

# Parent Handbook

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## *SECTION 1: THE MONTESSORI PROGRAM*

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### **PHILOSOPHY OF STARS MONTESSORI ACADEMY**

The Montessori system of education is both a philosophy of child growth and a rationale for guiding such growth. It is based on the child's developmental needs for freedom within limits, and a carefully prepared environment, which guarantees exposure to a wide range of materials, experiences and grace and courtesy, through which a child can develop intellectually, as well as physically and socially.

Montessori education recognizes that the only valid impulse to learning is the self-motivation of the child. The Montessori classroom, is designed to capture the unique ability of children to develop their own capabilities. The adult prepares the environment, provides the activity, functions as the resource person or exemplar, offers the child stimulation and guidance; but it is the child who learns, who is motivated through the work itself to persist in his/her chosen task.

The Montessori environment invites the child to progress at his/her own pace. Montessori introduces the child to the love of learning at an early age with the hope of building the foundation for a lifetime of creative learning. Montessori is not only a contemporary and progressive method of education, but it becomes a way of life.

### **THE MONTESSORI METHOD**

#### ***Key Philosophical Messages that make Montessori Unique***

- Deep respect for children as individuals.
- The multiage classes (which can span over a period of one to three years) allow the Teacher and the children to develop a close and long-term relationship. Older students are encouraged to become role models, and mentors for the younger students. In turn they are developing leadership and nurturing skills. The younger students truly look up to their older classmates and this gives them the incentive to behave and strive to achieve more challenging work.
- The integrated curriculum is carefully structured through the use and repetition of concrete materials which lays the foundation for later abstract concepts.
- Independence is nurtured and leads to children becoming purposeful, motivated, and confident in their own abilities.



- Grace and Courtesy, Peace and Conflict Resolution are guided daily, and children learn to be a part of a warm, respectful, and supportive community.
- Hands-on learning is central to the curriculum in all programs and leads to children being engaged rather than passive with their work.
- The environments are responsibly and carefully prepared with multisensory, sequential, and self-correcting materials to support self-directed learning.
- School faculty, children and parents work together as a warm and supportive community.
- Self-expression is nurtured in all children. Children experience art, music, writing, and other forms of creative arts with confidence and passion.

### ***Desired learner outcomes common to Montessori Education***

Dr. Maria Montessori was the first Italian female surgeon and educator. She developed a method of teaching based on her scientific observations of young children's behavior. Her first "Children's House" was established in Rome in 1907. She found children learned best in a homelike environment filled with developmentally appropriate materials that provide real-life experiences, which contribute to the growth of self-motivated, independent learners. Dr. Montessori carried her message across the globe, including the United States in 1912.

The outcomes we aspire to teach are lifelong developments.

**Independence:** Is the child able to choose his or her own work freely, work with it in concentration and repetition and return it to the proper place, prepared for the next child's use?

**Confidence and Competence:** Are the child's self-perceived successes far more numerous than his or her self-perceived failures? Is the child capable of self-correcting work, upon observation, reflection, or discussion?

**Autonomy:** Can the child accept or reject inclusion in another child's work or work group with equanimity?

**Intrinsic Motivation:** Is the child drawn to continue working for the apparent pure pleasure of so doing? Does the child, once having achieved a particular competence, move on to revel in mastery by showing others?



**Ability to Handle External Authority:** Is the child able to accept the “ground rules” of the group as appropriate in his or her interactions with other children? Is the child, while distant from the Teacher, able to function as if the Teacher were nearby?

**Social Responsibility:** Independent and autonomous persons are always a part of a group and must attain independence and autonomy through participation in group activity. The loss of these qualities by one of a group is a loss for all. Do students attain independence and autonomy and, at the same time, develop social responsibility?

**Academic Preparation:** Academic preparation entails activation and cultivation of inherent powers and processes through which the learner becomes a supplier of meanings or of things-meaningfully-known. Academic skills are essential to learning and knowing, not the aim of learning and knowing. Do students acquire academic skills and apply them in learning to learn?

#### ***Some Important Aspects of the Montessori Method***

1. It is based on years of patient observation and study of children by Dr. Maria Montessori, who was a scientist uniquely educated and qualified for this task. She was a surgeon, a student of psychology, and a professor of anthropology, a science that is concerned with man in a unique way. She developed her methodology by letting the children show her what worked and what did not work. It is not a "franchise" or "patented" operation. It is in the public domain.
2. Currently, Montessori is the largest growing pedagogy in the world. Within 100 years, Montessori schools span 6 continents.
3. It has revealed the small child as a lover of order and of intellectual work, spontaneously chosen and carried out with profound joy, capable of concentration and eager to learn for the joy of learning.
4. It is based upon the child's imperious need to learn through hands-on activities, which develop the child's abilities at each stage of mental growth. These stages are called “sensitive periods,” during which knowledge is more readily absorbed. While the method offers the child a maximum of spontaneity, it enables the child to reach an even higher level of scholastic attainment than under other systems.
5. Though it does away with the necessity of coercion by means of rewards and punishments, it achieves a higher discipline. It is an active discipline, which originates within the child and is achieved through concentration on work, which he has chosen. Children with extremely active and curious minds are stimulated and utilize their intellectual energies constructively.



6. It enables the Teacher to interact with each child individually in each subject and guide the child according to individual needs. Each child works at an individual pace.
7. The Montessori method develops the whole personality of the child, not merely intellectual abilities but also powers of deliberation, initiative, and independent choice, along with emotional development. By living as a free member of a real social community, the child is guided in developing fundamental social qualities that form the basis of good citizenship.

### ***Ground Rules for the Montessori Classroom***

**The following are guidelines established to enable the partnership of parents and Teacher to help develop the students at Stars Montessori Academy. The expectation is that The Teacher will abide by these guidelines in every way.**

#### **THE TEACHER:**

The prime responsibilities are:

- To help each child learn to help themselves experience success.
- To protect each child's right to engage in chosen activities within the prepared environment and schedule.

#### **1. The first duty of the Teacher is to prepare the classroom environment.**

By preparation of the environment, we mean that the Teacher programs into the environment materials and outcomes of activity designed to ensure success and satisfaction for the child, as well as providing a challenging and stimulating intellectual growth as well as the development of sensory-motor and communication skills.

“There is a place for everything and everything has a place.” Within the environment, the materials are displayed in easily accessible places and are ordered within areas defined for certain activities, e.g., Practical Life, Sensorial, Geography, Science, Mathematics and Language.

Within each activity area, materials are beautifully displayed in a pleasing and orderly manner. Everything needed to carry a particular activity through to completion is displayed together in a convenient and self-evident arrangement. This helps the child complete activities without interruption.





Preparation of the environment includes the general atmosphere created within the classroom as a result of visual displays, floor plan and arrangement of developmentally appropriate furniture. Within this context, the condition of the equipment is of the utmost importance. Materials are maintained in good repair, clean, pleasingly arranged, and colorful. The materials are changed frequently to ensure interest in the environment as well as progress in concepts as presented in the materials and activities. This standard must be maintained at all times.

## **2. The Teacher is a mediator and guide.**

"Never allow a child to risk failure unless he has a reasonable chance of success." The Teacher's goal as mediator is to maximize success for the child and to minimize error. In order to minimize error, the Teacher provides materials with built-in Control of Error. The child becomes an independent learner who experiences success through self-correction.

The entire environment is prepared in such a way that error is self-evident, and as the child internalizes the ground rules, the child no longer needs gentle reminders from the Teacher, having developed these as personal habits of working.

## **3. The Teacher maintains ground rules and guides appropriate behavior in the classroom by the use of Grace and Courtesy lessons.**

The Teacher treats the children with warmth, patience and respect, guiding them to freely observe the rules of the classroom.

Ground rules are extremely important, for only after the child has internalized the ground rules of social behavior (that is, made the ground rules their own) is the child truly free to learn and to create independently or with others.

The Teacher follows a peacekeeping curriculum to guide students in problem-solving behavior and language skills. Peacekeeping becomes a way of life in the classroom for adults and students. The Teacher acknowledges and reinforces students' attempts at adhering to the peacekeeping curriculum in the classroom.

## **4. The Teacher never arbitrarily interrupts the child during work.**

If the Teacher wishes to invite the class to a group activity, this is done at an appropriate time so as not to interfere with the absorption and concentration of the children in



activities of their own choice. The Teacher is extremely careful not to impose personal interests, wishes, or needs on the children without their sincere interest and involvement.

**5. The Teacher "corrects" a child who is breaking the ground rules in a one-to-one private relationship.**

The Teacher's manner can be described as gentle but firm, and the voice is kept quiet so as not to draw the attention of others. Corrections are never called out from across the room, as this may cause embarrassment and create a general disturbance. The Teacher approaches the child and gains attention by stooping to eye level or, when appropriate, placing a hand on the child's shoulder as a gesture of understanding.

**6. When a Teacher must "correct" or interrupt a child, the Teacher does so in a positive manner.**

The Teacher says, "Please do it this way," "We do it this way," or "May I show you how to do this?" The Teacher never derides, criticizes, or corrects in a negative way. If a child spills something or makes a mess, the Teacher will softly and kindly reply, "It is alright, accidents happen, and you have already received a lesson on how to clean up this spill; please get the mop."

Clean-up is like any other activity to the young child and involves water play and other motor activities, which the child enjoys a great deal.

**7. If a child is behaving in an uncontrollable manner in the classroom and is disrupting the activities of others, doing harm to themselves, others, or the environment, the Teacher removes the child from the environment.**

This is done in a calm, controlled manner with no implication of punishment. The child is removed as a measure of protection for themselves and the rights of others.

The Teacher attempts to help the child by diverting attention toward a productive kind of activity. The Teacher takes cues from the nature of the child's outburst, the possible cause of the problem, and the child's individual needs. The Teacher's attitude must be, "This child is trying to tell me something. This child needs help. How can I help?" There is no room for pride or anger in the teaching of young children. Above all, there must be respect and understanding.



**The Child:**

1. Children may work alone or in spontaneous groups. We teach children not to touch another's work without being invited; therefore, there is no forced sharing.
2. Everyone walks around the work rugs.
3. Line rules for group stories or lessons include sitting quietly with arms and legs folded.
4. Each child is responsible for dressing themselves and gathering their belongings.
5. Children are taught to serve themselves refreshments and are in charge of cleaning the environment.
6. Children are directors of work and Teachers are there to serve their needs.
7. Children talk quietly and ask for help on a one-to-one basis, not by yelling across the room. They do not interrupt a lesson but wait quietly in close proximity to the Teacher until they notice before asking for help or direction.

**Parents:**

1. Please leave toys at home.
2. Please try to bring happy, relaxed children to school by allowing adequate time and a very slow pace in preparing for school.
3. Talk about ground rules with children in a "positive" manner, and practice talking quietly at home.
4. Encourage the ability to distinguish between appropriate indoor behavior and outdoor behavior.
5. Parent conferences are scheduled twice each year.
6. Please avoid tangible rewards for accomplishments children naturally receive pleasure from.
7. Order is very important to children to give them a sense of security and peace.



8. Notify the Teacher if you have a question or concern. A telephone message can be left with the office.

9. Parents are the child's primary teachers. The faculty and staff at Stars Montessori Academy can love, support, and encourage parents best by setting excellent examples. We must address parents' needs as well as the needs of our children. We must also trust one another and share the goal of providing the best educational environment for children to develop.



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## SECTION 2: PROGRAM STANDARDS

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### **PROGRAMS**

#### **Toddler Program:**

Our Toddler Program starts at the age of 18 months and continues until up to 36 months of age. Our Teacher's provide your toddler with constant support and encouragement to build self-esteem, self-confidence, and their overall values. Our toddlers are given the best of care and nurturing to create a peaceful, fun and exploratory environment while they are here at school. As toddler development progresses rapidly and changes quickly, our Teacher's use a daily communication form to exchange information with parents and chart the needs of these children until they transition into our pre-primary program.

#### **Pre-Primary Program:**

Children ages 2 to 3.5 years old will be considered for enrollment into the Pre-Primary Program. This program is a training program designed to help prepare the children for the Montessori Primary environment. The children in the Pre-Primary program don't have to be toilet trained. However, they must show a social maturity to adapt to the group interactions and activities. Our Pre-Primary children are encouraged to be independent and learn important skills such as socializing, sharing, using their words, and toilet training. As children progress and master language, toileting skills, and proper use of materials, they may be considered for promotion into the Primary program.

#### **Primary Program:**

Children ages 3 to 6 years old will be considered for enrollment into the Primary Program. Children need to be completely toilet trained and must show a social maturity to adapt to the group interactions and activities. Our preschoolers will have the opportunity to develop their skills in: Practical Life, Sensorial, Geography/Science, Language and Mathematics. Following the Montessori philosophy throughout their time at Stars Montessori Academy, we will encourage a daily respect for their Teacher's, friends and the environment.

#### **TK / Kindergarten / Elementary Program:**

Students who stay for our Elementary program have the third year of the Primary curriculum to build on and continue their learning through individualized learning plans created by the Teacher. The Teacher helps each child balance new lessons while practicing previously mastered lessons in Language, Math, and Cultural studies, and supports the transition into the lower elementary curriculum.



### CLASSROOM SCHEDULE

The classroom daily schedule will be posted in each of our classrooms and on the classroom webpage.

### SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

We will observe Labor Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving Day and the day after, Christmas Day, one week Winter Recess, New Years' Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Presidents Day, one week for Spring Break, Memorial Day, Fourth of July and up to 5 x Teacher's In-Service Days. Please see school calendar for actual holiday dates.

### PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

There will be two conferences per child each calendar year.

### FIELD TRIPS

All field trips are onsite. Occasionally, special activities will be scheduled at school which may include specialist and educational vendors. A small participation fee may be charged per child.

### "THE CELEBRATION OF LIFE!"

Children are welcome to share their birthdays with their friends at school as long as the parent arranges a date with the Teacher **at least a week in advance**. This is a celebration of the child's life as well as a science lesson.

We celebrate with a special ceremony using Montessori number rods, globe, candle and pictures depicting the child's timeline of life. Parents are invited to send a "store bought special healthy treat," such as a vegetable or fruit platter. We are a nut-free school; therefore, we ask of you to please respect and follow our policy. Please refrain from sending party favor bags.

### FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Procure Connect App: This serves as our main parent communication and is a great way for families to receive notices and updates on their child throughout the day. Children in



our Toddlers and Preprimary classrooms will receive Daily Sheets via the app upon being checked out at the end of the day, but parents can log in and check their child's daily eating, diapering and sleeping logs on their family account at any time. Parents are able to message teachers via the app and see daily events.

**School Website:** Our school website is where you will find everything that is happening with your child's classroom. A monthly blog and photos are available at the beginning of each month on the classroom pages which can be accessed using a password provided by the office. You can always access our monthly lunch menu and calendar on the website. The monthly academic and enrichment curriculum and related information can also be found on your classroom webpage, as well as needed forms for schedule changes.

**Weekly Friday emails:** Every week the School Director will send out a Newsletter which provides an update on what the children are learning in the classroom and what has been happening around the school throughout the week. It will also include any updates on schedules or events and reminders for parents. It is important that we have up-to-date emails for parents to ensure you are getting the most relevant information.

Please feel free to email or call your Director at any time.

### **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Within the Montessori methodology we guide our students with a precious conflict resolution procedure, which is called the "Peace Rose." The children take turns holding the rose and sharing their feelings with one another. Likewise, the staff at Stars Montessori Academy is committed to responding to all family questions and concerns graciously and resolve those matters as quickly as possible.

Concerns are most effectively addressed within the school. If a specific classroom concern arises, you can discuss the issue with the lead Teacher. However, we encourage you to discuss more general school/facility concerns with school management, who will involve staff members as needed.

### **TRANSITIONS**

We recognize how important new beginnings are in each child's development and to each child's family. We call these new beginnings transitions. We take great effort to make transitions as special and as smooth as possible for children and their families. This is



done by slowly integrating children into a new program and by customizing care and communication throughout the transition period.

***Initial transitions from Home to School:***

The first transition families experience is from the home to the school. We realize that this can often be a difficult period for families as everyone adjusts to new routines and new people. During the transition from home to school, you will receive general information on the program and a daily schedule, meet with your child's Teacher, tour the classroom and meet the other children in the classroom. You are encouraged to discuss the communication methods that work best for you with your child's Teacher. Please mention any adjustment problems you anticipate and together we will work to foster the best possible transition. We also recommend that you visit the school prior to your child's first day.

***Transitioning to a New classroom:***

As children grow and develop, they need new challenges and social interactions with other children in their peer group. Children will make a transition to the next program based upon many factors relating to their readiness. During the transition from one program to another, your child is gently integrated into the new environment through a series of visits to the new classroom. We encourage you to visit the new classroom, so that you too can become accustomed to the environment and bond with your child's new Teacher. Special attention is given to your family to support you through these changes. You are encouraged to discuss communication methods that work best for you in order to maintain ongoing dialogue throughout your child's transition.

**POSITIVE GUIDANCE**

The staff at Stars Montessori Academy consistently emphasize basic respect for the individual child and exemplifies grace and courtesy. Young children are striving for understanding, independence and self-control. Children learn by exploring, experimenting and testing the limits of their environment and experiencing the consequences of their behavior. In this way, they begin to understand how the world works, their own limits and appropriate assertiveness. Children learn self-control in a relaxed, positive atmosphere of support and understanding that recognizes the child's struggle toward independence.

Children are accepted as they are – development is viewed as a process of growing, with each age and stage having its own characteristics, its own challenges and needs. Behavioral guidance is viewed by adults as an important aspect of teaching and learning.





Through positive guidance of behavior and modeling, staff members help children to feel good about themselves and to behave in responsible ways.

In our approach:

- Expectations are limited to what is realistic for the developmental level of the child, and they are clarified for children so they understand what is expected of them.
- A 'yes' environment is created, which enhances and encourages children's positive behavior.
- Teachers model appropriate behavior.
- Teachers encourage children's efforts to build feelings of self-worth.
- Children are given alternatives, which enable them to turn difficult situations into constructive ones.
- Natural and logical consequences are used to motivate and empower children to make responsible decisions about their behavior.
- Behaviors such as cooperating, helping, negotiating and problem solving are encouraged.

The following methods of discipline are prohibited:

- Corporal punishment, including spanking.
- Shaking, jerking, squeezing or physically indicating disapproval.
- Shaming, humiliation or verbal abuse.
- Labeling, such as indicating a child is a 'bad' girl or boy, or otherwise implying that he or she, rather than the behavior, is the problem.
- Using bribes, false threats or false choices.
- Withholding of food or drink, outdoor time or unrelated activities as punishment.
- Retaliating or doing to the child what he or she did to someone else.
- Punishment for soiling, wetting or not using the toilet.

### **CONFIDENTIAL HANDLING OF CHILDREN'S AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR INCIDENTS**

In social settings where young children are just beginning to explore and experiment with ways of interacting effectively with their peers, it is not unusual for moments of aggression to occur. At certain stages in early childhood development, children's desire to communicate their feelings and the need to assert themselves as individuals may often be expressed in non-constructive ways. As an organization committed to the education and development of young children, Stars Montessori Academy understands the developmental context in which these behaviors may occur and we provide an



environment where children can develop and grow as individuals as they learn more constructive ways of interacting with their classmates.

When incidences of aggression do occur, parents/guardians of the children involved are informed of the incident and of any specific information pertinent to an understanding of the situation. The information shared typically includes the details of the incident itself (e.g. the time and the place, preceding and subsequent events, the specific steps taken to comfort the child who was hurt and, more generally, to handle the situation).

However, the identity of the child who engaged in aggressive behavior is not disclosed. Knowledge of the aggressor's identity is not necessary to parents'/guardians' understanding of an incident of aggression, or of the actions taken by the school staff to ensure the well-being of their own child. In fact, such knowledge may serve only to stigmatize the other child unnecessarily (and inappropriately, given the developmental context of such behaviors). It may even add to the stress of this child's parents/guardians, who already find themselves in the midst of a difficult situation. The interfamilial conflicts that could also result add nothing constructive to the situation and may hinder its speedy and natural resolution. Therefore, it is in the best interests of all involved parties to maintain a policy of confidentiality in such cases.

If, in our judgment, any child's behavior places the well-being of others at risk of injury, we will act quickly and decisively to resolve the situation (e.g. through closer supervision, redirection to more appropriate activities, removal from tense situations, firm and consistent limit-setting, and/or provision of alternative outlets for the expression of feelings). If necessary, a Behavior Plan will be implemented, with the co-operation and involvement of the child's parents. Plans are developed to teach more appropriate interactions and to prevent the recurrence of the aggressive behavior. If the aggressive behavior continues after exhausting our resources, we may conclude it is in the best interests of the program to suspend a child's enrollment until appropriate outside resources are identified and implemented to both support the child in our program and to reduce the opportunity for injury to others. Our commitment is to provide a quality group-learning environment for every child.



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### *SECTION 3: WE CARE: HEALTH AND SAFETY*

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#### **HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES**

Staff members undergo a thorough screening and hiring process, including a state and federal required background check and fingerprinting. All staff members are also certified in first aid and CPR.

No child will be allowed to leave school in an emergency without parental permission. The Teacher will stay with the children and determine the safest place to keep them until the problem has passed. Fire drills will also be practiced in school as per regulation.

In addition to security measures promoting indoor and outdoor safety on the school grounds, Stars Montessori Academy provides its own security keypad and/or fob system and secured access, ensuring that access is available only to parents/guardians and authorized personnel. Security keypad access codes are changed at a minimum every quarter. To make certain that the school is kept as secure as possible, we ask that you not allow others to 'piggyback' on your entrance or enter the school upon your departure. Additionally, we have video-only security cameras both inside and outside of the school, excluding private areas, to allow for optimum safety and supervision.

#### **MEDICAL RECORDS**

In order to protect the health of all children and to satisfy child care regulations, current medical information for each child is required prior to enrollment. These records need to be updated annually, or as required by state licensing if more often, and when new immunizations are given to younger children.

#### **CHILD ILLNESS**

On average, babies experience eight to ten illnesses a year and preschoolers can experience almost as many. If a child is ill, it may be more difficult for families, staff and children to balance their respective needs. For example, it may be inconvenient for the family member who has to leave work or school or difficult for staff who are trying to care for a sick child despite other demands of the day. We are committed to implementing policies that balance and respect the needs of the children, families and staff in these circumstances.



### **CHILD'S WELLNESS CHECK**

If your child appears to be ill when brought to school and he or she cannot be made comfortable, you will be asked to take your child home. If we feel that your child is well enough to attend school but may be becoming ill, we will monitor your child and update you as necessary.

### **REPORTABLE COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**

When Stars Montessori Academy is notified that an enrolled child or an employee has a (suspected) reportable disease, it is our legal responsibility to notify the local Board of Health or Department of Public Health. Authorities may require further information, testing, or preventative measures.

Stars Montessori Academy will give serious consideration to all recommendations made by the public health agencies in order to promote the health and safety of all staff members and the children and families we serve. We believe it is extremely important to notify families about exposure so their children can receive preventative treatment if available. Included among the reportable illnesses are the following:-

- Bacterial meningitis
- Chicken pox
- Diphtheria
- Hemophilus influenza (invasive)
- Hepatitis A
- Measles (including suspected)
- Meningococcal infection (invasive)
- Pertussis
- Poliomyelitis (including suspected)
- Rabies (human only)
- Rubella congenital and non-congenital (including suspected)
- Tetanus (including suspected)
- Any cluster/outbreak of illness

### **INFECTION CONTROL**

All Teacher's are trained in proper hygiene practices, which include hand washing procedures, general infection control, safe food handling and diapering and toileting



procedures. Teacher's will also engage children in learning activities designed to teach healthy habits.

The following duties are performed on a regular basis:

- For all children, cot sheets and blankets are sent home at the end of each week for washing.
- Diapering surfaces are cleaned and disinfected after each use.
- Food preparation surfaces are cleaned and sanitized before and after each use, including tables and chairs.
- Toilets, toilet seats, flushing handles, containers/lids used to hold soiled papers, water tables or water play equipment, play tables and smooth nonporous floors are cleaned and disinfected daily or whenever there is visible contamination.

### ALLERGY PREVENTION

Families are expected to notify the school regarding children's food or environmental allergies. Parents/guardians of children with diagnosed allergies or asthma are required to provide the school with an individualized health care plan, signed by the child's physician, detailing the child's symptoms, reactions, treatments, care, and all necessary medication (see medication policies in Section 4). A list of children's allergies complete with the child's picture is posted in all the classrooms throughout the school including the kitchen. Staff members are trained to familiarize themselves with the list and to consult as appropriate to avoid the potential of exposing children to substances to which they have known allergies.

Contact with peanuts or products containing traces of peanuts or peanut oil, can be critical or even fatal to a child with a severe peanut allergy. Stars Montessori Academy takes a proactive approach to create a "Nut Free" environment and all families and staff are asked to carefully monitor all food ingredients to avoid all types of nut products.

Despite our diligent efforts it is impossible to eliminate all risk for children with food allergies. Some allergies are so severe that the presence of the allergen in proximity of the child causes a reaction. Similarly, it is impossible to prevent children from sharing food or for an allergen to be brought into the school by a family member or child, despite our best efforts to educate families and raise awareness. Ultimately, parents/guardians will need to decide whether group care is appropriate for their child with allergies in light of the risks that cannot be eliminated.



## **FOOD PREFERENCES AND INTOLERANCES**

While we certainly respect all cultures and religions, we are not able to provide and manage food substitutions for the many families we have in our school, whether that substitution is motivated by religious or cultural reasons, food intolerances, or simply child's preference. Menus are posted and families are always welcome to bring lunch and snacks from home.

## **DIAPERING**

Diapers will be checked every hour and changed every two hours and will be changed promptly when soiled or wet.

We understand that as part of the diaper-changing process, you may request that we use baby powder. However, it is our school policy not to use baby powder as it can get into the baby's lungs, causing swelling and irritation, and could lead to breathing problems. It can also cause an inflammatory reaction in some children when exposed to the broken skin of a diaper rash. An alternative for reducing rubbing and preventing diaper rash is cornstarch, which is coarser and safer than powder (see the medication policies in Section 4 for information regarding the use of diaper cream).

## **TOILET LEARNING**

Learning to control one's bodily functions is a childhood rite of passage, and it is of no small concern to all the adults in a child's life – at home and at school. In our environment, a family partnership that supports the child is the most important factor in making this experience successful. There are different views on the *when* and *how* of toilet learning, and every culture approaches it differently. Research indicates that young children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, mentally and emotionally ready. Many pediatricians say that most children under 24 months of age are not physically capable of regulating bladder and bowel muscles. Thus, toilet learning is generally most successful when it is started around that age or later. Most positive toilet learning will occur only after children show signs of physical control (or awareness) of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. We are committed to working with you to make sure that toilet learning is carried out in a manner that is consistent with your child's physical and emotional abilities and your family's concerns.



The following guidelines will be followed:

- Children will be supervised during toilet learning and will be encouraged for their efforts and accomplishments.
- Toilet learning will not be coerced. The individual developmental abilities of each child will be considered. Children will not be punished emotionally or physically for soiling, wetting or not using the toilet.
- Families will provide sufficient extra clothing for their children to change into in the event of a toileting accident. Any extra clothing that are worn home should be replaced the next day.
- Families will be kept advised of their child's progress on a regular basis according to family wishes.

### **INJURY PREVENTION**

Teachers for each age group are responsible for daily safety inspections of their assigned area and equipment. Defective equipment will be removed or repaired as soon as possible to prevent injury.

#### ***Balloons***

Broken balloon pieces can be ingested and cause an obstruction of a child's airway. This is possible whether a balloon is inflated or not as children may bite the balloon or suck it is while attempting to inflate it. As a result, latex balloons are generally not allowed in the school, however, may be used during an event.

#### ***Clothing Hazard***

Playground safety is a major concern in childcare. One particular aspect of concern is the risk associated with children's clothing that may become entangled with climbing or sliding equipment and creating a hazard that might lead to strangulation or other serious harm. Parents/guardians should be aware of the potential strangulation hazards of drawstrings on clothing. To prevent injuries from strangulation, children will not be permitted to wear any shirts, jackets, sweatshirts, jewelry, or articles that are tied around the neck or waist, included scarves and mittens or gloves secured with a string through the sleeves of a jacket. Please check your child's clothing carefully and remove all drawstrings.

#### ***Footwear***

Footwear (e.g., sneakers) that is appropriate for active outdoor play such as climbing, running, and jumping on various surfaces is strongly recommended. No open toe shoes are allowed at the school.





## **BITING**

Biting is commonly seen in toddlers, and sometimes even among preschoolers. It is something that almost all young children will try at least once. It is a natural phenomenon and not something to blame on children, families, or the Teacher. Still, it is very unfortunate when this occurs. Brief episodes of biting do not mean that the child is having a social or emotional problem. Nor does it mean the family is to blame. It simply indicates that your child is going through that particular stage in his or her development. As with developmental stages, biting soon ends.

In all cases of biting, our response will be to care for the child who was bitten, to help the biter learn a more appropriate behavior, and to examine our program to maintain an environment that is consistent with children's needs. Our focus will not be on punishment but rather on effective techniques that address the specific reason for biting. We encourage you to talk to your child about the behavior, but we also caution that delayed punishment at home, hours after the incident, will not be understood by the child.

*Note: Biting may occur for any of the following reasons:*

- *Oral exploration*
- *Teething*
- *Hunger*
- *Fatigue*
- *Lack of awareness that biting hurts*
- *Frustration, anxiety, or stress*
- *Inability to express feelings or needs verbally*
- *Mimicking behavior*
- *Inexperienced peer interactions*
- *A way of showing affection*
- *Exploring cause-and-effect relationships*
- *Exploring, holding on and letting go of relationships*
- *Making an impact*
- *Impulsiveness and lack of self-control*
- *Excitement and overstimulation*

We will work with you as much as possible, to help alleviate the biting problem. We must stress the importance of consistent reactions to such occurrences to ensure that the problem passes swiftly so we will talk through with you how we can work together to alleviate the problem. We do have a responsibility to ensure the safety of all children and staff at the facility so proactive attention to episodes of biting is essential to remain in the





program. If necessary, a Behavior Plan will be implemented, with the co-operation and involvement of the child's parents. Plans are developed to teach more appropriate interactions and to prevent the recurrence of biting. If biting continues after exhausting our resources, we may conclude it is in the best interests of the program to suspend a child's enrollment until appropriate outside resources are identified and implemented to both support the child in our program and to reduce the opportunity for injury to others. Our commitment is to provide a quality group-learning environment for every child.

### **CHILDREN'S INJURIES**

If your child sustains a minor injury while at the school (e.g., scraped knee), you will receive an Incident Report outlining the incident and course of action taken by the staff member. Minor wounds, such as cuts, scrapes, or bites, will be washed with cool running water. A dry bandage or dressing may be applied as appropriate. You will be contacted immediately if the injury produces any type of swelling, is on the face or head, or needs medical attention.

If a serious medical emergency occurs, the child will be taken to the hospital immediately by ambulance, and a staff member will contact you (or a designated emergency contact if you cannot be reached).

Please sign the Incident Report when you receive it. The school is required by State Law to keep these reports in your child's file.

### **REPORTING ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

Individuals working with children are mandated reporters and are required by law to make a report to the appropriate state authorities if they have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect. All staff members receive training in identifying and reporting suspected abuse or neglect. The particular State child protective service agency involved will determine appropriate action and may conduct an investigation. It is the agency's role to determine if the report of abuse or neglect is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Stars Montessori Academy will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect. Our foremost concern is always the protection of the child.



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## *SECTION 4: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES*

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### **REGISTRATION PROCEDURE**

Admission to Stars Montessori Academy is open to any child whose parents satisfy the policies listed below:

Parents must tour our facility and meet with the Director to review school programs and policies. Once a family determines they wish to enroll, an electronic registration packet will be emailed to one parent. The signing parent attests to the fact that they have the sole legal right to choose a childcare provider for the student and if this sole legal right to choose a childcare provider should change after signing this agreement, the parent agrees to communicate this to the school immediately. Only once documents have been signed will your child's school placement be secured. All Initial Registration Fees will be deducted from your nominated bank account and will be non-refundable if you later choose not to start on the agreed start date.

This electronic registration packet includes the following documents:

#### **State Requirements**

- LIC613 Notification of Personal Rights
- LIC955 Notification of Parents' Rights
- LIC995E Caregiver Background Check Process
- LIC627 Consent for Medical Treatment
- LIC700 Identification and Emergency Information
- LIC702 Child's Pre-Admission Health History

#### **School Requirements**

- Pre-Enrollment Application
- Admissions Agreement
- Tuition Schedule
- Parent Handbook
- ACH Debit Authorization Form
- Permission for Sunscreen & Diaper Cream
- Video Recording and Photography Release



In addition, the state requires that you get your child's Physician to complete and sign a Physician's Report, LIC701, per Community Care Licensing Regulations. A copy of this, along with an Introductory Information packet, will be emailed to Parents upon registration.

Please inform the office of any changes in your work schedule, phone numbers or emergency contact numbers so that in the event of an emergency, our records are up to date, and we are able to contact you regarding the health and welfare of your child.

Please note, Registration guarantees your child's placement at the school for the current school year only. For your child to continue at the school once the current school year ends, you would need to Re-Register your child each subsequent year thereafter. Please refer below to Annual Re-Registration for more details.

### **INITIAL FEES UPON REGISTRATION**

The registration process includes completion of all registration forms, along with the following payments:

- Non-refundable registration fee: \$225.00 (payable at the time of enrollment). Thereafter, a re-registration fee of \$100 is charged each March to re-enroll for the new school year.
- Non-refundable Annual Academic Material fee of \$200 which covers the academic year, September to June, prorated based on start date. (Summer Material Fee of \$50 covering July and August)
- If applicable, a non-refundable Spanish Material fee of \$200, if your child is joining our Spanish Inspired Primary program.
- Non-refundable Emergency Earthquake kit: \$30
- Non-refundable tuition deposit of \$250, which will be applied to your first month of tuition.

### **MONTHLY RECURRING TUITION**

Stars Montessori Academy will provide a Tuition Schedule which details the monthly tuition rate for each school year, September 1st through August 31st. You will be responsible for selecting which schedule you would like for your child, and this will be billed monthly.



Tuition is due in advance with no deductions for any absences, holidays, illness, or closures due to inclement weather, power outages, or other situations beyond Stars Montessori Academy's control.

Tuition is due on the 20th calendar day of each month, for the following month of care. All tuition will be collected by ACH. There is no charge for payments processed by ACH checking account. If the tuition is not paid by the day it is due, and remains due on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month, a late fee of \$25 will be added to the tuition. When a payment is delinquent for one week or more, care may be suspended until the balance is current, and your child's space will not be reserved. Tuition is due regardless of your child's absence from the program for any reason and is required to hold the child's space. A fee of \$25 will be charged for a returned payment.

There may be additional fees associated with special activities or events for the children.

### MONTHLY OTHER FEES

- Lunch is prepared on campus each day. It is an optional charge and is billed on a monthly basis as detailed in the Tuition Schedule. If you sign up for school lunch, you will pay the flat fee per month regardless of the school days that month. If you join or leave the program part way through the month, it will then be prorated accordingly.
- Hourly Child Care is available at the rates outlined in the Tuition Schedule. If you select either a half day or academic day schedule for your child and you either drop off your child early or do not pick up your child on time, you will be charged the hourly childcare rate for care provided outside of your normal schedule. This will be charged in increments of 15 minutes.
- Daily Drop In Child Care is offered per the rates provided on the Tuition Schedule and covers childcare for the extended day program.
- Summer Material Fee – In July and August, a monthly \$25 summer material fee will be charged each month to cover all summer activities and in-house field trip costs.

Should it become necessary to pursue payment through a collection agency or court action, the parent or guardian agrees to be heard and have judgment rendered in the San Diego County Judicial District and to pay all attorney's fees, court fees and collection fees incurred by the school in pursuit of collection.



## **ANNUAL RE-REGISTRATION**

Initial Registration provides your child with school placement for the current school year. Each year, if you wish for your child to continue at the school, you are required to re-register your child and pay a re-registration fee. At the beginning of March each year, all current parents will be offered a continuing place for the new school year. An electronic re-registration packet will be sent out to one parent. The signing parent attests to the fact that they have the sole legal right to choose a childcare provider for the student and if this sole legal right to choose a childcare provider should change after signing this agreement, the parent agrees to communicate this to the school immediately. Only once documents have been signed and re-registration fee has been paid, will your child's school placement for the coming school year be secured.

This electronic re-registration packet includes the following documents:

- Re-Enrollment form
- Admissions Agreement
- Yearbook Order form
- Tuition Schedule
- Calendar

## **MILITARY, FIREFIGHTER, POLICE DISCOUNT POLICY**

Here at Stars Montessori Academy, we take pride in supporting our military personnel and first responders. As a thank you for your service to our community and to our nation, all active-duty police officers, firefighters, and military personnel will receive 5% off one child's monthly tuition. If you have more than one child enrolled, this discount will be applied to the lesser tuition amount.

To qualify for the discount proof of active service is required in the form of a military ID with an expiration date, or a current paystub confirming employment with the Police department, Fire Department, or the military in a position of active duty. Discount will only be given if either parent qualifies as detailed. It is a condition of discount being offered that the parent claiming it, is a signatory on the admission paperwork and thus liable for payment of tuition. Upon expiration of the departmental ID, we will request a copy of your new ID be submitted to continue receiving the discount. Paystubs as proof of service will expire 1 year after submission. Each year, you will be required to submit a new paystub to continue receiving the discount. If upon annual review, it is found that the parent no longer qualifies, the 5% discount will be removed from monthly billing.



Please note that it is at the discretion of Stars Montessori Academy as to whether an application for police/fire/military discount is approved.

### **SCHEDULE CHANGES**

In order to provide sufficient supervision and to appropriately schedule staff, families are asked to carefully adhere to the schedule that they choose for their child. We ask that ongoing schedule changes be requested in writing to the Director at least one month in advance and we will try our best to accommodate this change. Any schedule changes must remain in place for a minimum of one full month. If you have an emergency and need to alter your child's schedule, please do not hesitate to contact the Director. Should you require childcare before or after your normal schedule, during the hours of 7am-6pm, you will be charged in accordance with the Tuition Schedule, in increments of 15 minutes. This is subject to availability.

### **WITHDRAWAL**

When you withdraw your child, you must give one month's notice prior to withdrawal, in writing, to the Director. Upon providing written notice of withdrawing, your tuition will be billed out 30 days from that written withdrawal notice and is contractually required to be paid. Note that verbal notice will not be accepted.

### **DROP OFF AND PICK UP**

To ensure each child's safety and to encourage daily communication between families and staff, parents/guardians are responsible for physically checking their child in and out of school each day. Teachers ensure safety throughout the day with roll-calls, head counts, and signing children in and out whenever a child leaves or enters a classroom. Parents/guardians must accompany each child into the classroom and confirm that their child is under adult supervision before leaving the premises. Families are required to re-enter the school when picking up their children, and sign them out, at the end of the day.

Please note: children must be under direct adult supervision at all times while on the premises and parents or guardians are responsible for children once they are checked out. Children will be released only to parents, legal guardians, or persons whose names are listed on the Child Release form. Authorized persons picking up children will be required to show photo ID and must be over the age of 18. For the safety and trust of the children in our care, we will not release children to a person they do not know.



On occasion, you may wish to allow friends, co-workers, or family to visit your child(ren) at school. The names of those permitted to visit must be specified in writing. All visitors will be asked to present a photo ID and sign the Visitor's Log.

### **CHILD CUSTODY**

So that all parents/guardians feel equally welcome at Stars Montessori Academy, we strive to remain neutral in all custody matters. Legally, unless there is an active restraining order, court order, or court-ordered visitation schedule on file at our school that designates otherwise, we cannot deny any parent or guardian access to his or her child. We require all families to resolve their differences or unsettled court orders through legal channels. Ultimately, Stars Montessori Academy's primary concern is the safety of all children and staff. For that reason, our school cannot be used as a place for scheduled visitations, nor can we be responsible for supervising parent or guardian visits.

### **LATE PICK UP**

Children should be picked up at the scheduled time. Because it can be distressing for a child to be left in the care of others after hours, late pickups should be prevented. Please allow enough time to arrive promptly at school, pick up your child, and leave the building by closing time.

We do, however, understand that special circumstances arise. If, in the case of an emergency, you cannot pick up your child on time or send one of your emergency contacts, please notify the school immediately. Children left in our care after hours will be supervised as long as possible. In the absence of contact from a parent/guardian, we will call all the numbers listed on the Child Release form; please make sure these numbers are up to date. Child Protective services will be called if we are unable to reach you or an emergency contact after one hour. A late fee of \$2 per minute after 6:00pm will be charged if a child is picked up after closing time.

### **PROGRAM PLACEMENT**

Children are placed in programs based upon a combination of their developmental and chronological age, as well as space availability. State regulations classify the specific age range and the number of children that may be enrolled in each program/classroom. Program placement will remain the same for the complete school year.





## ABSENCE

Tuition is due in full regardless of absences due to sickness, vacations, holidays and Spring/Winter breaks etc.

During the summer sessions, families are permitted to select two weeks in which they do not attend and will be charged a reduced rate of 50% of their regular tuition rate. If you are absent for more than a two week period and do not wish to pay tuition to hold your place, you will be dropping your place, and you would need to re-register to commence at a later date. Please note that we cannot guarantee that a place will remain available upon your return.

If your child attends a part time program, there will be no make-up or switching of days.

Please call the school if your child is going to be absent or arrive after 9:00 a.m. or after his/her normal arrival time. If we do not hear from you, we will be concerned about your child. If your child has a contagious illness, please let management know so other families can be alerted to look for symptoms in their children.

## NON-DISCRIMINATION/CONFIDENTIALITY

Stars Montessori Academy programs are designed to support children's growth and to challenge them to learn. Stars Montessori Academy views each child as an individual with a unique learning style and way of responding to the world. Given the diversity of the families and communities we serve, it is incumbent upon us to recognize and appreciate the characteristics and behaviors that each child brings to our programs. Our hope is to build programs that are responsive to the wide range of individual learning styles and needs in our classrooms – programs that truly celebrate and value the individuality of each child.

Stars Montessori Academy provides full-day and part-day education and child care to children without regard to race, religion, color, creed, gender, cultural heritage, parent/guardian marital status, parent/guardian political beliefs, parent/guardian sexual orientation, disability or special needs, child's toileting ability, medical condition, HIV status, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state, or local laws.

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided to people with disabilities. The law covers children with disabilities seeking reasonable accommodations in a childcare setting, as well as the parents/guardians





served. Stars Montessori Academy will conduct an individualized assessment of the particular needs of a child and family and engage in an interactive dialogue with parents/guardians, caregivers, and medical professionals to identify reasonable accommodations and to safely integrate the child into the program, given each individual's capabilities, and to give the family full access to and participation in our programs to the extent feasible. Any information regarding a child, a child's family, or other matters discussed with school management or staff will be held in the strictest confidence.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN'S RECORDS**

The information in your child's record is considered privileged and confidential. Only those persons directly related to the care of your child, management, or regulatory agencies will have access to the record unless your written permission is given. As a parent/guardian, you may have access to your child's records within a reasonable time upon your request. Upon withdrawal of your child from the school, files will be retained for three years. A small fee may be charged, if necessary, to retrieve your child's file from off-site storage. As a parent/guardian, you have the right to add information, comments, data, or other relevant material to your child's record. You also have the right to request, in writing, deletion or amendment of any information contained in the record. When your child leaves the school, management will provide a copy of your child's record to you within a reasonable time of your written request.

### **REGULATORY AGENCIES**

Regulatory agencies may review your child's record in order to ensure the school has followed its requirements. All information in the record is kept confidential. Stars Montessori Academy is required to have a copy of all state regulations. These regulations are available to all parents/guardians.

### **CLASSROOM OBSERVATION**

As part of the school's activities, outside childcare professionals not employed by Stars Montessori Academy may observe children in their classroom from time to time. If this occurs, families will be notified and the confidentiality of child information will be maintained. In addition, Teacher candidates may spend supervised time in the classroom with our regular staff as part of our hiring process.



### UNRELATED ACTIVITIES

Stars Montessori Academy will not authorize any activities unrelated to the direct care of children or allow any third parties to contact you without your written, informed consent. Stars Montessori Academy does not share customer information, for any reason, without your consent. “Activities” include, but are not limited to, email addresses, publicity or media events, taking of photographs or videos, media, and participation in surveys (other than those carried out by Stars Montessori Academy).

### BABYSITTING BY SCHOOL STAFF

In an effort to maintain the professional status of Stars Montessori Academy staff and prevent any potential conflict of interest, babysitting by school staff is strongly discouraged. However, if a staff member elects to babysit for a family, all such activities must occur outside school premises and with the understanding that such arrangements and payment for services is solely between the staff member and the child’s family and that Stars Montessori Academy is in no way responsible for the child’s care in connection with these activities. The arrangements are not sanctioned by the school and should not interfere with the staff member’s school schedule. If a babysitting arrangement should be made between a staff member and a family, the family is required to complete a Babysitting Release form, which can be supplied by management.

### CHILD ILLNESS POLICY

Stars Montessori Academy understands that it is difficult for a parent/guardian to leave or miss work; therefore, it is suggested that alternative arrangements be made for occasions when children must remain at home or be picked up due to illness. Exclusion from school is sometimes necessary to reduce the transmission of illness or because the school is not able to adequately meet the needs of the child. Mild illnesses are common among children and infections are often spread before the onset of any symptoms. In these cases, we try to keep the children comfortable throughout the day, but will find it necessary to exclude them from the childcare setting for the following reasons:

- Illness that prevents the child from participating comfortably in program activities.
- Illness that results in a greater need for care than our staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children.
- Illness that poses a risk of spreading harmful disease to others.



- Fever of 100.4 F and behavior change or other signs and symptoms such as sore throat, runny nose, mucus, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, irritability, constant crying, or difficulty breathing.
- Diarrhea — more watery stools or decreased form of stool that is not associated with change of diet. Exclusion is required for all diapered children whose stool is not contained in the diaper, and toilet-trained children if the diarrhea is causing “accidents.” Diapered children with diarrhea will be excluded if the stool frequency exceeds two or more stools above normal for that child.
- Blood or mucus in the stools not explained by dietary change, medication, or hard stools, and/ or uncontrolled, unformed stools that cannot be contained in a diaper/underwear or toilet. Special circumstances that require specific exclusion criteria include the following: – Toxin-producing E. coli or Shigella infection, until the diarrhea resolves and the test results of two stool cultures are negative for these organisms. – Salmonella serotype Typhi infection, until diarrhea resolves. In children younger than 5 years with Salmonella serotype Typhi, three negative stool cultures are required.
- Vomiting more than two times in the previous 24 hours unless the vomiting is determined to be caused by a non-communicable condition and the child is not in danger of dehydration.
- Mouth sores with drooling unless the child’s medical provider or local health department authority states that the child is noninfectious.
- Abdominal pain that continues for more than one hour or intermittent abdominal pain associated with fever, dehydration, or other signs of illness.
- Rash with fever or behavioral changes, until a medical provider has determined it is not a communicable disease.
- Purulent conjunctivitis (defined as pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge) until on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- Impetigo until 24 hours after treatment has been started.
- Strep throat (or other streptococcal infection) until 24 hours after treatment has been started.
- Head lice until after treatment and all nits are removed.
- Rubella, until six days after the rash appears.
- Scabies until 24 hours after treatment has been started.
- Chicken pox, until all lesions have dried or crusted (usually six days after onset of rash).
- Pertussis (whooping cough), until five days of appropriate antibiotics.



- Mumps, until five days after onset of parotid gland swelling.
- Measles, until four days after onset of rash.
- Hepatitis A virus, until one week after onset of illness or jaundice or as directed by the health department (if the child's symptoms are mild).
- Tuberculosis, until the child's medical provider or local health department states the child is on appropriate treatment and can return.
- Any child determined by the local health department to be contributing to the transmission of illness during an outbreak.

We ask that for your child's comfort and to reduce the risk of contagion, children be picked up within one hour of notification. Until then, your child will be kept comfortable and will continue to be observed for symptoms. Children need to remain home for 24 hours without symptoms before returning to the program. This means that the child needs to remain out of school for the remainder of the day he/she is sent home and the following day (if a child is sent home on Friday, he/she may return on Monday), unless the school receives a note from the child's medical provider stating that the child is not contagious and may return to the school. In the case of a (suspected) contagious disease, rash, or continuing symptoms, a note from the child's medical provider may be required before returning.

Children who have been excluded may return when:

- They are free of fever, vomiting, and diarrhea for a full 24 hours. Readmission after diarrhea can occur when diapered children have their stool contained by the diaper (even if stools remain loose) and when toilet-trained children do not have toileting "accidents."
- They have been treated with an antibiotic for a full 24 hours.
- They are able to participate comfortably in all usual program activities, including outdoor time.
- They are free of open, oozing skin conditions and drooling (not related to teething) unless:
  - The child's medical provider signs a note stating that the child's condition is not contagious.
  - The involved areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the bandage.

If a child is excluded because of a reportable communicable disease, a note from the child's medical provider stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return is required.



The final decision whether to exclude a child from the program due to illness will be made by management.

*Note: Notes allowing for a child's return to the school after an exclusion due to illness must originate from the child's medical provider. Unfortunately, Stars Montessori Academy cannot accept a signed doctor's note from a physician parent/ guardian.*

### **MEDICATION POLICY**

Every child has an occasional need for medication. We encourage you to discuss with your child's medical provider dosing schedules or once-a-day regimens that can be administered at home. You are also welcome to come to the school to administer medication to your child during the day, but we ask that you do so away from the other children.

When such options are impractical, we can be authorized to administer medications to your child. Such occasions are governed by specific state regulation.

All medications (including non-prescription acetaminophen and antihistamines, as well as all ointments, lotions, etc.) will require a parent's or guardian's signed Parent Consent for Administration of Medication (available from management). Diaper cream and sunscreen is authorized through a separate consent form.

- Non-prescription medication necessary for more than three days will also require a written order from the child's medical provider or nurse practitioner/physician's assistant.
- The current prescription label from the pharmacy with complete information and instructions will suffice as the medical provider's authorization for prescription medication.

Unfortunately, Stars Montessori Academy cannot accept signed doctors' orders from physician parents/guardians.

Doses will be tracked on the consent form; all unused medications will be returned to parents/guardians. We ask that the first dose of any new medication be given at home to note any side effects.

Please note that we are unable to administer expired medications of any kind.



*Note: Designated staff members will administer medication according to the Six Rights of Medication:*

- 1) *Right Child*
- 2) *Right Medication*
- 3) *Right Dose*
- 4) *Right Time*
- 5) *Right Method*
- 6) *Right Documentation*

Other general medication rules:

- All medication—prescription and nonprescription —must be brought to the school in the original container and labeled with the child’s full name, instructions (precise dosage, time to be administered), current date, and name and telephone number of physician, where necessary. Medication spoons and other dosage implements must be provided and be labeled with the child’s name (medication cannot be given without this).
- Medication cannot be administered in a child’s bottle without specific orders from the child’s medical provider.
- All medications must be handed directly to management. Please do not leave medication—including ointments, lotions, and lip balms—in lunch bags, backpacks, or a child’s cubby.
- Changes in medication/dosage require a new Parent Consent for Administration of Medication form and, where pertinent, an updated prescription or note from the child’s medical provider

*Note: Non-prescription medications (antihistamines and acetaminophen, as well as all over-the counter ointments and creams including eczema ointment, insect repellants, lip balms etc.) require written authorization from the child’s medical provider if the medication is not designated for the age of the child, if the instructions specify “consult a physician” for the age of the child, if the request is for a higher dosage than what is prescribed on the label, or if it is to be used for more than three days.*

### **Medication for Chronic Conditions**

Children with chronic illnesses such as severe allergies or asthma, or those children with special circumstances such as monitors or catheters, must have an individualized health care plan on file from the child’s medical provider. Professional training for staff caring for the child will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian. New medications, those not included on the child’s individualized care plan, or changes to doses or instructions for



existing medications are subject to the general medication rules (above). Information must be updated annually.

**Note:**

- *Fevers: Fever-reducing medications such as acetaminophen cannot be administered by staff or parents/guardians so that a child can remain at school.*
- *Orajel: Due to the recommendation of the FDA and the AAP, benzocaine products, such as Orajel, can only be administered to children less than two years of age with a medical provider's written permission, and not for more than 7 days.*

***Non-Prescription Topical Ointments***

Before staff can administer any non-prescription topical ointments (e.g., diaper cream, sunscreen, Vaseline, lip balm, and other ointments free from antibiotic, antifungal, or steroidal components) to a child Stars Montessori Academy requires written authorization signed by the parent/guardian. For diaper cream and sunscreen, consent is requested at registration. For all other non-prescription topical ointments, the parent/guardian should provide a completed Parent Consent for Administration of Medication form and instructions (precise dosage, times to be administered). Duration of administration cannot exceed one year. If the child has open and/or oozing sores, the ointment can be applied for three consecutive days with written authorization and instructions from the parent/guardian.

Written authorization from a medical provider will be required after the three days or any time within the three-day period if it appears the sores are worsening.

***Homeopathic/Herbal Medications***

Before staff can administer any form of homeopathic or herbal medications, Stars Montessori Academy requires written authorization signed by the parent/guardian and the child's medical provider. The parent/guardian should provide a completed Parent Consent for Administration of Medication form along with instructions (precise dosage, times to be administered, start date and end date, method), and the medication in the original container, labeled with the child's full name.

**All medications will be stored in a locked medication cabinet or in the refrigerator if required.**





## MEALS AND SNACKS

Stars Montessori Academy is a healthy food school and believes that meals and snacks are critical to a child's health and development. They are also an important part of the school's curriculum. When meals are provided by the school, they are carefully planned to provide children with the necessary nutritional content. Every effort is made to ensure that mealtime is enjoyable for children.

If the school does not provide meals for your child and you need to bring them from home, we discourage the following items: chips, cookies, donuts, candy and other high sugar food items. We have found that most children like "finger foods" as an alternative to the traditional "lunch box" meal. Plastic food containers are a great idea for packing fruits and vegetables, cheese, pieces of meat or chicken, and homemade leftovers from the night before. All food should be cut into bite-size pieces that are easy to swallow. Please make sure all lunch boxes, bags, and containers are labeled with your child's full name. Lunches are kept in your child's cubby, they are not refrigerated. We suggest that you use insulated lunch bags and ice packs to keep food cool, and thermoses to keep food warm. When sending dairy products in your child's lunch, extra ice packs may be required to keep food at the proper temperature. We are not able to heat or prepare meals for children as this not only keeps the children waiting for their lunch, but also takes the staff away from their time with the children. Additionally, we strongly recommend avoiding foods that are high in fat or sugar in your child's lunch. Providing a healthy lunch will ensure your child has the energy and stamina to get the most out of their day and fully participate in all of the fun learning experiences.

The school operates a Snack Host Program for morning snack which involves each child volunteering to become Snack Host for the day. Being a Snack host is an integral part of the daily Montessori experience for our children. We encourage you to include your child in the planning and purchasing of the snack for the class as part of the child's Practical Life experience. For each day's snack, please bring at least 2 of the basic four food groups unprepared so that we can assist your child in setting up the snack at school. All food must be prepackaged and store bought, from a grocery store or bakery. We appreciate your participating in our Snack Program and look forward to seeing all the yummy snacks that the children bring to share with their friends. In order to best plan for Snack Host, your child's teacher will set the Snack Host calendar for the month which will be communicated to you monthly. Regardless of participation in this program, each child will receive a morning and afternoon snack.





If your child has special dietary needs or food allergies, please work with management to find suitable accommodations.

### *REST*

Following lunch, toddlers and older children will have an afternoon rest period of up to 2 hours. However, if your child struggles to nap during this time, the Teacher will provide alternative quiet activities, such as reading a book so that your child's body is still resting.

### *CLOTHING SUGGESTIONS/ITEMS NEEDED*

Proper dress is an important part of the Stars Montessori Academy experience. In general, durable clothing that can withstand the energetic activity of young children—digging in dirt, exploring sand, experimenting with water, or tending to a garden, among other activities—is best. We consider our playground to be an extension of our classroom and, as required by state licensing, we conduct programs outside whenever weather permits. That makes it important for your child to dress for the elements. If the weather is extremely cold, it's also a good idea to send an extra sweater or jacket. We also ask that you leave a complete extra set of weather-appropriate clothing, especially socks, at all times. For newly toilet-trained children, it is helpful to keep an extra set of underwear on hand. Please replace the items when they become soiled. When buying indoor or outdoor clothing for school, make sure older children can put them on themselves.

Each child attending the program must have a complete change of clothing labeled with his or her name. These items will be kept in each child's cubby and used as needed. Upon registration, you will be given a list of all clothing required for your child. The school is not responsible for lost or damaged clothing. We will take all precautionary methods to be certain that your child's belongings are well cared for; please keep in mind, clothes that look a little less clean at the end of the day are a sign that your child was actively engaged in learning.

Each child is to have a crib-size sheet and a thin blanket. Please do not bring large thick blankets, sleeping bags, or adult-sized pillows as we are not able to store them. You will be provided with a school bag to use for your child's nap supplies. Bedding should go home with you every Friday for laundering and be returned the following Monday.



## PHOTOGRAPHS

Stars Montessori Academy takes photographs and videos of children enrolled at its school on a regular basis for its business purposes. Stars Montessori Academy takes care that any use, display, or dissemination of photographs or videos of children, whether at a particular school where the child attends or for its general business purposes, is accomplished in a thoughtful, safe, and secure manner appropriate under the particular circumstances.

For example, at your school these materials may be used to better communicate with families and to illustrate the daily curriculum, to chronicle a child's development, or to document school activities.

## CHILD'S DISCIPLINE POLICY

Given the diversity of families and communities we serve, we recognize and appreciate the characteristics and behaviors that each child brings to our programs. Our positive guidance policies and procedures are designed to help children learn appropriate behavior. Children under six learn best by example and the Teacher will demonstrate to the child how to behave and what to say in a particular situation.

### ***Definitions of Consequences:***

- **Verbal Warning:** Warning given to remind student of the expected/desired behavior or response.
- **Redirection:** Directing the child to an activity to change his/her focus of attention and promote positive activity and interaction.
- **Support Within the Prepared Environment:** The child will be positively redirected to the peace area, a designated and supervised space within the classroom that supports calm and self-regulation, and the child may return to group activities when they are ready.
- **Individualized Regulation Support:** If the child continues to experience difficulty regulating within the classroom, the child will be calmly supported to transition to a quiet space outside the classroom for a brief one-on-one walk and guided distraction with a staff member, returning to the classroom when they are calm and ready to re-engage.

### ***Incident Reports:***

An Incident report may be completed by your child's teacher if your child has exhibited behavioral issues that day and/or caused injury to another child. A copy of this will also



be presented to the parents of the child that has suffered an injury. Per our confidentiality policy, details of your child will remain confidential.

***Conference with Parents:***

The Teacher or school Director may meet with parents/guardians to discuss behavior issues so that both parties can agree on possible actions that can be taken both at school and home to resolve behavior issues. Co-operation between the school and families is paramount to successfully implementing techniques and experiencing positive change in a child's behavior. The school may require parents/guardians to seek professional assistance, such as an occupational therapist, in circumstances where it is deemed necessary to provide added support for the child in determining his or her individual needs and challenges.

***PROCESS OF SUSPENDING A CHILD'S ENROLLMENT***

Our child-centered approach seeks to accommodate a wide range of individual differences; however, on occasion a child's behavior may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for care. Examples of such instances include:

- A child cannot participate safely in our program or appears to be a danger to themselves or others, despite our best efforts to reasonably reduce the risk of harm or injury.
- Medical, psychological, school district, or social service personnel working with the school or child determine that continued care at the school could be harmful to, or not in the best interest of, the child.
- Any other situation in which the accommodations needed for the child's success in the program conflict with the fundamental nature of our group environment, or when a different environment is in the best interest of the child or the school.

At any point that a child's behavior/circumstance is of concern to a Teacher or administrator, written documentation and family/teacher communication will begin as the first steps to understanding the child's individual needs and challenges, and to evaluate these needs in the context of our program.

If in the opinion of the Director a child is not able to adjust to the school environment, the Director will counsel the parents or guardian and suspend enrollment until such time that the childcare setting is suitable for the child. In this case only will liability cease upon withdrawal of the child and a refund of the tuition paid in advance will be made.



### **PROCESS OF DISENROLLING A FAMILY**

Our programs are based on developing partnerships and supporting families; however, despite our best efforts, on rare occasions a parents'/guardians' actions or requests may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for themselves and their child. Examples of such instances include:

- The parent/guardian fails to abide by the school policies or those requirements imposed by the appropriate licensing agency.
- A parent/guardian demands special services that are not provided to other children's families and that cannot reasonably be delivered by the program (including requests that are outside the philosophy of the program).
- A parent/guardian is physically or verbally abusive to school, staff, children, or anyone else at the school, including any communications they may have posted on any social media sites.

**I acknowledge that I have read, understand, and agree to the policies and procedures outlined in the Parent Handbook.**

Parent / Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent /Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_