



# Family Handbook

2025 – 2026

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# **INTRODUCTION**

## **OUR HERITAGE**

May River Montessori ("MRM" or "The School") opened its doors in August 1987 to 17 young children who became the school's first students. In four short years, the school's growth exceeded the capacity of the original site. Over the last three decades, the school has continued to grow through three relocations and over seven major additions and renovations to its current home. May River Montessori has played a significant role in the social and educational environment of the growing Bluffton community.

The brainchild of two mothers, May River Montessori has grown and flourished throughout the years, touching the lives and hearts of hundreds of families. In turn, each of these families has become a beautiful part of May River Montessori's heritage and has helped to make the school what it is today.

## **OUR VISION**

Shaping future generations of world changers and peacemakers.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

We inspire a love of learning, compassion, and acceptance within an authentic Montessori community.

## **OUR ORGANIZATION**

May River Montessori is a non-profit, tax exempt, 501(c)(3) corporation. Voluntary contributions to MRM, where no goods or services are received in turn, are tax deductible as defined by the IRS guidelines. May River Montessori will look beyond tuition income to voluntary contributions from families and friends of the school who want to invest in the school's development.

The school is licensed by the South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) and operates under the guidelines of the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC).

## **OUR OUTREACH**

Anyone interested in learning about May River Montessori or the Montessori Method is encouraged to schedule a tour with office staff. When possible, the tour will include several opportunities to observe the children in various environments, an overview of the Montessori philosophy, and an opportunity to ask questions.

# **MONTESSORI OVERVIEW**

## **WHO WAS MARIA MONTESSORI?**

Dr. Maria Montessori was the first woman to graduate from the University of Rome Medical School in 1896. Born in Chiaravalle, Italy on August 31st, in 1870, she was one of the most influential educators who ever lived.

Dr. Montessori worked with underprivileged young children in the early 1900s. Doctor Montessori's background led her to approach education not only as a philosopher and educator, but also as a scientist. She observed carefully and followed the child with an open mind. She discovered that young children became absorbed in a serious interaction with specialized manipulative materials. The children developed an extraordinarily high level of intellectual and social ability using her approach. She believed that no one is educated by another. He must do it himself. Thus, the goal of early childhood education is to cultivate the child's own natural desire and ability to learn and to protect the essential nature of the child. Her attitude of respect for the child and his individuality became the foundation of the Montessori method.

Montessori was introduced in the United States in 1912. One of the earliest schools was established by Alexander Graham Bell. Today, the Montessori approach is taught in a great number of schools in the United States and throughout the world.

## **WHAT IS THE MONTESSORI METHOD?**

The basic idea in the Montessori philosophy of education is that every child carries unseen within, the adult he or she will become. In order to develop their physical, intellectual, and spiritual powers to the fullest, children must have freedom - freedom to be achieved through order and self-discipline. The world of the child is full of sights and sounds which at first appear chaotic. From this chaos, the child must gradually create order and learn to distinguish among the impressions that assail his or her senses, slowly but surely gaining mastery of self in the environment.

The Montessori classroom is a highly organized, enriched environment designed to stimulate children's interests and facilitate their understanding and learning. While children learn at their own pace, they do so in a carefully structured manner, guided by a highly skilled teacher, using specially developed materials and programs designed for each stage of their mental, physical, social, and emotional growth.

## **THE PREPARED ENVIRONMENT**

Dr. Maria Montessori developed what she called the “prepared environment”. Her materials were arranged on low shelves and provided a structured, proven path of learning, which allowed the child to develop at his own pace, according to his own learning modalities. Dr. Montessori said the years between birth and 6 are the formative years, which modern science has since validated. These are the years of the absorbent mind, the years in which intelligence itself is being formed. It is also the time that a child most easily learns attitudes, values, and the ground rules of human behavior. These years can be constructively devoted to helping him acquire good manners and habits, to take his place in culture. The importance of the prepared environment lies in its ability to provide the use of attractive, inviting, and developmentally appropriate materials, and to provide opportunities to explore the world of sensory, motor, and intellectual experiences.

The child who has had the benefit of a Montessori environment is freer at a later age to devote himself more exclusively to the development of his intellectual faculties. The method by which children are taught in the Montessori school might well be called “directed discovery”. The structure of Montessori learning involves the use of many materials with which the child may work individually. At each step of his learning, the teaching material is designed to test his understanding and to correct his errors.

The teacher prepares the environment, provides the path of learning for each child, and functions as the dynamic link between the child and the environment. She offers the child stimulation, but it is the child who learns. He is motivated through the work itself, not solely by the teacher’s actions, to persist in his chosen task. If the Montessori child is free to learn, it is because he has acquired from his exposure to both physical and mental order, an “inner discipline”. This is the core of Dr. Montessori's educational philosophy. Patterns of concentration, perseverance, and thoroughness established in early childhood produced a confident and competent learner in later years. Montessori introduces children to the joy of learning at an early age, and it provides a framework in which intellectual and social discipline go hand in hand.

## **ROLE OF THE TEACHER**

The Montessori teacher has undergone specialized training in the Montessori philosophy, principles, and methodology. The teacher's role is to guide the child where needed and introduce learning materials. The teacher carefully observes each child so that she may assist him in his growth and development. The classroom environment is intentionally prepared to meet the intellectual, psychological, and physical needs of the child in a manner that is intrinsically motivating. The materials are introduced and often presented with a certain unit of study or with the current theme (i.e., holiday season etc.).

The teacher is responsible for all the children in the classroom. In each classroom there are multiple ages, which is fundamental to the Montessori philosophy. The teacher has one or two other teachers as part of her teaching team.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **POLICY OF NON-DISCRIMINATION**

May River Montessori admits students of any race, color, national, and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to the students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national, and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, and other school administered programs.

May River Montessori is not designed for children with severe disabilities or emotional or psychological problems, which may require a smaller pupil to teacher ratio and more individual help and/or specialized interventions to be successful.

## POLICY OF TOLERANCE

May River Montessori chooses to be embrative and tolerant of the religious backgrounds of its students and welcomes the sharing of the cultural aspects of those religions in a spirit of respect. The children offer a prayer of thanksgiving before snacks and meals. Christmas, Hanukkah, and Easter are celebrated as holidays. American patriotic holidays are also observed in accordance with the national calendar.

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

It is important that your child's attendance is consistent. School absences are detrimental to a student's success. Your child loses momentum and motivation when the sequence of learning is disrupted through frequent absences or tardies. Each child is building concepts and absorbing values. If attendance is important to you, it will also be important to your child. Please have your child come to school every school day, and plan to stay for the entire day, unless he or she is ill. We are working towards building lifelong habits.

## TARDY ARRIVAL

Although our program is individualized, it still depends on consistency and continuous progress. It is of great importance for your child to arrive on time for the beginning of class. Children will be marked "tardy" if they arrive more than 15 minutes late. It is difficult and can be uncomfortable for the child to arrive late to class as he or she will often have missed the opening group time, where the events of the day are discussed, and lessons are given. If a child arrives after 8:45 AM, he or she will need to be brought to the front office for admittance as the classroom doors will have been secured and instruction will have begun. An office staff member will escort the child to the classroom.

## EXCUSED ABSENCES

While regular attendance is the responsibility of the parents or guardian, it is also the responsibility of the parents or guardian to notify the school when the child is absent. The absentee form on Blackbaud should be completed in the event of an absence. If there is no access to the app, a written note with the date, reason, name, and parent or guardian signature must be turned into the office upon the child's return.

An excused absence is defined as:

1. Sickness or injury
2. Medical treatment provided by a licensed physician
3. Observance of religious instruction or religious holiday
4. Death of a family member
5. School or personal approved trip

The student may be excused for continued or repeated illness up to **10 attendance days** in a 90-day calendar. After this period, a doctor's verification will be required. Chronic illness and family emergencies will be considered on an individual basis.

## UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

Absences from class for any reason other than those identified shall be considered unexcused. Student absences that are not verified or documented will also be considered unexcused. Vacation or personal family time that have not been pre-arranged and documented in writing will be considered unexcused. **Students who accumulate more than 10 unexcused absences per semester may be retained.**

## ELEMENTARY ABSENCES

Elementary work missed due to an excused absence will be made-up in a timely manner. One day of extension will be allowed for each excuse day of an absence. An elementary student absent on the day of a long-term assignment must still send in the assignment on the due date. Students and parents or guardians are to assume full responsibility in making arrangements to complete makeup work.

# **SECURITY & SAFETY POLICIES**

## **SECURITY POLICIES**

Your child's safety is of utmost importance to us at May River Montessori. As our day is filled with many people coming and going to and from the school's campus, we want to make sure we know who is on the school's campus at any given time. For this reason, we have implemented the following security procedures that all teachers, parents, and other visitors will follow.

The main front office entrance is the only door to receive parents and visitors during the day. When arriving at the school, guests enter and exit only through the main door. The office staff will receive all visitors for a quick and simple check-in. After a visit has concluded, guests sign out using the same procedure. This simple process helps to ensure the safety and security of our students and staff. Both doors at the main entrance to the main front office must be closed at all times unless actively in use.

In compliance with DSS regulation N. 114-503-F (1), parents and guardians are granted free and full access to their children at all times unless a court order stipulates otherwise.

Each classroom is outfitted with multiple exits to facilitate safe evacuation in the event of an emergency. Outdoor exhibits should remain open and clear from inside and should always remain locked from the outside. Any doors leading to outside cannot be left open while children are in the classroom unless children are actively working outside, and the teacher or staff member is actively monitoring the area.

May River Montessori maintains video surveillance at all egress points on campus. The campus security measures will continue to be evaluated regularly and revisions will be made as necessary.

## **CHILD SAFETY AND TRACKING OF CHILDREN**

School staff maintain visual lines of sight and communication with students at all times. Prior to leaving the classroom, each teacher must take roll and do a head-count against their check-in/check-out sheet. Throughout the activity, either in the classroom during work, during specials, on the playground, or on a fieldtrip, the teacher must continuously scan and count students. Upon lining up or transitioning, the teacher should again take roll and check the students against her list. Any dismissal must follow the dismissal guidelines policy and that student should be marked as "dismissed" on the check-in / check-out sheet.

## **RELEASE OF CHILDREN POLICY**

May River Montessori will only release a child to his or her parent or guardian, or to an approved person listed in the child's file.

At the start of the school year, you will receive a sign to place on the dashboard of your car which states the name(s) of the child(ren) and their classroom(s). As you drive through the carpool line, this sign will help identify you so that staff can prepare the child(ren) to be ready when you pull up. Please keep your sign in your car, ready to be displayed at dismissal time each day.

If your child is being picked up by anyone other than you or your regular carpool, submit that information to the school in the morning via Blackbaud, or via a written note. Please do not call or give changes to us verbally in the morning carpool lane. It is important that we have this information in writing for safety reasons. Be sure your child knows of any changes in dismissal or carpool arrangements.

If you are not able to use Blackbaud, a written transportation change note should include all of the following:

1. Your child's first and last name
2. Your child's classroom
3. The date
4. The name of the person picking up your child and if possible, the make, model, and color of the vehicle
5. Other children your child will be riding with

If you plan to pick up your child early, please utilize Blackbaud. If that is not possible, send in a written note stating the time and reason for early dismissal. When you arrive to pick up your child for an early dismissal, you must come to the main office to sign your child out. If we are aware of an early dismissal ahead of time, we will make every effort to have the child ready and waiting for you in the front office. No child may leave early without having the parent or guardian sign him or her out.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

If an emergency occurs during school hours, staff will follow predetermined emergency procedures that correspond with the circumstances.

An emergency announcement will be pushed out through Blackbaud to notify parents or guardians immediately of the emergency and the plan for proceeding. Second, each teacher will place a call to each child's parent or guardian to ensure communication has been received. If a child's parent or guardian are not able to be reached, the emergency contacts listed on each child's form will be contacted.

During an emergency dismissal, students will be dismissed directly to parents, guardians, or designated emergency contacts only. Every effort will be made to maintain normalcy and shelter children from any effects of the emergency.

If emergency personnel respond to an emergency at the school, students and staff will cooperate with and follow the directions of the emergency personnel.

## **REMIND**

In the case of emergencies, unscheduled school closings, and reminders for families, May River Montessori is using Remind to send out such messages. Make sure you have the correct phone number on file with the office to ensure that you receive these messages.

## **SCHOOL CLOSINGS**

If the school closes due to inclement weather or other hazardous conditions, an announcement will be pushed out through Blackbaud. Additionally, announcements will be made on FM radio stations 98.7, 106.9, and 107.9. May River Montessori typically aligns with decisions to close made by Beaufort County School District.

## **EMERGENCY DRILLS**

The school will conduct fire/evacuation drills for the students to practice leaving the building quickly and calmly in the event of a fire or other emergency that would require evacuation of the buildings. Teachers will discuss and practice the procedure with their students in a way that will calm any apprehensions.

The school will conduct safety (lockdown) drills for the students to practice seeking safety within the building in the event of serious weather conditions or any other hazardous circumstances that may threaten the safety and security of our staff and children. These procedures will be presented and practiced in a non-threatening way.

## **ANIMAL POLICY**

Animals are an integral part of the Montessori environment. May River Montessori welcomes animals on campus but may exclude an animal from campus if it causes disruption or threatens the health and safety of others.

Having pets to care for in the classroom helps teach responsibility, compassion, empathy, and an understanding and respect for other living things. Pets teach children to value life and have proven stress reducing effects. Exposure to a wide range of animal life in the classroom can benefit children in countless ways, from making tangible connections to the natural world to understanding the delicacy and uniqueness of all life.

All classroom activity involving a pet will be supervised by teachers. All pets will be maintained. At least seven feet from food preparation and eating areas. Pet habitats will be kept clean. Children will be invited to help care for the animals in the classroom every day, including feeding them, providing them with fresh water, and ensuring that their habitats are clean and healthy. Children

and adults will wash their hands after feeding or handling animals or animal equipment. At no time will any child be forced to interact with any pet.

May River Montessori welcomes the presence of service animals on campus. Service animals are permitted to be anywhere on campus that the animal's handler is permitted to be. Emotional support animals may not be permitted on the school's campus without prior approval. Each request will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

SCDSS requires all service animals to have their own file on record with the school. All documentation, including but not limited to, must be present for the animal to be on campus: the animal's certification as a service animal, a doctor's prescription of a service animal, and the most recent veterinary record for the animal.

## **PROGRAMS OFFERED**

### **TODDLER PROGRAM (24 MONTHS – 3 YEARS)**

- 5-Day Program (Monday-Friday) 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM
- 3-Day Program (Wednesday-Friday) 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM
- 2-Day Program (Monday-Tuesday) 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Our toddler program serves our youngest children beginning at 20 months of age in our cottage and bungalow classroom. Families may opt to enroll their child(ren) in a 2-, 3-, or 5-day program. The toddler program serves as a gentle and natural introduction to school and lays a beautiful foundation for future Montessori education and lifelong learning.

### **PRIMARY PROGRAM (3 YEARS – 6 YEARS)**

- Half-Day Program (Monday-Friday) 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM
- Full-Day Program (Monday-Friday) 8:30 AM – 2:45 PM

This program serves our children ages 3 to 6 years of age. The school day for children in the primary program is 8:30 AM to 11:30 AM for children in their 3-year-old year and 8:30 am to 2:30 pm for children in their 4- and 5-year-old years. The extended day for 4- and 5-year-old years allows the children to stay in their regular morning classroom with their teachers for lunch and an additional afternoon work period. The extended day is designed to give the children more time to work on their individual paths of learning, as well as to allow small group enrichment activities. Children in their 3-year-old year who need a longer day may opt to participate in the Lunch Bunch program. Additionally, the After School program is offered for primary children from 2:30 PM to 5:00 PM in an effort to better serve the needs of our families.

### **LUNCH BUNCH PROGRAM (24 MONTHS – 3 YEARS)**

- Half-Day Extension Program (Monday-Friday) 11:30 AM – 2:45 PM

This program serves our children ages 24 months to 3 years old who stay for a longer day until the 2:30 PM dismissal. Children transition to the cottage for lunch and an extended rest period. This is followed by a period of indoor activity and/or outdoor play.

### **ELEMENTARY PROGRAM (6 YEARS – 12 YEARS)**

- Lower Elementary – Grades 1-3 (Monday-Friday) 8:30 AM – 2:45 PM
- Upper Elementary – Grade 4-6 (Monday-Friday) 8:30 AM – 2:45 PM

Our Lower Elementary program serves our children in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades, ages 6-9, while the Upper Elementary program serves children in 4th, 5th, and 6th grades, ages 9-12.

The Elementary program is uniquely designed to build on the Montessori Foundation established in the primary program. While continuing a commitment to whole child development. The curriculum provides a continuum of both philosophy and materials, from toddlerhood to adolescence. The elementary program incorporates extended work periods, in depth studies, supplementary instruction for special school projects, and a wide array of field trips and collaborative projects. The elementary after school program is offered for elementary children from 2:45 PM to 5:00 PM in an effort to better serve the needs of our families.



# **MONTESSORI CURRICULUM**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Montessori curriculum is introduced through four basic areas in the primary classroom, called Avenues. These are practical life, sensorial, math, and language. These avenues later transition and correlate to disciplinary study at the elementary level and beyond. Children are encouraged to explore each area and discipline throughout their time at school. Studies and foreign language, music, art, drama, movement, and gardening are all woven into the school day. The curriculum is enriched with units of study, field trips, guest speakers, and special class activities.

## **PRACTICAL LIFE**

Practical life exercises are everyday life activities which form a link between home and school. Children work towards independence in care of self (buttoning, zipping, snapping, shoe tying, etc.) and care of environment (washing tables, scrubbing, plant care, etc.). There is further development and refinement of small motor and hand eye coordination (spooning, tweezing, tonging, threading, pouring, etc.). All of these activities strengthen the muscles of the hand, which is an indirect preparation for writing. These activities foster good work habits and attitudes such as focus, concentration, inner discipline, attention to detail, task completion, pride in work, organizational skills, etc. Also, exercises in grace and courtesy (please and thank you, not interrupting, etc.), are an important part of this learning. All the activities in practical life help to form the foundation for the later work in the Montessori classroom. Practical life activities in the elementary classroom include continued development of life skills at an advanced level. Artisan activities include sewing, weaving, cooking, etc. Entrepreneurial activities include organizing, planning, and running small business ventures, community service, running for and participating in student council, and writing, editing, and distributing the school newspaper.

## **SENSORIAL**

Sensorial materials help your child to classify and understand all that he or she takes in through his or her senses. Each of the sensorial materials isolates one defining quality such as texture, size, shape, color, smell, length, height, width, distance, direction, roughness, smoothness, or sound. The child's full attention is focused on that quality. A child who has a strong sensorial foundation met when he or she was in the sensitive. For this becomes a very aware person with keen powers of observation and perception. Not only will these refinements bring greater discernment but will add to the child's enjoyment of the world. As the curriculum advances through the sensorial Ave. the subjects of global studies and geography, social studies and history, plant study (botany), animal study (zoology), and physical science are explored.

## **LANGUAGE**

Montessori language material helps the child to classify his or her world by broadening vocabulary through pictures and real objects. Vocabulary is encouraged and developed. Reading begins when the child is introduced to the sounds of the letters. Next, the child is given the letter for that sound with sandpaper letters which is traced using the proper formation with the finger. And finally, the child has shown how to put the sounds together to form words. Reading and writing are introduced simultaneously in the environment, and the child develops these skills throughout the curriculum. In the elementary, children advance their language development through reading, a variety of genres, literary analysis, root and word study, grammar, creative writing (to include narrative, argumentative, and expository writing), and public speaking.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Dr. Maria Montessori demonstrated that if children have access to mathematical materials in their early years, they can easily and joyfully assimilate many math facts and skills of arithmetic. At a young age our children are instead introduced to the numerals 1 to 10 and how to count with a one-on-one correspondence. The children work first from concrete examples of numbers, then move from the concrete to the abstract, from the known to the unknown. The math materials isolate one concept for the child to absorb at a time. The materials are easy to manipulate and represent all types of quantities. The child not only sees the quantities for 1, 10, 100, 1000, etc., but can hold them in his or her hand. Later the child is shown the written symbol or number for that quantity. When the child is ready for mathematical operations like addition, he or she can actually perform the operation with the concrete

materials. There are a variety of materials the child can use for the same operation. This variety not only maintains the child's interest, but also allows for much repetition. In this way, the child gains a true understanding of the operation. Our phenomenal Montessori materials continue into the elementary program. They give our children hands on experience with many concepts that have traditionally been left for later studies. Elementary students continued to advance their mathematics studies through linear counting, decimal system, geometry, algebra, and discrete mathematics.

## **THE SCHOOL DAY**

### **ARRIVAL PROCEDURES**

The school day begins at 8:30 AM for all students. Staff members are available to welcome and greet the children by assisting them out of their cars between 8:15 AM and 8:45 AM.

It is important to follow the designated carpool route. The Bluffton Police Department has required the school to follow this specific route for the safety of its citizens and to reduce traffic load during these busy times.

1. Take Boundary St. to Waters St.
2. Make a right on Waters St.
3. Make a right turn on Calhoun St.
4. Make a left turn into the school's circular driveway.
5. Please do not make a right-hand turn into the May River Montessori driveway during carpool. It is dangerous for our children and disrupts the order in which children are retrieved from their cars.

If you arrive to school prior to 8:15 AM, please wait in the car with your child until 8:15 AM. There are no staff members outside to receive and be responsible for your child's safety. Please do not enter our driveway before 8:00 AM as this delays or prevents staff arrival.

To ensure a smooth transition from the car to the classroom, please drive your child around U-shaped drive, stopping at the first available drop off point designated by a numbered post with a teacher standing and waiting. As the staff member greets and helps your child out of the car, please be sure to have your car in park and to be off your phone in order to facilitate your child's safe exit from the vehicle.

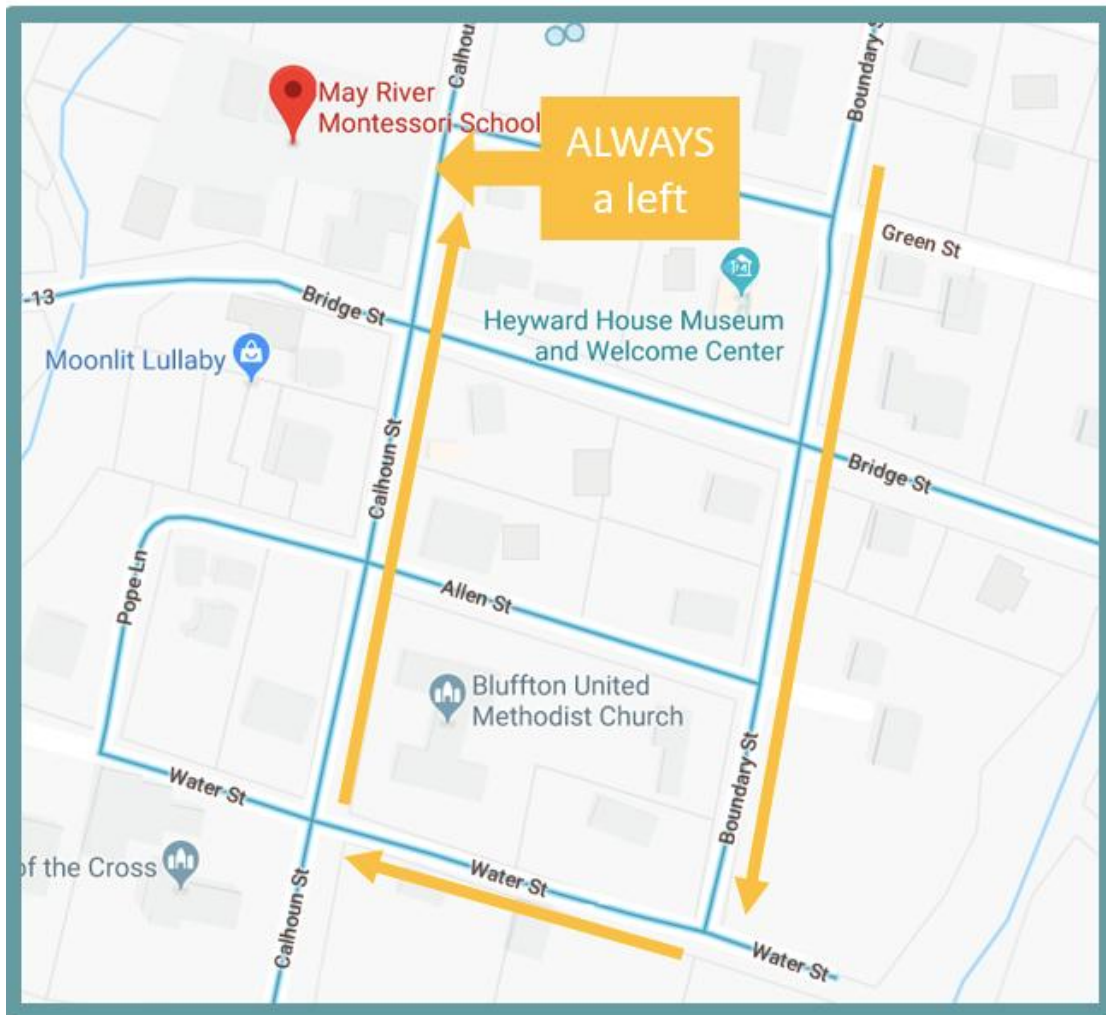
Toddler children who arrive between 8:15 AM and 8:30 AM will sit on the benches in front of the school and visit with each other. At 8:30 AM, toddler students will go to their classroom with their teacher. All primary children will go directly to their classrooms. Toddlers who arrive between 8:30 AM and 8:45 AM will be escorted directly to their classroom as well.

Please wait your turn in the carpool line. **Passing is not permitted.** This is a hazard to the safety of our children and staff. Please refrain from using your phone and/or electronic devices during carpool.

If you arrive late, there will be no staff outside to greet and help you. Please park your car and walk your child to the front door of the main building. You will need to sign in at the front office. Your child will then be escorted to class.

Please be patient at the beginning of the school year as we will all acclimate to the routine.

TIP: Having your child transition from the car to the classroom "independently" is part of helping him or her learn what to expect. You are helping your child feel safe, loved, and gain confidence that he or she can do it. You are sending a message to your child when you let him or her walk into the school that the school is a good place to be and that he or she can be successful. Your confidence goes a long way in the transition from you and the car to the classroom.



## DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

Add your child's dismissal time. Please take the same route used for arrival to enter the school's driveway. You will receive a sign from us to put on your dashboard giving your family name and the name(s) of your child(ren) as you drive through the carpool line. This sign will help us identify you so we can prepare your child(ren) to be ready when you pull up. Please keep your sign in your car ready to be displayed at dismissal time each day. Follow the same traffic flow in U-shaped driveway as is used in morning arrival.

Staff members will escort children to their vehicles and assist with securing safety belts. Please keep in mind that you, the parent, guardian, or driver are ultimately responsible for securing any child in your car in accordance with the law. You may need to pull over to check seat belts. For everyone's safety, please wait patiently and watch carefully in carpool lane. Please do not use your phone while we load your car. Also, please do not pull out and pass cars that are loading. This is extremely dangerous.

When picking up at regular dismissal times, please do not park and walk up to get your child. This slows the line and is confusing to the children. It is dangerous to all to have children walking through cars in the parking lot at carpool time. When you have babysitters, grandparents, etc. picking up your children, please explain the procedure to them.

For our families with children in the toddler and/or primary programs along with children in the elementary or secondary programs, the younger children will be brought to a classroom to have a snack and read a book until 2:45 PM, when they will be dismissed with their older sibling(s).

NOTE: We may release students to approved persons only. If your child is going home with someone other than you or your everyday carpool, please use the Blackbaud app or send a note in the morning listing the person who will be picking up.

In the event of an emergency transportation change you may phone the office and the office will communicate the change to the classroom.

## **RELAYING INFORMATION**

If you need to relay information to the teacher, have your child bring a note, send a message through Blackbaud, send an e-mail, or leave a voicemail for the teacher to call you. After class time has ended for the day, the teachers will return calls and respond to messages. We kindly ask that you refrain from texting teachers' personal mobile devices. While we appreciate the instant accessibility of our mobile devices and recognize the need for regular and open communication, it is essential that our teachers are fully present and engaged with our students during class hours.

## **BRINGING NEEDED ITEMS TO SCHOOL**

If you need to bring something to your child during the school day, please drop it off at the front office and a staff member will take it to the classroom so that there is minimal interruption.

## **ORIENTATION**

An orientation period occurs each year at the beginning of school to help the children ease into their new school. It lasts from two to four days, depending on the child's age. Children new to any given classroom come separately from those who are returning to that same classroom. During orientation, the children and teachers get to know each other. The children are introduced to all the important areas of the classroom and campus. They learned the ground rules for the classroom and how to choose work and return it to the shelf. After completion, they are also introduced to the playground and learn all the important rules of safety that govern their playtime. The orientation experience lays the groundwork for success.

## **TODDLERS & PRIMARY DRESS CODE**

Simple play clothes are best for primary and toddler students. Clothing should allow a wide range of motion for this age group because so much of their work is done on the floor. Children also need to enjoy recess outdoors when the weather permits and be able to run, play, and move freely. Please dress your child in clothes that he or she can easily manage independently in the bathroom. Please do not send your child in overalls. Please understand that any outfit your child wears to school may very well come home dirty or with paint or clay on it.

Shoes are an important feature in your child's proper dress for the day. Please send your child in tennis shoes or other shoes that have a closed toe and heel. Fancy shoes, boots and sandals are difficult for children on the playground and for large motor skill activities that occur within the classroom flip flops and Crocs are not permitted. Children need to be able to play outside wearing shoes that give support and protection.

No hats or caps are allowed to be worn inside the building. Please limit jewelry and other items that may be distracting and interfere with your child to work. If accessories become a problem, they may be set aside by the teacher and returned home. Remember to label each item of your children's clothing.

### **SPARE CLOTHES**

Toddler students should have a change of clothes in their Montessori school bags each day of school. Primary students should keep one change of clothes in a zip lock bag at school, including socks and underwear, labeled with his or her name for unavoidable situations that require a change of clothes. Please send these spare clothes into the classroom to be kept in the closet at the beginning of the year. Please exchange these clothes appropriately with the season.

## **ELEMENTARY UNIFORMS**

The wearing of school uniforms is long acknowledged and researched to assist in keeping children focused on education. Additionally, it enhances a sense of unity among the children, school pride, and community spirit. Students are encouraged to express their individuality by choosing what uniform pieces to wear each day.

May River Montessori elementary students are required to dress for school in uniform. Our specific uniform guidelines are listed below. Uniform shirts may be short or long sleeve. The bottoms may be black, navy or khaki. All shirts, dresses, and jumpers must have the MRM logo.

## **SPIRIT WEAR**

Spirit Wear is available through Group Order with Custom Ink twice a year, July and December. Spirit wear can be worn any day. Elementary and adolescent students may wear either a spirit wear top or traditional uniform top daily.

### **MRM UNIFORM EXCHANGE**

As your children outgrow their uniform pieces, we invite you to donate them to our Uniform Exchange. At the beginning of each school year, we will open our Uniform Exchange and welcome families to take what they can use at no cost.

## **GENERAL ATTIRE FOR GIRLS**

- Skirt/Skort – black, navy, khaki - no shorter than 4 inches above the knee. Shorts more may be worn under skirts and jumpers.
- Jumper (plain or pleated) - black, navy, khaki - no shorter than 4 inches above the knee.
- Shorts - black, navy, khaki - no shorter than 4 inches above the knee.
- Pants/Capris - black, navy, khaki
- Polo/Oxford/Long Sleeve Shirts – white, red, navy, light blue, gray, pink. Solid colors only.
- Sweater Vest/ Cardigan– white, red, navy, light blue, gray, pink. Solid colors only.
- Spirit Wear – short sleeved shirt, long sleeved shirt, hooded sweatshirt, zippered hooded sweatshirt
- Socks/Tights – solid color only
- Shoes – should be comfortable, basic, closed toed shoe (platform, high heels, fashion shoes, and high heeled boots are discouraged)

## **GENERAL ATTIRE FOR BOYS**

- Shorts - black, navy, khaki - no shorter than 4 inches above the knee.
- Pants/Capris - black, navy, khaki
- Polo/Oxford/Long Sleeve Shirts – white, red, navy, light blue, gray, pink. Solid colors only.
- Sweater Vest/ Cardigan– white, red, navy, light blue, gray, pink. Solid colors only.
- Spirit Wear – short sleeved shirt, long sleeved shirt, hooded sweatshirt, zippered hooded sweatshirt
- Socks – solid color only
- Shoes – should be comfortable, basic, closed toed shoe

## **PE & GARDENING ATTIRE FOR ALL**

- Plain white crew neck t-shirt or School Spirit Shirts
- Navy athletic bottoms
- Tennis shoes are REQUIRED

## **IMPORTANT UNIFORM POLICY NOTES**

- All elementary and middle school students will have a shoeless classroom environment. Socks will always be worn in the classroom. Children will change into their shoes for outdoor time and dismissal.
- Please label your child's name in all outerwear.
- Students are expected to come to school and school sponsored activities and events, clean neat and appropriately attired. Please make sure uniforms have no rips or tears. Doing so demonstrates respect for self, others, and school policy.
- Our intentions are to create and foster a safe, orderly academic setting in which students and teachers can comfortably focus on their academic endeavors. Parental support is encouraged in achieving this goal. Please help by giving your support and making sure your children are in dress code when they come to school or attend school sponsored events or field trips. We expect and appreciate your cooperation in enforcing this policy.

## **FIELD TRIPS & SPECIAL EVENTS UNIFORM POLICY**

For special events and field trips, a red (or other predetermined color) shirt will be required for all students with notice sent to parents. This assists with an easy way to distinguish the group from other students when in public venues.

## **LOST & FOUND**

All clothing should be labeled. This includes outerwear. There are many similar hats, coats, sweaters, and sweatshirts. If your child has lost a clothing item, please check his or her classroom first by sending a note, message, or e-mail to the teachers. If the item cannot be located by the teachers, then please check with the front office.

## **HEALTHY SNACK**

Please provide a small individual snack for your child each day. Remember that this is only a snack, not the size of breakfast or lunch. Please make sure your child eats a good breakfast at home before coming to school. We find that healthy snacks are that are enjoyable and nutritious are a wonderful and important asset to your child's day.

## **NO LONGER A NUT-FREE CAMPUS**

May River Montessori is not a nut-free campus, so please feel free to send with your child their favorite peanut butter and jelly sandwich, nut bar, or plain nuts to snack on.

For our children who have food allergies or sensitivities, including foods other than nuts, please inform both the teachers in the classroom and the office staff so that we can accommodate your child(ren) and keep them safe during the school day. Families in the class with a child who has allergies or sensitivities will be notified that there are special food requirements needed for that classroom. The school or teachers will not identify the child or family.

## **LUNCH**

In the interest of keeping your child healthy and eager to learn, we encourage you to send a nutritional lunch. This is a time when he or she is learning healthy eating habits that will last a lifetime. We recommend you send good food that your child will eat. Some suggested items that work well in lunch boxes are: sandwiches, fresh fruit, dried fruit, raw vegetables, cheese, etc. We provide filtered water to the children. However, if you wish to provide an additional drink in your child's lunch, please select a healthy option.

### **TODDLER & PRIMARY**

Often toddler and primary children cannot eat a whole sandwich or an apple that has not been cut up. If half of a sandwich works, better send that. Pre-cut fruit works well in a small container that can be sent home to wash. Fruit Roll-Ups. Jell-O, cookies, and sweet desserts are not recommended. The children will be asked to eat their main lunch foods first before eating any items that may contain sugar. We are not able to refrigerate food, so you may wish to include a cold pack in the lunch box. We are not able to warm up any food from the lunch box either. Please remember to include any utensils your children need for lunch. We have a few emergency utensils at school but cannot be counted on to provide regular spoons and forks.

Please pack a cloth towel to lay lunch out on and a paper napkin for wiping faces and hands. Your child will leave what is not eaten in his or her lunch box to bring home, rather than throwing it away so that you can see how much has been eaten and what is liked and disliked to help you in your planning.

The following foods are not allowed for school lunches:

- Candy
- Soft drinks
- Cakes or cupcakes
- Fast food items

### **ELEMENTARY**

Elementary students should bring their lunch to school every day in a clearly labeled lunch box. We encourage each family to emphasize the importance of good nutrition as the first step to lifelong Wellness. Lunch is a very important part of your child's school day. We consider good health and nutritional habits as part of the Wellness education we promote. Please send food and

reusable containers as much as possible as we try to limit plastic bags and trash. We recommend lunch boxes with built in cool packs. We look to every family for support and working with us to make our lunch periods healthy and relaxing.

Please pack lunches that your children will eat. Encourage them to discover that wholesome, sugar free foods can taste even better than less healthy options and don't have negative effects on our bodies. Please do not send candy or sugary desserts or drink. No sodas are allowed. The school provides filtered water to all children. If you would like to send an additional beverage for lunch, please be cognizant of the nutritional values. All uneaten food which can be contained will be sent home. You will want to monitor your children's lunch boxes to see what they like and dislike, and to determine the correct amount of food to pack. We appreciate your care in preparing a good lunch.

## **TODDLER & PRIMARY TYPICAL DAY SCHEDULE**

The day may either begin with the children gathering on the red ellipse (the shape on the floor) or children may move directly into their morning work period. Gathering time is a time for singing, sharing, watching presentations of new lessons, or other activities, and may last between 15 to 20 minutes. The morning work period is the part of the day when children work on their own or in small groups. During this time, teachers present lessons to the child that will help him or her progress along their individual learning path. The child also practices work independently which has been presented previously to become proficient. Outdoor playtime is scheduled for approximately 20 minutes each morning. Also, during the week, each class has special periods of music, drama, art, Spanish, PE, and gardening. The 4- and 5-year-old primary students stay in their classroom after the 3-year-old students are dismissed. At 11:30 AM, these children have lunch together and begin their afternoon schedule. Children listen to a story on the line while taking turns washing their hands to prepare for lunch after they have finished their lunches and the room has been tidied. All the children rest on mats for about 20 minutes before beginning their afternoon work period. A second outdoor play. In the afternoon lasts about 20 minutes.

## **NAPPING VS. RESTING**

All students in the primary program rest on a mat for about 20 minutes after lunchtime. This is a time when the child has an opportunity to lie down, rest, listen to music, reflect, re-energize, and prepare for the afternoon. Rest period is not enough time. As a school year progresses and the needs of children change, the need for rest period diminishes and may not be necessary at all in the primary class. While children do not sleep during rest time, those who occasionally fall asleep will be allowed to remain sleeping when the class begins the afternoon schedule.

Children attending the Lunch Bunch program will nap after lunch. These children may bring to school a favorite nap toy or blanket to sleep with the school launderers all mat covers at the end of each week.

## **MORNING OUTDOOR FREE PLAY**

All our elementary and secondary students will begin their days with outdoor free play. Once your elementary and secondary child(ren) are unloaded from your vehicle, they will go directly to the elementary playground until 8:55 AM. From there, they will move into their respective classrooms to begin their day. Since we began this last year, we have noticed that our students have stronger concentration, less distractibility, and more enthusiasm for their work throughout the day.

## **ELEMENTARY TYPICAL DAY SCHEDULE**

The elementary morning schedule is designed to provide long periods of uninterrupted work time. Each classroom has its own sequence of daily events, including large group meetings, small group instruction, individual lesson time, and independent work time. Elementary. Elementary children have a 30 to 40-minute outdoor recess each day and a 30-minute lunch period. This is followed by a shorter afternoon work period. Elementary specials include art, music, drama, Spanish, PE, and gardening.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICE**

We work to instill a sense of volunteerism and compassion for others in our children. Our Elementary and Secondary Student Council plans and executes a variety of community service projects throughout the year. Additionally, class and school service

events occur regularly. We work with other local organizations to communicate opportunities for children to serve beyond our campus with their friends and/or families.

## **SPECIAL OCCASIONS**

### **BIRTHDAYS**

Birthdays are a special time in your child's life, and we want to celebrate with your child at school. Having a birthday celebration is a special way to share your child's birthday. Please contact your child's teacher to schedule a day and time to celebrate the birthday. Keep in mind that another child may have the same birthday or pre-existing activity may be planned. So, your teacher will need to schedule your child's birthday accordingly. She will want to give each child his or her own day, as close to the actual birthday as possible. To ensure that each child has an opportunity to celebrate with his or her class, we suggest that children with summer birthdays celebrate their half year birthdays with their classes. An optional celebration edition is to share your child's personal timeline. Have the birthday child bring in a series of photos for each year of his or her growth. The child can then share the timeline with the class, and we can see how much he or she has grown.

Children love to celebrate their birthdays with their friends. However, birthday invitations may not be passed out at school. Please send birthday invitations by mail or e-mail. Please do not pick up a party group in carpool. It accentuates who was and wasn't invited to the party. Please do not send balloons for the school party or party favors for the children to take. This applies to all holiday parties too.

### **CLASSROOM CELEBRATIONS**

Throughout the school year, the classrooms will have planned holiday parties and various celebrations. These include, but are not limited to: Maria Montessori's birthday, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Holiday Celebrations, Valentine's Day, 1, and Earth Day.

Parents can sign up to help facilitate and provide items needed for these celebrations. There may be additional festivals and celebrations planned during the year in individual classrooms.

### **SHARE DAY**

Children enjoy bringing items to school to share and talk about. Designated days and times for the children to bring in their share. Items will be communicated by individual classroom teachers. The children are encouraged to bring items of interest to share with the whole class. It is especially nice when a child can share something that correlates with the classroom's unit of study. It may be a book, photos, objects, or it may be an interesting oral story or adventure.

Please help us by observing the school rule of not bringing any toys to school. It helps your child and us if you diligently assist us by keeping toys at home.

Good examples of share items are:

- Materials from nature: Leaves, rocks, birds, nests, eggs, acorns, shells, etc.
- Photograph of a pet. Live pets are only allowed if arrangements are made with the teacher in advance.
- Photograph of a special event or trip.
- Items pertaining to the current unit of study in the classroom.
- Something that the child has made: sculptures, buildings with Legos, arts and craft project, etc.

All items should be clearly labeled with your child's name.

### **SCHOOL PHOTOS**

School photos, both individual and class photos, are taken in the fall of each school year. Students may wear an outfit of their choice for their photo day. No uniform is required. After the photo shoot, you will receive an e-mail from the vendor that the school uses for photos should you wish to purchase them.



## **TODDLER & PRIMARY FIELD TRIPS**

Children in the toddler program will not be participating in field trips that require driving. Primary classes will hold their field trips to a minimum, and they will most likely involve afternoon children only. Most field trips will be within walking distance of the school. Classes will notify parents in advance of these walking field trips. Each student is required to have a completed field trip permission slip on file with the office at the beginning of each school year.

## **ELEMENTARY FIELD TRIPS**

The elementary classes will take field trips and participate in community service events throughout the year. They are planned to visit local points of interest and coordinate with subjects being studied by the class. Sometimes they are planned to take advantage of special community events. Parents are encouraged to chaperone the elementary and adolescent field trips.

Parents should be advised in advance of any field trip that would mean their child would leave the school campus. A note explaining the field trip will be sent through Blackbaud, class email and/ or on a flyer sent home with each student.

Upper elementary students have the opportunity to experience extended overnight field trips. These trips are funded through the Oak Room and Grove Small Business Ventures, which are run by the students.

## **PARENT VOLUNTEER DRIVERS/CHAPERONES**

Parents volunteering to drive/chaperone must provide the school with a copy of their driver's license and vehicle insurance card. This can be done through e-mail or by physically visiting the school office at least two weeks prior to a scheduled field trip. Drivers will also be asked to sign an agreement abiding by any laws regarding child vehicle safety. Chaperones driving or attending field trips may be required to pay any cost of the field trip, depending on the policy of the event. Please do not bring any younger siblings along when driving on a field trip.

Please be sure that you understand and can support the following basic safety rules when participating in an off-campus activity. Safety is our primary concern, and we must insist that every student follow certain rules of safe and courteous conduct during outings. Remember that all the normal school rules apply during the entire duration of any field trip.

- Wear your seat belt at all times.
- Remain in your seat while the vehicle is moving and do not leave your seat or disembark the vehicle until it has come to a complete stop.
- Do not shout, engage in horseplay, or switch seats during the trip.
- Never stick your hand or anything else out of the vehicle window.
- Refrain from eating or drinking in the vehicle unless the driver or teacher gives permission.

## **CAR SEATS/BOOSTERS**

As required by law, car seats must be provided for each child. Children under 40 lbs. must sit in a car seat. Each child under 80 lbs. must sit in a booster seat. If no car or booster seat is provided, the child may not go on the field trip.

## **STUDENT & STAFF HEALTH**

The safety of the school students and staff is of the utmost importance that May River Montessori. The school follows South Carolina state law for all medical policies employed.

## **HEALTH RECORDS**

South Carolina immunization forms are required by law to be up to date for all children attending school before the start of school. All immunization forms will be checked to make sure our students are in compliance with the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC).

## **SICK POLICY**

May River Montessori works hard on a daily basis cleaning the classrooms, including the materials, tables, bathrooms, and other areas so that the spread of sickness is minimized. However, children, when together, may spread sickness. May River Montessori does not have a nurse on staff.

The policy of May River Montessori is that any contagious illness and/or fever requires the student or staff member to be absent from school. Contagious illnesses include strep, conjunctivitis, chickenpox, flu, etc. Students and staff must be fever free without the aid of Tylenol or any fever reducer for 24 hours prior to returning to school. In the case of a common cold, the student or staff member should remain at home as long as a fever is present, or if there is a sore throat, eye infection, or severe nasal excretions. Students or staff with symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, or undiagnosed skin rash should remain at home. Students and staff members will be sent home if any of the symptoms appear while at school. A physician's release must be provided for any communicable disease.

Whenever a student is ill and won't be coming to school, parents or guardians are asked to utilize the Blackbaud app to inform the office and teachers. If a student or staff member is diagnosed with a communicable disease (i.e., influenza), this information may need to be shared with parents or guardians of classmates and fellow staff members to help aid in the quick diagnosis and elimination of the disease from the school community.

It is the responsibility of the family to contact the teacher to make up any missed work, but it is the expectation that a teacher will actively and regularly communicate with parents or guardians and prepare work for a child with an extended absence.

## **SICK AT SCHOOL POLICY**

If a child gets sick at school, his or her teacher or one of the office staff will call the parents regarding ANS to come pick the child up. The following is a partial list of observable symptoms of contagious illnesses which will prompt a call from the school:

- |                         |                           |                   |                   |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| • Diarrhea              | • Vomiting                | • Fever           | • Coughing        |
| • Difficulty Breathing  | • Pink Eye                | • Rashes or Spots | • Sore Throat     |
| • Infected Skin Patches | • Severe Nasal Excretions | • Unusual Crying  | • Extreme Fatigue |

## **MEDICATION POLICY**

In compliance with DSS Regulation #114-5-14A (4), May River Montessori may administer prescription and non-prescription medication to children only after permission has been signed and dated by a parent or guardian. A dosage schedule of any prescription and or non-prescription medication is to be supplied to the teacher and signed and dated by the parent or guardian. Medication prescribed by a doctor must be in the original bottle, with the dosage and child's name clearly listed on the bottle. Medicine will not be administered without the above note from the parent or guardian.

## **LICE POLICY**

If head lice are found on a child, parents or guardians are asked to call the school and let us know immediately. Parents and guardians are asked to keep a child home from school and administer lice treatment. The child must stay home from school for 24 hours after being treated.

If a child is found to have head lice at school, he or she will be sent home for treatment. All live lice and nits must be removed. The classroom and materials will be appropriately cleaned and all other children in the room will be checked for head lice.

## **MINOR ACCIDENTS/SCRAPES**

If a child has an injury at school, either on the playground or inside, the teacher will fill out an incident report with all the details concerning the accident or injury and what types of actions were taken for first aid. This report will be shared with parents or guardians. If the accident is substantial, the parents or guardians will be notified right away. If it is just a small scrape, the scrape will be washed, and a Band-Aid will be applied. If parents or guardians have questions about a minor accident or scrape, they will be asked to contact the child's teacher.

## EMERGENCY MEDICAL POLICIES & PROCEDURES

At the beginning of each year at May River Montessori, parents are required to sign a form which authorizes the school to act on behalf of the child in the event of a medical emergency, to include transportation by emergency vehicle if necessary. In the event of an emergency, parents or guardians are contacted immediately. If parents or guardians cannot be reached, then contact is made with authorized emergency contacts as designated by parents or guardians at the start of each year. If a child requires emergency care, the school will contact 911 emergency services first and then the parents or guardians or emergency contacts. Every effort will be made to have the child accompanied by a parent or guardian if ambulance transportation is required. If the parent or guardian is not immediately available, a staff member will always remain with the child until a parent or guardian arrives.

All full-time teachers and staff are required to have CPR along with infant and child first aid training. May River Montessori carries liability insurance in compliance with South Carolina Statute 63-13-210-(A)(B).

## DISCIPLINE POLICIES

### THE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

Montessori philosophy fosters a natural sense of community in addition to respect for everyone. In the classroom, the children are given freedom of choice within a well-defined set of ground rules. These rules have been carefully established to provide fair and clear expectations for the working community, along with a consistent set of guidelines and consequences for one's actions. The teachers, assistants, and children work cooperatively to provide a safe, comfortable, peaceful, and respectful environment in which to grow and learn.

When observing A Montessori classroom, one sees a joy of learning as children work purposefully at their own pace with the Montessori materials. One sees the beautiful environment with everything that is the child's size - clean, beautiful, multi-sensory, and developmentally appropriate so that each child can experience success and develop at his or her own pace. One feels the peace and observes the respectful way the children and teachers interact with each other and with the materials.

The atmosphere of respect and joy comes about through discipline, the self-discipline or "normalization" of the child. To discipline is to teach. It is based on love, not anger. Our goal is not an imposed discipline through the external control exerted by the teachers. Rather, it is to aid the children in developing their inner control or self-discipline. In her book, The Montessori Method, Maria Montessori says, "We call an individual disciplined when he is master of himself, and can therefore regulate his own conduct when it shall be necessary to follow some rule of life..."

### GROUND RULES

The school has ground rules that are the basis for positive social interaction in the classroom and that reinforce the values that we want our children to have. These rules are based on respect and responsibility. The children are taught these ground rules in the classroom from the first day of orientation using positive, clear communication and demonstration. Children are also shown what to do versus what not to do. Sometimes if a child is bothering another child's work, just a reminder is all it takes to redirect a child to a positive solution. Experiencing respect daily in the classroom - respecting the children and expecting respect in return - is a way children learn and internalize it as a value and a way of life. Consistency, respect, positive reinforcement, and normalization through work are components of a peaceful, respectful, and joyful environment in which these ground rules are consistently upheld. This, as well as giving the children a developmentally appropriate, multi-sensory environment where they may direct their energies in a positive manner towards their own development, allows the children to learn self-discipline, respect, responsibility, delayed gratification, integrity, positive self-esteem, as well as build on a solid foundation for the academics.

#### EXAMPLES OF SOME OF THE GROUND RULES:

- Use your walking feet indoors to move carefully and respectfully in the classroom.
- Use your quiet voice indoors so that others can concentrate.
- Only one person may talk at a time.
- Only two people may have snack at a time. When there is a space and you would like to have a snack, you may have it then.
- Put your work away when you are finished so that it is ready for the next person.

- You may work with another person if he or she has invited you to join. Otherwise, you choose your own work period if someone is working with a particular work, you must wait until they are finished before you may choose it.
- If a teacher is busy with another child, wait until he or she is finished before talking with him or her.
- Go to the person with whom you wish to speak.
- Wash your hands after going to the bathroom and after blowing your nose.

## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

May River Montessori has established this policy to protect the rights and safety of all people in the school setting. Please note that staff members never threaten to use or use physical punishment period verbal abuse, physical, or emotional intimidation is never permitted by staff members.

The following procedure is used to respond to disruptive behavior:

- When positive redirection of inappropriate behavior fails, the child will be asked to be excused from the group or activity.
- When a child has been excused, the teacher who requested this will follow up shortly afterward to discuss the issue, define why the behavior was inappropriate, and then help formulate a positive solution. At the elementary level, a child may be asked to complete a written self-reflection to help facilitate the intervention process.
- If a disruptive incident involves two or more children, all children involved will be asked to be excused.
- Whenever there is extremely disruptive behavior and being excused is not effective, the parent or guardian will be called and may be asked to pick up their child early. The teacher will explain what happened to the parent or guardian and present all the circumstances, time, place, and who witnessed the event to the parent or guardian. He or she will also explain what was done at school in response to the disruptive behavior.
- If disruptive behavior persists, the parents or guardians will be called in for a conference and a behavioral strategy is planned.
- In the rare event that disruptive behavior endangers the child or others, immediate action will be taken to deescalate the situation, remove the child from the environment, and ensure the safety of all involved.
- If the plan fails to work, i.e., we are unable to channel the child's energies into constructive, positive channels, or if the children's welfare is an issue, the parents or guardians may be required to withdraw their child from the program.

## **BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION FORMS**

When a child is disruptive enough to be sent home early, the teacher will contact parents or guardians and discuss the situation. Upon determining a resolution, the teacher will fill out an incident report stating the circumstances of the disruptive behavior. This will include information from all people involved, any additional staff who were consulted, additional comments, and what action is planned. This form will automatically be sent to parents or guardians and will remain a part of the child's school record.

## **BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES**

Every disruptive behavior is an opportunity to teach appropriate behavior, values, and social responsibility. Our goal is to help each child work through behavioral challenges in a loving, respectful, but firm way. We must take into consideration the effect disruptive behavior has on the classroom environment as a whole. Sometimes an additional person, a “shadow”, is needed for a short time to break a cycle of disruptive behavior. We recognize the dignity and worth of every human being within the school. We believe that by treating children with fairness and respect, they will respond in kind.

## **BITING**

Because we are working towards building positive social interaction daily in the classrooms, biting is not allowed for any reason. Biting can sometimes occur with the younger children when they may not be able to express themselves verbally and are in the process of learning appropriate communication and social skills. Should an incident occur, the teachers and staff evaluate the bite and administer appropriate first aid. The parent or guardian of the child who bit, as well as the parent or guardian of the child who was bitten, are both contacted. An incident report is filled out by the teacher.

The teachers in the classroom are to closely monitor a child who has previously bitten to make sure that it doesn't happen again. Usually this is enough to take care of the problem. However, if a child continues to bite, the parent or guardian may be asked to keep the child at home for a while, until the child shows no tendency to bite. The school may require that for the child to remain in the class, the parent or guardian hire an additional person to shadow the child who is biting until the child no longer bites. The school may assist the parent or guardian in the search for the shadow and must approve the selection.

Biting incidents are treated on a case-by-case basis and depend on the circumstances of the given situations. The bottom line is that biting is not permitted in the Montessori classroom and steps are taken as necessary to alleviate the problem.

## **EXTREME BEHAVIOR**

### **DRUGS AND ALCOHOL**

We expect our students to avoid any and all contact with drugs and alcohol. This is defined to include the use, possession, or sale of any controlled substance or alcoholic beverage. The possession or sale of any alcohol or controlled substance, either during the school day or during any school sponsored trip, party, or function, may be grounds for immediate expulsion.

### **BAD LANGUAGE**

We do not allow anyone to use profanity or crude language in the classrooms, on the campus, or during any school sponsored function. We also ask that parents model this example by refraining from using inappropriate language when visiting the school and campus.

### **BULLYING**

Any form of bullying, cyber bullying, or retaliation in our school buildings, school grounds, or in school related activities will not be tolerated. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyber bullying, and retaliation and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the victims sense of safety.

### **VIOLENCE**

We cannot tolerate any irresponsible and dangerous behavior, acts of violence, threats of violence, or verbal abuse directed towards anyone. It is illegal and forbidden to bring a weapon to school or use any common object as a weapon and maybe grounds for immediate expulsion.

### **SMOKING**

May River Montessori is a smoke-free environment. No one may smoke on campus.

### **DISRESPECT FOR THE PROPERTY OF OTHERS**

Any theft, vandalism, or damage to property, whether deliberate or accidental, must be repaired or repaid and may be grounds for immediate expulsion.

## **SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT**

The members of the staff of May River Montessori are required to report suspected abuse and or neglect. Any suspected abuse will be reported to the South Carolina Department of Social Services for investigation.

## **ACADEMIC POLICIES**

### **CONFERENCES**

Conferences are scheduled throughout the year to discuss your child's individual progress and development. We urge both parents or guardians to attend if possible and to please be on time. The teacher spent a great deal of time preparing information about each child to review with the parents or guardians. It is important for teachers and parents or guardians to establish and maintain close communication. With that in mind, please feel free to ask questions or discuss anything related to your child's progress.

## **TODDLER & PRIMARY CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT**

The order and progression of the Montessori curriculum is contained in the flow of the materials that are placed on the shelves. Each Ave. of learning goes from easier concepts to more difficult ones placed on display in each area. Every classroom teacher is responsible for keeping accurate records of each child's progression through each Ave. of the Montessori curriculum. The teacher takes notes of all lessons presented to your child and all lessons your child has mastered proficiently enough to move on to the next level in the curriculum. At your conferences the teacher may share with you your child's progress with the overall curriculum. Keep in mind that no two children are the same, and each child proceeds along a path of learning at his or her own pace.

A report on student progress will be sent home to the parents or guardians, giving a culmination of the child's skills and mastery levels at parent conferences.

## **ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT**

May River Montessori Elementary Curriculum is carefully structured and sequenced. The teachers maintain flow charts of the educational objectives of the course of study for each area or subject within the classroom and keep a record of which skills each child has accomplished. The Montessori Elementary program does not compare students against an arbitrary standard or the performance of their classmates. Traditional letter grades are not used. A variety of assessment tools are utilized throughout the year, and a comprehensive progress report of the student's growth and development is shared with parents or guardians at conference times.

Students at May River Montessori School moved through the vast and compact curriculum at individual paces rather than at a preset grade-based curriculum. As a result, the concept that a child is a 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, or 6<sup>th</sup> grader does not have the same meaning as it does in a traditional school. However, we recognize that children in our culture are accustomed to referring to themselves according to their grade level.

May River Montessori has established expectations for baseline achievement that we expect to see in our students correlated to the norms of their traditional grade level these standards present. A normal index of skill and knowledge we would expect if students progressing in a Montessori classroom to display, students will normally be promoted from one grade level to the next at the end of the school year if they have accomplished the goals and norms that we have established.

Advancement to class level is based on an evaluation of the student's total academic development along with the social, emotional, and physical development. Because the classes individualize each student's academic program regardless of the age of the child, the most important criteria for advancement to an older group is a student social adjustment, independence, work habits, and maturity. We invite parents or guardians to work with us in reaching these decisions, keeping always as our first objective, the student's best interest.

## **HOMEWORK**

Homework is intended to afford students the opportunity to practice and reinforce reading skills and foster a love of independent reading. Establishing early homework habits gives students a sense of responsibility for their own learning and fosters self-esteem. Students are expected to give homework their full attention and to do assignments on their own. This helps them learn to manage their time efficiently. The students experience a full day of academic learning with the Montessori materials. As a Montessori school, we strive to keep homework to a minimum.

## **STUDENT RECORDS**

Student records and files are confidential. As guardians of your child's school record, May River Montessori keeps all file secure in the main office of the school and digitally through Transparent Classroom and Blackbaud, parents and guardians may have access to their child's record.

To transfer your child's record to another school, the school must receive a "Transfer of School Records" form from the new school, which has the release signed by the parent. No records from a child's file will be given to anyone outside the school without a formal request in writing from the parent, unless subpoenaed by a court of law. Transfer of records cannot be issued if a student has an outstanding balance on his or her account that is more than 30 days past due. The request will be completed once the account has been brought up to date. If the request is received during summer hours when the school is closed, the request will be processed upon reopening.

# **FINANCIAL POLICIES**

## **ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE POLICIES**

As a nonprofit school, our income is based almost entirely on parents paying their tuition on time and according to schedule. In order to run as efficiently as possible, we need all of our families to follow their payment plan. If a change needs to be made, please contact the bookkeeper as soon as possible to get a new payment plan set up. We completely understand that life happens, and we want to work with you whenever issues arise. Communication is key!

- Monthly tuition payments are due every month on the 1st from July to May of the current school year.
- Semester tuition payments are due July 1st and December 1st of the current school year.
- Annual tuition payments are due July 1st of the current school year.
- After school payments start in full on September 1st of the current school year. In September, a full month along with the prorated amount for August of the current school year will be shown on your account. These fees can be paid monthly, semesterly, or annually. Any child that enrolls after September 16 will have a prorated tuition based on the week enrolled.
- After school ends, every regular school day promptly at 5:30 PM for every occurrence of picking your child(ren) up after 5:30 PM, you will be subject to a \$25 fee on each child's account.
- A payment is considered late if not received by the 15th of the month, and a \$25 late fee will be added to each outstanding account, continuing monthly until the account is brought current.
- Past due accounts will receive an e-mail containing a statement of the past due amounts with a request for payment.
- At 30 days past due, you will receive another e-mail with an updated statement as well as a telephone call, both with requests for payment.
- At 60 days past due, if no resolution has been made, past due accounts will no longer be able to request transcripts, report cards or tax documents from teachers or staff. Should a new school reach out to us with any of these requests, they will be told that we are unable to accommodate the request due to the outstanding balance on your account. The Associated Students with Past due accounts will also not be guaranteed a spot for the upcoming year if there's a 60 day or more balance on your account when it comes time for re-enrollment.
- At 90 days past due, if there has been no communication, or if the communication has not been beneficial in reaching an agreement for payment, or if an agreement has been made but we have not received a payment since the agreement, your accounts will be sent to collections. If there is an open account in collections re-enrollment for the associated child(ren) at May River Montessori for the next school year will not be permitted.
- For every bounced check or return payment, a \$30 fee will be added to your account(s).
- If you have two consecutive returned or NSF payments, we will require a backup credit card on file with our office to ensure that payments will still be received in a timely manner.
- MRM extends to 25% discount for the third child enrolled and each child after the third. The discount will be applied to the lowest tuition rate(s) per family.

## **TUITION**

May River Montessori is a nonprofit organization completely dependent on tuition as its principal source of income. We know and appreciate the sacrifices and hard work required to pay for your child's education. The skills and love of learning your child acquire here will serve them well for a lifetime.

Student accounts must be kept up to date. The school will be forced to withhold any and all services to students whose accounts have fallen behind, unless written arrangements have been made for deferred payment. Your cooperation is essential and very much appreciated.

## **TUITION PROTECTION FUND**

The financial contract agreed to by each family is for the full annual Commission for the entire academic year for your children. The school cannot refund any tuition or cancel unpaid financial obligations if your child is withdrawn for any reason at any time during the school year.

The May River Montessori Tuition Protection Fund provides the school with assurance that your financial obligation will be paid to the school if your child is withdrawn. The May River Montessori Tuition Protection Fund is self-funded, and all claims are subject to the terms and conditions of the agreement. Upon a withdrawal, a parent or guardian may submit a claim by providing a written letter of explanation and following the procedure outlined in the May River Montessori Tuition Protection Agreement.

Participation in the May River Montessori Tuition Protection Fund is required for all student accounts not paid in full prior to the 1st of August each year.

## **FINANCIAL AID**

May River Montessori will, if funds are available, provide financial aid for families with temporary financial need. It should be noted that the school does not have significant funds for aid, so families should be aware that aid will be limited and temporary in nature. Any financial aid awarded will be for a given academic year.

An application for financial aid can be requested during the spring reenrollment. The decision to award financial aid will be made by a three-member committee appointed by the Board.

## **RE-ENROLLMENT**

Invitations to continue at May River Montessori and re-enrollment material will be sent home no later than the beginning of February. Re-enrollment is due back at the school two weeks later along with the annual registration deposit if the school has not received a student's enrollment materials by the designated date, his or her space will be made available to new students who have applied for admission to the school.

## **COMMUNICATION**

### **TAKE HOME BAGS**

Children in the toddler program have bags that are carried back and forth to school on Tuesday (2-day program) or Friday (3-day and 2-day programs). Children in the primary program have "take home bags" which are sent home each Friday and return to school on Monday. All of your child's completed work is sent home in the take. Please go over your child's work at home with him or her. It is very important to your child. Children take great pride in their hard work. Be positive and specific. "I like the way you finished your work." "I like the way you color in one direction." "I can tell that you did your best." "I can tell that you tried very hard." "I can tell that you took your time." If it is a writing paper, let the child read it to you. Point out the best letters. You do not need to mention that some of the letters may not be as good. Through your interest, you give dignity and importance to your child's work.

Please do not compare your child's work with others. Your child is on his or her own timetable. Also, do not be upset if your child does not bring work home, especially during the three-year old year. The children spend most of their time interacting with the Montessori materials. Many times, the child will labor and internalize so much without anything physical to show for it. Please help your child remember to return the empty take home bag each Monday so it is ready for next week's work. The children learn a sense of responsibility in keeping up with the take home bags.

### **NOTES & FORMS**

Most hardcopy communication that comes from the classroom or the school is sent home in the toddler primary take home bag or elementary and adolescent backpacks on Fridays. If a hardcopy note needs to go home on other days, the notes will be safely pinned to each child's lunch box or bag. Please make sure to check your child's bag carefully to ensure you receive all communication from the school.



## OBSERVATION

May River Montessori encourages you to observe your child working in the classroom. This allows parents an up close and minimally invasive look into the Montessori classroom. When you schedule your observation, do not chill your child. Allow your child to have a normal morning and drop off experience. If you have any questions during your observation, make sure to record them for your child's teachers, who will try to visit you during your observation to be sure you understand the classroom procedures and to answer any questions you may have about the Montessori method. Please leave specific questions about your child's growth and development for a scheduled conference.

The Montessori method uses specific observation as the basis for guiding the child. In the Montessori classroom, the teachers spend much of their time observing the children as well as interacting with them. As parents or guardians, you are the primary educators of your children. Therefore, parent observation of the school provides an important insight into each child's life. It is a wonderful opportunity to see how your child relates to peers and adults, as well as to the specially prepared environment designed to meet his or her developmental needs. Please try to observe long enough to see your child in a variety of settings: large group meeting, small group lessons, individual work period, and perhaps the free play setting of recess.

During the first few weeks of the school year, students are familiarizing themselves with new routines in the environment. For this reason, we ask parents to begin scheduling observations in the Fall. Observations may be scheduled by calling the main office of the school.

## SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Trustees of May River Montessori are entrusted with the history of the school, the present operation, and the future of this grand idea. They each assume a role in the total life of the school. Positions are staggered, so the membership of the of the board has continuity.

TRUSTEES					
Jessi Dolnik	Roberts Vaux	Demetrios Stratis	Alex Hartzler	Nancy Golson*	
Ryan Williamson	Chris Burden	Margaret Pearman	Catherine Donaldson	Lynn Thurlow	Alison Howard

*\*Denotes co-founder and lifetime board member*

### FACULTY & STAFF

The cornerstone of May River Montessori is our committed and dedicated staff. Our faculty members are highly trained and experienced professionals. The strength and stability of our staff allows children and families to develop strong and trusting relationships with the teachers. All staff employed by the school are required to pass background checks, fingerprinting, and health screenings for the safety of our students and school community. The school may occasionally employ people provisionally to comply with regulations when an unexpected vacancy occurs. This follows the South Carolina Department of Social Services requirement. SC Statute 63-13-45 (a).

OFFICE STAFF	
Name	Title
Susanna Myburgh	Executive Director
Amanda Savage	Director of Operations
Jeremy Hodge	IT
D Gutierrez	Office Manager / Bilingual Liason

SPECIALS	
Name	Class
Katherine DeFreitas	Music
Tamela Maxim	Art
Brent Wearren (Farmer B)	Gardening

TODDLER PROGRAM				
Classroom	Ages	Teachers		
The Cottage	2 – 3 years	Jennifer Zimmerman	Paula Hawkes	Erin Rydell
The Bungalow	2 – 3 years	Florencia Imperial	Monique Bryant	

PRIMARY PROGRAM			
Classroom	Grade	Teachers	
Jasmine	PreK 3	Ashley Doray	Lily Beck
Magnolia	PreK - Kindergarten	Cindy Steinmetz	Helen Yates
Sunflower	PreK - Kindergarten	Emma Richardson	Katie Snyder
Afterschool	PreK - Kindergarten	Kristi Fossbakk	Erin Rydell

ELEMENTARY PROGRAM			
Classroom	Grade	Teachers	
Palmetto	1-3	Susan Francese	Angela Pruter
Oak	4-6	Kathy Midkiff	Darren Doray
Afterschool	1-6	D Gutierrez	

## PARENT- TEACHER ORGANIZATION

The River Montessori's Parents Teacher Association plays a vital role in the success of the school. The primary function of the PTO has been fundraising. The money raised by parents and teachers helps keep the school's tuition down. Additionally, it helps keep the school standards high as funds raised by the PTO in excess of established goals go toward needed. Materials or programs to enhance the curriculum. Monies also go towards financial assistance for children who wouldn't be able to attend May River Montessori otherwise. The Board of Trustees determines these expenditures annually.

We encourage all parents to take an active part in the PTO by attending the meetings, participating in projects and attending school functions. This participation, support and goodwill of the parents and teachers is critical to the future of our school. It is also a great way to get to know other parents and families in the school.

## FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

### GETTING INVOLVED

May River Montessori recognizes that without the support and volunteer efforts of many families here, we could not have this wonderful community. The resolve of past parents has made the school what it is today.

There are typically many events held throughout the year that will help each family become acquainted with their child's classmates and families. We cherish our warm and supportive community family here at May River Montessori.

## PARENT COMMITMENT

1. Make sure your child gets plenty of sleep each night. Children thrive when well rested.
2. Students are required to have regular school attendance. Consistency not only gives continuity to learning, but keeps the momentum of motivation for work, teaches responsibility, and lets the students know school is important. Make every effort to schedule any appointments outside of school hours.
3. Make sure your student arrives on time for school.
4. Keep the information in your child's Blackbaud file current. Inform the school immediately of any changes in life circumstances, physical address, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, etc.
5. Have a positive, supportive attitude. If learning is important to you, it will be important to your child.
6. Believe in your child. Don't compare him to others. Have faith in him. He is on his own timetable. He knows. If you were worried about his progress, let his "inner teacher" guide him and have faith in his classroom teachers.
7. Spend time reading with your child as often as possible.
8. Encourage your child. Be positive. Go over his work and be specific about what you like about his work.
9. Read notes including emails and app notifications that are sent from school.
10. Please communicate any questions, concerns, or anything that you feel is significant to your child's teacher. Good communication is vital so that we can work together for the good of your child.

## ROOM PARENT

Each classroom has two room parents. These volunteers help coordinate classroom needs and stay in close contact with the classroom staff. You will receive communication throughout the school year from the appointed room parent about various events occurring in your child's classroom as well as classroom needs.

## THRIVE POLICY

For our students in school to fully thrive, we require a minimum volunteer participation of at least one hour per family per month. Each month there are countless opportunities to get involved and volunteer. These volunteer opportunities engage our families and bring our community together in a beautiful way. Our goal is to log over 1500 volunteer hours from our school families. Imagine the impact of 1500 hours on our children's experiences.

## HARMONY POLICY

The May River Montessori community is built on a foundation of love and respect for its members, the school, and the community at large. The school prides itself on creating a harmonious atmosphere for children. Families and staff work together to foster each child's development within our classroom environments and their family home.

May River Montessori holds the expectation of its staff members to maintain professional ethics and of its families to support our community's mission and vision. If for any reason there is a question or discrepancy of school, mission, policy, or activity, it is expected that they be addressed in a respectful, solution focused manner.

Should a member of the community act in a manner that intentionally causes discord or malice, violating the core values of love and respect, then he or she may be asked to discontinue participation in the school community to preserve the health and harmony for all involved.

## FERPA (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act)

May River Montessori follows the United States Department of Education's Family Education Rights and Privacy Act. For any further questions regarding this policy, please reach out to the office. It reads as follows:

*The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.*

*FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."*

- *Parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents or eligible students to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.*
- *Parents or eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.*
- *Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):*
  - *School officials with legitimate educational interest;*
  - *Other schools to which a student is transferring;*
  - *Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;*
  - *Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;*
  - *Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;*
  - *Accrediting organizations;*
  - *To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;*
  - *Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and*
  - *State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.*

*Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow parents and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them. Schools must notify parents and eligible students annually of their rights under FERPA. The actual means of notification (special letter, inclusion in a PTA bulletin, student handbook, or newspaper article) is left to the discretion of each school.*



**MAY RIVER**  
**MONTESSORI**

## **FAMILY HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The 2025-2026 May River Montessori Family Handbook contains policies regarding the school's operation, attendance, dress code, discipline, assessment, and more.

I hereby confirm that I have access to or have received a copy of the 2025-2026 May River Montessori Family Handbook. I acknowledge that I have read and agree with the contents of the Handbook and further understand the responsibilities expected of May River Montessori families and students regarding the policies, procedures, rules, regulations, and practices as stated in this document.

I understand that the May River Montessori Staff Handbook is a living document and is subject to revision at any time. Any changes made will be communicated with staff at the time they occur.

Child(ren): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_