

# UNIVERSITY MONTESSORI SCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK

## **The Montessori Approach to Education**

Maria Montessori was one of the great pioneers in the study of child development. Upon graduation from Rome Medical School in 1896, Dr. Montessori applied rigorous scientific study to her observations and in 1907 began her innovative approach with a group of children in the slum area of San Lorenzo in Rome. Within a year, her accomplishments with these children earned worldwide acclaim and became a landmark in the education of young children. She trained a generation of teachers and wrote 25 books on her theory and practice and today Montessori schools flourish all over the world.

Montessori education is based on beliefs about human development and human relationships that facilitate teaching and learning. Respect is fundamental – respect for each person, for the environment, and for life. Respect leads to trust, which is essential for learning and growth. Learning and teaching are seen as inseparable, as are self, family and the world community.

In the Montessori approach, children are given ample time and opportunity to explore and work at their own pace and in their own learning style. Classroom activities are designed to encourage involvement, autonomy and risk-taking. As children make choices and become engaged with their work, they acquire a positive attitude toward learning that sets the foundation for life-long education.

## **The Mission of University Montessori School**

University Montessori School is a diverse, family-centered school community that embodies the best practices of Montessori education in facilitating the academic, emotional, physical and social development of each child. In an atmosphere of respect and warmth, parents, teachers and children collaborate to nurture an enduring love of learning and a view of the responsibilities and possibilities of life. We are a welcoming community in which children and adults find friendship and support, a place where all are encouraged to broaden their understanding of themselves and others.

## **School History and Organization: Board of Directors**

University Montessori School was founded in 1978 and moved to its current location in 1990. The school was incorporated as a non-profit organization on January 1, 1996, and is governed by a Board of Directors, which sets school policy. The school's Director provides a link between the Board, teachers, and parents and implements Board policy on a day-to-day basis. Communication is open in all directions – parents, teachers, and the Board of Directors collaborate in the operation of the UMS community.

The Board of Directors actively encourages parents to communicate with Board members and to attend Board meetings. Meetings are held the fourth Monday of the month at 7 p.m. in the Upstairs Classroom every month except for December and June. Minutes are posted monthly.

## **The Program at University Montessori School**

Our classrooms are mixed-age groups with a focus on global community. The curriculum and practices implemented through the environment and materials are designed to empower all participants as teachers and learners. Children are initiating, doing, talking, and sharing in a space that is theirs, with the guidance of their teachers. Mixed-age groupings enable children to learn from one another, gain autonomy, and develop confidence. Having a diverse ethnic mix prepares children to accept, respect, and understand themselves and others in our global community. The foundation of the classroom is the instruction given in grace and courtesy.

Classroom activities are carefully designed to focus on the development of specific skills and concepts. We expose children to a wide range of intellectual, social, and physical activities, and give them long blocks of uninterrupted time. They learn to ask questions and to seek explanations, to focus their attention on an interest, to work independently or with classmates, to solve problems, and to discover the joy of learning. In this way the children take responsibility for their own learning. Discipline is seen as the process of helping a child to control his or her behavior so that s/he may interact with others and the environment in a positive and respectful way. The classroom environment itself promotes discipline in its child-centered design, appropriate activities, and teachers' modeling of appropriate behavior and language. If the child is having difficulty, the teachers will help by redirecting the child to a positive activity or by gently removing the child from the group until s/he feels ready to rejoin.

The curriculum is rich in opportunities. The *Practical Life* materials enable children to learn how to care for themselves and their environment. The *Sensorial* materials develop children's perceptual and sensory abilities and refine their observation skills. *Language* materials and activities encompass speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The *Math* curriculum is concrete and develops a solid concept of numeracy. Other curricula areas are *Science*, *Art*, *Music*, and *Cultural Geography*. Throughout the year materials are revised and expanded in response to the children's needs and interests.

## **The Teacher's Role**

Montessori teachers recognize the importance of each child's early experiences in the formation of an emotionally healthy, responsible adult. We see our role as nurturing the tremendous potential of each individual, and supporting the child in the task of inner development. To do this, Montessori teachers must be exceptionally well-prepared—to have a clear understanding of child development and the learning process, to have excellent communication skills, to be able to observe and to individualize the curriculum, to design the classroom's physical environment, and to support parents in our collaboration around the education of their children. At University Montessori School, our community of teachers is committed to these objectives.

## **Kindergarten**

In the Montessori classroom, older and younger children interact freely, and there are many benefits for all ages. It is also important for the older children to spend some time independently from the younger ones. In the afternoons, the kindergartners have an opportunity to explore new social relationships and further explore all areas of the curriculum. It is the time when a very special blossoming of social, emotional, and cognitive growth occurs. It is, in fact, the culmination of the three-year developmental cycle of a Montessori classroom. The younger children benefit from the leadership and experience of the older children, and when their turn comes for kindergarten, they are able to give back in full measure what has been given to them. This year prepares the child for first grade, and establishes a strong foundation for all future schooling.

During kindergarten the children work with advanced math and language materials, and are involved with group projects in art, cooking, science, and other areas. We also explore the community on field trips. Parent involvement in our special activities is encouraged. Field trip transportation is by individual parent drivers. Teachers carry an emergency kit with all items necessary as required by state regulations. Each parent who drives must have an authorization form on file with the office. All children must be properly secured in a car seat provided by the parent which is age and size appropriate.

## **What Happens After Kindergarten at University Montessori?**

We believe it is our responsibility to help children and their parents make a smooth transition to their next school. The Director and teachers are available to all families to help them through the sometime complex decision-making process. We want to help each family select the best possible next school for their child.

Children leaving University Montessori attend a variety of public and private schools. Our goal is that they are as well prepared as possible to continue learning in any educational setting. We hope that they feel confident and eager to continue a lifetime of fulfilling their potential as individuals and as responsible world citizens.

## **After Care**

After Care begins at noon for children not enrolled in Kindergarten and is available until 5:30 based on the parents' needs. Space is limited and is arranged at the time of enrollment. After Care is a time to rest, relax, and play with friends under the watchful eye of caring and well-trained adults. After Care continues the Montessori theories and practices, but the Montessori materials are not used. Activities include artwork, building materials, dramatic play, games, and special projects. Outdoor play is available as weather permits and forms a significant part of each afternoon. After Care is meant to replicate the afternoon a child might have if s/he were home in a neighborhood with playmates. The school provides a snack.

## **Drop In Care**

Occasionally a child enrolled needs to stay for a longer day due to parental need. Drop-in Care is available at an hourly rate (see Schedule of Fees) or portion of an hour **with the prior approval of the Director or Assistant Director**. Payment is expected at the time of pick-up and should be accompanied by the Drop-in Care Form. A supply of those forms is kept in the wire basket by the mailboxes. Cash payments accompanying the form must be given to a staff member. Checks may be placed in the Tuition Box.

## Summer Program

UMS offers a Summer Program that focuses on fun and enrichment. The Montessori philosophy continues to guide the program, but the Montessori materials are stored until the next school year. Teachers may choose to be involved in the Program or may use that time for personal renewal. UMS hires the director(s) and the staff and oversees the program. Themes are chosen based on the interests of the staff and the current population of students. Summer usually ends with two weeks of a special focus on Japan that is taught by our friends from the Japanese School of Charlottesville who share our space on Thursday afternoons during the school year.

The Summer Program provides a way for children to continue their development in all areas of growth in an environment that is geared specifically to their needs. It provides balance to the school year by being similar in routines and practices, but different in focus and activities. First year children who are newly enrolled for the fall are encouraged to enroll for at least one two-week session of Summer Camp and are invited beginning in the third week of camp. Kindergarteners may attend only the first two-week session after their graduation.

## SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### Daily Schedule

8:30 – 9:00	Arrival	1:00 – 3:00	Extended Kindergarten
8:30 – 11:30	Work Cycle and Group Time	1:00 – 2:30	Aftercare Nap
11:30 – 12:00	Playground	2:30 – 4:00	Aftercare Outdoor Time
12:00 – 12:30	Lunch	4:00	Aftercare Snack
12:30 – 1:00	Playground	4:15 – 5:15	Aftercare Playtime
		5:30	End of Day

### Arrival and Dismissal

**School begins at 8:30 a.m.** Children may be dropped off in the morning between 8:30 and 9:00, but **IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT CHILDREN ARRIVE BEFORE 9:00!** For safety reasons, the parent is responsible for delivering the child to a teacher in the morning, whether on the playground or at the classroom door. The teachers are busy preparing the classrooms until 8:30 and are not available until that time. On days we begin outside, children arriving late miss important playtime. On days we begin in the classroom, children arriving late distract others already engaged in work, and may miss special activities. After 9:00, teachers are not at the door and children must be brought to the director's office for check-in. The director will escort late children to the classroom. In the absence of the director, please bring your child to the classroom door as quietly as possible and make eye contact with the teachers so they know the child has arrived. For the upstairs classroom, the door is through the coatroom. For late arrivals to the downstairs classroom, please use the inside stairwell and allow your child to proceed into the classroom alone. The coatroom doors in the downstairs classroom are locked after 9:00 for safety.

For the first several days of a new school year and on Fridays, weather permitting, we will meet on the playground in the morning. From past experience, we have found that this works best when 5 to 10 minutes after arrival, you say goodbye and leave. It is important to let your child know that you will be back shortly. It is expected that your demeanor will send the

message that ‘this is OK’ and that you trust the people with whom you are leaving him/her. Please take time to read the handout “Understanding Separation” also on in this packet and on our website. Even from the very first day, we ask that you allow your child to enter the coatroom on his/her own. It is exclusively your child’s responsibility, and the teachers will always help as needed. The classroom and the coatroom function as The Children’s House, or in Montessori’s native tongue, the *Casa dei Bambini*. This is the child’s space exclusively with the teacher acting as a guide and facilitator. Please help your child establish routines that allow for an independent and successful transition to the classroom.

After an adjustment period of several days (or in the event of inclement weather), please escort your child to the coatroom door and a teacher will be there to greet you both. Say your goodbyes outside, and allow your child to enter the classroom to start his/her morning independently. If you would like to know how your child is faring after drop-off, please do not hesitate to telephone the school for an update. If we feel a child is overly stressed in this new situation, we will call you and possibly suggest a ‘short morning’ for that day. Children and parents are encouraged to formally greet the director at the gate and the teacher at the coatroom door with a polite good morning and/or a handshake. Please assist your child with this by following the staff’s lead, allowing the child to accomplish this task independently, and understanding that we must respect the child’s own development of this process.

**Children must be picked up on time.** Pick-up times are as follows: 11:45 – 12:00; 12:45 – 1:00; 2:45 – 3:00; and, for our full-day students, any time **before** 5:30. (Aftercare children should not be picked up during naptime, which is between 1:00 and 2:30). Our schedule is such that the staff needs to be free to move on to the next task. If you are unavoidably late, please call the school. We can then let you know who will be with your child when you do arrive. If you need to make a change in who is picking up your child, please let us know with a note in the morning or a phone call. There is a notebook kept in the carport to facilitate this communication. Children will only be released to individuals specified by the parents. In the event that a child is not picked up by 5:30 every attempt will be made to contact the parent or the designated emergency contacts to make arrangements. The afternoon staff will be responsible for the care of the child until that child is picked up. Every attempt will be made to make the director aware of the situation.

### **Parking and Parking Lot Safety**

Parking is limited and is especially problematic at drop-off and pick up times. Trinity Presbyterian Church allows us the use of their parking lot and this is the best choice. **We do reserve the school parking lot for those with younger siblings who are waiting in the car.** We maintain a path through the woods from the church parking lot. It is essential that you hold your child’s hand until you both arrive at the carport gate and are safely inside it. Again at pick-up time, do not open the gate until your child is holding your hand. Children are not allowed to open any gates – that is a grown-up’s job. Despite all precautions, we have had fender benders in the lot and on Reservoir Road as people come in and go out. Please do not leave your engine running in the parking lot while you are dropping off. This is dangerous and fouls the air unnecessarily.

### **Playground Safety**

Our playground, built during the 2002-03 school year, was designed by the staff to continue the model of the prepared environment from the classroom to the out of doors. All

children are expected to use the playground with the same respect they use in the classroom. Children are shown how to use the climber safely and to go down the slides on their bottoms and feet first. Jumping off the climber and chase games on the climber are not allowed. Children are shown how to swing forward while sitting on their bottoms and holding on with two hands and are not allowed to twist the swings, nor stand on them, nor swing on their stomachs. Children are shown how to hold the railing while walking up and down the stairs, and are only allowed to throw balls – not toys, mulch, or sand. Trikes are ridden in designated areas marked by cones and are not to be used as scooters. In addition to the sandbox, digging is allowed in the two far eastern corners of the upper playground. Rough, threatening aggression of any kind is not allowed. Please maintain these guidelines when you are with your child on the playground.

### **Health and Illness**

UMS shall obtain documentation that each child has received the immunizations required by the State Board of Health before the child can attend. Each child is required to have on file a record of a physical examination that has taken place within twelve months prior to attending UMS. Updated information on additional immunizations shall be obtained once between each child's fourth and sixth birthdays and be on file at the office.

If a child becomes ill or is seriously injured during class, we will notify the parents immediately. Minor injuries are documented and reported to the parents on the day they occur, usually by email. A written record is kept in the office. (Simple comfort which may include a band aid or icepack for an imagined injury is part of the everyday experience of young children and is not documented or reported to the parents as a specific event at the time of occurrence.) Please do *not* send a child to school with: **fever, rash, sore throat, thick nasal discharge, vomiting, or diarrhea**. Children may not return to school until they are fever free without medication for **24 hours**. The number one indicator of a child's wellness is their ability to handle the program.

**Medications** will be given to a child only with the written consent of a parent. Any medication that is to be kept on hand at all times or is to be given for a period of ten days or longer also requires a physician's original signature (a stamp is not acceptable, but a fax or photocopy is). Medication shall be labeled with the child's name, the name of the medication, the dosage amount, the route of administration (topical or oral), and the time or times to be given. Medication shall be in the original container with the prescription or direction label attached. When needed, medication shall be refrigerated. Parents must provide a calibrated dosing spoon or dropper, labeled with the child's name for liquid medication. Parents will be notified immediately of any adverse reactions or any medication error. When an authorization for medication expires, the medication needs to be picked up within 14 days or the parent must renew the authorization. Medications that are not picked up by the parent within 14 days will be disposed of by the school. All medications are to be given directly to the director or to a staff member with Medication Administration Training for storage. **The Medication Authorization Form must be completely and correctly filled out before the medication indicated can be given.**

**Sunscreen** can be applied with the parent's written authorization noting any adverse reactions. Sunscreen must be labeled with the child's name and must be in the original container. Children may not apply their own sunscreen at school.

**Insect repellent** can be applied with written parental authorization noting any adverse reactions. It shall be in the original container and labeled with the child's name.

**Head lice** can be a problem at any school and we have a “no nit” policy to guard against large outbreaks. We ask that parents let us know if their child or a sibling has this problem so that we may be vigilant.

It is a state requirement that the parent(s)/guardian(s) agree to inform the school within 24 hours or the next business day after the enrolled child or any member of the immediate household has developed a reportable communicable disease, as defined by the State Board of Health, except for life threatening diseases which must be reported immediately. A Communicable Disease Reference chart with further health and safety policies is posted at the school for parent and staff use.

All staff at University Montessori is mandated by the state to report any suspicion of child abuse.

### **Toileting**

It is expected that the child be toilet trained before entering school. If a child is not, we will work with the child and family to achieve this goal. Please keep in close touch with the staff as this issue is resolved. Children are shown how to use the toilet at school, how to wipe themselves, to wash hands, and how to manage if an accident occurs. Children are given the assistance they need in order that this learning is positive and that it furthers the child’s competence and independence. If your child has a toileting accident, we handle it in the following way: 1) we assure the child that accidents do happen, 2) we teach the child how to clean himself/herself up and change clothes. We will provide a bag for the soiled clothes. Teachers are available to assist as needed.

### **Clothing**

Please keep your child’s clothing simple, practical and easy for the child to manage when using the bathroom. We go outside every day unless it is raining or icy. The children need to have appropriate clothing for the weather and shoes and clothes suitable for hard playing. Appropriate footwear for running is especially important. We highly recommend Velcro fasteners on shoes for children unable to tie. Please mark coats and boots with your child’s name. Because we have many practical life works involving water, slippers are a necessity to ensure dry feet (shoes stay ‘toes to the wall’ in the coatroom). Please take time to make sure that slippers are comfortable, lightweight with soles, and are easy to put on. Slippers should be of a kind that is not a distraction in the classroom, i.e., they should not light up, make noise, or be easily mistaken for a toy. Please mark each slipper with your child’s name. Every child should bring a **labeled** change of clothes to keep in a small bag provided by the school: 1 pair socks, 1 pair underwear, 1 pair pants/shorts, 1 shirt. Children enrolled in aftercare will have a separate cubby for a **duplicate** set of extra clothing (see next section). The school also keeps a supply of extra clothing that can be borrowed as necessary and returned promptly after laundering.

### **After Care, Nap, and Cubbies**

Children in afternoon care eat a lunch brought from home and those staying past one o’clock also have a rest period. Please bring a picture of your child to attach to a cubby provided by the school, a seasonal change of clothes, and a blanket for resting. We provide sheets that are washed weekly or more often if necessary. A **small, soft** toy (preferably one that can be left at school) and a small pillow **with a removable case** may be brought for rest time. Blankets and pillowcases should be taken home weekly, washed, and returned. We ask that you

use a tote bag to transport nap items back and forth to school. We refer to this as the Nap Bag. Afternoon snack is served.

## **Food**

Each morning (and afternoon for those enrolled in aftercare), we offer the children a nutritious snack. It is not a substitute for breakfast. Please have your child eat before school and leave his or her unfinished breakfast at home. Parents are asked to provide snack for the entire class during one week per year (see section on Child of the Week). Children who bring their lunches to school should bring a nutritious lunch that includes food from all the major food groups: this is a requirement of the Department of Social Services, under which we are licensed. Lunches at UMS are to be as healthy and sugar free and as environmentally friendly as possible. This means we do not allow sugar drinks, chocolate milk, cookies, cakes, puddings, jello, chips or items with excessive packaging such as Lunchables and Go-gurts. We will ask that such items be taken home. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter as it develops healthy, earth-friendly habits right from the beginning. We encourage the use of easy to open re-useable containers and cloth napkins. We will always assist children who need help.

## **Personal Belongings from Home and Mystery Items from School**

Books, CDs, tapes, and items related to units of study are welcome. Please label them clearly. Toys, candy, jewelry, money and other belongings should NOT be brought to the classroom or the playground. Such items will be kept in the Director's office until they are claimed.

Please return any pieces of school equipment or "mystery objects" your child may bring home! The equipment is unusable until the piece is replaced.

## **Birthdays**

Birthdays are acknowledged in a very low-key manner at school. Often the child's Child of the Week celebration coincides with the child's birthday, but no other special celebration is held. Invitations to private parties outside of school may be discretely delivered without the children's knowledge to the parent mailboxes in the carport. We discourage children from discussing their parties in order that the uninvited are spared hurt feelings. Like all of life's hard lessons, we help the children understand the reality that not everyone can be invited and that a person can still be your friend and not be able to invite you to their party. If your child would like to donate a book, puzzle, plant, etc. to the school in honor of his or her birthday, please do! This is a time-honored tradition and we can make suggestions for gifts.

## **Finances**

Tuition payments are due on the first of the month. **A \$10 late fee is assessed for payments made after the fifth of the month.** Please deposit tuition in the collection box provided in the carport or mail payments to the school. When paying cash, please obtain a receipt. The fee schedule is posted near the tuition collection box. The school encourages payment in full at the beginning of the year as well as semester payments. We are happy to sign forms for reimbursement. Please present them to the director in a timely fashion. Our Tax ID Number is 54-1782012.

Enrollment and materials fees are due with the Enrollment Contract. An enrollment fee is collected each year in order to secure a spot for the following academic year. Enrollment fees and materials fees are not refundable.

Our budget is funded almost exclusively by tuition payments and our greatest expense is teachers' salaries. There is an expectation that our community of parents, grandparents, staff, board, and alumni contribute to our fundraising events. We also depend on donations of gifts in kind (both services and goods), and the community is encouraged to speak with the director regarding contributions of all kinds. A wish list is maintained and special needs are posted.

### **Withdrawal Policy**

The Director may request the withdrawal of a child at any time if in her opinion the child's enrollment is inappropriate. A request for withdrawal will only be made after prior consultation with the parents and other staff regarding the child. If a withdrawal is made at the request of the Director, no financial obligation remains on the part of the parents or the school. For new students there is an initial trial period for the family and the school to determine if enrollment at UMS is in the best interest of the child. The trial period is 30 calendar days from the first day of enrollment or until October 1, whichever is later, and parents are responsible for 20% of the full annual tuition if they decide to withdraw the child.

### **Scholarships**

A committee of the board of directors meets to determine scholarship awards and loan approvals that can also include a trade for work at the school. Applications are available from the director. All such information is kept confidential.

In 1999, the Michele Mattioli Scholarship and Loan Fund was established in honor of our long time former director and contributions to that fund can be made at any time.

### **Communications**

The better the communication between parents and teachers, the better your child is served. If there are any changes in your child's home environment, such as a parent on a trip, the death of a pet, etc., please tell us. Such disruptions often influence behavior, and we should be aware of them. During the school year we have regularly scheduled Parent-Teacher Conferences. We are also available throughout the year to schedule a conference when the need arises. Staff phone numbers are also included in this handbook for those questions and concerns that can be handled best by a quick, immediate response in the evening or on the weekend.

The Director is available every morning to greet the children and this is a good time for a quick question. It is also possible to schedule a longer time to meet with the Director any time during the day and especially at 9 a.m. after greeting. This time is generally reserved for current parents for either a scheduled or impromptu meeting. Visits for prospective parents usually are scheduled for 9:30. Teachers are available for brief communications at drop-off if that does not interfere with the children's routine. Teachers may also be available at the 11:45, 12:45 and 2:45 pick up times. If you leave a message that you need to speak with a teacher, please let her know when is a good time to reach you and at what number. Teachers usually have time in the afternoon to return calls. Interrupting the morning work time to speak with a teacher is not recommended, but the Director is available at that time. E-mail at the school is checked regularly. The school maintains two email addresses: [ums@universitymontessori.org](mailto:ums@universitymontessori.org) and [director@universitymontessori.org](mailto:director@universitymontessori.org).

In order that we may reach you in an emergency, the Emergency Form must be filled out completely and kept up to date at all times. **The state requires two (2) emergency contacts that include BOTH phone numbers AND addresses of these contacts and that the phone numbers be different.** For example, you cannot list two grandparents at the same emergency number. That only counts as one contact.

We have established a mailbox for each family and staff member. We will distribute newsletters and other information in these boxes throughout the year. A notebook is kept near the mailboxes to leave notes for the staff regarding pick-up changes, planned absences, and other important information. Bulletin boards are kept for school and community wide information. If you wish to post something on the board, please give it to the Director.

Please make it a habit to check the wipe-off board that is kept in the carport for reminders and news.

### **School Closings and Emergencies**

School closings due to inclement weather or emergencies are announced on radio, television, by group email, and the school's voice mail and website (if electric power allows). In most cases, if BOTH the city and county schools are closed, we will be, too. In an emergency situation we will call and notify parents as well as the media. In the event that we need to evacuate our building we will use Trinity Presbyterian Church as emergency shelter and we will call and notify all parents. Days missed due to inclement weather are not made up.

### **Parent Education and Involvement**

We will work closely with you to give your child the best experience possible. Parents are welcome and are encouraged to visit the school throughout the year after the class has settled. In fact, custodial parents are allowed to visit the school any time the child is present. We will let you know when we feel the classroom routines have been established in order that non-disruptive visits may occur. We also ask that parent visits be limited to one parent at a time per classroom and that the frequency of visits be mindful of the child's need to develop independence and a sense of the classroom as the Children's House. Sign up sheets are kept for each classroom. Visiting time is from 8:30 to 9:15 and 1:15 – 2:00 in the extended kindergarten. Please let your child know that you must see if there is room on the sign up sheet for a visit rather than make a promise you can't keep. It is expected that observers sit in the designated observer's chair and view the entire class. When in the classroom, we ask that parents are as unobtrusive as possible, speak in quiet voices, and **observe** their child at work, rather than **choose** or **direct** his/her work.

It is important that at least one parent attend each of the parent meetings scheduled throughout the year. Parents find these meetings valuable in understanding their child's time in school and their development in all areas. Please give us feedback regarding such evenings as we are always seeking suggestions for topics to be covered. If there is a special interest group, we are more than happy to find a time to meet for interested parties. Please see the Director with suggestions.

Parent Conferences are held in the fall and in the spring. School is closed on Parent Conference days and parents sign up for a thirty-minute conference with both classroom teachers where your child's development is discussed. A written summary of the conference is provided afterwards for both the fall and the spring meetings. Additional conferences may be scheduled as needed.

The Board of Directors has organized committees that include Budget and Finance, Facilities, Fundraising, Community Events, and Personnel and Policy. (Further description is available on a separate sheet in this handbook). Parents are encouraged to become involved in this very important committee work. Please see the Director or contact a board member if you wish to be involved in this way.

Occasionally, we need substitutes when one of our teachers has to be absent. We greatly appreciate parent volunteers as substitutes and find that parents enjoy the experience. We also have an opportunity for parents to help supervise the children at lunch on the playground each Friday during the staff meeting. This is a regularly scheduled time usually about every four to six weeks. Please let us know if you are available to help out as a substitute and/or Friday volunteer.

Many excellent books and pamphlets about Montessori education and parenting young children are available for you to borrow at any time. Please see the Director.

### **Child of the Week**

Each child will have a turn to be “Child of the Week”. A schedule will be posted shortly after the start of school and teachers will give you detailed information about this very special event well in advance of your child’s week. Please be sure and note when your child will be having his or her turn as “Child of the Week”. It is expected that you schedule time to visit the classroom during this week. Please sign up on the Classroom Observation sheet by the mailboxes. We encourage you to bring in a timeline of photographs of your child’s life to share and keep in the classroom for the week. It is so special for your child to see his or her growth over the years. This is also the week you are responsible for the classroom snack. The teachers will provide you with a list of snack items well in advance. In the event that we have children with allergies to peanuts, none of our snacks will include peanuts.

### **Fair Weather Fridays and other Friday Specials**

It has long been a tradition that classes meet on the playground on Fridays when the weather permits. This celebrates the end of another wonderful week of school and parents are encouraged to spend extra time playing with their children, their children’s friends, visiting with other parents and checking in with the teachers and the Director. It is also a time when your child may invite you into the classroom to show you a special work that has been recently introduced or mastered.

Fridays are also traditionally the day that the Child of the Week Sun Celebrations take place, that work from folders goes home, that there is no extended kindergarten and that the staff meets while special staff and parents attend the children who stay for lunch and aftercare.

### **School Picnics**

School Picnics are traditionally held in September and May at 5:30 on a specified Friday at a pavilion at Pen Park, located off Rio Road. This is a potluck and families are asked to bring a dish to share and provide their own dinnerware, utensils and drinks. Again, as we do with lunch every day, we wish to have our picnic as environmentally friendly as possible and generate as little trash as possible.

**Back-to-School Nights**

Back-to-School Nights are a traditional part of a Montessori classroom and provide some children with their fondest Montessori memories. Children invite their families to the classroom for the evening and choose a Montessori work they have mastered or are working on currently. A sign-up sheet is placed at the coatroom door in order that we may manage the numbers of students at each of the three sessions scheduled that evening.

**International Luncheon**

Each spring we celebrate our international community with the International Luncheon. The children in both classes learn songs from around the world in preparation for a performance. Dressing in ethnic dress that is meaningful to you is highly encouraged. After the performance we share an international potluck. This is an event to mark on your calendar. Family members are welcome to come.

**Grandparents' (or VIP) Day**

Grandparents' Day is scheduled on a Friday near the end of the school year. It is hoped that each child will have either a grandparent or other special grown-up visit the classroom that day for all or part of the morning.

**Kindergarten Graduation and the Last Day of School**

It is expected that children attend through the kindergarten year and the ceremony celebrating the completion of this three-year cycle is very special indeed. This is held at 11 a.m. on the last day of school and school is dismissed at noon after the ceremony. Families of the kindergartners and the younger children in the classrooms attend the ceremony.

Revised August 2, 2010