrival	11
Carpools and Authorized Pick-Up	11
Afternoon Departure	12
Early Pick-Up	12
Late Pick-Up	12
Before and After School Care	13
Before School Care	13
After School Care	13
Attendance	13
Reporting an Absence	13
Excused Absences	13
Unexcused Absences and Attendance Concerns	13
Appointments and Family Travel	14
Late Arrival	14
School Policies	14



Beginning the School Year	14
Movement	14
Clothing and Footwear	15
Outdoor Time and Weather	15
Hot Weather	15
Cold Weather	15
Food and Nutrition	15
Breakfast	16
Lunch	16
Foods to Keep at Home	16
Lunch Containers	17
Forgotten Lunches	17
Food Allergies and Dietary Needs	17
Health Policies	17
Immunizations	18
Vision and Hearing Screening	18
Medication Administration	18
Illness Policy	19
Communicable Illness	20
Medical Emergencies	20
Sunscreen and Insect Repellent	20
Breastfeeding Support	20
Employee Health & Disease Prevention	21
Supporting Each Child's Continued Growth	21
Supporting an Inclusive Environment	21
Positive Discipline & Guidance	21
Supporting the Child's Return to Balance	22
Supporting a Thoughtful Transition	22
Screen Media & Technology Policy	23
Partnership with Families	23
Early Childhood: Protecting Real-World Experience	23
Elementary: Protecting and Preparing	24
Adolescence: Informing and Empowering	24
Shared Guidance for Home and School	24
Safety and Campus Security	25
Campus Access	25
Emergency, Fire, and Severe Weather Preparedness	25
Gang-Free Zone	25
Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect	25
Employee Training	26
Awareness and Prevention	26

Community Coordination and Support	26
Obtaining Help and Making a Report	26
Allegations Involving a Child in CMS Care	27
Parents' Right to View Available Video	27
Authorized Release of Children	27
Injuries at School	27
School Closures and Inclement Weather	28
Admission, Re-Enrollment, and Placement	28
Transitions Between Program Levels and Classroom Placement	28
Casita	29
Children's House	29
Lower Elementary	30
Upper Elementary	30
Adolescent Program	30
The Family's Role	30
The Placement Process	31
Placement Changes	31
Delaying a Start Date	31
Withdrawal from CMS	31
Tuition Assistance	31
Enrollment and Policy Updates	32
Admissions & Enrollment Policy	33
Applications to Community Montessori School	33
Enrollment Priority	34
The Waiting Pool of Applicants	34
Declining an Offered Space	35
Admissions Selection Criteria	35
Delaying a Start Date	35
Admission Decisions	36
Family-School Communication and Partnership	36
Family to Guide	36
Family, Guide, and Academic Support	36
Family to Executive Director	37
Contacting Your Child's Guide	37
Parent - Guide Conferences	37
Classroom Observations	38
The Weekly Newsletter	38
School Governance	38
Who Do I Contact	39

Welcome to Community Montessori School

Welcome to Community Montessori School. We are grateful that your family has chosen to be part of our community.

A Montessori education supports children in becoming independent, curious, capable, and internally motivated learners. Through meaningful work and developmentally appropriate freedom, children build confidence, self-awareness, responsibility, and a lifelong love of learning.

This work is strongest when families and the school work in partnership. Open and honest communication helps us understand and support your child. We also encourage families to learn more about the Montessori approach and consider how its principles can be supported at home. Classroom observations, family education opportunities, and conferences with your child's Guide are important ways to deepen that partnership.

This Family Handbook explains CMS policies, practices, and community expectations. It also includes or references related policies such as our Nutrition Policy, Screen Media Policy and Guidelines, and Our Shared Commitment: Family-School Partnership.

Families are asked to review the handbook and acknowledge that they have received, read, and agree to follow the policies and expectations outlined within it. The handbook will be available electronically through Transparent Classroom, along with any required acknowledgment or signature process.

This handbook is a living document and may be updated as our programs, practices, or legal requirements change. When substantive changes are made, families will be notified and asked to acknowledge updated policies when required.

We look forward to partnering with you and supporting your child throughout the year. Please reach out whenever you have questions or need support. We are grateful you are here.

About Community Montessori School

Community Montessori School was founded in 1981 and has served generations of children and families throughout Georgetown and the surrounding communities. In 2000, CMS moved to its permanent home on Pleasant Valley Drive. Our 18-acre campus provides a nature-rich environment where children can explore, work with purpose, and develop a meaningful connection with the world around them.

Our work is rooted in the educational approach developed by Dr. Maria Montessori. CMS is a member of AMI-USA and is deeply committed to authentic Montessori education. Our work is grounded in shared Montessori principles, thoughtfully prepared environments, and respect for each child's development.

Our Mission

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 Guiding Principles

Our guiding principles shape how we support children, partner with families, care for our environment, and make decisions as a school.

Focus

We put children first. Our mission of authentic Montessori education is at the heart of everything we do.

Community

All are welcomed, heard, and included. We value every voice and celebrate the diversity of our children, families, and staff.

Respect

Courtesy and kindness are present in every interaction.

Love of Learning

We model curiosity, adaptability, and joy, and encourage children to dive deeply and be creative.

Responsibility

We honor our commitments and conduct our work with integrity and care.

These principles guide the entire CMS community. Children, families, staff, school leadership, and the Board each play an important role in creating a community grounded in respect, belonging, purposeful learning, and shared responsibility.



Our Shared Commitment: Family and School Partnership

Children thrive when families and school work together with trust, consistency, and shared purpose. At CMS, partnership grows through open communication, appreciation for what families and educators each bring, and a shared commitment to each child.

Home and school may look different while still being connected by shared values of respect, responsibility, independence, and care for the community.

The commitments below outline how CMS and families can work together to support each child's growth and well-being.

The Guide-Family Partnership

What Families Can Expect from Their Child's Guide

Families can expect guides to:

- Provide Montessori lessons and experiences appropriate to each child's stage of development
- Prepare an orderly, engaging environment that supports concentration, independence, movement, choice, and purposeful work
- Observe each child regularly and use those observations to guide lessons, support, and communication
- Know each child well—their strengths, interests, needs, and progress—and use that understanding to guide their learning
- Cultivate a classroom culture of respect, collaboration, gratitude, responsibility, and care for others
- Support each child's academic, social, emotional, and physical development
- Encourage children to solve problems, make thoughtful choices, and take developmentally appropriate risks
- Participate in ongoing professional development
- Collaborate with their classroom team, colleagues at the same program level, guides across other levels, and school leadership to strengthen their practice and provide continuity throughout each child's Montessori experience

CMS guides share a commitment to thoughtful preparation, careful observation, and respect for each child's development. When questions or concerns arise, guides will communicate thoughtfully with families and work together to understand the child's needs and identify appropriate next steps.

Communication with Families

Families can expect guides to:

- Communicate with care, honesty, and discretion
- Share meaningful information about their child's experience and progress
- Hold family-guide conferences twice each year
- Provide a written progress report as part of each conference cycle
- Reach out between conferences when a meaningful question, concern, or development arises
- Provide all families in the classroom with regular, shared updates on classroom life, learning, and community experiences every other week, along with individual communication when appropriate

- Communicate on the same day or within 24 business hours about injuries or significant incidents involving their child
- Protect the privacy of every child and family

Because guides devote the school day to observing, supporting, and engaging with the children, they may not be able to respond right away. Families can expect emails and phone calls to be acknowledged within one business day. When additional time is needed to provide a thoughtful response, the guide will communicate that and follow up promptly.

What Guides Can Expect from Families

Families are expected to:

- Read and follow the policies and procedures in the CMS Family Handbook
- Follow the school calendar, daily schedule, and expectations for attendance, health, nutrition, media and technology, safety, arrival, and dismissal
- Help children arrive on time and prepared for the day
- Read school and classroom communications regularly
- Respond when the school requests information, documentation, or a conversation
- Attend family-guide conferences twice each year
- Share changes or circumstances that may affect their child's experience at school
- Consider the guidance shared by their child's guide
- Work collaboratively with the school when their child may need additional support

Families are strongly encouraged to participate in family education opportunities and community events that deepen their understanding of Montessori and strengthen the connection between home, school, and the community.

Supporting Independence at Home

Families will support their child's Montessori experience by:

- Maintaining consistent, age-appropriate routines
- Giving children meaningful responsibilities at home
- Allowing time for children to complete tasks independently
- Providing appropriate opportunities to make choices and solve problems
- Setting clear and respectful boundaries
- Encouraging children to care for themselves, their belongings, and their surroundings

Open communication between families and guides helps ensure that each child is supported with care, consistency, and a shared understanding of their needs.

The Classroom Community

What Families Can Expect

Each classroom reflects the CMS mission and guiding principles. Families can expect:

- A thoughtfully prepared Montessori environment
- Purposeful work suited to the children's developmental needs



- Clear routines and expectations
- Respect for each child's individuality
- Opportunities for children to contribute to the care of their classroom
- Support for independence, collaboration, problem-solving, and responsibility
- Appreciation for the children and families who make up the community
- Regular communication that offers a meaningful view of classroom life

Families may be invited to share their time, interests, experiences, or skills. Participation is voluntary and highly encouraged. These opportunities are coordinated by the guide to support the children's work and maintain the consistency of the environment. Volunteers working with children will be required to complete a background check.

Classroom Observations

Families may have opportunities to observe their child's classroom at designated program levels. Observations are scheduled through the CMS office and are structured to protect the children's concentration, routines, and privacy.

What the Classroom Community Can Expect from Families

Families play an important role in creating a warm and respectful classroom community. We ask families to:

- Support the work of the guide and the shared expectations in the Family Handbook
- Follow classroom procedures that protect children's safety, concentration, and routines
- Welcome other families with kindness and respect
- Use care and discretion when speaking about children, families, and staff
- Protect private or sensitive information
- Avoid sharing information that has not been confirmed
- Bring classroom questions or concerns directly to the guide so they can be addressed thoughtfully

When a family becomes aware of an issue that may affect the classroom community, we ask them to contact the guide rather than discuss it broadly with other families. This allows the school to understand the concern, protect confidentiality, and respond with care.

The School-Family Partnership

What Families Can Expect from CMS

Families can expect CMS to:

- Place the well-being and development of children at the center of school decisions
- Provide a physically and emotionally safe learning environment
- Maintain classrooms and shared spaces that support Montessori education
- Treat children, families, and staff with courtesy, patience, and respect
- Communicate school expectations, policies, and significant changes clearly
- Provide meaningful opportunities for family education, connection, and community building
- Protect confidential information and share it only with those who need it to support the child or fulfill school responsibilities
- Respond to questions and concerns thoughtfully

- Provide clear avenues for raising concerns and working toward resolution
- Promote consistency across classrooms and program levels while recognizing the developmental needs of each age group

Families can expect CMS to acknowledge emails and phone calls within one business day. Some questions or concerns may take additional time to address fully. When that happens, CMS will keep the family informed while gathering information and determining next steps.

What CMS Can Expect from Families

CMS asks families to:

- Communicate with members of the school community with respect and care
- Bring questions and concerns to the school in a timely manner
- Address classroom concerns first with the child's guide
- Contact the Academic Director when a concern cannot be resolved with the guide
- Contact the Executive Director when the matter remains unresolved
- Allow the school time to understand the situation and respond thoughtfully
- Avoid public or group discussion of confidential student, family, personnel, or classroom matters
- Work in partnership with CMS when decisions are made to support safety, classroom stability, or a child's needs
- Bring questions or concerns directly to the school so they can be understood and addressed thoughtfully

Questions and concerns are a natural part of a partnership. We ask families to address them directly, respectfully, and through the appropriate school channels so we can work toward understanding and resolution.

Our Commitment to One Another

Our partnership is strengthened through open communication, thoughtful listening, and consistent follow-through. By working together with respect and care, families and CMS create a supportive community where children can learn, grow, and thrive.

Hours of Operation

CMS is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. during the school year.

- **School day:** 8:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.
- **Before School Care:** 7:30–8:00 a.m.
- **After School Care:** 3:00–5:15 p.m.
- **Administrative office hours:** 7:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

The administrative office is closed on school holidays. Office hours may be adjusted on staff professional development days or other days when children are not in attendance. Any changes will be shared with families in advance.

Arrival and Departure

CMS uses a car line for arrival and dismissal to help children enter and leave campus safely and smoothly. Families receive car tags and a traffic-flow map during orientation. Please display your car tag where staff can easily see it.



Anyone dropping off or picking up your child should have a car tag and be familiar with CMS arrival and dismissal procedures.

Car Line Safety

To help us care for everyone in the car line:

- Remain in your vehicle unless directed otherwise by a staff member
- Do not pass other vehicles
- Follow the posted speed limit and staff directions
- Keep cell phones and other devices put away while in the car line
- Have children remain safely secured in their car seats until a CMS staff member is ready to assist them

Morning Arrival

Arrival takes place from 8:00 to 8:15 a.m. CMS staff greet children at their vehicles and support their safe arrival to their classrooms.

Children arriving after 8:15 a.m. are considered tardy and must be checked in through the school office. Please park and walk your child into the office to sign them in. A parent or caregiver must remain with the child until a staff member is available to escort them to class.

Please call the office when you know your child will arrive late.

Carpools and Authorized Pick-Up

Families who participate in a carpool should share the names of all drivers with the school office and ensure each person is listed on the child's Authorized Pick-Up list. We encourage carpool families to talk through shared expectations for safety and conduct before the carpool begins.

During the first few days of school, families may find it helpful to drive their own children as they become familiar with the arrival and dismissal routines.

Whenever possible, please make after-school plans before the start of the school day. When plans change, let the school office know in advance so we can help your child transition smoothly to the correct dismissal plan. Changes cannot be made after 2:15PM.

Children will be released only to a parent, regular caregiver, or another person authorized by the family. For an occasional change, please send advance written notice to the school office. Anyone who regularly picks up your child, such as a grandparent, nanny, or carpool driver, must be added to your child's Authorized Pick-Up list in the school's designated system.

For safety, any unfamiliar authorized person will be asked to show a valid photo ID before the child is released. For an unexpected same-day change or emergency, please call the school office as soon as possible.

Afternoon Departure

Departure takes place from 3:00 to 3:15 p.m. Children wait with staff in the designated dismissal area and are escorted to their vehicles safely.

To help staff remain focused on the children and keep the car line moving, please keep conversations brief during dismissal. When additional time is needed, please park in a designated space before continuing the conversation.

Early Pick-Up

When your child needs to leave before 3:00 p.m., please call the office or email attendance@community-montessori.org in advance.

When you arrive:

- Park near the school office
- Come inside to sign your child out
- Allow approximately 5 – 10 minutes for the staff to bring your child from the classroom

Early departures can interrupt the child's work and the classroom routine, so we encourage families to schedule appointments outside the school day whenever possible.

If you arrive after 2:30 p.m., please use the regular dismissal car line, as classrooms and staff are already preparing for departure.

Late Pick-Up

Please arrive within the dismissal window, which runs from 3:00 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. When a family is delayed, staff will remain with the child and make sure they are cared for safely.

If a child has not been picked up, CMS will call the parents and emergency contacts until someone is reached. Children who remain more than five minutes after dismissal may be taken to After School Care when space is available, or they may remain with staff in the office.

Late fees apply based on the child's pick-up time, as outlined in the CMS Tuition and Fee Schedule. Please contact the school office as soon as possible when you know you will be late.

Before and After School Care

Before School Care

Children enrolled in Before School Care should be walked by a parent or caregiver to the designated classroom between 7:30 and 7:50 a.m. Families arriving after 7:50 a.m. should join the regular morning car line.

After School Care

Children enrolled in After School Care may be picked up between 3:15 and 5:15 p.m. Parents and caregivers should park, walk to the designated After School Care entrance, and sign their child out.

When you would like your child to leave through the regular afternoon car line instead of attending After School Care, please contact the office before 2:30 p.m. This gives staff time to prepare your child for dismissal.

Please plan to arrive by 5:15 p.m. Late fees are assessed for pick-ups after 5:15 p.m. according to the CMS Tuition and Fee Schedule.

Attendance

Consistent attendance is an important part of the Montessori experience. Lessons, collaborative work, classroom responsibilities, and long-term projects build from day to day. Regular attendance helps children remain connected to their work and to the classroom community. Children are expected to attend school each day it is in session unless an excused absence prevents attendance.

Reporting an Absence

Please notify the school office of planned absences in advance. Unexpected absences must be reported to the office by 8:00 a.m. on the day of the absence.

Excused Absences

Excused absences include illness, injury, or a family emergency. When an absence is planned, please contact your child's guide and the school office as early as possible. This allows the guide to consider any classroom responsibilities, group work, or experiences your child may miss.

Unexcused Absences and Attendance Concerns

Absences that do not meet the criteria above are considered unexcused. When a child has more than seven unexcused absences, or any child has more than 10 total absences during the school year, CMS may ask the family to meet with school leadership. The purpose of the meeting is to better understand the circumstances and work together to support consistent attendance. Excessive absences can significantly impact a child's progress and may jeopardize continued enrollment.

Appointments and Family Travel

Whenever possible, please schedule appointments and family travel outside the school day or during scheduled school breaks.

Montessori work cycles provide uninterrupted time for children to concentrate, receive lessons, collaborate with classmates, and complete meaningful work. Arriving late or leaving early during these protected periods can disrupt both the child's work and the classroom community's flow.

When an appointment during the school day cannot be avoided, please notify the office in advance and follow the early pick-up procedures.

Late Arrival

Arriving on time helps children enter the classroom calmly and begin the day alongside their community. Children arriving after 8:15 a.m. must be signed in through the school office. A parent or caregiver must remain with the child until a staff member is available to escort them to class.



School Policies

Beginning the School Year

CMS begins the school year gradually so children have time to settle into their environments, reconnect with familiar routines, and build relationships within the classroom community.

In Casita and Children's House, returning children begin first, followed by new children to CMS. This phase-in process allows the classroom community to reestablish its rhythm and gives returning children opportunities to model routines and leadership.

In Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, and the Adolescent Community, all students begin on the first day of school.

Children who are new to CMS or transitioning to a new community at the Casita and Children's House program levels will have a pre-visit with their new guide before they join the community. Guides will share each classroom's start schedule and pre-visit details with families in advance.

Movement

Movement is an essential part of Montessori learning and development. Throughout the day, children have opportunities to move with purpose both indoors and outdoors.

In the classroom, children may carry materials, work at tables or on floor mats, move between activities, and participate in practical life, sensorial, and other experiences that support coordination, balance, strength, and fine-motor development.

Outdoor time gives children space to run, climb, explore, play, and care for the natural environment. Guides may also offer group movement activities appropriate to the children's age and developmental needs.

Clothing and Footwear

Children should come to school dressed for active movement, outdoor exploration, and changing weather.

Please choose:

Comfortable, well-fitting clothing that allows children to move freely and manage independently

Closed-toe shoes that are secure and appropriate for running, climbing, hiking, and outdoor play

Clothing suited to the day's weather and the nature-rich campus

Any additional layers, rainwear, hats, or other items requested by the child's program

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.

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

Clothing may become wet, muddy, stained, or worn through purposeful work and outdoor play. Please label personal items clearly with your child's name.

Outdoor Time and Weather

Outdoor experiences are an important part of the CMS day. Children spend time outside whenever conditions allow, with activities adjusted to support their health and safety.

Hot Weather

CMS follows National Weather Service heat index guidance.

- As temperatures rise, outdoor time may be shortened, and children will be offered frequent water breaks.
- When the heat index temperature reaches 104°F or greater, outdoor activities will move indoors.
- Additional precautions may be needed for children with certain health conditions or who are taking certain medications.

Cold Weather

CMS follows National Weather Service wind chill guidance.

- When the wind chill is 34°F-40°F, outdoor time may be shortened.
- When the wind chill temperature falls below 34°F, outdoor activities will move indoors.
- Cold rain or other precipitation may further limit outdoor time.
- Children should come to school dressed appropriately for the weather.

These adjustments allow children to remain active while protecting their health and safety year-round.

Food and Nutrition

Food is an important part of each child's health, concentration, independence, and sense of community. At CMS, mealtimes are approached with care and respect. We want children to enjoy a variety of nourishing foods, recognize their own hunger and fullness, and take an active role in preparing for and caring for the meal environment.

We also welcome foods that reflect each family's culture and traditions. These meals help create a meaningful connection between home and school while giving children opportunities to learn about one another.

Our approach is grounded in a few shared principles:

- Offer a variety of nutrient-rich foods
- Include foods from different food groups
- Limit foods and drinks that are high in added sugar, sodium, or highly processed ingredients



- Avoid using food as a reward or punishment
- Allow children to decide how much to eat from the foods provided
- Speak about food, appetite, and body size in a neutral and respectful way

Children are always provided access to clean drinking water throughout the day, including during meals, snacks, and active play.

Breakfast

Children should arrive at school having eaten breakfast. A balanced breakfast supports concentration, energy, and participation throughout the workday. Whenever possible, breakfast should include a combination of protein, carbohydrates, healthy fats, fruits, or vegetables.

Lunch and Snacks from Home

CMS families provide their child's lunch and any required snacks from home.

By choosing to provide meals and snacks from home, families understand that CMS is not responsible for the nutritional value of the food provided or for meeting the child's daily nutritional needs. CMS is responsible for the safe storage and service of food while it is in our care.

Families are encouraged to pack a balanced meal that includes a variety of foods such as:

- Fruits and vegetables
- A source of protein
- Grains or another nourishing carbohydrate
- Foods that reflect the family's culture and the child's preferences

If a family does not provide a required snack, CMS will provide one when required by licensing standards. Children may not share food, drinks, utensils, or food containers with one another.

Mealtimes at CMS

Lunch is more than a break in the day. It is a shared community experience where children practice conversation, grace and courtesy, independence, and care for the environment.

Mealtimes and snacks are unhurried, supervised by an adult, and structured to allow children to feed themselves according to their developmental abilities.

Children may help set the table, serve themselves, open containers, pour drinks, clean their space, and compost appropriate food scraps. Guides support these skills at a pace suited to each child's age and development.

Children are encouraged to listen to their own hunger and fullness. They may be encouraged to try a food, but they will never be forced to eat or required to finish their meal.

Uneaten food may be sent home so families can better understand the amount and variety that worked well for their child that day.

Foods to Keep at Home

To support a calm and nourishing mealtime, please do not send:

- Candy or gum
- Cupcakes, cookies, pudding, gelatin, or similar desserts
- Fruit snacks or fruit leather
- Chips
- Soda or other carbonated drinks
- Juice, flavored milk, or other sweetened beverages
- Highly processed convenience foods
- Foods that require warming up

Plain yogurt may be sent with fruit or another naturally sweet addition. If a food does not align with the school's nutrition guidelines, it may be sent home with a reminder.

Choking Safety

Foods sent for toddlers must be prepared in a form that is safe for the child's age and development. Foods that present a choking risk may not be served to infants or toddlers. Examples include whole grapes, hot dogs cut into rounds, hard candy, popcorn, nuts and seeds, spoonfuls of peanut butter, and large chunks of meat. CMS may ask a family to modify how a food is prepared or packaged when it presents a choking concern.

Lunch Containers

Please help us care for the environment by packing lunches in reusable containers and striving for a zero-waste meal. Choose containers your child can open and manage as independently as possible, that fit securely inside the lunch bag, and that keep food at a safe temperature.

Please label lunch bags, containers, utensils, and water bottles with your child's name.

Forgotten Lunches

If a child arrives without lunch, the school will contact the family. A parent or caregiver will need to bring a replacement lunch to campus as soon as possible.

Food Allergies and Dietary Needs

CMS is an allergy-aware school. Families must inform the school of any diagnosed food allergy, intolerance, dietary restriction, or health condition that may affect their child's meals or snacks.

Families of children with a diagnosed food allergy must provide:

- A current Food Allergy Emergency Plan completed and signed by the child's healthcare professional and parent or caregiver
- Any prescribed emergency medication with a signed written authorization form
- Updated documentation whenever the child's needs or treatment instructions change

To help protect all children:

- Children may not share food, drinks, utensils, or food containers
- Families must follow any food restrictions communicated for their child's classroom or program

- Food brought for classroom activities or community events must be approved in advance
- Staff responsible for the child will be informed of the allergy and trained to follow the child's emergency plan
- CMS may put additional safeguards in place when needed to support a child with a serious allergy

Health Policies

Keeping health information current helps CMS care for your child and respond quickly when a health need or emergency arises.

All required health forms and records must be completed and submitted to CMS before a child begins school. These forms include:

- Vital Health Record
- Medical Consent Form
- Health Care Professional's Statement
- Immunization Record
- Over-The-Counter Medication Form
- Permission and Release
- Prescription Medication Form - as required
- Action Plans (seizure, allergy, diabetes) - as required
- Authorization to Release Information - as required

Families are responsible for keeping emergency contacts, phone numbers, health information, medications, and care plans up to date throughout the school year.

Immunizations

CMS follows Texas immunization requirements for schools and licensed childcare programs. Families must provide a current immunization record before their child begins school and submit updated records as immunizations are received.

CMS encourages families to follow the immunization recommendations of their child's healthcare provider and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Texas law allows exemptions for medical reasons or reasons of conscience, including religious belief. Families choosing an exemption must provide the documentation required by the Texas Department of State Health Services:

- A medical exemption must be supported by a statement from a licensed physician. Unless the physician identifies the condition as lifelong, the exemption must be renewed annually.
- An exemption for reasons of conscience must be submitted on the official DSHS affidavit, signed, notarized, and provided to CMS. The affidavit is valid for two years from the date it is notarized.

A child with an exemption may be temporarily excluded from school during an official emergency or outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease. Families are responsible for keeping all immunization and exemption records up to date.

If student medical files are not on file with the Admissions Office the student is unable to attend school until all files are complete. Families will have one week from notification to provide any updated documentation.

Medication Administration

When a child needs medication during the school day, a parent or caregiver must provide authorization and deliver the medication directly to the school office. Children may not carry medication in backpacks, lunch bags, or other personal belongings unless CMS has approved a written self-carry plan.

Parent or caregiver authorization must be provided in one of the following ways:

- A written, signed, and dated form submitted electronically or in hard copy for CMS to retain
- Verbal authorization by telephone for a single dose only

Prescription and over-the-counter medications must:

- Remain in the original container
- Be clearly labeled with the child's full name
- Be unexpired
- Include the date the medication was brought to school
- Include clear dosage and administration instructions
- Be given only to the child for whom the medication is intended

CMS will administer medication only according to the container label or written instructions from the child's healthcare provider. Each dose will be documented, and medication will be stored securely.

Families must notify CMS whenever a medication, dosage, or treatment instruction changes and provide updated authorization or healthcare-provider instructions as needed.

Emergency medication, such as epinephrine or a rescue inhaler, must be accompanied by a current emergency care plan and remain available whenever the child is on campus or participating in a school activity.

Authorization remains valid for up to one year. A parent or caregiver may not authorize a dose that exceeds the medication label or the child's healthcare provider's instructions. In a life-threatening emergency, staff may administer prescribed emergency medication in accordance with the child's care plan.

Medication will be returned to the family when it expires, is no longer needed, or at the end of the school year. Any medication not picked up by the communicated deadline may be disposed of in accordance with school procedures.

Illness Policy

To care for the health and well-being of the entire community, children should remain home when illness prevents them from participating comfortably in the school day or when they need more care than staff can provide while safely supervising the classroom.

A child will be cared for in a separate, supervised area, and the family will be contacted for prompt pick-up when:

- The child cannot participate comfortably in school activities, including outdoor play
- The child needs a level of care that affects the staff's ability to safely supervise the other children
- The child has a temperature above 100°F along with changes in behavior or other signs of illness
- The child shows signs of a potentially serious illness, including:
 - Unusual lethargy
 - Abnormal or difficult breathing
 - Uncontrolled diarrhea
 - Two or more episodes of vomiting within 24 hours
 - A rash accompanied by fever
 - Mouth sores with drooling
 - Significant changes in behavior
 - Other symptoms suggesting the child may be seriously ill
 - A healthcare professional has diagnosed the child with a communicable illness, and the school has not received documentation confirming that the child is no longer contagious

Children must be free from fever, vomiting, diarrhea, and other exclusionary symptoms for **at least 24 hours** without the use of symptom-reducing medication before returning to school.

If your child does not seem well in the morning, please take time to observe them before bringing them to school. Children are observed for visible signs of illness upon arrival and throughout the day.

A child with mild cold symptoms may remain at school when they can participate comfortably and do not require additional care. Families may be updated at pick-up or contacted sooner if symptoms change.

Communicable Illness

Children with signs of a [communicable illness](#) should remain home until they are no longer contagious and meet the school's return requirements.

Please notify the school office and your child's guide promptly when your child is diagnosed with a reportable communicable illness. CMS will communicate with affected families as required while protecting the child's privacy.

Medical Emergencies

In a medical emergency, CMS will make every reasonable effort to contact the child's parents or caregivers before seeking treatment. When immediate care is needed, staff may contact emergency medical services or arrange treatment without delay and will continue trying to reach the family. CMS will follow the child's emergency information and medical instructions whenever circumstances allow.

Sunscreen and Insect Repellent

Children spend meaningful time outdoors each day. Families are encouraged to apply sunscreen and insect repellent before arriving at school.

When reapplication is needed during the school day, please send the product:

- In its original container
- Clearly labeled with your child's first and last name

When you send sunscreen and/or insect repellent to school with your child, a form will be sent to you to electronically sign in your Transparent Classroom account. Upon receiving your authorization, CMS staff will apply or assist with sunscreen and insect repellent according to the product label, child's level of independence, and details included in your signed form. This form will be electronically assigned each school year. Products should be given directly to the school rather than placed loosely in a child's backpack.

Breastfeeding Support

CMS supports families who choose to breastfeed or provide breast milk for their child while in care. Parents have the right to breastfeed their child at school and to provide expressed breast milk for their child. CMS will provide a comfortable place with an adult-sized seat on the campus for breastfeeding. Families may speak with the school office for assistance in identifying an appropriate space and coordinating breast milk storage and feeding instructions.

Employee Health & Disease Prevention

CMS maintains an employee vaccine-preventable disease policy in accordance with Texas Minimum Standards. The policy is included in the school's written operational policies and is available for families to review upon request.

Supporting Each Child's Continued Growth

Supporting an Inclusive Environment

CMS welcomes children with a range of strengths, abilities, and support needs. When a child has special care needs, we work in partnership with the family and qualified professionals to understand the child's needs and support meaningful participation in classroom life.

In accordance with Texas Minimum Standards, CMS will consider and provide appropriate recommended accommodations, use adaptive equipment supplied for the child, and allow qualified early-intervention or special-education professionals to provide services on campus with family approval. We will also thoughtfully adapt activities, materials, procedures, and teaching approaches so that children with and without special care needs can participate together in the classroom environment.

Families are asked to share current care plans, professional recommendations, adaptive equipment, and other information needed to support their child. CMS will review each child's needs individually and remain in communication with the family as supports are planned and reviewed.

Child day care operations are public accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Title III. To learn more, visit www.ada.gov/resources/child-care-centers/. If you believe that such an operation may be practicing discrimination in violation of Title III, you may call the ADA Information Line at 800 514-0301 (voice) or 800 514-0383 (TTY).



Positive Discipline & Guidance

At CMS, we view discipline as an opportunity for guidance and growth. Children are continually learning how to understand their feelings, express their needs, make thoughtful choices, and participate respectfully within a community. We meet these moments with calm, consistency, and respect for each child.

Our approach is responsive to the individual child, appropriate to their development and understanding, and centered on helping children gradually build self-control, responsibility, and confidence within the community.

Guides use positive approaches that may include:

- Preparing an orderly and predictable environment.
- Modeling respectful language and behavior.
- Offering clear, positive reminders of expectations.
- Recognizing and encouraging constructive choices.
- Redirecting behavior toward a safe and purposeful alternative.
- Helping children understand feelings, actions, and their effect on others.
- Supporting problem-solving, repair, and restoration when appropriate.
- Providing a brief, supervised separation from the group when appropriate for the child's age and development. Any separation will be limited to no more than one minute for each year of the child's age.

CMS does not use harsh, cruel, humiliating, or unusual treatment. Prohibited practices include corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment; punishment involving food, rest, or toileting; grabbing or pulling a child as discipline; placing anything in or on a child's mouth; yelling, ridicule, rejection, humiliation, or abusive language; placing a child in a locked or dark space; using a restrictive device for separation; withholding active play except for a brief, supervised separation related to behavior during active play; or requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for an inappropriate length of time.

When a child needs support beyond the guidance provided within the environment, CMS will follow the processes described in Supporting the Child's Return to Balance and Supporting a Thoughtful Transition.

Supporting the Child's Return to Balance

We recognize that there may be times when a child is unable to participate safely or comfortably in the classroom or in after-school care, even with staff support. In those moments, CMS may contact the family and ask that the child be picked up for the remainder of the day or for a brief period of time.

The child's guide and Executive Director will connect with the family to better understand what occurred and make a thoughtful plan for the child's return to the environment.

Supporting a Thoughtful Transition

CMS is committed to knowing each child well and working closely with families to support a wide range of strengths, temperaments, learning styles, and developmental needs. When concerns arise, we begin with careful observation, open communication, and a collaborative plan for support.

In rare circumstances, CMS may determine that another learning environment would better meet the needs of the child or the classroom community. This may be considered when:

- The child needs a level or type of support that CMS is not equipped to provide within its program
- Ongoing behavior presents a significant concern for the physical or emotional safety of the child, other children, or staff
- Attendance prevents the child from participating consistently in the program
- The family is unable to participate in the support process, including meetings, recommended evaluations, or agreed-upon next steps

Before making this decision, CMS will clearly communicate its concerns, work with the family to consider available supports, and review the steps already taken. If a transition becomes necessary, CMS will approach the process with care and help the family prepare for the child's next learning environment.

Screen Media & Technology Policy

At CMS, we honor childhood as a time for deep exploration, meaningful relationships, purposeful movement, and discovery. Our approach supports the whole child—intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically.

Digital media and technology are part of the world children are growing into. We believe these tools are most beneficial when they are introduced thoughtfully, with respect for each child's stage of development. Children need time and space for conversation, concentration, creativity, movement, real-world experiences, and connection with others.

In keeping with Montessori principles, CMS introduces technology gradually and with a clear purpose. Children first build understanding through concrete materials, hands-on work, direct experience, and relationships. As they grow, technology may be introduced as a tool for learning, communication, creativity, and productivity.

Through this shared approach, CMS and families can help children develop a healthy, responsible, and thoughtful relationship with technology over time.

Partnership with Families

Children are best supported when home and school approach media and technology with shared intention. These guidelines are offered to help families create space for the sleep, movement, concentration, relationships, creativity, and emotional well-being that support a child's growth and engagement at school.

We recognize that each family has its own routines, needs, and values. Our role is not to prescribe every choice at home, but to share developmentally appropriate guidance and invite families into a thoughtful partnership around technology use.

As children grow, this partnership can evolve from adult protection and close supervision toward guided choice, shared responsibility, and increasing independence.

Early Childhood: Protecting Real-World Experience

During the first six years of life, children come to understand the world through movement, sensory exploration, language, relationships, imitation, and direct experience. Dr. Montessori described this as the period of the Absorbent Mind, when children deeply and naturally absorb the qualities of their environment.

In Casita and Children's House, CMS provides screen-free environments where children can work with concrete materials, move with purpose, care for themselves and their surroundings, build relationships, and grow in independence.

At home, we invite families to support this same foundation by keeping screen use limited and making room for conversation, outdoor play, practical work, books, music, art, imaginative play, and unhurried time together.

Elementary: Protecting and Preparing

During the Elementary years, children's imagination expands, their reasoning develops, and their interest in the wider world deepens. They continue to need rich, real-life experiences as they begin to explore how tools, including digital tools, can support meaningful work.

In Lower Elementary, technology use remains limited so children can continue building concentration, handwriting, mathematical thinking, research habits, collaboration, and problem-solving through concrete materials, discussion, and hands-on experience.

In Upper Elementary, technology may be introduced thoughtfully and in limited ways when it supports purposeful work such as research, writing, presentations, or classroom projects. It is used as one tool among many, not as a replacement for Montessori materials, direct experience, or meaningful engagement with others.

At home, we invite families to introduce media with care, set clear and consistent limits, remain aware of what children are accessing, and consider how both the content and amount of screen use support the child's well-being, relationships, and development.

Adolescence: Informing and Empowering

Adolescence is a time of growing independence, expanding responsibility, and deeper engagement with the wider world. Young people benefit from authentic work, meaningful choices, and opportunities to understand the impact of their decisions.

In the Adolescent Community, students may use a broader range of digital tools for research, communication, creative work, organization, and productivity. Guides support students in developing the practical judgment and ethical awareness needed to use these tools with purpose.

This includes learning to:

- Manage time and attention
- Evaluate the reliability of information
- Communicate with respect online
- Protect personal information and privacy

- Understand the lasting impact of digital choices
- Recognize when technology is supporting or interfering with well-being, relationships, and work
- Maintain balance among screen use, sleep, movement, outdoor time, responsibilities, and in-person connection

Families remain essential partners during this stage. Through ongoing conversation, thoughtful boundaries, and gradually increasing responsibility, home and school can help adolescents develop the judgment, self-discipline, and independence needed to use technology well.

Shared Guidance for Home and School

As children grow, families and CMS share the work of helping them build a healthy, thoughtful, and responsible relationship with technology. The following principles offer a common foundation for that partnership:

Technology should be used with a clear and meaningful purpose.

- Screen use should leave ample room for sleep, movement, outdoor experiences, relationships, reading, creativity, and family responsibilities.
- Children should have access to content that is appropriate for their age and stage of development.
- Adults should remain connected to and aware of the platforms, games, media, and online communication children use.
- Personal devices should support, rather than interrupt, the school day, classroom work, and community life.
- Digital communication should reflect the same respect, care, and responsibility we expect in person.

As technology and student needs continue to evolve, CMS may share additional guidance based on age level, device, platform, or communication type.

Safety and Campus Security

Campus Access

The safety of our children and community is a shared responsibility. Outside of arrival and dismissal, campus gates and designated entrances remain secured.

Families and visitors must enter through the school office, sign in, and receive a visitor badge before going onto campus. The badge must be worn and clearly visible at all times while on campus. Before leaving, visitors must return the badge to the office and sign out.

During school hours, the campus is reserved for school programs, approved activities, and authorized visitors. These procedures help us maintain a safe, calm, and prepared environment for the children.

Emergency, Fire, and Severe Weather Preparedness

CMS regularly practices emergency response, fire evacuation, and severe-weather drills so that children and staff can respond calmly and safely when needed.

Our Emergency Preparedness Plan includes procedures for evacuation, sheltering, communication, reunification, and other situations that may affect the school community. A copy is provided to families through Transparent Classroom and must be reviewed and acknowledged with a signature. The plan is also available for families to review on campus.

Gang-Free Zone

Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1,000 feet of a child care center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalties.

Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse and Neglect

Community Montessori School is committed to protecting children and helping families recognize, prevent, and respond to child abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Employee Training

All CMS employees receive annual training on recognizing, preventing, and reporting child abuse and neglect.

Awareness and Prevention

CMS shares information with employees and families about warning signs, risk factors, and prevention practices through the Parent Handbook, staff training, family education, community resources, and additional communication when appropriate.

Possible warning signs may include:

- Unexplained Or Repeated Injuries;
- Significant Changes In Behavior, Mood, Sleep, Eating, Or School Participation;
- Fear Of A Particular Person, Place, Or Going Home;
- Frequent Hunger, Poor Hygiene, Or Inadequate Clothing;
- Age-Inappropriate Sexual Knowledge Or Behavior; Or
- Statements Suggesting A Child Has Been Harmed Or Does Not Feel Safe.

Risk factors may include family stress, social isolation, domestic violence, substance misuse, untreated mental-health needs, unrealistic expectations of children, or limited access to support. The presence of a risk factor does not necessarily mean abuse or neglect is occurring.

Prevention includes attentive supervision, respectful and developmentally appropriate guidance, clear adult-child boundaries, open communication, family support, and prompt response when concerns arise.

Community Coordination and Support

CMS may coordinate with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Child Care Regulation, law enforcement, health-care professionals, and the Williamson County Children's Advocacy Center when prevention education, intervention, investigation, or family support is needed. The Williamson County Children's Advocacy Center provides a coordinated response and support services for children and families affected by abuse.

Obtaining Help and Making a Report

Anyone who suspects that a child has been abused or neglected must report the concern immediately.

Reports may be made by calling the **Texas Abuse and Neglect Hotline** at **1-800-252-5400**, which is available **24 hours a day**. A report may also be submitted through the Texas Abuse Hotline website when the situation is not urgent. Call 911 when a child is in immediate danger or needs emergency assistance.

Parents seeking assistance may also contact law enforcement, their child's health care or mental health provider, the Williamson County Children's Advocacy Center, or the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Reporting to CMS does not relieve the responsibility to report suspected abuse or neglect to the appropriate state authority.

Allegations Involving a Child in CMS Care

CMS will immediately notify a parent when there is an allegation that their child has been abused, neglected, or exploited while in CMS care, unless a law-enforcement agency, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, or another authorized agency directs CMS not to provide notice at that time.

CMS will take immediate steps to protect children, preserve relevant information, cooperate with authorities, and make all required reports and notifications.

If Child Care Regulation cites CMS for a deficiency related to abuse, neglect, or exploitation, CMS will notify the parents of every child attending the center within 5 days using the required state form.

Parents' Right to View Available Video

A parent may view an available video recording maintained by CMS of an alleged incident of abuse or neglect involving their child.

Before the recording is viewed, CMS will provide written notice to the parent of any other child shown in the recording. A parent may not retain any portion of a recording that depicts another child. CMS will protect the privacy of all children and preserve access needed by law enforcement or child-protection authorities. Texas parent-rights rules expressly include access to available video under these conditions.

Authorized Release of Children

Children will be released only to a parent, legal guardian, or another person authorized in the child's Authorized Pickup list. Families should list at least two additional authorized adults who may pick up their child when needed.

Families are responsible for notifying the CMS office of any change to regular pickup arrangements. Last-minute changes should be communicated to the office as soon as possible by calling the office.

Anyone unfamiliar to the CMS staff will be asked to show a government-issued photo ID before the child is released. Children will not be released to anyone younger than 18.

Permanent changes to a child's Authorized Pickup list must be submitted to the CMS office.

Injuries at School

CMS staff members who supervise children maintain required pediatric first aid and CPR certification.

For a minor injury, staff will provide appropriate first aid, comfort the child, and document what occurred. Families will be informed at departure or sooner when the location or nature of the injury warrants more immediate communication.

Families will be contacted promptly for injuries involving the head, neck, face, teeth, loss of consciousness, a suspected broken bone, a deep cut, or another significant concern.

When an injury appears life-threatening or requires immediate medical attention, staff will call 911, provide care within the scope of their training, and contact the child's parent or guardian as quickly as possible. If the parent or guardian cannot be reached, CMS will contact the individuals listed as emergency contacts.

CMS will complete all required incident documentation and notifications.

School Closures and Inclement Weather

CMS follows Georgetown ISD's decisions on school closures, delayed openings, and early releases due to inclement weather.

Families will be notified by email and through CMS's designated communication system as soon as possible. When an immediate response is needed, such as an early release, CMS may also send a text or emergency notification.

Families are encouraged to monitor Georgetown ISD announcements and CMS communications during inclement weather.

Admission, Re-Enrollment, and Placement

Families interested in enrolling at CMS are encouraged to review the steps outlined in the school's [Admissions and Enrollment Policy](#). Student re-enrollment occurs annually. Re-enrollment is offered by program level and does not guarantee placement in a particular environment or with a specific Guide.

After the re-enrollment deadline, available spaces may be offered to qualified applicants in the appropriate waiting pool.

If a family does not complete re-enrollment by the deadline, the offer will expire, and the space may be released. Families wishing to re-enroll after the deadline should contact the Enrollment & Admissions Specialist. Returning children will be given priority when an appropriate space remains available, but admission and placement cannot be guaranteed.

Placement decisions are made thoughtfully, with consideration for the child's developmental needs, program readiness, classroom balance, and the well-being of the learning community. **CMS does not accept requests for placement in a specific environment or with a specific Guide.**

Transitions Between Program Levels and Classroom Placement

Multi-age communities are central to the Montessori experience. Children typically remain in the same environment for approximately three years, allowing them to experience being among the youngest members of the community, grow in confidence and independence, and eventually become leaders and models for others.

Transitions at CMS are guided by Dr. Maria Montessori's Planes of Development. Rather than relying only on age, grade level, or academic achievement, Guides and the Academic Team consider the whole child and look for signs that the child is ready to benefit from the next prepared environment.

Placement and transition decisions may consider:

- Social And Emotional Development
- Independence And Self-Regulation
- Ability To Sustain Concentration
- Academic And Developmental Readiness
- Relationships With Peers And Adults
- Completion Of The Montessori Cycle, When Possible
- The Needs And Balance Of The Receiving Community

Families are included in the transition process and will receive information about the child's readiness, anticipated timing, and next steps. CMS does not accept requests for placement in a specific environment or with a specific Guide.

Casita

Casita is often a child's first experience in a Montessori community. Children may enter the program between approximately 15 and 20 months of age, with 18 months considered the ideal entry point. Children must also meet the developmental expectations established by CMS, including being a confident walker.

The environment supports growing independence, movement, language, social development, and participation in the community's daily life.

Children's House

Children may enter Children's House as a new CMS student or transition from Casita when they demonstrate readiness for the environment.

CMS considers transitions from Casita to Children's House at three points during the school year:

- At the beginning of the school year
- At the middle of the school year
- Near the end of the school year

These transition windows allow CMS to respond thoughtfully to each child's development while also protecting continuity and balance within both environments.

Children entering Children's House are expected to meet CMS's readiness expectations related to toileting independence, dressing, communication, independence, and participation in the classroom community.

Transitions are planned gradually and include visits to the new environment, communication between Guides, family conversations, and other support based on the child's needs.

Lower Elementary

Children generally transition to Lower Elementary at the beginning of the school year after completing the Children's House cycle.

Readiness for Lower Elementary reflects the child's movement into the second plane of development. Indicators may include:

- A Growing Interest In Working And Learning With Peers
- An Emerging Reasoning Mind
- Curiosity Expressed Through "Why" And "How" Questions
- Increasing Independence And Responsibility
- The Ability To Sustain Concentration
- Social And Emotional Readiness For A Larger Community

Whenever possible, children benefit from completing the full Children's House cycle before moving to Lower Elementary.

Upper Elementary

Children generally transition to Upper Elementary at the beginning of the school year after completing the Lower Elementary cycle. The Upper Elementary environment builds upon the child's growing ability to think independently, collaborate, organize work, and engage with increasingly complex academic and social experiences.

CMS considers the child's readiness, Montessori experience, academic foundation, independence, and ability to participate successfully in the Upper Elementary community.

Adolescent Program

Students generally transition to the Adolescent Program at the beginning of the academic year after completing the Upper Elementary cycle. The Adolescent Program supports students as they enter the third plane of development and experience growing independence, responsibility, social awareness, and engagement with meaningful work. Students participate in an integrated academic program that may include collaborative projects, practical life experiences, service, entrepreneurship, and work connected to the broader community.

CMS considers the student's academic, developmental, social, and emotional readiness when determining placement in the Adolescent Program.

The Family's Role

A strong partnership between home and school helps children move into the next level with confidence and a sense of belonging. As a transition approaches, families are invited to visit the next program level and participate in educational opportunities that explain the child's developmental needs, the prepared environment, and the Montessori practices used at that stage.

Families are encouraged to ask questions, share observations, and remain engaged throughout the transition process.

The Placement Process

Montessori placement is centered on the needs of both the child and the classroom community. The Academic Team considers each child's development, strengths, relationships, learning needs, and readiness, along with the balance and composition of each environment. Placement decisions are not based on a preference for a particular Guide or classroom.

Because maintaining balanced communities supports every child's growth, CMS does not accept requests for a specific environment or Guide. Families are welcome to share in writing any information they believe would help the Academic Team make a thoughtful placement decision.

Placement Changes

Placement changes are uncommon and considered only when significant circumstances affect the child's well-being or ability to thrive. When a change is being considered, the family, Guide, and Academic Team will work together to review the child's needs and determine the most supportive path forward. Any change must be approved by CMS and made in the child's best interest, and the well-being of the classroom community in mind.

Delaying a Start Date

Once a family has signed an enrollment or re-enrollment agreement, tuition begins on the date stated in the agreement. If a child is not ready to begin attending for personal reasons, the family may hold the space by continuing to pay tuition and any applicable fees until regular attendance begins. A reserved space may not be used for occasional or drop-in attendance. Any request to change the agreed start date must be submitted in writing to the Enrollment & Admissions Specialist and may be approved only in writing by the Executive Director.

Withdrawal from CMS

Enrollment at CMS is a commitment for the full school year, through the end of May. Once a family signs the Enrollment Agreement, the child's place is reserved, and CMS makes staffing, classroom, and budget decisions based on that contractual commitment.

If a family withdraws after signing the Enrollment Agreement, whether before or after the school year begins, a withdrawal fee equal to 20% of the child's total annual tuition will apply.

For withdrawals that occur after the school year begins, the family is also responsible for tuition prorated through the child's final day of enrollment, along with any other outstanding charges due under the Enrollment Agreement.



CMS may also end a child's enrollment when the school determines that continued enrollment is no longer appropriate. Any financial obligations associated with a school-initiated termination will be governed by the Enrollment Agreement and communicated directly to the family.

Tuition Assistance

CMS is committed to making Montessori education accessible to families with demonstrated financial need. Families seeking tuition assistance must complete the FACTS application and submit all required documentation by the communicated deadline. FACTS provides CMS with an independent financial assessment to help determine each family's level of need. A non-refundable payment of \$40 is required by FACTS to process the application; this fee is not received by CMS

Tuition-assistance decisions may consider:

- Demonstrated Financial Need
- Available Tuition-Assistance Funds
- The Timing And Completion Of The Application
- Continued Enrollment At CMS
- The Number Of Children Enrolled
- Other Priorities Established By CMS

Applications submitted by the deadline will be considered during the initial allocation of available funds. Applications received after the deadline may be reviewed if funding remains, but a decision may not be available before the start of the school year.

Families will receive written notice of their award and any related enrollment steps. Tuition assistance must be renewed each year and is not guaranteed from one year to the next.

Applications, financial documents, and award information will be handled with care and shared only with individuals who need them to administer the program.

Enrollment and Policy Updates

Families complete CMS enrollment requirements before a child begins attending school. Enrollment is considered complete when all required forms, health records, emergency information, authorizations, agreements, and applicable fees have been submitted by the communicated deadlines. Families are responsible for keeping this information current and notifying CMS promptly when contact information, authorized pick-up persons, medical needs, or other important information changes.

Before enrollment, families receive access to the Family Handbook and other applicable enrollment agreements and school policies. Parents or guardians must review and acknowledge these documents through Transparent Classroom. CMS keeps the completed acknowledgment in the child's school record.

From time to time, CMS may update its policies, procedures, or enrollment agreements to reflect changes in law, licensing requirements, school operations, or community needs. Families will receive written notice of any change by email before it takes effect, whenever advance notice is reasonably possible.

When an operational policy or enrollment agreement is updated, families will be provided with the revised document and asked to sign and date an acknowledgment through Transparent Classroom. The signed acknowledgment will be maintained in the child's record. When an immediate change is necessary for health, safety, legal, or licensing reasons, CMS will notify families in writing as soon as practicable and clearly communicate the effective date.

Families are encouraged to contact the CMS office with questions about enrollment requirements or policy updates.

Admissions & Enrollment Policy

We are pleased that you are considering Community Montessori School for your family. This policy outlines the process/procedures for enrollment into the Early Childhood, Elementary, and Adolescent programs. Applying to CMS is a multi-step process and requires families to plan time to complete each required step.

An overview of the inquiry and enrollment process is available on our website <https://www.community-montessori.org/the-admissions-process>.

Applications will be reviewed after CMS receives:

- A campus visit by family and child(ren);
- A completed enrollment application through Transparent Classroom;
- Payment of the nonrefundable \$100 application fee;
- Supporting records or information requested by CMS; And
- Any student visit, observation, or family meeting, if required, for the applicable program.

Applications to Community Montessori School

CMS seeks families who understand and support our mission and Montessori approach. We accept applications for the following programs:

Casita Community: Children enter the program between 15 and 20 months of age once they are stable walkers. Families who have completed the application process but have not been placed in the Casita Community by the age of 20 months are moved to the applicant pool for the Children's House.

The Children's House: Children enter this program between two years and ten months and three years and six months of age. At this age, prior Montessori school experience is not necessary. Children must be fully toilet-independent and able to dress/undress independently.

Elementary: This program serves children ages 6 to 12 (equivalent to grades 1 through 6).

- Prior Montessori school experience is **preferred** for the Early Elementary program, serving children ages 6 to 9 (the equivalent of grades 1 through 3).



- Prior Montessori school experience is **preferred** for the Upper Elementary, children ages 9 to 12 (the equivalent of grades 4 through 6).

Adolescent Community: This program serves youth ages 12 to 15 (equivalent to grades 7 through 9). Prior Montessori school experience is **preferred**.

Enrollment Priority

CMS's mission is to provide authentic Montessori education in a nature-rich environment that cultivates collaboration, curiosity, love of learning, and respect for oneself, others, and the world. This mission guides enrollment and placement decisions.

When space is limited, priority may be given to:

- Currently Enrolled Students Continuing Into The Next Program Level
- Younger siblings of children currently enrolled in our Elementary and Adolescent programs.
- Returning CMS Families
- Applicants With Prior Montessori Experience, When Relevant To The Program, and
- Other Priority Groups Approved By CMS

Priority status does not guarantee admission, placement in a particular environment, or placement with a specific Guide.

Admission and placement decisions also consider:

- Available Space
- The Child's Age And Developmental Readiness
- Classroom Balance
- Program Expectations
- The Child's Educational And Social-Emotional Needs, and
- CMS's Ability To Support The Child Successfully.

The Waiting Pool of Applicants

If there is no immediate opening for a child, the application will be placed in the appropriate waiting pool.

Casita Community Waiting Pool

Admission is offered on a rolling basis as space becomes available. CMS will review the waiting pool and offer available spaces to eligible applicants based on program readiness, classroom balance, enrollment priorities, and the needs of the school community.

Applicants who are not placed before aging out of the program may be moved to the applicant pool for the next program level.

Children's House Community Applicant Pool

Children new to CMS typically begin at Children's House at the start of the school year. Midyear admission may be considered when space is available, and the placement is appropriate for the child and environment.

Elementary and Adolescent Applicant Pools

Midyear admission may be considered when space is available, and CMS determines that the student can transition successfully into the program. Applications for a future school year will remain in the appropriate applicant pool for that enrollment cycle.

Declining an Offered Space

When CMS offers a family an available space, the family must accept or decline by the stated deadline. If the family declines the offered space because they prefer to wait for a later school year, the current application will be closed. To be considered for a future year, the family must submit a new application and pay the applicable nonrefundable application fee, currently \$100.

Declining an offered space does not preserve the family's original application date, waiting-pool position, or enrollment priority for a future year.

CMS may make an exception when the offered start date, program level, schedule, or placement differs materially from what the family requested. Any exception must be approved in writing by the Executive Director.

Admissions Selection Criteria

Once the application and all required supporting information have been received, the CMS Admissions Team will review it.

In addition to the enrollment priorities described above, CMS may consider:

- The Balance Of Beginning-Cycle, Mid-Cycle, And Full-Cycle Children In Each Environment
- Previous Enrollment At CMS
- Siblings Currently Enrolled At CMS
- Prior Montessori Experience
- The Child's Developmental, Academic, And Social-Emotional Readiness
- The Needs And Balance Of The Classroom Community
- CMS's Ability To Support The Child Successfully

This list is not exhaustive, and no single factor determines admission.

Sibling priority applies only when the family is in good standing with CMS, required tuition and fees are current, and an appropriate space is available.

CMS does not accept requests for placement in a specific environment or with a specific Guide. Placement decisions are made thoughtfully by the Admissions and Academic Teams based on the child's needs, classroom balance, and the well-being of the learning community.

Delaying a Start Date

Once a family has signed an enrollment or re-enrollment agreement, tuition obligations begin on the date stated in the agreement, even if the child begins attending later for personal reasons.

A family may hold the child's space by continuing to pay tuition and all applicable fees until the child begins regular attendance.

A reserved space may not be used for occasional or drop-in attendance. Any request to change the agreed start date must be submitted in writing and approved by CMS.

Admission Decisions

CMS may accept, decline, waitlist, or defer an application based on the information available and the needs of the child, program, and classroom community.

Families will be notified of the admission decision and any next steps through email.

An offer of admission must be accepted within seven calendar days of the date the offer email is sent. If the required enrollment agreement, payment, or other enrollment steps are not completed within that time, the offer may expire, and the space may be offered to another family.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Community Montessori School does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, or gender, disability, or age in providing educational services, activities, and programs. Community Montessori School complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ("ADA"), as amended, which incorporates and expands upon the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended; and any other legally-protected classification or status protected by applicable law.

Family–School Communication and Partnership

Open, respectful communication helps families and CMS work together in support of each child. When a question or concern arises, we encourage families to begin with the person closest to the child's daily experience.

Family to Guide

Your child's Guide is the best place to begin with questions about the classroom, learning, relationships, routines, or your child's day.

Guides are deeply engaged with children during the school day, so they may not be able to respond while the environment is in session. They will acknowledge family messages within one business day, even when a thoughtful response requires more time. For urgent or same-day matters, please contact the CMS office.

Families and Guides bring different perspectives, and both are important. Open communication and a willingness to listen help us work together in support of the child.

Family, Guide, and Academic Support

At times, a family or Guide may benefit from an additional perspective. After the family and Guide have had an opportunity to discuss the concern, either may request support from the Academic Director.



A collaborative meeting may include the family, Guide, and Academic Director to clarify concerns, review observations, and identify next steps.

Families may also contact the Academic Director regarding:

- Transitions Between Program Levels
- Referrals Or Coordination With Outside Specialists
- Program-Specific Questions
- Other Matters Requiring Academic Support

When an outside specialist is supporting a child, families are encouraged to provide relevant reports and authorize communication with CMS when appropriate. This allows the family, Guide, Academic Team, and specialist to work from a shared understanding of the child's needs.

Family to Executive Director

Concerns that remain unresolved after collaboration with the Guide and Academic Director may be brought to the Executive Director. Families may also contact the Executive Director directly when a concern involves schoolwide policy, safety, discrimination, harassment, confidentiality, or another matter that may not be appropriate to address first with the Guide.

Contacting Your Child's Guide

CMS values timely and thoughtful communication with families. Guides may communicate through approved methods such as email, phone, Transparent Classroom, newsletters, conferences, written notes, or scheduled meetings.

Guides are generally unavailable for unscheduled conversations during arrival, dismissal, or the work cycle because their attention must remain with the children. Families should schedule a meeting when a conversation requires more time or privacy.

Emergency or same-day operational messages, including changes to pickup, attendance, illness, or transportation, should be communicated to the CMS office rather than sent only to the Guide.

Families are encouraged to share changes at home that may affect their child's experience at school. This may include a move, family separation, death, new sibling, change in caregiver, extended absence, disrupted sleep, or another meaningful change in routine. Families need to share only the information they are comfortable providing, but helpful context allows the Guide to respond to the child with greater understanding and care.

Parent - Guide Conferences

Formal conferences are offered twice each school year. Families and Guides may request an additional meeting when questions, concerns, transitions, or changes in the child's development would benefit from further conversation. Conference scheduling information will be shared with families in advance. Families should arrange care for children so the conversation can remain centered on the child's development and allow everyone to

listen, reflect, and speak openly. If you or your child's guide has any concerns, additional conferences can be scheduled.

Classroom Observations

Families are invited to observe their child's class once each semester. Classroom observations offer families an opportunity to experience the rhythm of the environment and deepen their understanding of Montessori practice.

Observing in your child's community is an excellent opportunity to get a glimpse of what a day in their community might be like. Each observation is scheduled for 30 minutes and must be scheduled in advance with the Front Office. All visitors must check in at the office and follow campus security procedures before entering the environment.

During an observation, families are asked to:

- Silence And Put Away Cell Phones
- Refrain From Taking Photographs Or Recordings
- Observe Quietly And Avoid Interrupting Children's Work
- Keep Interactions With Their Child Brief And Calm
- Allow The Guide To Continue Supporting The Community
- Save Questions For A Conversation After The Observation

Families are invited to observe the environment as a whole, the rhythm of the community, the children's growing independence, the quiet guidance of the Guide, and the many ways the prepared environment supports learning.

It is natural for a child's experience to feel a little different when a family member is present. If your child has difficulty settling or becomes distressed, the observation may be gently brought to a close so they can return to the comfort and rhythm of their day.

We recognize and support parents' desires to see and spend time with their children whenever they can. There can be unintended consequences of frequent visits, including disruptions to rest, naptime routines, or concentrated work cycles. We have regularly scheduled observation times for parents each semester. In addition, the school has an open-door policy for parents. If at any time you would like to visit campus or your child's community, notify your guide and check in through the front office.

The Weekly Newsletter

Each Friday afternoon during the school year, CMS sends families a weekly newsletter with important updates, upcoming events, Montessori learning, and other information from across the school community. Families are encouraged to read it each week to stay connected to the life and rhythm of CMS.

School Governance

Community Montessori School is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. The Board safeguards the school's mission and provides financial, governance, and long-term oversight.



The Board appoints and supports the Executive Director, who leads the school's daily operations and works with CMS staff to carry out the school's mission.

Who Do I Contact

Absence/Attendance	attendance@community-montessori.org CC: Guide
Academic Curriculum	Guide, then Lynn O'Connor, Academic Director loconnor@community-montessori.org then, Leah Nohra, Interim Executive Director lnohra@community-montessori.org
After School Enrichment Classes	Nicole Hagen nhagen@community-montessori.org
Admissions, Applications, & Tours	Katie Elder admissions@community-montessori.org
Annual Fund Donations	Jennifer McGowan business@community-montessori.org
Late Arrival & Early Pickups	attendance@community-montessori.org CC: Guide
Background Checks for Volunteers	Tirzah Johnson tjohnson@community-montessori.org
Benchmarking/Assessments	Guide, then Academic Director loconnor@community-montessori.org
Building & Grounds	Tirzah Johnson tjohnson@community-montessori.org
Childcare Licensing	Leah Nohra lnohra@community-montessori.org Tirzah Johnson tjohnson@community-montessori.org
Children's Developmental Progress	Guide; then Academic Director loconnor@community-montessori.org
Community Specific Gatherings	Class Ambassadors
Departure Changes Without Prior Notice	Nicole Hagen attendance@community-montessori.org (by 2:15PM)
Dyslexia Support & Tutoring, Benchmark Communications	Jessica Clark jclark@community-montessori.org

Employment Opportunities	Leah Nohra lnohra@community-montessori.org
Enrollment Contracts	Katie Elder admissions@community-montessori.org
FACTS Account	Jennifer McGowan business@community-montessori.org
Financial aid (tuition assistance)	General Questions: Katie Elder admissions@community-montessori.org Financial Aid Reward Questions: Jennifer McGowan business@community-montessori.org
Going Out & Field Trip Protocol	Guide, then Academic Director loconnor@community-montessori.org then, Interim Executive Director lnohra@community-montessori.org
Immunization Records	Katie Elder admissions@community-montessori.org
In-kind donations; equipment donations	Jennifer McGowan business@community-montessori.org
Library	Lois Grobert lgrobert@community-montessori.org
Questions about children's academic, social, & emotional development, challenges, etc.	Guide
Schoolwide policies, safety concerns, discrimination or harassment, confidentiality, or other sensitive matters that may be better addressed directly with school leadership	Leah Nohra lnohra@community-montessori.org
Summer Camp Registration	Katie Elder admissions@community-montessori.org
Website/Social Media	Lynn O'Connor loconnor@community-montessori.org
Yearbook	Tirzah Johnson tjohnson@community-montessori.org