



MONTESSORI SCHOOL

OF IOWA CITY

Family Handbook

2024-2025

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(319) 338-9650

www.montessoriiowacity.org

INTRODUCTION

The Montessori School of Iowa City was founded in 1962 by a group of parents seeking a Montessori based educational program for their children. In 1995, the school moved from a house on Reno Street in Iowa City, to its present location in Coralville. In the summer of 2000, the school created two classrooms on the building's lower level. The additional space allowed the school to begin an elementary program for grades 1-3. During the summer of 2003, two more rooms were created in the lower level making it possible to expand the elementary through grade 6. In 2017, the school added a program to serve children two years of age. The school's total enrollment capacity is about 200 students, ages two through twelve.

Montessori School of Iowa City values an educational experience that embraces a peaceful learning environment. Faculty and staff are dedicated to fostering your child's development, helping them grow socially, emotionally and academically through individualized lesson planning. Montessori School of Iowa City structures each program to invite curious, respectful, and independent learners to explore the world around them.

Montessori Philosophy

Dr. Maria Montessori, Italy's first female physician, developed the Montessori method of education. She opened her first "school" (*Casa dei Bambini*) in 1907. Today, Montessori schools flourish all over the world. Fundamental to all of Dr. Montessori's ideas is a deep respect for a child's ability to learn. She recognized that children go through sensitive periods during which they learn more easily. This innate potential to learn is dependent upon a loving environment that encourages the active pursuit of knowledge.

Dr. Montessori's developmentally appropriate approach to learning is designed to fit each child instead of making each child fit into a preset program. She believed that learning should take place in multi-aged classrooms where children who are at various stages of development can learn from and with each other. This learning should take place in a noncompetitive atmosphere for each child to develop at their own speed.

Dr. Montessori observed that the best way for young children to learn is through active, hands-on experiences. She developed the idea of the *prepared environment*, where the classroom contains a wide variety of cognitive materials that foster learning in numerous areas. The purpose of the materials is not just to impart knowledge to children, but also to provide them with stimuli that capture their attention and initiate a process of concentration.

Purpose and Objectives

The school's mission statement is as follows:

To provide authentic Montessori education that serves the child's intrinsic motivation to learn and is inclusive, sustainable, and holistic.

The values of the school are:

We value the Montessori educational philosophy which includes

- A child's intrinsic motivation to learn
- Excellence in teaching the whole child customized to student's intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual needs and abilities

We value respect for and appreciation of

- Diversity in all its forms
- The individual, self, others, and the environment

We value the entire school community, including students, families, faculty, and staff within the larger global community

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

The Montessori School of Iowa City, Inc. is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt corporation under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Members of the corporation automatically include parents or guardians of children enrolled in the school, faculty, and staff. All of our classrooms are fully licensed by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

Board of Trustees

A nine to fifteen-member Board of Trustees, which includes the Head of School, a faculty/staff trustee, and an honorary trustee, oversee the school. The board is composed of volunteers from past and present Montessori parents and other community members. The board determines school policies in the areas of finance, strategic planning, and administrative accountability. A list of the current board members can be requested from the office and is on the website.

School Administration

The Head of School and the office support staff work together to provide authentic Montessori education. The Head of School is the primary person charged with implementing the school's strategic plan as determined by the Board of Trustees.

The Head of School is responsible for promoting the school, managing enrollment, overseeing financial transactions, maintaining the building and grounds, providing school communications and correspondence, fulfilling licensing requirements, and promoting the professional growth of teachers.

Staff

Each classroom is directed by a lead teacher and an assistant teacher. Trained, experienced teachers mentor assistant teachers.

In addition to the teachers and the Head of School, the school employs an office manager and a custodian to assist in carrying out the school's operations. All staff members are required to pass background checks, receive training in CPR and First Aid, Mandatory Reporter Training, and Essentials Training as required by DHHS.

Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)

Each parent is a vital part of the school organization. Parents are invited to participate in our Montessori Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). Each year the PTO sponsors a variety of activities and fundraisers such as those listed below:

Clean Up Days (throughout the year)

- Fun Run
- Glow Run
- Ice Cream Social (August)
- Picture Days (Fall and/or Spring)
- International Festival (May)
- Book Fairs (Fall and/or Spring)
- Classroom Picnics
- Staff Appreciation Week (May)

THE PROGRAM

Hours of Operation

The school's normal hours are from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. In general, The Head of School can be contacted daily from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., or by appointment. In the case you prefer to email, you may email the Head of School at headofschool@iowacity-montessori.org

During the academic year, Montessori School of Iowa City offers two program schedules: half day and full day programming. These schedules are offered in our Pre-Primary and Primary classrooms. The Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary classrooms offer full-day schedules only. In addition, the school offers before and after school care for all students enrolled. The costs of these respective programs are found on our website.

The daily class schedule is as follows:

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Before School Program | 7:30 – 8:15 |
| Arrival for Elementary (1 st – 6 th) | 8:00 |
| Arrival For Pre-Primary / Primary Students | 8:15 – 8:30 |
| Dismissal for Half Day Students | 11:15 |
| Dismissal for Elementary (1 st – 6 th) | 3:00 |
| Dismissal for Pre-Primary / Primary Students | 3:15 – 3:30 |
| After School Program | 3:15 – 6:00 |

The Montessori School of Iowa City follows the Iowa City Community School District calendar. In addition to the academic year program, the school may offer a summer program in June and July. The breaks between the academic years, and summer session, are used for building maintenance and staff preparation.

Lunch

Menus for the month are posted in the school's entryway and shared via email. A record of meals served during the year will be kept in the office.

Parents must list children's food allergies, dietary restrictions, and any other food related conditions in the enrollment packet so that staff can prepare accordingly.

If a child brings their own lunch to school, it must include fruit, vegetable, grain, and protein. The school will provide milk and water throughout the lunch period. Sugary treats and desserts must stay at home; our school follows the IDOE and DHHS guidelines for healthy food/healthy bodies. If the child's lunch is missing one or more of the required items, the child may be served our school lunch for the day. Please include an ice pack, as we can't store lunch boxes in our school refrigerator. The school is not able to warm lunches from home in the school microwave.

Snacks

Approximately once a month, each child in the program is to provide a snack for their class. During the month of a child's birthday, their snack day will be scheduled as close as possible to that day. Unfortunately, the school can't accept snack items prepared/baked at home (due to allergies). If parents forget to bring a snack on their assigned day, they may need to supply a replacement snack, which can be stored without refrigeration for the next time a back-up snack is needed.

Nutritious and simple snacks are preferred. Foods high in sugar are strongly discouraged, although exceptions will be made for a child's birthday. Each snack must include two of the following food groups:

- Fruit
- Vegetables
- Meat or protein substitute
- Bread or equivalent

Rest Time

The Department of Health and Human Services requires a supervised 30-minute quiet time for all children under the age of six who are present at the school for five or more hours. During this time, the children sleep or relax quietly on their mats. The school provides the mats. Parents are requested to purchase a "Rollee Pollee" which is a self-contained blanket, sheet and pillow. They are available from the school at cost. At the end of each school week napping materials go home to be cleaned so that they may be returned at the beginning of the following week. All napping materials should be clearly labeled.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents' Rights and Responsibilities

Parents have the right:

- To know that their child is cared for in a safe, supportive environment,
- To unlimited access to their children (unless prohibited by a court order),
- To access the school staff during the school's normal hours of operation,
- To be informed about serious misbehavior on the part of their own child,
- To be regularly informed of school activities.

Parents are responsible for fulfilling their obligations as described in various portions of this handbook. These obligations include, but are not limited to:

- Paying fees on time,
- Keeping their child's records up to date,
- Following the health policy,
- Respecting classroom arrival and dismissal times,
- Making contact with a staff member at the school when picking up a child so that the school knows that the child has been received,
- Letting the school office know if their child will not be attending on a regularly scheduled day,
- Acknowledging communications from administrators or teachers and cooperating in any efforts for improvement and/or resolution of difficult situations,
- Attempting to attend school activities that involve parents (PTO),
- Informing the school of any significant changes that occur in the home.

Children's Rights and Responsibilities

Children have the right:

- To experience a safe, supportive, and consistent environment
- To use all of the program equipment, materials, and facilities on an equal basis with all of the other children
- To receive respectful treatment
- To experience discipline that is fair and non-punitive
- To receive nurturing care from staff members.

Children have the responsibility:

- To be accountable for their actions,
- To respect the school rules,
- To remain with the group and staff at all times,

- To care for materials and equipment properly.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This Family Handbook constitutes a valid part of the enrollment agreement between the Montessori School of Iowa City and the parents or guardians of children who are enrolled at the school. Enrollment at the Montessori School of Iowa City constitutes acceptance of the following policies.

Arrival and Dismissal

There are two parking lots in front of the school. The west lot is for our staff, while the east lot is for parents. There is also a drop-off location in the circle driveway. This area is used to pick up and drop off students. We ask that parents not leave their vehicle if it is parked unattended in the circle driveway. It is imperative to keep the circle driveway open in the unlikely event that an emergency vehicle should ever need to arrive at the school and to ensure a good flow of traffic in and out of our lot.

Arrival

A greeter will be present at the front door from 8:00 – 8:30 welcoming students to school. For the first three days of school, families may choose to align to the “new family arrival routine” as explained below. When the child enters the building, they will be escorted through the hallways by highly qualified staff (as needed) to ensure a safe transition to the classroom.

If a child is enrolled in the before-school program, the routines of arrival will be much the same as the general school day, with a greeter at the front door, 7:30 – 8:15.

Arrival Routines for New Families

For the first three days of school, please feel welcome to support your child with arrival routines by escorting your child through the hallway. Please remain in the hallway during your goodbyes. Parents and guardians are not allowed in the classrooms. If your child is comfortable saying goodbye at the front entrance, it would be wonderful to start this routine on the first day of school. Goodbyes that are short, loving, and filled with trust and confidence are best as your child adjusts to the transition from home to school.

Arrival for Returning Families:

Starting the school year where your child left off is optimal; please feel welcome to keep your goodbyes at the front door and allow teachers and staff to support your child through the hallways.

Dismissal for Half Day Students

Students who are dismissed at 11:15 will be escorted by a staff member to the front entrance for parent/guardian(s) to pick them up. Please feel welcome to wait outside until your child greets you at the front entrance.

Full Day Dismissal:

Students dismissed at 3:00 (Lower/Upper Elementary) or 3:15 (Pre-Primary/Primary) will be called via walkie talk when you arrive. Dismissal will not begin earlier than the scheduled dismissal time unless you call ahead for a planned early dismissal. In the event you are planning to pick your child up from school earlier than normal, please call the school by 2:00pm so the school can prepare accordingly.

After-School Program Dismissal:

Students who attend the after-school program will be dismissed once the parent/guardian arrives. Please call the school (319-338-9650). Once you call the school, an after-school program teacher will escort your child to the front entrance. For the first day, please be prepared to show your driver's license or photo identification.

As a reminder, the circle drive is reserved for 30-second drop offs. Please park your vehicle in the east parking lot if arrival / dismissal routines take more than 30 seconds. Children may be picked up by a parent or other adult designated on the child's enrollment forms. Once the designated person receives the child (i.e. contacts them), the child then becomes the responsibility of that person, and the school no longer has a responsibility for the child being picked up.

At the end of the designated time at school, each child must be picked up within a few minutes of the stated dismissal time for that class. Due to the large number of students at the school, traffic congestion can become a significant problem if the pickup times are not adhered to. Also, time immediately after (and before) class is valuable preparation time for the teachers. **If a child is picked up more than 5 minutes late, parents may be charged a fee of \$1.00 per minute.**

Attendance

Arriving to school on time is a critical element to a successful day. As adults, we all have commitments that require us to be on time (appointments, meetings, work, etc.) and our time management is a direct reflection of the respect that we have for those involved in the commitments we've made. It is important that we model respect for others and to be on time.

In the Montessori environment, work cycles include group gatherings, small group / individual lessons, and work that invites a longer focus. The On-time arrival means that children know when to expect the arrival of their peers and the teachers can plan their small group lessons with confidence that they will have full participation without the distraction and interruption of a tardy child. When children are tardy, they arrive with less confidence, may require additional support (that may or may not be available at the time), and disrupt a work cycle that is already in progress. If a child has 10 or more unexcused tardies, MSIC reserves the right to terminate the child's enrollment without refund. Excused absences / tardies may be:

- Illness,
- Medical, dental, chiropractic, optometric, speech, occupational therapy, or other valid appointments (appointment documentation may be requested),
- Bereavement,
- Religious holidays,
- Family trip or vacation.

Changes in the Home

If a significant change occurs in the home that could cause distress in the child, parents should inform the teachers as soon as possible. Common causes of distress include parent(s) being away from home for an extended time, a new person living in the home, illness of a family member, an accident or death in the family, a new caregiver, moving, the death of a pet, parents' separation, or divorce. All information will be regarded as strictly confidential.

Closings and Early Dismissals

As noted before, the school generally follows the same schedule as that of the Iowa City Community School District. The current school calendar can be found on the website or obtained from the office.

Montessori School of Iowa City follows the Iowa City Community School District Inclement Weather Guidelines, but may delay, cancel, or have an early release regardless of the decisions made by the Iowa City Community School District. Please note that decisions are not limited to the following circumstances but are guided by the following information from NWS and ICCSD.

Announcements:

Announcements of weather-related decisions are communicated through local media outlets such as KCRG, KWWL, and KGAN in addition to Facebook and Email.

Inclement Weather Guidelines

Families may request a copy of the inclement weather guidelines by contacting headofschool@iowacity-montessori.org.

Inclement Weather:

The Head of School will prohibit outdoor play during inclement weather or when the temperature index is in the danger zone of the Childcare Weather Watch chart. Parents may go to <https://www.idph.state.ia.us/hcci/common/pdf/weatherwatch.pdf> for the Childcare Weather Watch chart.

Outdoor activity will be permitted if the weather allows. Every child needs to be properly dressed for the weather. In the winter, this includes snow pants, a hat that covers the ears, mittens, and boots. Staff/child ratios do not permit the school to keep one or two children inside during recess.

Clothing and Other Personal Property

Children should wear washable, comfortable clothes. The staff recommends that an extra set of clothing be kept at school in case the clothes become wet or muddy. The children in the Pre-Primary classroom must have diapers, wipes, and clothing changes. All items of clothing should be labeled with the child's name. Montessori School of Iowa City is not responsible for misplaced belongings. Items found at school will be collected and kept in a lost and found near the front office. Children should not bring money, toys, food, or other unnecessary items to school without first checking with their teacher.

Every child needs to have a school bag as a container for notes, a change of clothes, indoor school shoes, etc. At the end of every week, the staff will send home notes and the child's work in their bag. The child should bring the bag to school every day they attend. Montessori School bags may be purchased from the school; however, any bag of similar size and design is acceptable. **BACKPACKS ARE NOT PREFERRED**, as they are too difficult to open and often too big to fit in the lockers. As with all personal belongings, the easier the item is for a child to use, the more quickly they will become self-sufficient.

Classroom Guidelines

These classroom guidelines are for parents to help them understand the school's operations and expectations:

- All children are free to work with any material displayed in the classroom as long as it is used appropriately, and the child has received a lesson. The children may not harm the materials, themselves, or others. They may not use the materials in any way that disturbs the activity of others.
- A child may work either at a table or on a rug whichever is suitable. Children are not to work on display shelves, as that would obstruct other children's access to the materials.
- Children are to walk in the classroom, being careful to avoid students who are working on the floor.
- Children are to use quiet talking voices when speaking to other students during work time.
- Any type of hurtful behavior is not acceptable, whether it is physical, verbal, or emotional.
- Inappropriate language is not acceptable. Politeness and courtesy are encouraged.
- To the best of their ability, children are to restore the environment to its original order after an activity.
- No child is permitted to interfere with another's work unless invited by that child. This practice provides security for the child to continue working until the activity is finished.
- Children are not to be coerced into joining a group activity. It is the child's right to keep working at an individual exercise during group activities. A child that has chosen not to participate in a group activity is not allowed to disrupt the group activity.
- Children are free to explore the classroom as long as they do not disturb the work of others. In truth, they may be learning by observing others' work, processing information, or relaxing.
- Only one child may use the restroom at a time.

Guidelines for Outdoor Environment

The following guidelines are in effect for the playground and other outdoor venues:

- The teacher-student ratio is the same outside as it is for inside.
- Any type of hurtful behavior is not acceptable, whether it is physical, verbal, or emotional.
- Inappropriate language is not acceptable. Politeness and courtesy are encouraged.
- Children are not permitted to use sticks, rocks, or other hazardous items in harmful ways.
- Sandbox toys and sand stay in the sandbox and on the ground.
- Children are not permitted to climb trees or fences.
- The scooters and bicycles must follow the arrows on the painted path and slow to a stop before reaching others or the wall.
- The red slides are to go down only. No sliding headfirst on any slide.
- Teachers are not to lift children to reach equipment that is too big for them.
- The drinking fountain is for drinking purposes only.
- The children should communicate with their teacher when going into and coming out of the building.
- Coats must be worn if the temperature is below 32 degrees. When deciding whether children should go outdoors, consult the Child Care Weather Watch chart.
- Snow shovels are used only for shoveling snow, rakes for raking and brooms for sweeping hard surfaces.
- Balls and other toys are not to be used on playground equipment.

- Broken materials must be removed immediately.

Discipline

During their early years of education, children are developing social skills and may benefit from support to learn and understand how to regulate emotions, communicate feelings/wants/needs, and interact with others positively. The school is responsible for providing a safe and comfortable environment to help the children develop self-control, cooperation skills, and consideration of others. Children have a natural desire to do what is expected. In order for children to know and understand expectations, we model, explain, and reinforce positive behavior when necessary. All staff and students at Montessori School of Iowa City have the right to feel emotionally and physically safe while at school.

There may be times when a child's behavior is disruptive, destructive, disrespectful, and/or compromises the emotional and/or physical safety of others. Staff will provide counsel and support all involved in an incident. Any concerns will be communicated with parents and may lead to a team meeting to discuss potential functions of behavior, patterns, and a plan for resolution. Montessori School of Iowa City does not have a Student Support Team: whether it be one incident or a pattern of behavior, our school reserves the right to release a child who displays behavior that is disruptive, destructive, or disrespectful, towards staff or students without further notice or refund.

The Montessori School of Iowa City abides by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services policy on disciplining children:

- Corporal punishment, including spanking, shaking, and slapping will not be used,
- Punishment that is humiliating, frightening, or causes pain or discomfort to the child will not be used,
- Punishment shall not be administered, or threat of punishment be associated, with food or rest,
- No child will be subjected to abuse, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or the child's family.

While lead teachers are ultimately responsible for working through problematic situations with the child's parents, the teacher involved will include the Head of School in any meeting involving potential for a student discharge from the school. Parents always have the right to appeal any decision made by the child's teacher to the Head of School, keeping in mind that the teacher may be acting under the Head of School's guidance. A final appeal may be made to the Board of Trustees.

Health and Safety Policy

Please do not send your child to school if they are sick. Montessori School of Iowa City follows the guidelines of IDPH (Iowa Department of Public Health), JCPH (Johnson County Public Health), and DHHS (Department of Health and Human Services) and reserves the right to send home a child who is displaying any symptoms that interfere with the classroom experience. If a child attends school with a communicable disease that has a potential to spread to others, MSIC will notify the parents and may require the child to be picked up from school immediately.

If a child has any one of the following conditions, they must not attend school:

1. contagious disease (ex. conjunctivitis, hand foot and mouth,
2. fever of 100.4 degrees or more during the past 24 hours,
3. vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours,
4. draining sores or burns,
5. a rash, until diagnosed and determined to be non-contagious,
6. accident requiring medical attention,
7. any condition that prevents the child from comfortably participating in program activities or that results in greater care for the child than what staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children.

If a child experiences any of the above conditions while at home or school, the child may return 24 hours after symptoms have subsided.

Medical Conditions

If a child has a known medical condition or allergy, parents are to note it on the enrollment paperwork and communicate a detailed plan with all staff who work with the child.

Medication

If a child needs medicine (including lotions, diaper creams, etc.) a parent must complete a Medication Authorization Form at the front office. The medication (lotion, diaper cream, etc.) must be given directly to the appropriate staff member to ensure that the medication is stored safely in a medical bag. Children may not bring their own medicine to school. The medicine must be in its original container and be labeled with dosage information and the child's first and last name.

Staff Training

All school staff are trained in CPR, First Aid, and Universal Precautions and take the health and safety of our students very seriously. Each classroom contains a First Aid Kit to be used if an accident should occur. In the event of a more serious injury, an emergency vehicle will be called and the child may be taken to the doctor/hospital designated on the enrollment form. A parent or emergency contact will be notified immediately after the incident occurs. After an injury is treated, an incident report is written by staff to document the injury/treatment. Parents will receive a copy of the report.

Emergency Procedures

In the case of an emergency, the Emergency Action Plan will be followed. Should the school need to evacuate, children and staff will evacuate to the designated evacuation site. The evacuation plan is distributed to current families and a copy of the plan is in all classrooms and common spaces of the school.

Unauthorized Persons Entering the School

The front door is always locked and requires a passcode to enter the school. Authorized visitors and community partners will be welcomed in the school at the discretion of the regular staff on site.

Unauthorized visitors will not be allowed to visit the school. The Head of School is responsible for addressing this situation: All staff members and parents/guardians are requested to inform the Head of School when a visitor is on the premises, including the outdoor area. If an unauthorized visitor refuses to leave the premises when asked, a staff member will call the police for assistance.

Biting Policy

A child biting another is one of the most common and most difficult behaviors in-group childcare. It may be impulsive, difficult to prevent, and can provoke strong emotional responses in the biter, victim, parents, and the caregivers involved.

The following plan of action will be used if and when biting occurs in any of our rooms:

For the biter:

1. The biter is immediately removed with no emotion, using words such as “biting is not okay, it hurts.” Avoid any immediate response that reinforces the biting or calls attention to the biter. Caring attention is focused on the victim.
2. The biter is talked to on a level the child can understand. “I can see that you want that truck? You can use your words to get what you want. You can say ‘can I have a turn?’”
3. The biter will be redirected.
4. Parents will be given a written incident report and will be required to sign the form. A signed copy will be placed in the child’s file. Information about the incident will be provided to staff on a need-to-know basis. Parents will ***NOT*** be given the name of other children involved.

For the victim:

1. Separate the victim from the biter.
2. Comfort the child and administer first aid if necessary
3. Parents will be given a written incident report and will be required to sign the form. A parent-signed copy will be placed in the child’s file. Information about the incident will be provided to staff on a need-to-know basis. Parents will ***NOT*** be given the name of other children involved.

If biting continues:

1. Involved teachers/staff will meet with the Head of School routinely for advice, support, progress monitoring.
2. Chart every occurrence, including attempted bites, indicating location, time, participants, behaviors, teachers/staff present, and circumstances.
3. Let the parents involved know there is a pattern and inform them of the procedures that will be followed to prevent and respond to future cases.
4. “Shadow” children who indicate a tendency to bite:
 - a. Practice prevention strategies for biting.
 - b. Teach non-biting responses to situations and reinforce appropriate behavior.

5. "Shadow" children who tend to be bitten:
 - a. Practice prevention strategies for biting.
 - b. Teach responses to potential biting situations: "No" or "Don't hurt me!"
6. Work together as partners with the parents of both biting children and frequent victims to keep all informed and develop an action plan. Schedule follow-up meetings or telephone conversations as needed.
7. Prepare the parents of the biting child for the possibility the child may be removed from the school.
8. If it is deemed in the best interest of the child, other children, or the school, a child's enrollment will be terminated for the duration of the biting stage. Written warning will be given to the parents before this action is taken. [OBJ]

Weapons and Weapon Look-Alikes

Dr. Maria Montessori said, "If help and solution are to come, they can only come from the children, for the children are the makers of man."

Peace and peaceful resolutions are at the core of character development in Dr. Montessori's philosophy. It is seen as the school's responsibility to provide a safe environment that promotes peace and peaceful resolutions so that our children may develop a culture of respect for themselves and others. Therefore, the Montessori School of Iowa City does not allow weapons of any sort on the school grounds. This includes weapons, toy weapons or toys such as action figures, or any other object, costumes, or books, or any items that suggest violence in any way.

Holidays and Other Celebrations

Planned special occasions at the Montessori School of Iowa City can include Halloween, Thanksgiving, December holidays, President's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Valentine's Day, and St. Patrick's Day, among others. Festivities are simple and are usually in conjunction with curricular activities. The school is sensitive to the multicultural nature of our community and includes cultural diversity in its celebrations whenever possible.

If a child is going to host a home birthday party, we ask that invitations not be sent to school, unless the entire class is invited.

Mandatory Reporters

Under Chapter 232 of the Iowa Code (a copy of which is posted at the school's main entrance), anyone employed by our school is considered a Mandatory Reporter. All employees must report to DHHS any suspicions of child abuse. If any staff member has reason to believe that a child has suffered sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, that staff person must report to DHHS. According to the Code, any Mandatory Reporter, who in good faith makes a report of child abuse or participates in an investigation of child abuse, has immunity from any criminal or civil liability.

Parent Orientation and Communications

Orientation/Education

There are orientation meetings for parents in August before school starts and as needed throughout the school year. At this time, information will be presented regarding the school's specific policies and procedures.

Family events are scheduled throughout the school year and regularly include New Parent Orientation, Open House, Back to School Night, and the International Festival. Parents are encouraged to familiarize themselves with our school and the Montessori system of education by attending these and other school events. For anyone who is interested, the school also has a lending library of pertinent reading.

One of the best ways to learn more about our school is to observe a work cycle. All parents are encouraged to see their child at work and are welcome to schedule an observation at their convenience.

Conferences

During the school year there are scheduled parent-teacher conference days. Parents are expected to attend two parent-teacher conferences each academic year, whether it be in person or via ZOOM. Additional conferences may be scheduled if requested by teachers or parents. There is no school on conference days. Parents are responsible for providing childcare for their child during the conference.

Other Channels of Communication

1. In Person

The school strives for excellent communication among parents, teachers, administrators, and the Board of Trustees. Parents are encouraged to visit their child's teachers regularly.

2. In Writing

Newsletters, classroom updates, health announcements, and upcoming events may be communicated via email and Friday Folders.

3. By Telephone

Teachers are available to talk with parents by phone during non-class hours. Parents should arrange to talk with teachers at a mutually convenient time.

4. Email

Lead teachers may be reached by email at any time and will strive to return emails within 24 hours.

Registration and Enrollment

The Montessori School of Iowa City encourages children of all backgrounds to attend. The school does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, or family composition. The school will also make any reasonable accommodations for children with special needs, per the Americans with Disabilities Act. Attending the school involves a two-step process – the registration process, followed by the enrollment process.

Registration

A child can be registered to enroll in the Montessori School any time before attending. The earlier a child is registered, the more likely it is that they will secure a position. Registration requires a parent or guardian to complete a registration form and submit it with a non-refundable registration fee. Before registering their child, parents are encouraged to observe the school as part of the decision-making process. The registration procedure places the child in a waiting pool for enrollment.

Enrollment

To attend the Montessori School of Iowa City, a child must be at least two years old. Before entering the Primary class, a child must be three years old and fully toilet-trained. If frequent toileting accidents continue after a reasonable adjustment period to the Primary class, the parents or guardians of the child will be asked to withdraw the child from school until toileting habits become reliable. The school does not meet the facility standards required by the Department of Health and Human Services for diapering and changing children that are not part of the Pre-Primary class.

Full day and morning half day openings are determined by the student/teacher ratios set by DHHS.

Pre-Primary enrollment is determined by the following priorities:

- Montessori staff children,
- Current Montessori student siblings,
- Family Commitment (years of enrollment) to school now or in past,
- Former Montessori families from other places (i.e. transfers),
- Balance for classrooms,
- All criteria examined within context of waiting pool.

Primary enrollment is determined by the following priorities:

- Montessori staff children,
- Current Montessori student siblings,
- Balance for three-year-olds for beginning of each year,
- Family Commitment (years of enrollment) to school now or in past,
- Former Montessori families from other places (i.e. transfers),
- Balance for classrooms,
- All criteria examined within context of waiting pool.

Elementary enrollment is determined by the following priorities:

- Current Montessori students,
- Current Montessori staff children,

- Current Montessori siblings,
- Years of enrollment family has in school,
- Montessori students from other schools (i.e. transfers),
- Balance for classrooms,
- All criteria examined within context of waiting pool.

Enrollment of new students generally occurs in June for the summer session, in August for the school year, or at any other time that an opening should exist. Students who begin in the summer generally continue in the fall. New students are typically not admitted for the summer program only.

Deadlines for the return of completed forms will be stated in the cover letter accompanying the packet of enrollment information.

Parents will be asked to complete the following enrollment forms:

- Parent Emergency Medical Consent (including identification of health care provider),
- Release forms: Travel, Information, Media/Picture,
- Allergy and Medical Information,
- Student Information,
- Physical Assessment and Health Form,
- Iowa Department of Health Certificate of Immunization,
- Pick-up Permission Form,
- Sunscreen Administration.

The school expects the forms to be kept current. The parent must provide new information to the school regarding any changes in pertinent information.

Start of a New Academic Year

If separation is difficult, please consult the child's head teacher ahead of time to plan an appropriate strategy. The staff is quite experienced in supporting children (and parents) who suffer from separation anxiety. The first few days of school might be difficult, but separation anxiety usually subsides soon thereafter. Parents are welcome to use the observation rooms to observe their child unobtrusively during this time of adjustment.

Tuition and Payment Policy

Tuition and registration fees support the salaries, supplies and administrative expenses of the Montessori School of Iowa City. A current fee schedule is available from the office and is on the website.

Registration and Fees

The Montessori School of Iowa City's initial registration fee for new students is due when the student registers or is placed in the waiting pool for future enrollment.

Montessori School of Iowa City charges an annual supply fee to cover classroom expenses. For existing students, the supply fee is due upon registration for the next academic year, or summer and next academic year if the student registers for both.

Tuition

The tuition for the academic school year may be paid for all at once or divided into ten monthly payments. The first tuition payment is due August 1 before the academic year starts. If tuition is divided into 10 payments, the remaining tuition payments for the academic year are due the first business day of each month starting in August and ending in May. Statements are not sent to parents monthly, but the office is available to help parents calculate the tuition owed.

The summer session tuition may vary, depending on the program length and dates.

If a tuition payment is not received by the 15th of the month in which it is due, the family will be contacted in writing. After 30 days, the family will be notified again and a penalty of 5 percent of the monthly tuition will be assessed. If payment is not received after 60 days, the student will not be allowed to attend school unless satisfactory payment arrangements have been made. No student will be allowed to enroll in upcoming programs if the tuition account is delinquent from a previous program. Each returned check is subject to a \$30.00 service charge.

There is no tuition refund for holidays, illness, vacation days, weather related cancellations or other absences.

Tuition Assistance

A limited amount of tuition assistance is available to qualified families for the school year. There is no assistance available for the summer session. Awards are typically distributed only once each year, by a subcommittee of the Board of Trustees. To be considered for tuition assistance the school must receive the summary of parental contributions by May 1st. Please contact the Head of School for an application or more details.

If openings exist, the school will accept a limited number of students who qualify to have their tuition paid for under Title XX, as established by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. These children can enroll at the school under the registration and enrollment procedures described earlier in this handbook. Please see the Head of School for details and availability of spots.

Withdrawal from the Program

Pre-Primary / Primary Program Withdrawal

Parents/Guardians must provide a written statement when requesting to withdraw their child from the Pre-Primary and/or Primary program with at least 30 calendar days prior to the discontinuation of the child's participation in the program. Parents/Guardians are responsible for the tuition as outlined in the enrollment agreement and reimbursements will not be provided. If a 30-day written request to withdraw is provided in the middle of the month, the following month's tuition payment is required.

For example, if the withdrawal request is made on the 20th of September, the October tuition will be the final payment regardless of the child's scheduled last day of school.

If a child is enrolled to start on the first day of school, a written request must be provided on or by July 1st. If a written request is not provided on or by July 1st, parents/guardians are responsible for the first tuition payment + supply fee, as outlined in the enrollment agreement.

If parents/guardians choose to withdraw their child from a program throughout the year, the request must be received by February 15. If a written request is received after February 15, parents/guardians are responsible for tuition through the remainder of the academic year.

Elementary Program Withdrawal

If a child is enrolled to start on the first day of school, August 23, a written withdrawal request must be provided on or by July 1. If a written request is not provided on or by July 1, parents are responsible for the first tuition payment + supply fee, as outlined in the enrollment agreement.

Parents must provide a written statement when requesting to withdraw their child from the Elementary program. Parents are responsible for the full years tuition, as outlined in the enrollment agreement. Reimbursements are not offered.

Summer Camp (Primary + Elementary)

If a child is withdrawn from a summer camp program, tuition must be paid through the end of the program without refund. If a parent chooses to withdraw their child from any of the camps, a written request must be received on or by May 1. If a written request to withdraw from summer camp is received after May 1, the parent/guardian is responsible for the full camp tuition as outlined in the summer camp enrollment agreement(s).