



Parent Handbook



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Overview

WELCOME

Welcome to Indiana Montessori Academy (IMA)! We are pleased you have chosen a Montessori education for your child. We are committed to the ideals Dr. Montessori founded over 100 years ago and it is our goal your child benefits from everything our Montessori environment has to offer. The educational journey is a long one—one that begins at birth and ideally continues throughout one's life. These first six years of your child's life is the most important for his or her development. We are honored and thrilled that you have chosen us to be a part of your child's journey. We look forward to a lasting relationship over the next few years with your child and your entire family. Our IMA Community is only strengthened by your presence. Enjoy all these precious Montessori Moments you will experience during your time with us, and we will fondly do the same! On behalf of the entire staff and community of IMA, welcome!

DR. MARIA MONTESSORI

Maria Montessori, one of Italy's first woman physicians and one of the great educators of the twentieth century, pioneered the work with children that we carry on today at Indiana Montessori Academy. She was born in Chiaravalle, Italy, in 1870. Her first association with children began in 1898 with the mentally deficient at the University Psychiatric Clinic in Rome. Through intense study, observations, and long days of working with these children, she discovered their problems were more emotional than medical. She designed special learning materials to meet their needs and trained teachers to present them in a special way. Montessori's success was proclaimed miraculous. Many of these children went on to pass, or even excel at, conventional state examinations.

In 1904, she turned her attention to 'typical' children. She opened her first school, *Casa de Bambini* (House of Children) on January 6, 1907, in the community of San Lorenzo Rome. Word of this "new education" began to spread, and many more schools were opened in Italy and other countries. In half a century, her work became known as the *Montessori Method*. In 1929, she founded the Association Montessori Internationale to continue her work. During the war years, it was regarded as a movement for world peace. Indeed, she saw the child as the most legitimate hope for a new world. Honorary doctorates, recognition, and awards were bestowed on her from countries all over the world. By the time of her death in 1952, she had gained an international reputation as an educator and had been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize three times.

Montessori fervently believed that children have an inner force that gives them the power and drive to achieve their full potential. When children are given the proper measures of guidance and freedom, this inner force enables them to focus on what they need to know... and they learn with wonder, joy, and confidence.

"Free the child's potential and you will transform him into the world."

—Maria Montessori

A vital part of the Montessori approach is a carefully prepared environment that is beautiful and orderly. It includes learning materials designed to meet the needs of each child at her/his particular level of development. Through skilled observation, the adult is prepared to offer children the kind of instruction that will stimulate their interest and activity. The special relationship between the child and adult in a Montessori classroom is conveyed by these words of a young child: "Help me to do it myself."

ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION MONTESSORI INTERNATIONALE (AMI)

AMI was founded by Dr. Maria Montessori in 1929 and continues to supervise its accredited teacher-training centers. These courses prepare adults to work with children at the Infant level (prenatal to 3 years of age), the Primary level (ages 3 to 6), the Elementary level (ages 6 to 12), and the Adolescent level (12 to 18).

Montessori is a complex approach to human development, from birth to maturity, based upon universal principles. It is international in that, when done in an exacting manner, it can be used with children of all nationalities with the same results. The training is essentially the same everywhere, with natural adaptations to the language and culture of each country. Lectures, seminars, the preparation of materials and curriculum texts, observation, and practice teaching are all carried out under the direct supervision of the training center. Each course lasts one or two academic years; these courses are thorough and require intense study. Some training centers offer both academic-year and multi-summer formats.



The AMI diploma is universally recognized for the quality and authenticity of the training given. Course admission requirements vary from country to country. In the United States, a bachelor's degree is a prerequisite; all centers do make some exceptions based upon the candidate's experience and intentions. A few AMI courses offer undergraduate degree credit; all offer graduate school credit.

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE MONTESSORI METHOD

THE WHOLE CHILD APPROACH

The primary goal of Indiana Montessori Academy's program is to help each child reach full potential in all areas of life. Activities promote the development of social skills, emotional growth, and physical coordination as well as cognitive preparation. The holistic curriculum allows the child to experience the joy of learning and to develop self-esteem and independence.

THE PREPARED ENVIRONMENT

For self-directed learning to take place, the whole learning environment—room, materials and social climate must be supportive of the learner. The teacher provides necessary resources, including opportunities for children to function in a safe and positive climate. The teacher

thus gains the children's trust, which enables them to try new things and build self-confidence.

THE MONTESSORI MATERIALS

Dr. Montessori's observations of the kinds of "toys" which children enjoy and return to play with repeatedly led her to design several multi-sensory sequential and self-correcting materials which facilitate the learning of skills and concepts. Our teachers follow "Montessori principles" as they structure new activities for the classroom.

THE TEACHER (DIRECTRESS/GUIDE)

Originally called a "Directress," the Montessori teacher functions as a facilitator of learning. She is a role model, designer of the environment, resource person, demonstrator, record-keeper and observer of each child's growth and development. She encourages, respects, and loves each child as a special, unique individual; she also provides support for parents and joins them in a partnership to nurture the development of the child.

How MONTESSORI WORKS

Each Montessori class, from toddlers through high school, operates on the principle of freedom within limits. Every program has its set of ground rules which differs from age to age but is always based on core Montessori beliefs: respect for each other and for the environment. Children are free to work at their own pace with materials they have chosen, either alone or with others. The teacher relies on his or her observations of the children to determine which new activities and materials he may introduce to individual children or to a small or large group. The aim is to encourage active, self-directed learning and to strike a balance of individual mastery with small group collaboration within the whole group community. The three-year-age span in each class provides a family-like grouping where learning can take place naturally. More experienced children share what they have learned while reinforcing their own learning. This peer group learning is intrinsic to Montessori; therefore, there are often more conversation-language experiences in the Montessori classroom than in conventional early education settings.

MULTI-AGE GROUPING: BUILDING COMMUNITY

At each level, children are clustered in small learning communities for a two- or three-year period. These small communities provide several advantages not found in conventional schools. Children work with others who are older and younger than themselves. The older students serve as role models and tutors for the younger students, and in the process, they gain confidence in their own abilities and self-esteem regarding their skill level and expertise. The younger ones watch the older ones, and in the process gain a clear vision of what's expected of them and have the benefit of working with and learning from their peers as well as the teacher. This small community is a direct preparation for life in the family and in the workplace. Communicating and working well with others are important life skills.



First year at 3

Second Year at 4

Third Year at 5

COMMITMENT TO THE THREE-YEAR CYCLE

The Montessori Classroom and its founding principles are based on building a community of children. Your child benefits most from the Montessori environment by completing the 3-year cycle—which for Primary includes staying through the kindergarten year. For most children this is three years; however, they may be in our primary program for three and a half or four years before completing kindergarten depending on the exact birthdate of your child. The success of our environment is attributed to the classrooms remaining balanced with the appropriate ages of children in each room. As a commitment to the three-year cycle of our primary program, we have adopted a third-year deposit for enrollment. Younger children enrolled in our program benefit from those families whose older children complete the three-year program. As we continue to build our Montessori community, we expect that all families commit to the three-year program as well. This not only strengthens our already thriving Montessori classrooms, but also allows your child to reach his or her full potential. Families are required to attend a presentation on the benefits and aspects of the kindergarten year. This presentation will be held during the child's second, or 4-year-old year with us. We do not knowingly enroll families that are unable to commit to the completion of kindergarten. This also includes younger siblings of families that have not committed to the completion of kindergarten.

"Our aim is not only to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but so to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his innermost core. We do not want complacent pupils, but eager ones."

—Maria Montessori

ABOUT IMA

Indiana Montessori Academy was founded in August 2011 by Kris Spence. She is certified through the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) from the Montessori Institute of Milwaukee. IMA provides authentic Montessori education to the families of Carmel, Westfield, Zionsville, Fishers and Indianapolis.

IMA VISION AND MISSION

IMA's vision is to become the premier Montessori school in the Indianapolis area. We strive to uphold Dr. Montessori's principles and pedagogy. In the 2012-13 school year, we were successfully recognized by AMI. In 2019, we moved into our own building on 2.3 acres of land to incorporate a 'Farm to School' Program. The art of gardening flowers, fruits and vegetables are a wonderful way to connect children to the beauties, science, and wonderment of nature. The program will incorporate other local businesses; involve the children in learning about nutrition, community, and sustainability. Additionally, the children will be able to harvest the food to use for snacks.

Coinciding with our Farm to School Program we will also strive to be an environmentally 'green' school. We will introduce the concepts of reduce, reuse, and recycle to the children; be an environment that is paperless as much as possible and use cleaning products that are not only safe for our children, but green as well. (For more information, read about our Green School Program under Programs in the Handbook.)

ACCREDITATION

Indiana Montessori Academy is fully recognized (accredited) by the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), which confirms that member schools meet its rigorous standards before receiving or renewing accreditation. Every three years, an AMI-trained consultant will make an evaluation visit to the school as a part of the accreditation cycle. Of the 5,000 Montessori schools in the United States at present, fewer than 200 are accredited by AMI. In the state of Indiana, we are the **only** Primary Montessori Program that has this certification.

To receive AMI Recognition, each classroom in the school must have:

- A fully trained teacher who has completed both a college undergraduate degree and certification from an AMI training program;
- A complete set of authorized Montessori classroom materials;
- A three-year range of ages within the single classroom;
- An uninterrupted three-hour work cycle each morning

IMA MISSION STATEMENT

Indiana Montessori Academy's mission is to provide an environment for children to foster their natural love of learning; and develop socially, academically, and emotionally. IMA builds a strong sense of community utilizing the concepts and practices founded by Dr. Maria Montessori. IMA believes a respectful, thoughtful, peaceful child will create a peaceful and sustainable future.

OUR COMMITMENT

Indiana Montessori Academy is committed to creating an environment for teachers and children where the Montessori principles can be applied. The goal of Indiana Montessori Academy is to introduce children to experiences which:

- Provide a warm and loving environment in which each child feels secure, respected, and loved.
- Support and encourage the growth and development of the whole child.
- Develop social skills, emotional growth, physical coordination, as well as cognitive preparation.
- Help build self-confidence, self-esteem, and motivation.
- Foster the natural desire to learn.
- Develop freedom within limits.
- Develop and refine each child's sensory motor skills.
- Lengthen each child's attention span.
- Enable each child to move smoothly and purposefully.
- Encourage the development of creativity in each child.
- Provide a framework of discipline through which each child can develop self-discipline and personal strength.
- Provide an environment with safe limits in which each child can become an active explorer and learner.
- Provide opportunities for each child to develop social grace and courtesy.
- Develop skills in observation, questioning and listening.
- Prompt order, coordination, concentration, and independence.
- Refine and develop each child's physical and mental capabilities and interests as they expand.
- Help children develop respect for themselves, others, and their environment.



School Administration

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND FACULTY INFORMATION

HEAD OF SCHOOL

Kris Spence, Head of School, serves as the professional educational leader of the school and as its executive director. She has complete responsibility for faculty, staff, and student selection, evaluation, and dismissal. The head articulates the mission of the school to its constituencies and is responsible for the professional quality and behavior of the faculty and staff.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND TRAINING

The school aims to ensure that our teachers are trained in Montessori pedagogy under the auspices of the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI). In cases where a Montessori training center is associated with a university, a master's degree can be earned in conjunction with the Montessori diploma. Even when this is not so, the Montessori training is the equivalent of master's degree coursework. Kindly visit our [website](#) for current staffing information.



Programs

PRIMARY PROGRAM

Our program is designed for a minimum of three-year enrollment. This allows the youngest children to be inspired by the older students while providing older students the benefit of leadership roles. In this situation, students learn not only “with” each other but “from” each other without feeling the pressure of competition. Children stay with the same classroom for each of the three/ four years, and the class is maintained as a stable ongoing unit. This provides an atmosphere of security as well as a sense of community. The Primary classroom will maintain the AMI standard of having a range of 28 to 35 children with two adults—one trained AMI directress and an assistant.

PRIMARY HALF-DAY PROGRAM



This program is five days a week, three and one-half hours per day. It is designed for children ages 2½ through approximately 4½-5 years.

PRIMARY EXTENDED-DAY PROGRAM

This program runs five days a week for six and a half hours per day, including lunch and recess. It is designed for children in kindergarten and for children who are no longer napping yet need to remain at IMA during the afternoon hours. Sometimes children are ready for the afternoon work cycle before their Kindergarten year. This is usually the semester when the child turns 5. The directress will notify parents when she feels that a child is ready for the Extended-Day Program. Additionally, there are children enrolled in our Extended-Day Program who can nap through the afternoon work cycle.

Note:

Any child who is starting what would be his/her third year of the program (regardless of when the child enrolls at IMA) is generally enrolled in the Extended-Day Program. It is essential that the

oldest children in the class have the afternoons to experience the more advanced lessons. IMA considers children who are 5 years old on or before August 1 to be in kindergarten. All Kindergarteners must be enrolled in the Extended-Day Program.

PRIMARY ALL-DAY PROGRAM

This program is held in our classroom setting with shelves that offer Montessori-based work choices, where lessons are given in the use of materials and expectations for behavior are the same as during our regular work cycles. In addition to our regular Extended-Day Program, the children enrolled in the All-Day Program experience before and after care accented with group lessons and activities including seasonal lessons, crafts, large motor movement and music. In the afternoon, weather permitting, children return to the park for a second recess. Children who remain at IMA beyond Afternoon Departure are offered an afternoon snack.

FLEX TIME

We understand conflicts in schedules arise from time-to-time. With that in mind, we have a Flextime program whereby your child may arrive early or stay after school when needed. This way your child remains in an environment familiar to him or her and you

may drop-off early or pick-up later when scheduling conflicts occur. Flex time is offered in half-hour and hourly increments. A pre-paid punch card of \$50.00 equates to 5 hours of Flex Time.

TODDLER PROGRAM

Our Toddler Community is for children ages 18 months to 2 ½ or 3 years of age. This allows the youngest children to be inspired by the older students while providing older students the benefit of leadership roles. In this situation, students learn not only “with” each other but “from” each other. Children remain in the same classroom until ready to enter our primary program at ages 2 ½ or 3 years of age. It provides an atmosphere of security as well as a sense of community. The Toddler Community will maintain the AMI standard of having a range of 12 children with two adults—one trained AMI directress and an assistant.

A large component of any Montessori classroom is meeting the child where they are and preparing the environment so the child can accomplish all that they are capable of. The children in the Toddler Community come to class wearing underwear and routinely use the toilet based on the child’s progression. The expectation is that the child practices their toileting routine and progresses with their toilet learning. Each child is met where they are.

TODDLER COMMUNITY HALF-DAY PROGRAM

This program is five days a week, three and one-half hours per day. Children who join the Toddler Community will have a 2-hour work cycle that includes a group snack and a 45-minute large motor time.

TODDLER COMMUNITY EXTENDED-DAY PROGRAM

This program runs five days a week for six and a half hours per day, including lunch and nap. All children in the extended day program are required to nap.

TODDLER COMMUNITY ALL-DAY PROGRAM

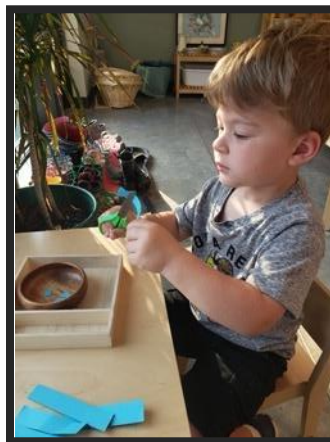
This program is held in our Toddler Community classroom. In addition to our regular Extended-Day Program, the children enrolled in the All-Day Program experience before and after care accented with group and individual non-Montessori activities, large motor movement and music. In the afternoon, weather permitting, children go outdoors for a second recess. Children who remain at IMA beyond Extended Day Departure are offered an afternoon snack.



SCHOOL HOURS

The Primary Program classroom hours are:

Arrival	7:30-8:15 am	All-Day Children with Before Care Enrollment
Arrival	8:15-8:30 am	Half-Day Children; Extended Day Children
Morning Work Cycle	8:30-11:30 am	All Children
Recess	11:40-11:50	Half-Day Children
Morning Departure	11:50	Half-Day Children
Lunch	11:45-12:15	Extended Day Children; All-Day Children
Recess	12:15-1:00	Extended Day Children; All-Day Children
Afternoon Work Cycle	1:00-3:00 pm	Extended Day Children; All-Day Children
Afternoon Departure	3:00	Extended Day Children
Aftercare	3:00-5:30	All-Day Children



The Toddler Program classroom hours are:

Arrival	7:30-8:15 am	All-Day Children with Before Care Enrollment
Arrival	8:20-8:30 am	Half-Day Children, Extended Day Children
Morning Work Cycle	8:30-10:30 am	All Children
Recess	10:30-11:30	All Children
Morning Departure	11:50	Half-Day Children
Lunch	12:00-12:30	Extended Day Children, All-Day Children
Nap	1:00-3:00 pm	Extended Day Children, All-Day Children
Afternoon Departure	3:00	Extended Day Children
Aftercare	3:00-5:30	All-Day Children



IMA GREEN SCHOOL

Researched, Written and Impassioned by Emmanuelle Schwarz, Spring 2012

Below, please find a list of 10 goals for a greener IMA. Our guiding principle is for the interactions between the children and their environment to be consistent with the Montessori philosophy which embodies holistic qualities.

Goal

- 1 Maintain a Green and Sustainable Supply List
- 2 Implement a No Waste Lunch
- 3 Coordinate a No Waste Organic Snack
- 4 Collect and Create Heirloom Seed Bank Annually in October
- 5 Uphold Green Cleaning
- 6 Continue to Use Green Classroom Material
- 7 Conserve Green School Events
- 8 Future Green Building: A Look at Materials, Energy and Water
- 9 Preserve Greening our Outside Time
- 10 Official Change to Our Mission Statement



filling the bird feeder



admiring the pumpkin



composting



digging in the garden

With the help and guidance of Mrs. Schwarz, IMA implemented the above ten principles in the school in 2013/14. They have had a profound effect not only on the children but the staff as well. We continue to strive not only to uphold the goals set in place, but also to reevaluate ways we can continue to be a green and sustainable environment. We were excited and thrilled at the success we have had, and we look forward to continuing with our IMA Green School!

Policies and Procedures

ADMISSION PROCEDURES

1. Private Tour or Prospective Parent Night:

Come visit IMA to learn more about our Montessori Education. We'll share the philosophy of education, our approach applied, programs we offer, and our internationally recognized accreditation. Kindly set aside an hour of time to learn more from our educators firsthand.

2. Application:

Complete our application to proceed with your interest in enrolling your child in our programs at IMA. Applications are accepted a year prior to enrollment. Applications will be held only for the current school year. Applicants upon our waitlist will need to reapply for the upcoming school year.

3. Observation:

Schedule a day to personally visit our classroom environments. We love to host guests to see the children working in action. An observation consists of stepping into the classroom for a glimpse into the children's environment. Please note these guidelines for your visit. Kindly set aside about an hour of time to view each of our classroom environments.

4. Interview:

Schedule an interview with us. We'd love to hear your observation insights and clarify any questions to solidify your family choosing IMA for your child's education. Come prepared with any final inquiries you might have.

5. Enrollment Deposit:

Join in partnership with IMA educators as your child's schooling unfolds. Join us to foster a love of learning for your little one. Applicants may send their child's deposit to hold their spot. The deposit is paid to ensure your child's enrollment space and the money is returned to you during your son/daughter's Kindergarten year with us.

APPLICATION

After all parents involved in the decision have taken a tour, complete an application and submit it to: Indiana Montessori Academy, 2925 W. 146th St., Carmel, IN 46074 or via email at info@imamontessori.org

ENROLLMENT

When you sign an enrollment agreement for your child, you are committing to paying annual tuition for the entire academic or all year program, beginning in August and ending in May or July respective of the specific enrolled program. Tuition can be paid in full

on the first day of school; in 10 monthly payments for the academic year or 12 monthly payments for all-year. If your child is admitted after the first month of the school year, the tuition will be pro-rated based on actual days of enrollment.

TUITION

Parents understand and agree that:

- All tuition and fees must be paid in full according to the payment plan selected. Family accounts are considered past due after 30 days. Students can be removed from the active attendance services should the tuition and fee account become past due.
- You agree to pay fees for all activities which properly apply to the student not covered by tuition.
- Your account will be kept current, and your financial obligation is unconditional.
- Your financial obligations to the school must be met before the student will be permitted to advance to the next academic year.
- IMA will not release report cards or grades, and transcripts will not be sent to other schools or colleges until your account is brought up to date.
- The student will not be allowed to participate in a school-sponsored trips unless your account is current.
- IMA reserves the right to withhold grades and transcripts for non-payment.
- IMA reserves the right to apply any monies received for fees, trips, or deposits first to outstanding tuition balances.
- Account information will be discussed with and supplied to only the “responsible payer” that has signed the enrollment agreement.
- Any account balance that is more than 30 days overdue will be charged a late fee of 3% per month.
- A \$40 fee will be charged for returned checks.

FORCE MAJEURE

IMA’s duties and obligations under the Enrollment Agreement shall be suspended immediately without notice during all periods that the School is closed because of force majeure events including, but not limited to, any natural catastrophes, fires, floods, act of God, hurricane, war, governmental action, act of terrorism, epidemic, pandemic, natural disasters or any other event beyond the School’s control. If such an event occurs, the School’s duties and obligations in the Enrollment Agreement and Parent Handbook will be postponed until such time IMA, in its sole discretion, may safely reopen. In the event that IMA cannot reopen due to an event under this clause, the School is under no obligation to refund any portion of the tuition and fees paid.

DATE OF BIRTH FOR ADMISSIONS

Children must be at least 30 months of age (2 ½) and turning 3 years old by December 1st of the year enrolled to be admitted into our Primary Program.

Children must be at least 18 months of age (1 ½) to be admitted into our Toddler Community.

TOILETING

A child must have demonstrated the ability to use the toilet regularly for all waste functions before they can enroll in the school. Children who have yet to gain full mastery of toileting abilities will be assisted by staff to achieve more effective skills. In the event of accidents, children will be assisted to change and clean themselves and put soiled clothing in plastic bins in their cubbies. For this purpose, all students should have always at least one complete change of clothes in their cubbies clearly marked with initials. All children should wear clothing that is easy for them to use when toileting. Coveralls and belts, as well as tight-fitting waist bands are discouraged in favor of elastic waists. No paper-product underpants are allowed. If a child continues to have problems toileting for a prolonged period, medical referrals may be made.

REFERRALS

Your greatest compliment to our Montessori program is the referral of a new family to our school. We honor the commitment you make to our school and the families you refer to us by offering you a \$150.00 referral fee, reduced from your tuition payment. The tuition reduction is made when the referred family has officially enrolled.



ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

- In your vehicle, form a double-stacked line in the long driveway of the school. Please pull all the way up to our double-entrance doors. A staff member and/or our Kindergarten greeters will help your child out of the car and into school starting at your designated carline arrival.
- Please pull slowly ahead to the forward-most position in the carline area.
- Make sure your child is ready to leave the car when you pull up (i.e. shoes and coat on; buckle undone).
- Parents should stay in the car. If you need to talk to another parent, please have a pre-set location for meeting after the child drop off is complete.
- For any other drop-off or pick-up time, please park your car and come into school using the front entrance.
- At Dismissal, please stay in your car and let a staff member walk your child to the car.
- Once your child is in the car, pull ahead to the parking lot, out of the way of outgoing traffic, to buckle your child into his/ her seat.
- If you arrive late, please walk your child to the front entrance. A staff member will open the door to invite your child in. As you are already late, it is disruptive to walk your child into the classroom. Please say your goodbyes to your child at the front door, so he or she may join the work cycle with minimal disruptions to the children already working.

CHANGES IN PICK-UP ROUTINE

If your child is to be picked up by anyone other than the person who usually picks him up or who is listed on the Child Information and Health Form, or if your child is going home with a friend, please notify your child's teacher in writing at least 24 hours prior to pick up. If there is a last-minute change of plans and you need to notify the school less than one day prior to pick up, the school will accept hand-written notes on the same day, emailed instruction from you, or, as a last resort, a phone call or text to the school. Last minute phone requests may need to be followed by an email. All requests are subject to verification, and anyone picking up a child may be required to display personal identification. These measures are in place for the protection and safety of your child—and for your peace of mind.

SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN

Our responsibility begins and ends at the car door or when children are dismissed to go home by other means selected by the parents. During school hours, children are under the direct supervision of the administration, directress, or assistant at all times.

They may not leave the school grounds during school hours except with their own parents or guardian(s). When weather permits, the class may go outside for class time or a walk on the grounds surrounding the building.

CAR SEATS

Remember that Indiana law requires appropriate child restraint systems. Staff members are not permitted to buckle your child into his car seat. If dropping off a car seat in the morning for a carpool, please give it to the staff member who takes your child out of the car. If picking up a car seat, it will be in the vestibule or outside by the benches. Please pick up car seats on the way through car line. Car seats must be labeled with your name; masking tape works well and is easily removable.

NOTES

If you have a note for the staff or payment for the Administration, put it in an envelope addressed to the appropriate party and give it to the staff member who gets your child out of the car. It is better to leave a written message for a staff member rather than verbally relay the message in carline. If you need to come in to check the calendar, drop something off (i.e. snack, medicine), pick up something, or are assisting at school, please drop off your child per procedure, park, and then enter the building.

MEDIA RELEASE

We ask parents' permission for a Media Release to post pictures of their children either on our website, Facebook®, Instagram®, newsletters or other means to promote the ideals, mission, vision, and pedagogy of IMA. The required permission is noted on the signed Enrollment Agreement.

In that light, we ask that you do not post pictures of other students from IMA without a parent's permission. Not all parents grant us a media release. We respect their requests, and we hope you do the same.

ATTENDANCE

ATTENDANCE: WHY IT MATTERS

Regular school attendance is essential for success in school. It is important that parents and students recognize the relationship between academic success and regular school attendance. Students should remain out of school only when ill or absolutely necessary, in order for them to achieve to their maximum potential. Regular attendance establishes continuity and community for your child. Parents should consider the value in the uninterrupted three-hour morning work cycle and two-hour afternoon work cycle and make every effort to allow your child to enjoy the benefit of this Montessori education.

Consistent attendance is important. The children who benefit most from the prepared environment are those who attend regularly. There are several reasons for this:

- A consistent routine provides security for children; a sense of security enables children to learn more readily.
- A child's experiences in the classroom and with the materials are cumulative; consistent attendance bolsters learning.
- Your own commitment to your child's presence in school affirms the importance of school and learning. If you often invite your child to stay out of school for different activities, you implicitly undermine the importance of school in her mind—which can affect her performance when she is present.
- Intermittent attendance, or periods of long absence, can affect both your child's adaptation to school and her learning.

Please make every effort to ensure your child's regular attendance.

Students will be considered for automatic withdrawal after five (5) consecutive days of unexcused absences.



Under such circumstances, parents are required to meet with the Head of School to discuss possible re-enrollment based upon available space as well as conditions to prevent further interruption of the student's attendance and education. Please notify the Head of School immediately if your child will be absent for an extended period of time.

PUNCTUALITY

In the Montessori classroom, it is important for students to arrive promptly each day. Arriving with the rest of his or her classmates will help your child adjust more easily to the school day and quickly become a part of any activities that may already be in progress.

Punctuality is important for all students. School begins promptly at 8:30 am. When younger children arrive late, it violates their sense of order: their sense of what is right and what is expected, of how things are supposed to be. For the older child, there is a sense of embarrassment and disorientation. In either case, arriving late gets the day off on the wrong foot. Late arrivals also disrupt the classroom community, the work of the other children, and the teacher. Out of respect for your own child, the classroom community, the other children, and the teachers, please help your child arrive at school on time.

NOTE: Families that are consistently late—more than three times in one month—will be required to meet with the Head of School to determine whether enrollment should continue.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

Holidays and scheduled school closings are listed in the school's calendar (See our website). Scheduled closings will also be published in monthly newsletters and on the website. The school reserves the right to amend the closing schedule as needed.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS AND DELAYED OPENINGS

SCHOOL CLOSINGS

Notice of closing due to inclement weather will be sent via a *Remind* Text to all families prior to 7:00 am. In addition, you can watch Channel 13 WTHR Eyewitness News, FOX 59, WRTV 6 and WISHTV 8. We will follow the local public school system, Carmel Clay Schools, for closings.

DELAYED OPENINGS

If we are operating on a delay, it will be one hour in length, drop off will begin at 9:20am. Pick-up will remain the same. *There will be no Before Care available if we are under a one-hour delay.* IMA families are geographically widespread, so please use your best judgment regarding travel on severe-weather days and exercise caution. The top priority of IMA is the safety of our children, parents, and staff members. Deciding to delay or cancel school is not easy; many issues are considered. *Please have a back-up plan in place prior to the winter months.*



Health And Safety

Our goal is to do all possible to contribute to children's healthy and joyful development. Basic to this is physical health. We ask that every child be in good health and free of communicable diseases each day (s)he participates in school. Please do not bring children if they have an excessive runny nose or cough, or any communicable disease.

As parents and staff, we know that some children may arrive at school apparently well and then become ill during the day. In such a case, we will notify you immediately of your child's symptoms of illness. Because many childhood illnesses are contagious, ill children must be picked up as soon as possible. Please make alternative care arrangements for your child if (s)he displays any symptoms of illness. We must, within reason, do everything possible to protect all children, staff members, and their families from exposure to contagious illnesses. See the appendices: *Health Conditions that Mandate Exclusion from School* for more information on which illnesses or conditions require your child to stay at home.

IS MY CHILD TOO ILL TO COME TO SCHOOL?

We cannot admit your child to school if one or more of the following health conditions exist:

- The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in normal school activities, including outdoor play;
- The illness/injury requires more care than teachers can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children in the class;
- The child has one of the following, unless medical evaluation by a healthcare professional indicates that child is well enough to attend school:
 - a. oral temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater, accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness;
 - b. rectal temperature of 101.4 degrees or greater, accompanied by behavior changes or other signs and symptoms of illness;
 - c. armpit temperature of 99.4 degrees or greater, accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness; or
 - d. symptoms and signs of possible severe illness, such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea, two or more vomiting episodes in 24 hours, rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, behavior changes, or other signs that the child may be severely ill;
- A health-care professional has diagnosed the child with a communicable disease, and the child does not have medical documentation to indicate that the child is no longer contagious.
- The child does not meet screening health criteria that may be required from time to time (for example, pandemic or other defined guidelines).

STEPS FOR RETURNING TO SCHOOL

1. **Ensure 24-Hour Fever-Free Status:** Before sending your child back to school, confirm that they have been fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. A student is considered fever-free when their temperature has been below 100.4°F (38°C) for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.
2. **Check Overall Health:** Ensure your child is feeling well enough to participate in daily activities and does not have lingering symptoms that could affect their ability to engage in schoolwork or spread illness.

ILLNESS, ACCIDENTS, AND EMERGENCIES AT SCHOOL

The school employs a proactive safety program which focuses on prevention to minimize accidents and injuries to children and faculty. We review our policies and procedures regularly and conduct safety inspections to correct any potential hazards. In addition, we review the staff coverage to ensure proper adult supervision is maintained.

All faculty and staff receive training in first aid and CPR. If an accident or injury occurs, faculty responds immediately and follows emergency procedures. Each classroom is equipped with a first-aid kit which is inspected regularly. An *Incident Report* is completed whenever an accident or injury occurs, and the report is reviewed to determine if any corrective action is required. We maintain records of all such occurrences. Parents and guardians are asked, upon enrollment, to sign an *Emergency Release* on the *Student Information and Health Form* empowering the school to seek and approve emergency medical treatment in the event the parent cannot be reached.



MINOR INJURY

In the event of minor injury, an adult will attend to the child and administer first aid. The Directress informs the parent about the situation, either by phone, in person at dismissal time, or by note. If the child has sustained an injury to the face or head, we will advise the parent as soon as possible. The Directress and/or Assistant complete the *Incident Report*.

SERIOUS INJURY

In the event of serious injury, a faculty member will immediately call 911. The staff will administer first aid until the arrival of emergency medical technicians. Parents will be notified at the earliest opportunity so they may come to the school. If a parent cannot be reached, a faculty or staff member will remain with the child, accompanying him or her to the hospital, if necessary. After the emergency is handled, the Directress fills out an *Incident Report*.

LIFE-THREATENING ALLERGIC REACTION

We follow the steps outlined above under “Serious Injury.” Please complete an *Allergy Action Plan* and provide any emergency medications. All staff and faculty who work with your child have been trained to recognize allergy symptoms and how to

administer the EpiPen. We will follow the steps outlined in the plan. Contact the Head of School or check the school's website if your child needs this form.



OTHER EMERGENCIES

The school is open daily from 7:30 am until 5:30 pm. We have staff member(s) at school during those times. When you leave your child, they remain in our care until you, or someone else listed on your emergency/authorized pick-up form, come to school to pick up the child(ren). (These authorized persons are listed on our Student Information Form.)

If there is an emergency with your child, we call the parent(s) immediately. If we cannot get a hold of a parent, we attempt to reach the emergency contact. Please refer to the section: *Illness, Accidents and Emergencies at School* listed above.

If you have an emergency, or will be late picking up your child, first please call the school and leave a message on the answering machine or send a text message at 317-569-1290. Please know your message will be received; however, we may be in the process of a lesson; lunch or dismissal and not able to respond immediately. Your child will remain in our care until you or an authorized

person picks them up. If an emergency should arise and someone not on your list needs to come pick-up your son or daughter, you (as the parents) will need to give us permission to release your child to his or her care. It is our process to check identification upon arrival. A staff member of the school will always be present with the children until all children have been picked up.

HEALTH FORMS

The State of Indiana requires that every child have an updated immunization certificate. Make pediatrician appointments well in advance of the first day of school. The following health forms must be on file within 30 days of the start of school:

- **Immunization Record:** Obtain a copy of this from your child's doctor using the Indiana State Board of Health approved form.
- **Student Information and Health Form:** To be sure that your child's forms are completed on time, please make checkup appointments with your doctor several months before school begins. To keep our medical records updated, please use the Student Information and Health Form to notify us of any additional immunizations during the year or changes in your child's medical information. This form may be found on [Transparent Classroom](#).

POLICY REGARDING A CHANGE IN A CHILD'S MEDICAL CONDITION

Pursuant to state and federal law, Indiana Montessori Academy adheres to the following procedure regarding a change in a child's medical condition:

- If a student has a change in their medical condition that potentially affects their performance during the school day and requires the school to take extra measures and/or alter classroom procedures and policies to accommodate this student, the parents must submit a complete written expert medical diagnosis, the medical professional's description of the limitation on the child's activity and physician-prescribed suggested range of accommodation options upon notifying the school of the change.
- This proposed individualized health care plan will be considered by the school administration immediately upon receipt. The school will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate the child's medical condition. If this child's health and safety are threatened by this change in medical condition, the child may not attend school until the individualized health plan is in place.
- If, due to financial, logistical, or mechanical reasons, the school is unable to accommodate the child as requested by the prescribed plan, the family will be permitted to withdraw the child at that time (not to be applied retroactively) without liability for future payments.
- Indiana Montessori Academy's overriding goal is the safety and well-being of our students during the time in which they are under our care. This policy is in place to ensure that and take the most appropriate action based on the situation presented. All information relating to these matters is confidential.

MEDICATIONS

If your child requires medication, please confer with your doctor and, if possible, obtain medication that can be administered twice daily, in the morning and in the evening at home. Medication prescribed to be taken three times daily should be taken in the morning, after school, and before bed. If it is necessary that your child have medication administered during school hours, please fill out a *Permission to Dispense Medication* from the school office or from our website. School staff will not administer medication, including aspirin or other over-the-counter pain relievers, without written authorization of a parent. Do not send medication to school in your child's lunch box. Medications must be delivered to the school in the original container, labeled with the child's name, a date, dosage directions for administration, the physician's name, and pharmacy name. The school will administer the medication only as stated on the label instructions, or as amended in writing by the child's physician.

Follow these guidelines to allow school staff to dispense over-the-counter medications:

- The child must fall within the correct age range written on the label instructions of over-the-counter medication, or else we must receive a doctor's written instructions stating the amount and dosage schedule.
- We cannot give medication "as needed" without prior detailed written instructions or verbal consent from a parent at the time of administration.
- Parents must give written notification when a child is to stop taking a medication.
- Parents must provide dispensers for medication.

SMOKING

Indiana Montessori Academy is a smoke-free environment; smoking is not permitted at school.

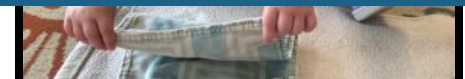
BUILDING SECURITY

During the school day, children are not to leave their classroom or the building without the permission of their teacher. However, freedom of movement within the classroom is a part of the Montessori approach to education. Immediately adjacent to the classrooms is an outdoor environment that acts as an extension of the indoor environment and, as such, is open to the children in accordance with the ground rules of their class. The back door is open only at arrival and dismissal times, and at other times when it is needed during the day for deliveries and for children going out to the playground. All visitors to the school, including parents, are required to enter through the front door. IMA administration reviews security procedures on a routine basis. If you have concerns or recommendations, please drop a note to the Head of School.

All doors to the classroom remain locked during the day and children are not allowed to open them unless they have explicit permission to do so from the adult in the classroom. In the event a door is inadvertently opened, the alarm to the door will ring.

EMERGENCY PLAN

We have special, practiced procedures for events such as tornadoes and fires. School evacuation plans are posted in each classroom and will be followed in the event of a fire or other event that requires students and staff to quickly evacuate the building. Monthly fire drills will be conducted to familiarize children with the evacuation procedures, as well as fulfill



state mandates. Disaster drills will also be conducted regularly to familiarize students with the procedures relating to tornadoes and other natural disasters.

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING

The Indiana Family Code requires reports of suspected child abuse or neglect to Family Protective Services (FPS). A person who suspects that a child may have been abused or neglected, and fails to report it within 48 hours, has committed a punishable offense. If you suspect child abuse or neglect, or if you have questions about whether the concern you have constitutes abuse or neglect, call the 24-hour toll-free Abuse/Neglect Hotline at 1-800-252-5400. IMA abides by these requirements.

Classroom Life

FIRST DAYS OF SCHOOL

This may be your child's first major separation from the secure and familiar world of home and family. This transition marks the entrance into a new world of friendships, learning and adventure. Parting is easier for some than for others. Your child will transition much easier to our classroom if the goodbye is not long. (It is why we do a carline. The goodbye is more succinct and between that and the consistency of the routine, the children are much more capable of walking into the classroom on their own.) A quick, definitive goodbye; well wishes for a great day; and being happy when you say it, all will help your child come into school confident and happy. Like mirrors reflecting in mirrors, children easily read the tender hearts of reluctant parents. Your loving, confident, happy, matter-of-fact approach will help your child take this big step positively. You are always welcome to call or text so we can let you know how things are going.

NEW STUDENT PHASE-IN

A key element of being an AML-recognized school is that the children work in a classroom of mixed age groups from 3-6 years. It means your children will be working in a classroom well-balanced with age groups and the variety of work and learning that will take place will amaze you! In that regard, at the start of the school year, we welcome quite a few new students to our school and our Montessori classrooms. We, as the Directresses and Assistants, want to make sure the first few days your children are with us are great! We want to devote one-on-one time with the children before the hum of our Montessori classroom takes over. We will schedule a phase-in period for any student who is new to Montessori and who may not have had the chance to work with us over the summer. You will be contacted by your Directress should your start-date differ from the first day of school.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

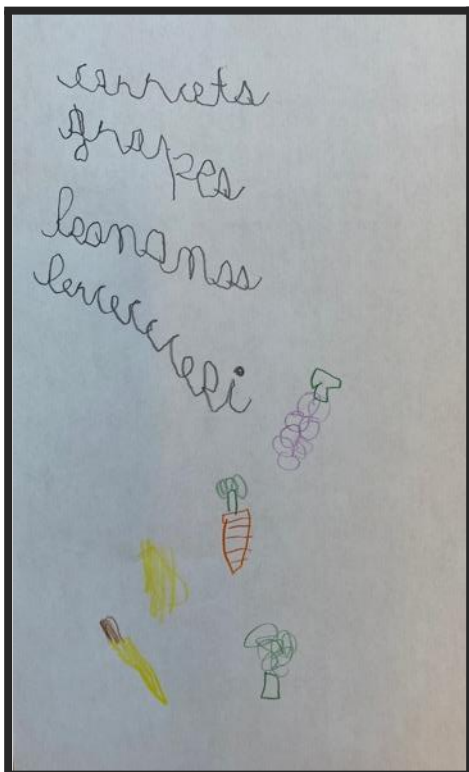
What people eat is, on one hand, highly personal with roots in culture and even religion. IMA is very aware and respectful of this point in our diverse school community. On the other hand, diet is a major factor for children's sound growth and development, as well as in how they function, attend, and learn on a daily basis. In addition, eating habits, healthful or otherwise, are established in childhood; therefore, learning about nutrition is an important part of the curriculum for any child. The points we focus on in this part of the curriculum are objective and scientifically based:

- Certain diet elements are essential for good health, growth, and optimal function.
- Certain diet elements do not contribute to health and, in excess, can be harmful.
- Our country has a crisis of obesity that includes children.
- We live in a society where many distortions of a normal healthful diet are considered "normal," such as:
 - fast food
 - eating "on the run"
 - large serving sizes
 - high-calorie foods with little or no nutritional value
 - highly refined foods
 - foods with high salt, sugar, and fat content

The principles we strive to promote are:

- appropriately sized servings
- additive-free foods (learning to read labels)
- low-fat, low-salt, low-sugar, and low-cholesterol choices
- avoidance of fried foods and trans-fats
- many fresh fruits and vegetables
- whole-grain foods rather than refined foods
- whole fruits over juices
- the importance of fiber
- protein, whether from meat, fish, beans, nuts, or dairy products

Based on this approach, items with excessive amounts of added sugar may be sent home at the discretion of the teacher.



Food is not just the essential “fuel” for our bodies to function and develop; it also, universally, serves a social function. At IMA we strive to promote this aspect of food by conducting snack and lunch time in a way that provides for the social element and the exercise of grace and courtesy:

- setting the table using tablecloths or placemats, china, glassware and silverware, napkins, centerpieces, etc.
- setting aside a special place for a few children to eat snack when they wish
- teaching table manners:
 - saying “please” and “thank you”
 - waiting to eat until everyone is served
 - chewing with the mouth closed
 - not speaking with food in the mouth
 - using silverware and napkins properly
 - waiting for others to finish
 - cleaning up and making the table ready for the next person.



SNACKS

Parents or guardians of students will provide snacks for our classroom. Each family will be asked to supply snacks during the year. A snack schedule will be issued at the beginning of the year, and a shopping list will be provided to you during the week prior to your child’s snack week. Please bring all items on the list on the Monday morning of your assigned snack week.

Children eagerly wait their turn to bring snacks and are proud to provide snacks for their classmates. We encourage participation in helping the children to learn good eating habits. Time spent with you shopping from the provided list for the healthy snacks allows you to enjoy each other’s company while providing an excellent opportunity for you to teach your child about food preparation and good nutrition. It is educational and fun to involve your child in the shopping. Please explain to your child that the snacks are to be shared by all the children. At school, students help to prepare and assemble the snacks. This purposeful involvement helps your child feel like a contributing, valuable member of the school community.

If you are interested in cooking with your child's class, please contact your child's Directress. If there is a particular food that is traditionally served for a holiday or special occasion in your family, we are happy to share those traditions with our students (i.e. latkes for Hanukkah). Please contact your child's Directress in advance to arrange for this.

Note:

- Due to student allergies, only store-bought goods can be served at IMA. Any snacks requiring assembly must be prepared at school. We appreciate your participation in our snack program.

LUNCH

Children who stay at IMA past noon bring a lunch. For ease of handling, please send your child's lunch in a cooler bag with a freezer pack all enclosed in his/ her lunchbox. Please label your child's lunch bag with his/ her name. We have a microwave to heat up student lunches. All food that will be heated with the microwave will be done on a glass plate. The microwave will be used to heat up meals less than one minute.



The children are learning about the environment and recycling. We encourage the use of reusable containers and the avoidance of excessive packaging. Containers with twist lids or zippers are the easiest for young children to manage. Children should be involved in the preparation of their own lunches until they are able to do it themselves. Involving them in shopping, reading labels, and

planning meals is important in their ownership of what they eat. The more children know about what is good for them and why, as well as what is not good for them and why not, the more they will be able and willing to make positive choices on their own.

IMA has adopted a “No Waste” lunch policy. This means if your child cannot compost or recycle what is left from his/her lunch, then the item will be sent home. Additionally, anytime a child does not finish the food from his/her lunch, this will be sent home as well. This way you are able to monitor how much your child ate for lunch and see if you need to adjust as necessary.

Items Not Permitted for Lunch:

- Beverages: milk, juice, etc.
(Water is provided by IMA; or parents may sign-up to have milk with lunch.)
- Lunchables® or related item
- Large amounts of candy (One Hershey Kiss® is okay, but a large candy bar is not.)
- Gummi® or rolled fruit snacks
- Fast food
- Any microwavable meal that needs to be fully prepared
- Any items that, like the above items, are highly processed, high in sugar and low in nutrients.
- PEANUTS and ALL TREE NUTS and any items processed in the same facility with peanuts and/or tree nuts present.

Anything such as apple sauce or yogurt must have a replaceable lid if it is not finished. Since children are not allowed to share food, pay attention to the amount and types of food that return home with the child and try to adjust accordingly. Parents/guardians will be informed about children who are not eating well or seem to not have enough or too much to eat. Any food that has not been finished will be sent home.

CLOTHING

Occasionally, children’s clothes will get dirty or wet while in school and on the playground. Please do not dress your child in clothing that you do not want to get dirty. We ask that you send along a change of clothes, underwear, and socks for your child that will stay at school. To make storage easier, we ask that you put these in a sealable clear plastic bag that is labeled with your child’s name. As the seasons change, so should the change of clothes.

Your child should be comfortably dressed for school. Natural fibers clean more easily and breathe better. It is important that the children feel at ease with what they are wearing. It is equally important that children can manage their own clothing as much as possible. Children take pride in being able to dress without help. Clothes that are simple and functional allow a child to move and work freely. Consider clothing/ jackets in terms of how easily a child can put on/ take off “all by myself.” Sweatpants or shorts with elastic bands instead of zippers or buttons are wonderful for children who are newly toilet trained.

Please label all clothes, boots, mittens, etc. with your child’s name in permanent ink. Also label lunch boxes, Tupperware, outdoor water bottles and associated items.



WEATHER APPROPRIATE

Please send your child to school with outerwear and clothing that’s appropriate for the climate of the day. Weather permitting, we will go outside at some point almost every day (except for the coldest of days or when it is raining), so please dress children appropriately. In the winter, students will need hats, coats, mittens, and galoshes or other boots for sloppy days. On rainy days, please send along boots and a raincoat. All clothing must be labeled. Do not send an umbrella with your child. On sunny days, we ask that parents be responsible for applying sunscreen at home. Parents of Extended and All-Day students may send in individually labeled bottles of sunscreen for afternoon application.

SHOES

Children mastering and perfecting the way they move and walk can succeed best in simple, flexible, non-skid shoes. Outdoor shoes should be appropriate for the playground. A designated pair of indoor shoes/slippers will be worn indoors and will be left at school each night. These shoes need to be appropriately sized; they are to aid children in being aware of their feet and movements and should not be a hindrance to them. Indoor

shoes/slippers must have hard soles; water shoes or plastic bottoms will work well. We kindly ask that you do not send in Crocs® or the like. Excessively long shoelaces and double knots are an added obstacle to the child. Cotton shoelaces remain tied; synthetic ones tend to slip.

BIRTHDAYS

At IMA, we like to mark children's birthdays by celebrating their life story. Parents are invited to join us in the classroom for their child's birthday celebration. The day and time of the celebration will be coordinated between the Parent and the Directress. To facilitate this celebration, when your child has a birthday, please send a simple grouping of photos illustrating milestones and special memories at each age. For example, if your daughter is turning 4, you would send in a photo representing each year of her life including birth. Your grouping would include 5 photos: Birth, One Year, Two Years, Three Years, Four Years.

Then, in the classroom, usually with many friends gathered around, the Directress will create a Timeline of Life with your child using the provided photos and your child's own artistic decorations. With the classroom assistant, the child will prepare a treat to share with the class. We like to bake or prepare different kinds of 'treats' with the children like, mini-muffins, smoothies, yogurt parfaits, frozen juice pops, fruit kebobs, fun shaped pancakes, or healthful cookies. Please do not send food, treats or party favors into school. The focus of activities will be on your child and his/her celebration.



baking for the birthday
celebration



creating a timeline with
friends



presenting the timeline to our
circle of friends



serving our friends, a
made-from-scratch treat

On the day of the celebration, many Montessori schools, just like IMA, use some form of a sun, the months, a candle, and a globe to help show the passage of time and the growth of the child from birth to this birthday celebration. A candle, representing the sun, is lit in the middle of the room. Labels with each month of the year are laid out in a circle radiating out from the “sun.” The children, teachers and guests sit in a wide circle around the sun and months of the year, while the birthday child stands next to the month of his or her birth holding a globe to represent the Earth. The child then walks around the sun one time for each year of his or her life. As the child walks, the audience sings the “Earth Goes Around the Sun.” At the end the child may extinguish the candle.

Once this representation of the child’s life has been done, the child then presents his own timeline of life to the adults, visitors, and children in the room. The child talks about his life progression and then invites his friends to ask questions about the pictures presented.

To complete the day’s celebration, the birthday child presents a small treat to the class. He serves each child individually. When everyone has been served, the classroom collectively gives thanks:

**We are thankful for the food before us;
We are thankful for the friends beside us;
We are thankful for the love among us;
We are thankful.**

The children enjoy the special treat together! It is a wonderful celebration of your child’s life!

Notes:

- If you are giving a birthday party for your child and plan to invite children from the class, it is better to invite only a few, or to invite them all. When many are invited, but not all, some feelings get hurt. Please be so kind to mail or email the invitations; do not send them to school for distribution.
- For children with June birthdays, these will be celebrated in the month of May and for children with July birthdays, these will be celebrated in the month of August, when we return to school.

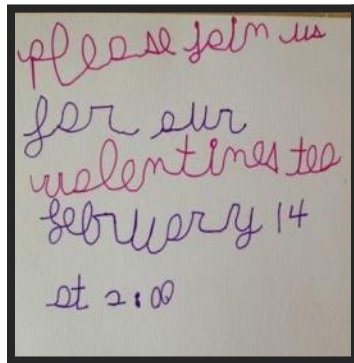
HOLIDAYS

The Montessori philosophy reflects universal acceptance of all people and appreciation of differences. Cultural diversity is well represented and highly valued at IMA. Holidays are explored culturally and historically as special times for sharing traditions.

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

VALENTINE'S DAY

At IMA, we traditionally host a Valentine's Day Tea to celebrate the day. In the Primary classrooms, we do not exchange Valentine's cards, treats or gifts. It is difficult for the young child to create his or her own Valentine's and then subsequently ask the child to 'give away' his/her work. Instead, we will host a special Valentine's Tea where invitations will be sent to you (as the parents) to join us. We will bake special treats with the children and enjoy having you as our guests. The children truly love this annual event!



handwritten
invitation—written by a
4-year-old



decorating cookies



preparing cucumber
sandwiches



our Valentine's Day tea

CHILDREN'S WORK

Children will not bring work home each day. Keep in mind that there is not much paperwork in the Montessori classroom, as young children are more interested in the process than the product. If your child wants to bring home a piece of work that he or she completed at school, then your child will be allowed to do so.



POSSESSIONS AND CLASSROOM TREASURES

Each classroom is filled with beautiful Montessori materials that are available to all. We ask that no toys, jewelry, candy, gum, or back-packs be brought to school, as these items often distract children from activities that are helpful to their development. Instead of a backpack, a small canvas bag will be provided by IMA, so the children have something to carry their work. If they choose, children are welcome to bring projects or natural objects (i.e. flowers, leaves, stones, animals—which must be approved ahead of time by the Directress) or items from other cultures or times to share with the class. In general, if it can be of some educational interest, your child may bring it to school. Valuable items are not recommended.

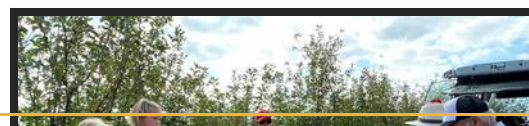
Note: Occasionally a school object or a part of a classroom work may inadvertently be brought home. Please assist the child (if needed) with returning the object to school. This does not need to become an issue about stealing. If you say something like, “I believe that belongs to the classroom. You and your friends need that material to do the work at school. Let’s return it to where it belongs.” This should suffice in having the child return the object or material back to the classroom.

ITEMS TO BRING TO SCHOOL

- Fresh flowers for Flower Arranging
- Bird Food for the bird feeders
- Anything found in nature and/or small plants
- Items of interest to the class (e.g., cultural or scientific artifacts or objects). If you have any doubt, ask before your child brings them in the car.
- Some children like to bring something that will remain in the classroom. Your child’s teacher can make suggestions of small things needed by that classroom.
- Books are great to bring to school to share with the classroom. They should only be stories that are ‘real’ or anything written about nature, culture, etc. Please do not bring books with imaginary characters, make-believe, etc. Montessori is about providing the child with a foundation of the world around her that is ‘real.’

LOST ITEMS

If you are missing an article of clothing or other item that your child brought to school, please park and come into the school to look for it. Lost and found items that are not labeled will be kept in the school office for 90 days. If unclaimed after that point, the items will be donated to Goodwill.



FIELD TRIPS

Occasionally, the students may go on an educational field trip. Field trips require an authorization signature from the parent. We will notify you well in advance of any planned field trips. Please remember that you must leave an appropriate car seat or booster seat for your child.

DISCIPLINE

IMA believes that helping a child fulfill the motto: “Help me to do it myself!” holds true in all areas, including discipline. Our goal is to develop self-discipline for each child. The root word of discipline is disciple. It means to lead forth. We seek to lead students to cooperative behavior and membership in a productive, loving, and caring classroom community. We all help each other grow.

Methods of discipline used in the classroom include:

- Modeling desired behavior by adults
- Problem solving skills that teach children “to use their words, not their hands”
- Careful classroom structure and ground rules
- Clear and consistent communications of behavioral expectations by all teachers
- Giving the child opportunities to make good choices regarding his/ her behavior
- Redirection to an appropriate activity
- Sitting down quietly to rethink one’s actions

If necessary, your child’s directress will work with you to develop a method of daily contact, or a system to reinforce positive behaviors. If continual behavior problems exist, we will work with the family to help resolve the issue(s). If your directress feels that additional support is needed to help your child achieve success in our classroom, IMA will communicate our concerns with you. We have found that in this time of a child’s life—the first experiences in a classroom setting—problems may arise that were not evident previously. IMA will make recommendations and provide as much support as possible to each family and child.

*“If children are allowed free development and given
occupation to correspond with their unfolding minds,
then natural goodness will shine forth.”*

—Maria Montessori

Parent Education and Involvement

MONTESSORI PARENT EDUCATION

Parent education sessions are scheduled throughout the year. Attendance at these sessions is strongly encouraged. By attending these sessions, you will become better informed about classroom activities, processes, and the Montessori education your child is receiving. These sessions provide you an opportunity to form relationships with other parents and your child's teacher. They also provide parents an opportunity to:

- Discover more about the Montessori Method and terminology (communicate better with your child!)
- Become better acquainted with the staff
- Learn about the various areas of the classroom and specific activities in which students engage
- Build our community of parents

PARENT EDUCATION RESOURCES ON OUR IMA WEBSITE

While we find it vitally important for our parents to attend the Parent Education Nights offered, we also understand that occasionally scheduling conflicts to occur. As a remedy, IMA provides Parent Education resources on our website. From our website, [Indiana Montessori Academy](#), choose "Montessori" then "Learn More" from the navigation bar on the top. Our [IMA Blog](#) also has a wealth of articles about Montessori materials, theory, and your child's development. It is our hope that making this resource available for parents to learn from at their own convenience will help in their own comprehension of the value of their child's Montessori education.

OBSERVATION

We welcome your visit to our Montessori school and want you to learn as much as possible about the classroom. Please read these guidelines carefully so that the children's day will be as uninterrupted as possible since some children may react to your presence.

To minimize that disruption, please **turn off your cell phone** and do not make calls or text when observing. Please do not bring or use cameras, video recorders, or other electronic devices while inside or outside of the classrooms.

As children are working in the classrooms, please do not engage in conversation with them; a polite “hello” will suffice. “I came to watch you work” is a good phrase to use when questioned; they will understand your response. Please refrain from helping children with their activities. In this way, you will see a more accurate reflection of the child’s day. We recommend a 30–45-minute observation time so that you can see a cycle of activity in the classroom.

The teacher cannot take time from the classroom to converse with you, either during or immediately following your observation, because she is focused on her work with the children. If questions occur to you while watching, write them down; leave a note for the teacher to arrange a follow-up phone call.

HINTS ON OBSERVING

The environment of a Montessori classroom is quite diverse. Children are engaged in purposeful movement, and there are flurries of activity and conversation. The teacher can usually be found giving a lesson on a mat or at a table, or even observing unobtrusively from another area in the room.

Visual perspective: Make the effort to alternate between an overall view of the entire classroom and then a focus on a single child. The child will be less self-conscious and you will see her/him in the context of the whole class.

Auditory perspective: Listen to the noise level as it rises and falls, and from which groups of children the sound emanates. You will generally hear a “hum” of voices as opposed to shouting or disruptive talking. At times there will be a special exclamation of excitement denoting a new discovery.

Learning style: Notice that children have their own learning styles. With some types of materials, you will see groups of children working cooperatively. With others, you will find one child working independently. Other children will seem to drift aimlessly at times, seemingly not engaged in any direct activity. Often, this child is engaged in her/his own method of observation and is actively absorbing information.

Alternate your focus on these three perspectives of visual, auditory, and learning style. Also note the ease and joy with which the children work. You will see the intense self-gratification that this unique learning experience affords them.

Child–child interaction: Listen to the way (the style and content) the children talk to each other. Try to hear the level of respect as well as the normal pushes and pulls of childhood. Very often, observers new to Montessori are surprised that a child will jealously guard her/his work: a child might tell a classmate that she is disturbing this work, and, as a result of this verbal communication, that child will leave. Other new observers are bemused by the politeness of a conversation in which one child will ask another if he/she would “care for a piece of apple” and the other will respond, “Yes, please. Thank you.”

AFTER YOUR VISIT

Observation is highly recommended during the admission process and before conference time; it gives parents a better view of how their child is working in the classroom. At other times, a parent taking the time to visit will give the child the sense of how much the work he/she does at school is valued by his/her parent. Questions about your visit can be directed to the classroom teacher.

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Thank you for taking time to observe at our school.

OUR MONTESSORI WORK: CHILDREN'S OPEN HOUSE

Twice during the school year, you will be invited to a parent-child Open House. On these dates, our school will be open between 9-11:00 am. These mornings allow you to come to school with your child in an open house setting. This is a wonderful opportunity for your child to be the teacher and give you lessons on what (s)he has been learning. The teachers will be present, but this is truly a time for you to interact with your child in the classroom. These dates are typically scheduled on a Saturday in October and March.



TELEVISION AND COMPUTERS

Young children learn by doing. Developmentally, childhood is a time for movement, activity, acting on the environment and interacting with others. Therefore, we encourage you to limit TV and computer use in a matter-of-fact way. A limit of 30 minutes to 1 hour per day of television/computers allows your child ample time to engage in more age-appropriate activities.

In the short time we have with our children, time that might be spent just *sitting* together could instead be used *being* together. Play music on the stereo and let your child help with dinner. Encourage him/ her to dance, go for walks, play board games, play ball in the yard, read books, tell stories, and do family activities together. You can also look at photo albums, talk about family history, and share favorite memories, dreams, ideas, etc. We have found that children who come into our classrooms in the morning without having watched television before school, are often more peaceful and ready to select purposeful work.

COMMUNITY-BUILDING EVENTS

IMA hosts a variety of events designed to bring together children, parents, and other family members over the course of the school year. Below is a list of the regularly scheduled community-building events:

- Back-to-School Open House
- Welcome Family Picnic
- Winter Family Social Outreach
- Valentine's Day Tea
- End of School Annual Picnic

FIELD TRIPS

Chaperoning and/or attending a Field Trip are other great ways to build our community of parents as well as gives you an opportunity to get-to-know your child's friends. Please review the School Calendar for scheduled Field Trips.

SCHOOL / FAMILY COOPERATION

A positive and constructive relationship between IMA and Family Member (defined as Parent, Guardian, Student, or other person associated with Student) is essential to the School's educational purpose and responsibilities to its students. If any Family Member engages in behavior, communications, or interactions on or off campus, that is disruptive, intimidating, overly aggressive, or reflects a loss of confidence in or disagreement with the School's policies, methods of instruction or discipline, or otherwise interferes with IMA's safety procedures, responsibilities, or accomplishment of its educational purpose or program, IMA reserves the right to dismiss the Family or Family Member from the community. IMA may also place restrictions on a Family Member's involvement or activity at School for other reasons that IMA deems appropriate. Any determination under this Paragraph shall be in IMA's sole discretion. There will be no refund of tuition where such dismissal occurs, and any unpaid balance is payable in full according to the terms of the Enrollment Agreement. IMA also reserves the right to withdraw an offer of enrollment or re-enrollment at any time and to void an executed Enrollment Agreement.

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND RULES

The Parent or Guardian further agrees and authorizes Student to participate in all School programs and activities including athletics and any other sponsored trips away from campus, or for the purpose of traveling between the student's home and IMA, and to use such transportation as is provided by the IMA for such activities, unless the Head of School receives written notice to the contrary.

Although it is understood IMA and its representatives intend to take reasonable precautions, the Parent or Guardian understands that the participation of Student in such activities involves a certain element of risk and Parent/Guardian hereby assumes full and complete responsibility for risks, death, personal or bodily injury, disability, and/or property damage. The Parent/Guardian releases and holds IMA and its agents, administrators, managers, employees, chaperones, volunteers, related entities, trustees and representatives harmless from any and all liability and/or claims, suits, or damages for costs and expenses, property damage, illness, accidents, injury, death, or loss whether arising before, during, or after such activities which are not the result of willful misconduct, and agrees not to sue any such person for any claims released herein. The Parent/Guardian also agrees that Student and/or families are expected to abide by all IMA rules and direction from faculty, administrators, coaches, or chaperones during such activity and failure to do so will be justification for termination of participation in the activity. Parents or Guardians also understand there may be other forms and releases involving trips or activities that the Parent/Guardian may be required to sign to allow Student to participate in certain activities. The Parent/Guardian further acknowledges and agrees Student's enrollment at IMA is subject to the rules and regulations of the IMA contained in the current Parent Handbook, which may be amended from time to time. IMA has the right to suspend or terminate the attendance or participation in extracurricular offerings of Students and/or families for reasons set forth in the Parent Handbook, for reasons the IMA administration considers detrimental to its community, Student, or to other students.



Communications

SCHOOL CONTACT INFORMATION

Indiana Montessori Academy
2925 West 146th Street
Carmel, IN 46074

317.569.1290

www.imamontessori.org

info@imamontessori.org

During the work cycle, we typically do not answer the phone. You may leave a message on the answering machine, and we will return your call promptly. If you find you need to just send a quick note, ***without requiring a response***, please feel free to send a text to: **317.569.1290**.

CONTACTING IMA PARENTS VIA EMAIL

As a courtesy to all of our parents whose email addresses may be displayed on email, please refrain from sending general school-wide emails. If there is a question or topic requested to be addressed by the school, please communicate this to one of the Directresses and we will gladly inform the parents as necessary.

Parents who are listed in the IMA School Directory have expressed interest to have their names/emails/addresses listed. During these early years of education, we believe having strong bonds with other families will only help to promote your child's success here at IMA. We encourage you to utilize the directory to contact other families for playdates, birthday celebrations, etc. Kindly respect the wishes of those parents not listed in the directory by refraining from contacting them.

LIFE CHANGES

If there has been a significant change in your child's home life, please let your directress know right away. Often, we can help with a little added attention, understanding, and loving care. Open communication between parents and directress is vital. As always, we will respect confidentiality.

We want to be in close contact with you. The importance of communication between the parent and directress cannot be overestimated. We encourage a two-way discourse at all times. It is especially important that sharing take place in cases of unusual circumstances that might affect your child. It is very difficult for the directress to chat during class hours, drop off, or dismissal, so communication is more productive if you leave a note, send an email or call the school for a time to confer. Also, it can be confusing and sometimes humiliating for children to be talked about—positively or negatively—in their presence. We will set aside a private time and place for these discussions. If at any time the directress sees a need to communicate with you, she will plan to do so at your convenience.

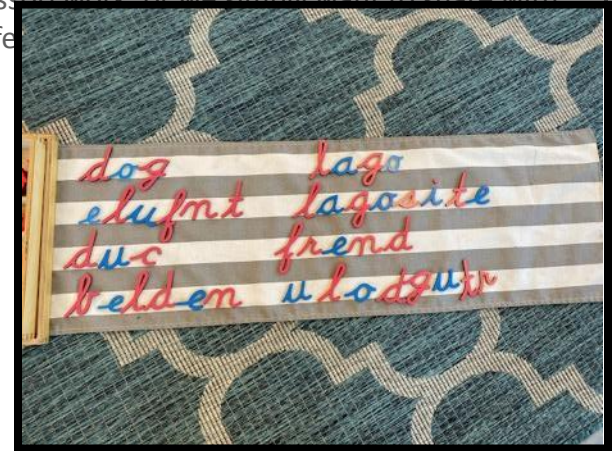
DAY-TO-DAY NEWS AND INFORMATION

Sometimes we capture a moment in a picture, or we want to highlight a specific Montessori work, or we simply want to share with you the joy your children bring to us. The following are ways we use to communicate life

- Monthly Newsletters—sent via email from MailChimp
- Postings on Facebook or Instagram
- Other Email Updates
- Transparent Classroom

CONFERENCES

The teachers who have worked with your child will produce evaluations during the year of your child's performance in the classroom. You will receive two written conference reports each year. These reports will be reviewed with you in person at conferences with your child's teacher in the fall and spring. In the fall and spring of each year, you'll have an opportunity to discuss your child's performance at parent/teacher conferences. This is a time for you to deepen your collaboration with the directress on behalf of your child—each by looking at the student's development from the other's perspective.



Sign-up for conferences will be announced at least two weeks in advance to allow you to arrange the conference with your schedule. Please respect the time allotted for your conference. Each conference will be approximately 15-20 minutes for Primary students. If additional time is needed, a follow-up conference may be scheduled. Throughout the year, if you have questions about your child's progress, please call the teacher for a discussion.

ISSUE RESOLUTION PROCESS

- Any person with a concern relating to school matters needs to discuss the concern with the staff member most directly related to it.
- If it is perceived that a situation continues to be unresolved; a written documentation should be submitted to the Head of School.
- The Head of School will take all documentation and collaborate to solve the problem with the individuals who are involved. We will not waiver or compromise on Montessori pedagogical issues. The trained staff and Head of School will first and foremost keep Dr. Montessori's beliefs and our children in mind when making decisions.
- If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions about your child's classroom progress, whether it is about his/her relationship to the environment, the directress, or other children, *please talk to the directress honestly and promptly*. We will first ask that you come in for an observation and then schedule a meeting for follow-up.
- Questions related to IMA operations should be directed to the Administrator or Head of School.

CONTACTING THE STAFF

During the school day, the entire IMA staff is focused on working with your children. We respectfully ask that parents schedule meetings in advance, instead of "drop-in" meetings during the day. Communication is vital to the success of our children, as is the uninterrupted work time of everyone. If you need to contact a staff member, please call the school, send a written note, or email the staff member. Please note that Directresses will not discuss classroom issues during recess or dismissal, and car line is not the appropriate time to inform the staff of an issue. The staff member will return your call or email as promptly as possible. Keep in mind that the Directress normally does not take or make calls during class hours.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

If a Directress feels that a particular child may have special abilities or is experiencing difficulty in learning, a conference with parents/guardians will be scheduled. At this time, the possibility of testing and a plan of action to work jointly in helping the child will be discussed. Each case is handled individually and in strict confidence. The cooperation and equal participation of parents and school is mandatory for a child's continued enrollment at IMA.

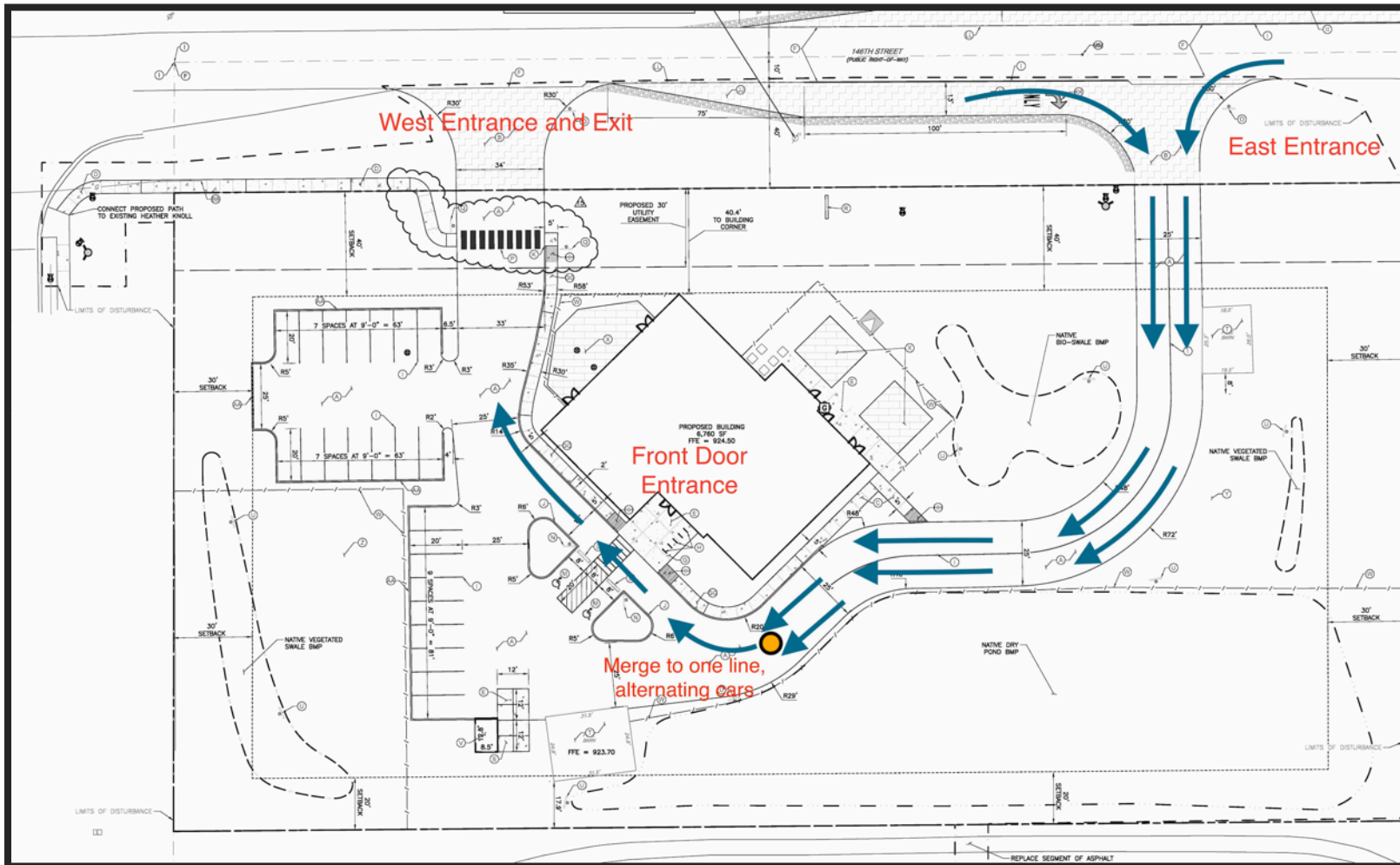
"Since it has been seen to be necessary to give so much to the child, let us give him a vision of the whole universe. The universe is an imposing reality, and an answer to all questions. We shall walk together on this path of life, for all things are part of the universe, and are connected with each other to form one whole unity. This idea helps the mind of the child to become fixed, to stop wandering in an aimless quest for knowledge. He is satisfied, having found the universal centre of himself with all things."

—Maria Montessori



Appendices

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE CARPOOL MAP



HEALTH CONDITIONS THAT MANDATE EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL

Communicable Disease Reference Guide for Schools 2023 Edition

For the following conditions, a child may return to school when she or he has received medical attention:

- Severe allergic reaction with various symptoms
- Asthmatic Attack
- Bone fracture or suspected bone fracture
- Burns whether chemical or major scalds
- Persistent Headache with child looking pale and ill
- Fainting Spell
- Persistent Nosebleed
- Any Seizure
- Abdominal Pain
- Suspected Frostbite or Heat Stroke

Unspecified Respiratory Illness:

A child without a fever who has symptoms of mild or moderate cases of the common cold, sore throat, or croup shall not be denied admission or be sent home from school unless it precludes comfortable participation in school activities or need for greater care by the staff that could compromise the health and safety of other children in school.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

PARENT READING LIST

The following are suggested reading materials for parents:

- Lillard, Angeline S. (2005). *Montessori the Science Behind the Genius*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pink, Daniel (2009). *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*. Riverhead Hardcover.
- Wagner, Tony (2008). *The Global Achievement Gap Why Even Our Best Schools Don't Teach The New Survival Skills Our Children Need—and What We Can Do About It*. New York: Basic Books.
- Lillard, Paula P. (1996). *Montessori Today*. New York: Random House
- Montessori, Maria. (1949). *The Absorbent Mind*. Madras, India: Theosophical Publication House.

- Oriti, Patricia. (1994). *At Home with Montessori*. North American Montessori Teachers' Association.
- Stephenson, Deede .(1995). *The Pink What? A Reference Guide to Montessori Materials*. Arbor Montessori School.
- Kahn, David. (1995). *What Is Montessori Preschool?* North American Montessori Teachers' Association.
- Kahn, David. (1995). *What Is Montessori Elementary?* North American Montessori Teachers' Association.
- Futrell, Kathleen (1995). *The Normalized Child*. North American Montessori Teachers' Association.

MONTESSORI IN THE HOME

To help you prepare your home environment with the same Montessori principles of having a prepared environment, think as if you are a child. What would be important to you? Listen to you child as he is saying, "Help me do it by myself." Your child wants to mimic all the activities you do in your home. Think carefully about family activities and the materials used, in all areas of the home, and arrange the environment to include the child.

The following are some tips to get you started in preparing different environments in your home. Most of this requires a little planning on your part, but truly helps the child feel as though he is a contributing member of the household and will keep your child feeling well-loved and comforted as he creates a balance between his home life and his school life.

IDEAS FOR THE KITCHEN

FOOD PREPARATION

It's not practical to have all the countertops lowered so your child can reach, but a simple step stool will do wonders in the kitchen. It is portable, so the child can move to where you are when you are preparing food. Let your child help you as much as possible. If you're making a salad, give him his own cutting board and chopping utensil. He can cut vegetables with you for the salad. [Montessori Services/For Small Hands](#) are great resources for child's utensils and other child-sized cooking tools to use in the kitchen.

SNACKS

Have an area in both the pantry and the refrigerator where you child can reach healthy snacks on his own. For example, in the pantry a small snack basket on a low shelf filled with snacks you approve. Similarly, in the refrigerator, put snacks she can choose and reach on her own, like yogurt or fruit.



UTENSILS

In the lower cabinets of the kitchen, place cups, plates and bowls your child can get without assistance. If you are so inclined, you can have everything ready for your child to serve himself cereal: have the cereal in a smaller more manageable container for pouring (or even single serve containers); bowls and spoons within reach; a small pitcher of milk that he can get out of the fridge and pour himself.

IDEAS FOR THE CHILD'S BEDROOM

Toys



This is a place where you can have shelving that is fit for your child's height. Open shelving with the use of baskets for toys, puzzles, books, and other items help your child create order in his own environment as well as helps with clean-up when the toys are done being used.

Choose select items at a time. A few baskets or trays holding tools or toys that are being used at the moment are sufficient. Use only a few like items in each basket. If a child has 100 Legos®, that is too many for him to manage. Start out with 10 or 15 in the basket. This way he can learn how to completely put away the Legos®. As he wants more Legos® with which to build, more, Legos® can be added to the basket. He gradually learns how to manage more and more Legos®.

It is a good idea to rotate books and toys – taking out those that have not been chosen lately and removing them to storage for a time. A monthly rotation works well. An older child can help with this. This is done after observing what the child is actually using, and removing those things which are being ignored, or which have been outgrown. Be sure to leave the favorites!

CLOTHING

Whether it's in the closet or on shelves with baskets, having the child's clothing easily within reach for the child will help her be able to choose clothes and get dressed in the morning and into pajamas in the evening.

IDEAS FOR THE BATHROOM

This is another area to help your child with his independence. A step stool so he can reach not only the toilet, but the sink area and light switch. Keep his toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, towel, and washcloth all within reach, so he can wash his hands, brush his teeth and wash his face without too much assistance from the adult.



HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN 3-6

Indoor	Outdoor
Dress self	Collect mail from the mailbox
Feed self	Take recycling out
Help prepare meals for the family	Take garbage out on garbage day
Set the table	Return trash receptacles when they have been emptied
Clear dishes from the table	Help plant flowers
Load the dishwasher	Help plant a garden
Unload the dishwasher	Weed garden and flower beds
Sweep the kitchen or other areas	Rake leaves
Laundry: sort, fold and/or put away	Shovel snow
Water plants	Water outdoor plants, flowers
Mop (use a child-sized mop with a small bucket of water)	Gather sticks
Put away own toys	Sweep porches or sidewalks
Any other activities listed below	

HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES FOR TODDLER CHILDREN

Indoor	Outdoor
Set the table	Water plants
Load the dishwasher	Sweep patio, deck, sidewalk
Unload the dishwasher—start small—perhaps with just the silverware	Help carry recycling
Match and organize shoes in the laundry/mud room or a closet	Weeding
Hang coat/jacket (hook needs to be at appropriate height)	Rake leaves
Wash a table	Shovel snow
Scrub a stool	Fill a bird feeder
Fold small towels	
Match socks in the laundry	
Wash own face	
Comb hair	
Put on own shoes	
Get dressed—start with one article of clothing first, like the pants/shorts	
Feed a pet	
Dust	
Put away groceries	



25 REASONS TO KEEP YOUR CHILD IN MONTESSORI THROUGH THE KINDERGARTEN YEAR

Every year thousands of Montessori parents whose children are about to move up to kindergarten face a common dilemma: Do they allow their child to remain in a Montessori environment or do they transfer their children to a more traditional kindergarten program. Although there are plenty of issues that factor into this important decision, most Montessori administrators, educators, and parents will agree that perhaps the most compelling factor for most parents has to do with basic economics. Simply put, their child can attend a local public school kindergarten program free.

Although each family must make this decision on their own, we offer a number of thoughts which should be considered before transferring a child in the kindergarten year.

1. Does your child love school and can't wait to go every day? If so, consider yourself lucky. Why tinker with a winning school situation when so many families are frustrated and disappointed?
2. Your child has waited for two years to be one of the five-year-old leaders of her class. The kindergartners are looked up to as role models for the younger students, and most children eagerly await their opportunity to play this role.
3. The third year, the kindergarten year, is the time when many of the earlier lessons come together and become permanent part of the young child's understanding. An excellent example is the early introduction to addition with large numbers through the Bank Game. When children leave Montessori at age five, many of the still forming concepts evaporate, just as a child living overseas will learn to speak two languages, but may quickly lose the second language if his family moves back home.
4. As a five-year-old, your child has many opportunities to teach the younger children lessons that he learned when he was their age. Research proves that this experience has powerful benefits for both tutor and tutored.
5. As five-year olds, Montessori children normally go on to still more fascinating lessons and more advanced Montessori materials, such as the Stamp Game.
6. The Primary Montessori curriculum is much more sophisticated than that found in most kindergartens.
7. Having spent two years together, your child's teachers know her very, very well. They know her strengths and areas that are presenting challenges.
8. Your child knows most of her classmates. She has grown up in safe, supportive classroom setting.
9. If your child goes on to another school, he will spend the first half of the year just getting used to the new educational approach.

10. Montessori math is based on the European tradition of unified mathematics. Montessori introduces young children to basic geometry and other sophisticated concepts as early as kindergarten.
11. In many Montessori schools, five-year-olds are beginning to read the Junior Great Books; kindergartners in other schools may be learning to recognize letters and numbers.
12. Five-year olds have a real sense of running their classroom community.
13. In Montessori, your child can continue to progress at her own pace. In traditional kindergarten, she will have to wait while the other children begin to catch up.
14. Even in kindergarten, Montessori children are studying cultural geography and beginning to grow into global citizens.
15. In Montessori, five-year olds work with intriguing learning materials, like the Trinomial Cube instead of coloring books and insipid basal readers.
16. With the Land and Water Forms, he'll learn about lakes, islands, isthmuses, straits, capes, bays, systems of lakes, archipelagos, peninsulas, gulfs and other geological forms, rather than circles, squares, and rectangles.
17. In art, she'll learn about Picasso and Renoir, rather than learn her basic colors.
18. In Montessori, your child has been treated with a deep respect as a unique individual. The school has been equally concerned for his intellectual, social, and emotional development. Unfortunately, despite lip service to the contrary, this is often not the case in traditional classrooms.
19. Montessori schools are warm and supportive communities of students, teachers, and parents.
20. Montessori consciously teaches children to be kind and peaceful.
21. In Montessori schools, learning is not focused on rote drill and memorization. Our goal is to develop students who really understand their schoolwork.
22. Montessori students learn through hands-on experience, investigation, and research. They become actively engaged in their studies, rather than passively waiting to be spoon-fed.
23. Montessori is consciously designed to recognize and



address different learning styles, helping students learn to study most effectively.

24. Montessori challenges and sets high expectations for all students not only a special few.

25. Montessori students develop self-discipline and an internal sense of purpose and motivation.

If you still have any doubt, spend a morning observing in your child's class and compare it with a morning in a kindergarten class in the other school you are considering. Sit quietly and take mental notes. The differences may be subtle, but most likely they will be significant. Then project your child into the future and ask yourself how the positive differences you observed in the Montessori classroom might help shape your child to become the teenager, and later the adult, you envisioned for your child's future.

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COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT MONTESSORI

by Barbara Hacker

CHOICES: THE CHILDREN SHOULD BE ABLE TO CHOOSE WHATEVER THEY WANT.

The ability to make good choices is an important life skill to learn, but it is not accomplished by giving children open-ended choices about everything! It is facilitated by giving limited, age-appropriate choices in certain circumstances. It can begin with an infant, by placing two or three appropriate toys within the child's reach and then observing what attracts the baby enough to make the effort to reach and grasp: the knitted ball, the rattle, or the bell?

When we see children in tank tops on chilly days we suspect the parent has a misunderstanding about choices. It is never appropriate to open the closet door to a young child and ask, "What do you want to wear?" or the refrigerator door and ask, "What do you want to eat?" Children do need to develop a sense of personal preference and a sense of what is appropriate for the situation. This can be facilitated by a parent saying something like "It is a cool day: a good day for a turtleneck. Would you like to wear the red one or the blue one?"

Remember, offer limited choices where all the alternatives are good. In school the children can choose from the activities they have already been shown how to do.

INDEPENDENCE: IN MONTESSORI SCHOOLS, CHILDREN HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING THEMSELVES.

We do encourage the fostering of independence, but a key component of this effort is teaching children the specifics of how to do things themselves. First, the child must be taught a skill—such as how to hang up his coat on a hook he can manage—and then he is expected to do so. If the task is too hard (such as a hook set too high) the child can't be successful. If the task is manageable, but the parent picks up the coat where the child has dropped it, the child will not gain responsibility and independence.

Using the example of coats again, at school we teach the children to hang their coats on their cubby hooks. First, we show them to pull through any inverted sleeves so the coat will be ready to put on. In dressing, we show them how to place the coat on the floor with the front facing up, stand by the collar, and insert both arms at the same time, flipping it over their heads—the easiest way for a child to put on a coat, sweater, or jacket. Some children do it easily. Others stand and hold their coat without making an attempt and say, “I can't.” We show them again and assure them they can, but I wonder if they are being dressed by an adult at home!

If a child is not allowed to exercise a skill within her grasp but instead is always dressed, carried, and buckled in, *etc.*, she will not learn to be independent. The adult's role must be to teach the skill, allow enough time for the child to do it alone, and then step back and allow the child the dignity and self-esteem that comes from being able to take care of his own needs.

ACADEMICS: THE AIM OF MONTESSORI IS TO TEACH THE CHILDREN ACADEMICS AT AN EARLY AGE.

Wrong! The aim is what Montessori called the *normalized child*, which is a child who is centered, well balanced, and free of “issues” to act out. A normalized child is calm, hard-working, motivated, self-directed, able to make reasonable choices, joyful, helpful, respectful, non-possessive, and obedient to reasonable authority. When all of these characteristics are in place, we see a by-product of accelerated learning that seems to happen effortlessly.

HOME: THE HOME NEEDS TO BE MADE INTO A MONTESSORI CLASSROOM

It is not necessary or helpful to transform one's home into a Montessori classroom. Parents should not buy pink towers or sandpaper letters or moveable alphabets. These things are for the school environment.

One can extract certain principles from a school environment to apply at home. In order for the child to become independent in appropriate home tasks, the physical arrangements should make independence feasible. For example, if a child is to be independent in brushing his teeth, he may need a step to access the sink. If a child is to be independent in making her bed, the bed may need to be placed away from the wall. If a child is to be independent in managing his coat, pajamas, *etc.*, a set of hooks and a

hamper at the child's level are appropriate. In order to clean up her/his own messes, a child-size whisk broom, dustpan, mop, and dust cloth should be accessible to the child.

Another principle to take from the classroom is that the children's activities are arranged on shelves where they can be seen and accessed easily. Toy boxes are not a good idea. Today many well-designed storage units are readily available at reasonable prices; Target has some great things for children's rooms. The racks with tubs for sorting out and storing things like Legos are ideal. Be cautious about not having out too many toys at one time; it is preferable to have a few well-chosen activities that are appropriate for the child's current developmental stage and keep the rest in storage to rotate.

Children want to feel part of the family and of ongoing household activities. A step-stool in the kitchen that allows the child to participate in cooking at the counter is appropriate. Ideally, for eating, the type of high chair that pulls right up to the family table (rather than the type with a tray) can be used. Lacking one of these, the phone books have served many families well! Children need a small table of their own for their own activities, but they want to be part of the family at meal times at the big table.

Though it is not suggested for parents to order Montessori materials for their home, one of our suppliers does offer a catalog for families with many books, games, and practical-life supplies (like real knives that work but aren't too pointed). Since practical-life materials are the bridge between the home and school, parents may want to obtain their catalog: Montessori Services, phone 877-975-3003 (toll-free) or website www.montessoriservices.com.



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