



# **Montessori House for Children**

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Lakemont Montessori School, Inc.

## **Parent Handbook 2011/2012**



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## Academic Calendar

Please refer to the web-site for our academic calendar and important dates.

[www.montessorihouseforchildren.com](http://www.montessorihouseforchildren.com)

### Important “Back to School” Dates

Back to School Parent Information; Packet Pick Up & Records Update	Aug 10 & 11
4:00 – 6:00pm	Aug 10
9:00 – 11:00am	Aug 11

Teachers and Assistants/Guides Return to School	Aug 15
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School Closed for Staff In-Service	Aug 17 – 19
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Teachers and assistants return to school at least one week prior to the start of school and continue three days after the last day of school. Key elements of the Montessori Method include preparation of the environment and preparation of the adult. The child is introduced to an environment that is appropriately matched to suit their interests and development. Classrooms are welcoming, orderly, esthetically inviting and meticulously prepared. Equally important, is the preparation of the adult. Our school commits to continuous staff development through “in-house” training, national conferences, local workshops and opportunities for rejuvenation. Therefore, Montessori Schools require more preparation time than that of other schools.

Open House	Aug 19
2:00 – 3:00 pm EC children (new & returning)	
TBA for Toddler children	

Toddler Parent Orientation & Luncheon	Aug 27
10:00 am – 1:00pm	

Welcome Back Parent Coffee	Sept 1
8:45 – 10:00	

Early Childhood Parent Orientation & Luncheon	Sept 10
10:00am – 1:00pm	

## **Partnership Agreement**

School and parents enter a cooperative relationship at School. The Parent side is to make a continuing effort to understand and embrace the Montessori approach, to get involved in the life of the school community, to model respect in all associations with others in the community and to strive to incorporate Montessori principals in parenting skills in order to achieve consistency between home and school. The School side is to follow the commitment to develop the whole child- emotionally, socially, physically and academically, to model and practice human virtues and practices, to communicate effectively with parents and to maintain high standards in the program, guides and curriculum.

### **Overview**

#### **Mission**

Our mission at Montessori House for Children (MHFC) is to provide an authentic Montessori program, emphasizing superior indoor and outdoor learning environments, which are designed to guide and nurture each child to their fullest potential. We work as a community to foster confident, competent and socially responsible members of society.

#### **Philosophy and Goals**

Our school's philosophy is founded on the Montessori Method of Education as developed in the early 1900's in Rome Italy by Dr. Maria Montessori and which is now applied in schools all over the world.

Our primary goal is to create and sustain the highest quality Montessori environment that facilitates the child's natural tendencies towards formation of self; encompassing qualities that improve the quality of one's own life and that of humanity.

- Confidence, self-reliance and self-discipline.
- Appreciation for and respect of life's resources, human and physical.
- Understanding of multi-cultural experiences, foods, language and lifestyles which is the first step in Peace Education.

The supporting goal includes collaborative work among the school, family and community to build relationships that support the child's formation.

#### **School History**

Montessori House for Children is a successor organization to Lakeview Montessori School founded in 1997 in Sugar Land, Texas. We are a private, family owned and operated, non-sectarian school with an international clientele from over 34 countries.

Our present location opened June 2006. Over the past 14 years, our school has served

families in the Sugar Land, Fulshear, Katy and Richmond areas.

### **American Montessori Society (AMS) Affiliate**

Our schools have been affiliated with AMS since 1999. AMS has three levels of membership; initiate, associate and full. MHFC became “Full Member School” in June 2009. For a school to join at this level, all classroom lead teachers must hold Montessori credentials in the level(s) they are teaching. The credentials must be issued by a teacher education program affiliated with AMS, the Association for Montessori Internationale (AMI), the National Center for Montessori Education (NCME), or other programs that are also accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE).

### **SACS Accreditation**

MHFC began the process of accreditation through Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) in May of 2008 and achieved Accreditation in February 2010. The AdvancED Accreditation Process is comprehensive, evaluating all the parts of our institution. The process focuses on vision and goals, and evaluates teaching and learning, and how results are documented and resources are allocated. The seven AdvancED Standards are the foundation of the Accreditation Process and serve as a guide to continuous improvement.

## **School Administration & Support Staff**

### **Owner/Founders Nelson**

Established first school in Sugar Land 1997; MHFC in 2004

**Robert and Pam**

### **Business Manager**

Oversees school finances; tuition payment and billing, expense reimbursements, check requests, building and grounds maintenance.

**Pam Nelson**

### **School Director/Head of School**

Oversees School mission and goals, faculty, curriculum, academic counseling, safety and security

**Barbara Walleck**

### **Training Director**

School policies and procedures, staff recruitment (employee orientation, training, records), maintain compliance with all State and School standards.

**Melissa Schlicht**

### **Admissions Director & Day School Administrator**

Admissions, Attendance, Student Records, School Access Cards/Codes, parent contact updates.

**Myriam Vasquez**

**On-site before and afterschool supervisor** **Neelofur Surty**  
Open/Close school, oversee before/afterschool staff and children, oversee extra-curricular classes, welcome visitors.

**Morning Receptionist and School Secretary** **Norma Ortega**  
Welcome, follow up with visitors, administer medication, staff/student support, liaison with parent committees.

**Afternoon Receptionist** **Therese Cardoza**  
Welcome visitors, general front office support, Provided support for staff/students

**School Communications/Marketing** **Ashley Nelson**  
School Newsletter, Web Site, Facebook, Advertisement/Marketing

**School Cook** **Mary Russell**

**Building Maintenance** **Elliot Garcia**

## **Faculty Information**

All Lead teachers are MACTE trained/credentialed in the community age in which they are assigned. All classrooms have a professional teacher, making our school an AMS Full Member School. Teacher Bios can be found on the School web-site.

### **Professional Development**

Continuing education in the form of Montessori specific training, general child care workshops, and conferences are a part of the minimum of 24 hours training required each year for every staff member who works with children.

### **Professional Days**

The School closes each year for a 3 day teacher in-service just prior to the first day of school. Once school starts, there is an early release for ½ and extended day students on the last Friday of each month for teacher in-service meetings. Each teacher has 2 Professional Days per year to use for visiting other Montessori campuses and brain storm/gather ideas for our school's improvement.

**Faculty Changes** – The current median tenure for teachers at our school is 3 ½ years (school opened 2006). Many teachers have come to MHFC with years of experience at other schools. With almost 30 staff, faculty turnover is inevitable from year to year. Changes in faculty for the upcoming school year are formally announced, after contracts

are signed. Any changes after school year begins are communicated to parents by letter.

## **Parent Involvement**

Parents are the child's first and most important educators. We emphasize the importance of the family in the child's development and seek to create a partnership with parents. Parent involvement includes participation in educational, social and financial aspects of the school community. Together, staff, parents and children become a community of learners, able and willing to receive and to give back.

### **Community Building Events**

Each year, the school has seasonal events, picnics, cultural celebrations, family life workshops, open houses, coffees and community service opportunities.

### **Fundraising Events**

The Parent Organization Board meets at specific times each year to set goals for the school year and establish committees for meeting the goals. Historically, fund raising events have been held to provide funds for school improvements, help teachers get to national conferences and provide money for the kindergarten tuition assistance fund.

### **Volunteers**

Many activities included in our program would not be possible without the commitment and hard work of our parent volunteers. These events are organized by the Parent Committees under the leadership of the Parent Organization Board. Participating in the life of the school puts you in the life of your child. We can match you with volunteer activities that suit your passions and loves. Many activities require only a few minutes a month. Please see school website for more information.

### **Parent Organization Board**

This is a liaison group between the general community of parents and the School administration. This Board brings suggestions and ideas to School administration to discuss, plan and implement. Each year, as members graduate out of the group, new members are invited to join. The group meets an average of 3 times a year.

### **Room Parent Support**

Teachers appreciate and could definitely use help in seasonal activities in the classroom. Volunteer for material making, cultural celebrations, library resources, special events.

## **Parent Committees**

Whether you have 10 minutes or 2 hours per week/month, we can fit you with the perfect way to participate in the School:

### Recycling Committees

- Plastics
- Electronics
- Paper

### School Improvement Committees

- Gardening, Outdoor Nature Improvement
- Handy Dandy – building and furnishings restoration/maintenance

### Stewardship Committees

- Care Committee (offers support to families in need)
- Parent Coffee
- Annual Community Outreach (organize charitable school event)
- New Family Welcome

### School Event Committees

- Field Day (twice/year)
- School Pictures (twice/year)
- International School Picnic - Family Night (Fall/Spring/or Both)
- Cultural Enhancement – share a part of your culture during special occasions

Book Club Committee – Oversee Scholastic Book Orders

Fundraising Committee – Fall/Spring Fundraiser Events

## **School Communities**

### **Toddler Community (IC)**

During the first three years of life, the child is self-constructing the human being he or she will become. To aid this self-construction, the Toddler Community offers the young child a tender atmosphere that fosters independence and aids in physical, psychological, intellectual, social and spiritual development.

### **Early Childhood (EC)**

Our Early Childhood community offers multi-aged grouping for ages 2 ½ ~ 6 years. The three year mixed age grouping gives children the unique opportunity to succeed in a miniature community, where mutual respect, caring, sharing and self-reliance can

flourish. Older children are mentors and role models for the younger children. Through teaching and mentoring the younger children, their knowledge is reinforced.

## **School Programs**

<b>Half day</b>	8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. (Toddler) 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (EC)
<b>Extended day</b>	8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
<b>Full day</b> (before/afterschool care)	6:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

The school is staffed according to student population and follows State mandates. Requests for extensions beyond the program time you have registered for are accommodated on a space available basis and need prior approval.

### **Summer Program (EC only)**

Full day year-round students enjoy a summer session that incorporates a specialty theme with weekly projects and activities. A complete summer calendar is available each May. Registration is weekly or monthly.

### **Summer “Mini-Camp s” (EC and older only)**

Specialized Mini-day camps are held during summer session for the Early Childhood age children. These camps can vary from year to year, but would normally include science, visual arts and cooking. Each session is one week, mornings only.

### **Extra-Curricular Programs (EC only)**

Extracurricular activities occur after 2:30 p.m. We offer a nice variety of extra-curricular activity providers based on the interests of the children and families. Information on these activities is available during orientation and thereafter in the school lobby. Enrollment and payment of chosen activities is handled directly by extra-curricular providers.

## **Admissions Policies and Procedures**

### **Admission Procedures**

The admissions process begins with:

- Visitor Information and/or School Tour
- Scheduled Observation and/or video. Following the observation, parents will be invited to discuss their impressions.
- Application/Application Fee – including application and authorization for the request of student records
- Parent & Director Meeting (Upon receipt of complete application forms and fee)

- Class placement or placement on school waiting pool. (Children who have been placed on the waiting list will be given an approximate starting time based on our best efforts to predict future openings).
- Enrollment forms and New Student Fee are due upon assignment of a classroom and start date.

### **Admission Decisions**

Children are evaluated on the basis of readiness for school and potential for success in a Montessori classroom. It is equally important to determine whether the parents' educational philosophy is compatible with that of MHFC.

### **Financial Policy**

School Enrollment assumes good faith intent to attend a complete academic school year. There is no reduction of tuition for absences due to illness, vacations, early withdrawal or any other extended absence from school.

The tuition schedule with registration and associated school fees is provided each family at time of application to the school. School tuition for the academic year is based on an academic year total divided into monthly payments.

Tuition is due the 1st of the each month. Statements are sent monthly via e-mail. Cash, check, money order or a bill paying service through your bank or credit union are the preferred methods of payment. The school has a locked tuition box just inside the front door. Tuition Schedule shows discounted tuition, which means any payment that is not credit card. Credit cards payments are listed as base tuition on the Tuition Schedule. Tuition is late after 3 calendar days. A late fee of \$25 is applied after the grace period. The school reserves the right to suspend attendance or withdraw a child if tuition is not paid by the 10th of the month.

A bank service fee of \$25 is charged for returned checks.

All admission/re-enrollment and summer activity fees and pre-paid special events fees are non-refundable.

If a family withdraws during the school year, and wishes to re-join the school, they will need to re-enroll.

Late pick-up fees: Drive-thru dismissals: After the last car has left the carpool lane, children will be brought into the front office to wait for parents. Regrettably, the school cannot absorb the cost of staff working overtime to stay with late departures. There is a late pick-up charge of \$1/minute. Late pick-up after 6:00 is \$1/minute after 5 minute grace period. \$30 after 15 minutes.

Summer tuition policy: In order to be able to book our special events and to arrange for adequate teaching staff, the school has a no-refund policy on summer registration fees and activity fees once a student has registered and paid.

### **Observation**

Classroom observations are scheduled during the school year, after new students have settled in. Montessori DVD's from AMS and AMI are available for viewing in the school lobby in addition to, or in place of observations at other times of the year. Professional observations from other schools and parent observations can be scheduled with the front office. There are guidelines for entering classrooms and recording observations without disrupting the working children. Staff are available after observations to answer questions.

### **Student Records**

Student records are kept in the admission office and include complete registration forms, progress reports and conference notes. All student records remain the property of the school. Student records are confidential and can only be released with written parent permission.

## **Classroom Placement/Transitions**

### **New Student Transition**

#### Transitioning into the Toddler Community

When at all possible, we suggest the following schedule for introducing our community to both parents and child. First, we ask the parent to tour the classroom. Next, we ask the parent to observe the class in session to begin to envision your child as part of the group. We then set up a date and time for a "Home Visit". The purpose of the Home Visit is to establish the parent/guide relationship, sharing of information about the IC environment and a time to learn more about your child's history and behavior patterns. Just as important is a chance for the child to meet his/her new guide (teacher) in familiar surroundings and sees acceptance from parents of this new adult. Finally, we ask the child to visit for about half an hour prior to their first day of school, arriving and leaving with the parent. Over a period of (about) one week, the transition is complete without the adult with the child staying from just a short time in the morning to a full day by the end of the week.

*To ease the transition it is suggested that the child have experienced some separating from parents with either family or friends before entering the IC.*

#### Transitioning into the Early Childhood Community

When at all possible, we suggest the following schedule, especially for children who have never been away from home in a school or childcare setting.

- Classroom Visit ~ 30 minutes (child enters room without parent(s))
- First day is a half day; leaving at noon.

- Second day is extended day; leaving at 2:30
- Third day is regular schedule

### **Transition from the Toddler (IC) to Early Childhood (EC)**

When the child's lead teacher brings a recommendation to the Director to move the child to the next community, we will follow the following procedure:

- IC teacher will schedule the EC teacher to observe the child for at least 30 minutes.
- We recommend that the parents observe the EC classroom for about an hour prior to the child's move. After this observation, parents can bring questions to the EC teacher or Director.
- IC teacher will bring the child to visit the EC class and point out similar materials and familiar children. Several more visits may take place depending on the child's readiness, before the "real" move.
- A meeting between the EC teacher and the child's parent will take place to share information and discuss the changes.
- Differences in the IC and EC communities will be explained to the parents.
  - Larger classroom and more materials
  - Mixed age group; spanning over 3 years
  - Differences in communication. EC teachers communicate through parent notes and parent conferences. EC teachers only communicate regularly if there is an item of concern that is a part of an agreed communication plan.
  - Expectation for the level of work and concentration will increase.
  - Food preparation and snack are group activities in the IC and take up much of the morning. In the EC, the food preparation is individual work.
- The "real move" can be celebrated by formally moving the child's belongings from the cubby in one room to another. Also, the child's records and information regarding previous lessons and mastery of such lessons can be given to the child's new teacher.
- By taking time to visit, observe and share information about the progression of the child through the developmental stages that are built into the Montessori community, the child looks forward to changes and new situations with a healthy anticipation.

Transitions during School Holidays/Breaks and the Summer Sessions are discouraged due to absences of the Lead Teachers or regular assistants.

### **School considerations during placement**

Placement Process is different from conventional schools whereas placement is often determined by the child's ability to get along with the teacher (and vice versa). MHFC is not a teacher-centered educational system: it is child-centered. Placement is determined by matching the skills and needs of the individual with the skills and needs of the learning community. The teacher is one part of the learning community.

### **Three Year Commitment**

Because the composition of a learning community is selected very carefully, it is unusual for children to be transferred from one class to another during this three year period.

### **Parent Requests**

The school does not honor parent requests for children to be placed in particular classrooms. The school works hard to ensure that each child is placed in the environment where her/his needs will be best met. If you have a particular concern about your child's learning, you are welcome to meet with the school director.

## **Getting to and from School**

### **Arrival/Dismissal Procedures**

Early Arrival - children arriving before 8:30 a.m. will be accompanied by their parent into either the Toddler classroom or the central Home Environment Room (EC children).

After 8:30 - please say goodbye to your child at the double doors, a staff member will assist your child to class if needed.

Full Day dismissal - If you are picking up your child after the academic day (after 2:30), please walk to the classroom door and wait outside the classroom for your child to put away his work.

Changes in pick up routine - Your child will be allowed to leave the school only with parents or persons designated on enrollment form. In an emergency, or if there are temporary departure arrangements, the parent must send a written note giving the name, date and identifying information about the person picking up the child. This person must give proper identification, such as a valid driver's license. We will make a copy of their license and keep it in your child's file.

You are responsible for your child's safety entering and exiting the school. Always hold your child's hand.

Please support the school policy that ONLY staff and adults push the "Red Button" that releases the door lock.

Fire Lane - The drive through lane is included in the fire lane for our school. It is against Fire Marshall Ordinances to park and/or leave your car in this lane at any time. This lane is to remain accessible to emergency vehicles at ALL times.

### **General Guidelines for Drive – thru Safety**

“Peak Drive-thru Hours” are very busy and the safety of your child is our highest priority. Therefore, we ask your cooperation in the following:

- Minimize foot traffic; use the drive thru lane during peak hours (8:30 – 8:45, 11:30, 2:30).
- Your child must exit on the School side of the car.
- Parents in the drive through lane must stay in their car.
- School has a designated “pedestrian traffic area” at the front of the drive thru lane; foot traffic is not permitted in-between cars.
- It is a Federal and State Law that all children under 8 years old be buckled in a safety seat. Montessori House fully complies with this law and will not assist any child into a car that does not have a car seat. A copy of the law governing child seats is available in the front office.

### **Attendance**

Regular consecutive attendance and on-time arrivals are essential components of your child’s success in school. A family considering Montessori House for Children should determine if their schedules and family circumstances permit consistent on-time attendance before enrolling in the school.

### **Tardiness**

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

We consider more than five tardies for the year to be problematic. Teachers are expected to speak with parents directly about late arrivals. If there is no improvement, then teachers are expected to inform the administration when tardies are excessive.

Please notify the school of any planned absences or call the front office if your child’s absence is due to illness.

## Communications

Change in contact information – if you have a change of address, e-mail, or phone number, please call, fax or email the Admissions Director, Myriam Vasquez. It is vital that we have current contact information, especially phone numbers in case your child is ill or needing emergency medical treatment.

### School Contact Information

Phone 281.239.3400  
Fax 281.239.3466  
Web [www.montessorihouseforchildren.com](http://www.montessorihouseforchildren.com)  
Address 20625 Lakemont Bend Ln.  
Richmond, TX. 77407

Poison Control (800) 222-1222

### Business Hours

6:30 – 6:00 Reception Hours  
9:00 – 4:30 Admissions Director/School Secretary  
9:00 – 1:00 Business Office (tuition, statements and procurement)  
8:00 – 2:30 School Director (by appointment)  
2:30 – 5:00 (by appointment)

### Communication from School

- E-mail: School statements, notices, policy changes, and newsletters.
- Facebook page: “Montessori House for Children” to receive up-to-date information and important reminders.
- Website: Lunch Menu, School Calendar, Important Dates, School Forms, Parent Resources, Parent Handbook, etc.
- Family Folder (located in the lobby) – this folder is used for extra-curricular communications, birthday invites and weekly communications. Please check your folder on a regular basis.

### Contacting Your Child’s Teacher

We value open and consistent communication regarding your child. During parent orientation, teachers will let you know of the best way to contact them. In general, we use two primary forms:

- Leave a note for your child’s teacher; a timely response will be given.
- Contact via email at [firstname@montessorihouseforchildren.com](mailto:firstname@montessorihouseforchildren.com)

Please avoid:

- Making direct phone calls to the classroom during the school day (8:30 – 2:30)
- Dropping by the classroom to speak to the teacher during the school day
- Holding extended conversations with the teacher in the drive thru line
- Sending oral messages to the teacher via the classroom assistant or admin.

## Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parent/Teacher Conferences are held each Fall and Spring Semester, please see school calendar for the exact dates.

## Proper lines of Communication

For matters related to....

Contact...

School mission and goals, faculty, curriculum, academic counseling, safety and security	School Director Barbara Walleck <a href="mailto:barb@montessorihouseforchildren.com">barb@montessorihouseforchildren.com</a>
School policies and procedures, staff recruitment (employee orientation, training, records),	Training Director Melissa Schlicht <a href="mailto:melissa@montessorihouseforchildren.com">melissa@montessorihouseforchildren.com</a>
Tuition payment and billing, expense reimbursements, check requests, building and grounds maintenance.	Business Manager Pam Nelson <a href="mailto:pam@montessorihouseforchildren.com">pam@montessorihouseforchildren.com</a>
Admissions, Attendance, Student Records, School Access Cards/Codes, parent contact updates	Admissions Director: Myriam Vasquez <a href="mailto:myriam@montessorihouseforchildren.com">myriam@montessorihouseforchildren.com</a>
Child's progress, classroom activities, class procedures and communications	Classroom Lead Teacher <a href="mailto:firstname@montessorihouseforchildren.com">firstname@montessorihouseforchildren.com</a>
Welcome, follow up with visitors, administer medication, staff/student support, liaison with parent committees.	School Receptionist Norma Ortega (morning) <a href="mailto:norma@montessorihouseforchildren.com">norma@montessorihouseforchildren.com</a>
Greet visitors, general front office support, support staff/students	School Receptionist Therese Cardoza (afternoon)
Urgent matters pertaining to before/after school care	Before/after school supervisor Neelofu Surty
School Communications (newsletter, web site, Facebook) and marketing	Social Network/Communications and Marketing <a href="mailto:Ashley@montessorihouseforchildren.com">Ashley@montessorihouseforchildren.com</a>

## School Closings & Other Emergencies

School closings will be posted on web-site, updated through Facebook and left on our school phone answering machine.

## Emergency Management Plan

The emergency management plan will be implemented in response to situations that require us to evacuate the school or the school grounds, or shelter in place. Examples of such situations include fire, severe weather, toxic spills, or acts of wars.

## **Types of Evacuation**

### School Evacuation

Monthly fire drills practice one form of school evacuation. Students exit the building and remain on the Montessori House grounds.

### Campus Evacuation

If necessary, students would evacuate Montessori House grounds and go to McNeil Elementary (next door).

### Shelter In Place

Students and teachers will shelter in place in the event of severe weather, nearby chemical spill, or other events that require us to seek shelter indoors.

In the event of a chemical spill or other airborne hazard, the ventilation system carrying outside air will be shut down.

While sheltering in place, the school will be open as long as students need to be here.

In the event that a shelter-in-place is declared, we strongly discourage parents from coming to the school until instructed to do so.

## **How the School will Communicate with Parents**

In the event of a school wide emergency, parents will be sent a message via email (through our Child Care Manager Data Base). It is important that parents keep the school up-to-date on emergency contact information and an e-mail address that will reach you by day.

## **Classroom Life**

### **Nutrition**

MHFC is a low-sugar facility. This policy is to be followed in breakfasts, snacks, lunches brought to school and in community celebrations (such as birthdays) and special occasions.

The school serves water and milk. Drinks from home must be low sugar, water or milk. Sippy cups are not allowed.

Lunches from home must have ice-packs if containing perishable items; hot items must be in thermal containers (school does not have the ability to heat lunches).

Children are encouraged to eat but will not be forced to do so. Any recurring eating problems will be discussed with the child's parent.

Breakfast, snack and lunch menus are posted in the school and on the web site. Catered hot lunch menus offer vegetarian and halal options.

If special dietary needs or allergies require omitting a nutritional requirement from the school lunch, parents will need to provide a nutritionally complete (see guidelines) lunch from home. All food allergies must be listed in the school enrollment forms.

Breakfasts and lunches from fast food restaurants are not allowed.

- Breakfast is available from 6:30 – 8:00 A.M. for full-day children.
- Snacks are offered mid-morning for all children and mid-afternoon (schedules vary per class) for full-day children. Food prep is also a part of the classroom, and this is in addition to snacks listed on our menu.
- Parents have two lunch options: 1) MHFC offers an optional lunch program from our catered family-style hot lunch provider, or if home provided lunches are preferred, please see the school website for nutritional guidelines of packed lunches from home.

### **Produce Baskets**

Every classroom has weekly rotational schedule for the produce basket (voluntary). Parents are encouraged to offer the class a variety seasonal fruits, vegetables, fresh flowers, etc. (list may be provided).

### **Laundry**

Laundry of all bed linens and toddler training pants is done on-site, weekly or more often as needed.

### **Laundry Baskets (EC)**

Each EC Classroom has 2 daily laundry baskets that are sent home on a rotational basis (voluntary). We use cloth in place of paper when possible and tablecloths to enhance their dining experience. Children are encouraged to fold the laundry, either at home or upon returning to school.

### **Nap**

MHFC provides each child a sleeping mat, fitted sheet and blanket. Replacement mats, if needed, can be purchased at the school. Blankets and bed linens are provided and laundered at the school weekly, or more regularly if needed.

Every child has different sleep needs. Children are required to have a rest period but are not forced to sleep.

Older children (EC community) who exhibit the following abilities will be invited by their teacher (with parent's approval) to join the extended academic period, from 1:00 to 2:30 PM, and become "afternoon workers":

- Strong concentration

- Long attention span (can work for an extended time)
- Controlled behavior (self-discipline)
- Follows instructions well
- Sense of maturity & endurance

Children who are “in-between” will be given the opportunity to engage in a quiet activity after a brief resting period.

### **Dress Code**

MHFC wishes to promote an environment FREE of media influences. Please read our link on the website on TV and the effects on children. Support our effort to protect this environment by dressing children in attire (shirts, shorts, shoes, jackets, etc.) free of popular TV shows, movie characters (Cinderella, Spider Man, Hulk, Dora, Bratz, and other TV/movie stars).

Blinking shoes are not allowed. Toddler “squeaky” shoes are not allowed.

Play clothes are encouraged – simple, washable, sturdy and easy to manage – large buttons, front zippers, front fastening pants, elastic waist band, dresses, and simple belts. This encourages your child’s growing independence and will make dressing a positive experience.

Children should be dressed appropriately for weather, activities and comfort. Painting, gardening, water work and food preparation take place every day.

For younger children, unable to tie, we recommend Velcro, zip or slip-on shoes. Leather shoes and ‘tennis shoes’ are most practical for our playground surface.

Cowboy boots and flip-flops should not be worn, as they are safety concerns for your child and others.

Encourage your child to participate in choosing their own clothes.

Extra clothes (EC)- Each classroom has a supply of “extra clothes” marked MHFC, which are community owned and are there if/when a child gets wet or dirty. If your child wears MHFC labeled clothes home, please return them to school as soon as possible. If your child does bring extra clothes, please put them in a ziplock bag with his/her name on it.

Toddler children – easy on/off clothes. No clothes with snaps-in-the crotch/onesies. Additional guidelines are available from your child’s teacher.

## **Code of Conduct**

We strive to keep the classroom environment a peaceful one. Children have freedom in the classroom so long as the child's behavior is respectful to themselves, others and classroom materials.

Behaviors which are contrary to our CODE OF CONDUCT will be addressed immediately and appropriately:

- Disruptive behavior, which deprives others of learning.
- Intimidation, verbal abuse, physical threats and hurtful acts (such as hitting, punching, kicking or biting).
- Destruction of school property (classroom & playground equipment, supplies).

Teachers will let a child know if he is interfering with another's freedom and/or disrupting the peaceful work environment. The goal of discipline is helping the child gain self control through learning appropriate behavior, rather than forcing the child to conform to adult standards.

In keeping with our above methods, the following guidelines are followed by our guides:

1. Redirect the child to an activity or work that is appropriate and meaningful.
2. Use consistency.
3. Allow for natural consequences to take place that are understood and logical to the child, ex: Cleaning up after a spill.
4. Recognize and encourage concentrated and appropriate efforts.
5. Model appropriate behaviors and actions.
6. Use respect in all contacts with the child – what you say, how you say it and how you act. The State's Minimum Standards specifically forbids corporal punishment, verbal abuse and sarcasm.

We encourage our parents to mirror these basic behaviors at home, to make for consistent environments in your child's main areas of life. While a parent is on school grounds, the above mentioned guidelines must be followed.

In nearly all cases application of the foregoing guidelines will suffice. However, if the behavior of a child is not positively affected by this approach, the following procedures will be followed:

- First occurrence: parent/teacher conference to discuss a plan of action involving the triangle: parents, teacher and child.
- Second occurrence: parent, teacher and director conference to discuss further options available to help the child.
- Third occurrence: It may be determined that the school does not meet the needs of the child and an alternate education setting is suggested.

The school reserves the right to terminate the attendance of any student or family whose presence is considered by the school to be detrimental to the best interest of the school. The school reserves the right to ask a parent to collect their child from school as

an appropriate action when the child is displaying harmful behavior. Any meetings between family/teacher/director will be documented for use of all sides.

## **Possessions**

### What Not to Bring to School

- Backpacks
- Toys/Stuffed Animals
- Sippy cups, bottles or pacifiers
- Accessories that cause distraction for others
- Valuables

### What to Bring to School

- Items of interest (EC children have “show & tell” every Friday)
- Please see your community packet, Toddler or EC, for specific items needed for school.

## **Lost and Found**

Unlabeled lost/found items are kept in a small box located in the Lobby. When full, these items are donated to charity.

## **Birthdays**

The Early Childhood (EC) communities celebrate birthdays the “Montessori Way”. The birthday child is the ‘center of attention’ of his/her class by holding the globe and walking around a “sun” and the months of the year as a story of his/her life is read. This is a lovely and natural way to symbolically experience the passing of years and the child thoroughly enjoys this. Each class has its own variation of this theme. Please talk to your child’s teacher ahead of time, if you wish to participate. A low sugar snack or fruit tray may be brought to celebrate the occasion.

The Toddler communities may also bring a low sugar snack to share with their class and we also suggest donating a book or other item to the class in honor of their child’s Birthday.

Balloons, class decorations, goodie bags, paid entertainment and high sugar snacks are not allowed in class.

Birthday Party Invites – Please request a class directory so that you may mail invitations directly to families or leave them in the family folder in front lobby. Invitations are not to go into a classroom.

## **Community Celebrations**

Celebrations involving parents are integral to the life of the school. Many of these celebrations revolve around the activities of individual classes, while others bring the larger community together. Whether small and informal or organized for the whole school, celebrations and rituals highlight and affirm the values and vision of our school.

The Montessori view of cultural celebrations is that with knowledge comes understanding. Building community based on this understanding and respect will further our goal of a peaceful world community.

### **Study of Living Things**

At Montessori House for Children we study and observe an assortment of plants, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds, fish and mammals. If your child has an allergy to animal or plant, please notify the front desk.

### **Water Play & Safety**

At Montessori House for Children we enjoy many aspects of water; from actual work in the indoor classroom and in our “outdoor classroom”/ (watering gardens) to playing in sprinklers and water tables. For the safety of your child, we will limit water activities to aforementioned uses and will not have wading pools on school premises.

### **Social Media Policy**

MHFC has a privacy policy which does not allow discussion of current or former members of the community – staff, children or parents. Parents who post pictures of children from the school must have permission from that child’s parent to do so. Children should not be named in postings. For your family’s protection, we advise against posting travel schedules, daily routines and personal information on the social media.

To maintain the professional relationship between parent and teacher, please do not ask staff members to be “friends” on the social media.

## **Health & Safety**

### **Fire & Severe Weather Drills**

Fire drills are conducted monthly. The evacuation route is posted in each room. In threatening weather, our front office monitors weather bulletins and calls an alert through the intercom if a bad weather drill is needed. The severe weather rooms are indicated throughout the building. These drills are conducted on a routine basis, following the State and Local regulations.

### **Necessary Health Records**

Students will not be able to attend school until we have the necessary forms on file, including:

- Emergency Release Authorization
- Health Inquiry Form
- Current Immunization Record

### **When to keep a child home**

We are not licensed to provide get-well care or to isolate children who cannot participate in school activities.

- If your child's illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in the normal activities of the day (including outdoor play), your child should not be brought to school.
- If your child is required to have more than one breathing treatment/ medicine treatment per day.

If your child has one of the following, unless medical evaluation by a health-care professional indicates that you can include the child in the child-care center's activities:

- Oral temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater, accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness;
- Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea, two or more vomiting episodes in 24 hours, rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, behavior changes, or other signs that the child may be severely ill.
- If your child has had to have fever reducing medicine or has had fever within the past 24 hours.
- Pink Eye Policy-If your child has one or both eyes that are itchy, red or crusty, **DO NOT BRING THEM TO SCHOOL.** If a child develops any signs of eye infections, the parent will be called to pick up the child. Children going home due to possible eye infections shall remain home for at least 24 hours before returning to school and have at least 3 doses of medicine, or a note from their pediatrician saying when they may return to school.

When returning to school after an illness, please let the school front office know of the nature of the illness and that your child has been cleared to return to normal activities at school.

### **Illness**

Should your child become ill during the course of the day, you will be notified immediately. You must arrange to have him picked up as soon as possible – we are NOT licensed to provide care for sick children. Your child will await your arrival in a safe area away from other children.

Children sent home due to fever or vomiting/diarrhea must be symptom free and without need for fever reducing medicine for 24 hrs. before coming back to school. We will provide you an "Illness Report" letting you know what symptoms your child experienced at school. This note will explain the 24 hr. rule for returning to school.

If your child has been diagnosed with a communicable illness, please notify the school so that the other parents can be alerted to watch for symptoms.

When returning to school after an illness, please let us know the nature of the illness and that he has been cleared to return to normal activities at school.

## **Guidelines for Head Lice**

Treatment: Parents/guardians should consult their physician, pharmacist or Texas Lice Squad for advice on the proper use of an approved medicated shampoo for the head lice.

Exclude from attendance: Yes

Re-admission Criteria: Student's scalp is free of lice and nits.

## **Accidents and Emergencies**

Should your child be injured while at the school we will advise you as soon as possible. Our first and immediate concern will be to care for your child. Depending upon the severity of the injury, you will be contacted and consulted about the procedures you want followed (doctor or hospital etc.). All of our staff members have been trained and certified in both First Aid and CPR.

All significant incidents, accidents, injuries and illnesses will be documented on a "Incident/Illness Report" and the parents will receive a copy to be signed; one copy will remain at school and the bottom copy will go home with the parent.

## **Medications**

The school administers prescription medications only.

Medications are to come into the school in their original container with prescription date, doctor's name and child's name. These are checked in at the front desk and a Medical Authorization Form filled out (also located on our web-site)

Any exceptions need to be accompanied by a written doctor's note indicating dosage for the child.

Prescriptions and breathing treatments are given once in the day, after lunch.

Medications, such as diaper rash crème etc, will be handled on a case basis.

## **Hearing and Vision Screening**

State requires all children age 4 by September 1<sup>st</sup> receive vision/hearing screening. We provide this screening at the beginning of the school year or you may obtain on your own and provide the school with results.

## **Child Abuse Reporting**

State Law and Licensing requirements state that child care facilities are required to report immediately to the police or Child Protective Services (CPS) if they suspect child abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Child Abuse Hotline           (800) 252-5400 or [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us)

Local Licensing office (713) 940-3009

The Director has available a copy of the minimum standards and Montessori House for Children's (MHFC's) most recent Licensing inspection report.

### **Smoking**

Smoking is not permitted on school property or at school related functions.

### **Building Security**

Our school has two security systems. The first is a badge that allows entry into the building, the second is a sign-in PIN code that automatically signs your child in and opens the interior door.

At all times except drive through times, you should use your badge. Always have your badge with you. The doorbell is primarily for visitors. If you misplace your badge, please request a new badge – replacement badges can be purchased at cost.

All visitors and volunteers must be checked-in through the front office and are accompanied from there by a staff member. Family members (other than parents) who wish to visit must have parental permission and should be arranged in advance. We ask all families to please keep in mind that when a child sees a family member at school, they think it's time to go home.

### **Gang-Free Zone**

Texas House Bill 2086 requires all schools and child care centers to notify parents/guardians that gang related criminal activity or anyone engaging in organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of a child care center is in violation of the law and is subject to increased penalty under state law.

### **Transportation**

Our school has a policy that no enrolled child be transported to or from the school by faculty. We do not transport children to outside events. Rather, we have outside event providers come to the school for special programs.

### **Babysitting, Attending Childrens' Parties**

Babysitting and/or attending childrens' parties by staff members is strongly discouraged. If you have references to offer for mother's helpers, babysitters or nannies, please post your referrals in our parent resource book.

*"Free the child's potential, and you will transform him into the world"*  
.....*Maria Montessori*



**Parent Acknowledgment Form  
2011/2012 School Year**

We, the parents of \_\_\_\_\_ have received/viewed the Parent Handbook for this school year and the tuition schedule. By our signature we indicate our understanding and acceptance of school policies listed in these documents, especially the policies pertaining to:

**Attendance:** **Classes start promptly 8:30 a.m.** All children are expected to arrive on time. Parents will be called to talk about consistency if a child's attendance becomes a problem.

**Dress Code:** MHFC wishes to promote an environment FREE of media influences. Support our effort to protect this environment by dressing children in attire (shirts, shorts, shoes, jackets, etc.) free of popular TV shows, movie characters. Play clothes are encouraged – simple, washable, sturdy and easy to manage. Light up shoes and "squeaky" shoes are not permitted as they cause distraction to the learning environment.

**Safety:** For arrivals and dismissals at our drive-through lanes, children shall exit only on the School side of the car. The school does not permit pedestrian traffic through the car lane during drive-through time. If you wish to walk your child into the building, you may come a few minutes before drive-through, or park along the driveway next to the future recreation field.

**Medications:** The school administers prescription medications only. All medications are checked in at the front office. Parent must fill out a Medical Authorization Form (can be downloaded from website and filled out ahead of time). Exceptions for over the counter medications must be accompanied with a doctor's note indicating dosage for the child.

**Financial Policy:** School Enrollment assumes good faith intent to attend a complete academic school year. **There is no reduction of tuition for absences due to illness, vacations, early withdrawal or any other extended absence from school.** The tuition schedule with registration and associated school fees is provided each family at time of application to the school. School tuition for the academic year is based on an academic year total divided into monthly payments. Tuition is due the 1<sup>st</sup> of the each month. Statements are sent monthly via e-mail. Cash, check, money order or a bill paying service through your bank or credit union are the preferred methods of payment. The school has a locked tuition box just inside the front door. Tuition Schedule shows cash discount tuition, which means any payment that is not credit card. Credit cards payments are listed separately as Base Tuition on the Schedule. Tuition is late after 3 calendar days. A late fee of \$25 is applied after the grace period. The school reserves the right to suspend attendance or withdraw a child if tuition is not paid by the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month. A bank service fee of \$25 is charged for returned checks. All admission/re-enrollment and summer activity fees and pre-paid special events fees are non-refundable. Children who withdraw during the school year and wish to re-join the school, will need to re-enroll.

**Communications:** School statements, notices, policy changes, and newsletters are sent via e-mail, so please keep us informed of contact information changes – This is our primary means of communicating quickly with our families.

**Please check your family folder regularly.** This folder is used for incident reports, extra-curricular communications, Birthday invites & weekly communications. Please check these folders daily if full-day and at least weekly if you will use driver-through at dismissal time.

If you have a question about your child, leave a note (in front office) for your child's teacher. Notes are delivered to teacher in-box or delivered to class if the matter is urgent. Your child's teacher will contact you within a 24 hr. period.

**Our child's enrollment affirms our family's acceptance of MHFC's policies.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date