



MONTESSORI SCHOOL  

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OF IOWA CITY

# Family Handbook

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## 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 more classrooms in 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 until October 2018. In 2017, the school added a program to serve children two years of age. The school's total enrollment capacity is about 161 students, ages two through ten.

You have made an excellent choice in selecting our program for your child's early education. We trust that you will find our program to be of exceptional quality. Our highly qualified staff are committed to challenging and supporting each child through guided discovery.

### 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 certain phases during which they learn more easily than at any other time in their lives. 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 in order for each child to develop at his/her own speed.

Dr. Montessori observed that the best way for young children to learn is by 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 rather 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 to Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. Members of the corporation automatically include parents or guardians of children enrolled in the school and staff employed by the school. The two-to-three-year-old classrooms, the three-to six-year-old classrooms, and the elementary classroom are fully licensed by the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS).

### **Board of Trustees**

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

### **School Administration**

The Head of School and the office support staff work together as a team to lead the school in accomplishing its mission of providing 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, promoting professional growth of teachers and performs other duties.

### **Staff**

The Pre-Primary (2 to 3 year old) and each of the Primary (3 to 6 year old) classrooms are directed by a trained Montessori Lead Teacher and an assistant teacher. Trained and experienced teachers mentor assistant teachers. The elementary classroom is led by a state certified elementary teacher.

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 and are trained in CPR and First Aid as required by DHS.

### **Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)**

Each parent is a vital part of the school organization as a whole. Parents are invited to participate in our Montessori Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). Simply by having your child enrolled at Montessori, you are considered a PTO member. No dues are collected, we simply ask for your participation, interest, and support. Each year the PTO sponsors the following activities and fundraisers:

- Clean Up Days (throughout the year)
- Ice Cream Social (August)
- Picture Days (Fall and/or Spring)
- International Festival (April)
- Book Fairs (Fall and/or Spring)
- Staff Appreciation Week and Dinner (May)
- Box Tops for Education
- Community Outreach (One Book Two Book, Iowa City Arts Festival, etc.)

## 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. Voice messaging is available to receive calls when the lines are busy, or when the school is closed.

During the academic year, we have a full day elementary program as well as two core Pre-Primary (2 to 3 year old) and Primary (3 to 6 year old) programs to choose from: morning and full day. In addition to these core programs, the school also offers before and after-school care. Details regarding the costs of these respective programs are found on our website. The general daily class schedule is as follows:

Before School	7:30 – 8:15
General Arrival For All Students	8:15 – 8:30
Dismissal for Morning Students	11:15 – 11:30
Dismissal for Full Day Students	3:15 – 3:30
After School	3:15 – 6:00

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

### Lunch

Meals are served family style, and parents are welcome to come and eat lunch with their child. (Please call ahead!) Menus for the month are posted in the entryway of the school and on our website. A record of meals served during the year will be kept in the office.

In the child's enrollment packet, there are places to list any food allergies that he/she may have. Parents must detail these and any other conditions or preferences in regards to food so that the staff can act accordingly.

### Snacks

Approximately once a month, each child in the program is to provide a snack for his/her class. During the month of a child's birthday, her/his snack day will be scheduled as close as possible to that day.

If parents forget to bring a snack on their assigned day, they will 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 the preferred. Foods high in sugar are strongly discouraged, although exceptions will be made for a child's birthday and for holidays. Children will help serve the snack. Each snack must include two of the following food groups:

- Fruit
- Vegetables

- Meat or protein substitute
- Bread or equivalent

If necessary, the school will supplement any snack in order to meet the nutritional requirements as listed above.

### **Rest Time**

The Department of 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, they 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 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 have the responsibility to fulfill 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;
- Acknowledge communications from administrators or teachers and cooperating in any efforts to bring about improvement in a situation;
- Attempting to attend school activities that involve parents;
- 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 that guide them while at school;
- 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 also is 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 car if it is parked 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 insure a good flow of traffic in and out of our lot.**

During arrivals, parents can either park in the east lot and walk their child into their classroom, or drop off their child at the drop-off location in front of the school during normal arrival times (specific arrival times are listed on page 4). It is important that children arrive at the school as close to their designated arrival times as possible. A greeter will be at the front door between 8:15 AM to 8:30 AM to assist children who are dropped off in the circle driveway.

During dismissal, the main foyer is used as a holding area while the students wait to be picked up. Children may be picked up by a parent or anyone else who has been so designated on the child's enrollment forms. Once the designated person receives the child (i.e. makes contact with him/her), the child then becomes the responsibility of that person and the school no longer has responsibility for him/her. Persons picking up children have the option of using the drop-off location to receive a child or parking in the east lot and coming into the school to receive the child.

At the end of the designated time at school, it is imperative that each child is 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.

### Changes in the Home

In the event that 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, with the exception of early release days on Thursday. The current school calendar can be found on the website or obtained from the office.

On days when the Iowa City schools are either delayed or canceled due to bad weather, the Montessori School will generally do likewise. For example, if it is announced that the Iowa City schools will delay the start of school by one hour, those children who normally arrive at the Montessori School at 8:30 will be delayed until 9:30. There will be no Before School program and everyone will arrive at 9:30. A two-hour delay means no Before School and no morning program. In the event of an early dismissal, school will dismiss at the same time as the Iowa City schools. Enough staff will remain at school until every child has been picked up.

To determine if school is closed or delayed, listen to local television and radio stations or check for any information on the Iowa City Community School District website-- <http://www.iowacityschools.org/pages/ICCSD>. There will not be a separate announcement for the Montessori School. Parents and staff may also call the school to check the voice message.

One exception to the above policy would be dismissal or cancellation due to heat. Since the building is air-conditioned, the school will not be cancelled in this instance. There may be other exceptions as well.

One other point to note is that the Montessori School will make up days missed to inclement weather if the Iowa City School District does. However, the school year will NOT be extended beyond the scheduled last day of the school year in order to insure that there will be enough time for staff to prepare for the start of the summer session.

### **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 clothes become wet or muddy. The children in the Pre-Primary classroom are required to have diapers, wipes, and changes of clothing. All items of clothing should be marked with the child's name.

Outdoor activities are planned if the weather permits. Outdoor play will not be allowed at the discretion of the Head of School during inclement weather or when the temperature index is in the danger zone of the Child Care Weather Watch chart. Parents may go to <https://www.idph.state.ia.us/hcci/common/pdf/weatherwatch.pdf> for the Child Care Weather Watch chart. Every child needs to be properly dressed for the weather. In the winter, this includes snow pants, a hat that covers the ears, mittens, boots, and shoes or rubber soled slippers for classroom use. Staff/child ratios do not permit the school to keep one or two children inside during recess. If the child's doctor requests that the child refrain from physical activity, parents should tell the teacher who will supervise the child outside accordingly.

The school attempts to help children stay organized; the school is not responsible for lost personal property. Items found at school will be collected and kept in a lost and found box near the office. Children should not bring money, toys, food, or other unnecessary items to school without checking first 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 s/he attends. Montessori School bags may be purchased from the school, however, any bag of similar size and design is acceptable. **BACKPACKS ARE NOT PREFERRED**, because they are too difficult to open and are 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 he/she will become self-sufficient.

### **Discipline, Guidelines for Outdoor Environment, Classroom Guidelines, and Discharge from the School**

#### **Discipline**

During their early years of education, children are just beginning to learn how to get along with each other. They need a lot of direction and guidance from adults to learn how to work things out for themselves. It is the responsibility of the school to provide a safe and comfortable environment to help the children develop self-control, cooperation skills, and consideration of others. The staff has developed guidelines for acceptable student behavior. Teachers enforce these guidelines using redirection, problem solving, and positive reinforcement.

Occasionally some children repeatedly break the rules and are hurtful to others. Teachers work diligently with these children to encourage them to choose appropriate behaviors. When necessary, parents will be notified of problematic behaviors so that the teachers and parents can work together to help the student act appropriately.

Regarding the disciplining of children, the Iowa Department of Human Services mandates that all licensed facilities utilize the following policies. The Montessori School of Iowa City abides by the following:

- 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.

### **Guidelines for Outdoor Environment**

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

- The teacher-pupil 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 trikes must follow the arrows on the painted path and slow to a stop before reaching others or the wall.
- The big red slide is to go down only. Other slides may be used appropriately and in any safe way. 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 child should communicate with her own 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 the playground equipment.
- Broken materials need to be removed immediately.

### **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 presentation. 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 speak to other students during work time using a quiet talking voice.
- 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 to completion of the activity.
- 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 "do nothing" as long as they do not disturb the work of others. In truth, they may be learning by observing others' work or simply thinking or relaxing.
- Only one child may use the restroom at a time.

### **Discharge from the School**

As children mature and develop, it is not unusual for them to exhibit behaviors that may be improper and/or disrespectful. These occasional misbehaviors, while certainly not condoned, are often a normal part of the process of a child's development. As noted above, the school's policy is to redirect the child's behavior and explain to them other ways of communicating or voicing their frustrations.

If a particular child exhibits chronically disruptive behavior, the issue must be addressed. Following are the series of steps we will take in dealing with this type of behavior:

1. When repeated attempts in talking to the child are not successful, the child will be isolated from other students. The child's parents will be contacted regarding the situation. The teacher will discuss the problem with the parents in order to update them on the situation. Along with any verbal communication, incident reports will be written, and a copy will be sent home to the child's parents.
2. If the child continues to exhibit disruptive behavior, the next step would be for the child's teacher to have a meeting with the child's parents. At this meeting, the teacher will explain to the parent what options are available (e.g. counseling through Grant Wood Area Education Agency) and a plan will be formulated to resolve the problem.
3. If no arrangement or agreement can be reached, or if no improvement is made within the set time limit, then the child will be discharged from the school.

Any of the following may be considered to be disruptive behavior:

- Any behavior which requires constant attention from the staff;
- Any behavior which inflicts physical or emotional harm on themselves, other children, or any staff;
- Or any behavior that conflicts with the rules of the classroom or the playground.

While lead teachers are ultimately responsible for working out the situation with the child's parent, the teacher involved will include the Head of School in any meeting involving potential for a discharge situation. 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 teachers will normally be acting under the Head of School's guidance. A final appeal may be made to the Board of Trustees.

### **Health and Safety Policy**

The school takes every precaution to maintain the wellness of each student who attends our program. The first step taken is to require that children have had a recent physical exam and all of the necessary immunization shots. Staff members have immediate contact with children when they enter the school in order to detect any noticeable health conditions. Staff members are required to take annual training in infectious disease control and universal precautions for the transmission of diseases. In addition, students and staff alike are required to wash their hands consistently throughout the day in order to prevent the spread of germs.

Even with all of the precautions that are taken, viruses and other illnesses will still exist at school. In the event that a child contracts a communicable disease, the school will post a note at the front entrance. The note will state what illness has been contracted; list some of the symptoms, and the approximate incubation period.

If a child has a known medical condition (asthma, allergies, diabetes, etc.), parents are asked to note it on the proper place on the enrollment form. Teachers should also be notified of the steps to take if a problem occurs while the child is at school.

If a child has any one of the following conditions, the school requires that the child not be at school:

1. contagious disease, not including a cold
2. fever of 100.1 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 exhibits any of these conditions while at school, the child's parents will be notified to come and remove their child from the school until the above conditions no longer apply. While waiting to be picked up, the child may rest in the office in order to minimize exposure to the rest of their class.

Whenever a child is to be given any medicine, including over-the-counter medicine, a parent must complete a Medication Authorization Form. Teachers may not give any type of medication unless this form is completed. Parents should go to the office for the form, complete it, and give it and the medicine DIRECTLY to the office staff member. Children may not bring their own medicine to school. The medicine must be in its original container, the label specifying dosage and the child's name.

Beyond the medical health of our students, their physical safety is also looked after. The school staff is trained in First Aid and CPR. First Aid kits are present in each of the classrooms, the dining room and the outdoor area. If an accident should occur, a staff member will administer simple first aid. In the event of a more serious injury, an emergency vehicle will be called and the child will be taken to the doctor or hospital designated in the enrollment forms. A parent, or if necessary, an emergency contact, will be contacted immediately thereafter incident occurs. After any injury is treated, an accident report will be written up to explain what happened and what treatment was performed. Parents will receive a copy of the report.

The school has also developed a series of procedures to follow in the event of a fire, natural disaster or other catastrophe. Staff members receive training on these policies at orientation and at other times during the year. Anyone wishing to view these policies may obtain a copy of them from the office. In the event that the school should ever need to be evacuated, the children would be escorted to the appropriate evacuation sites. The evacuation site list will be distributed to current families.

## Unauthorized Persons Entering the School

The door is kept locked at all times 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 will be responsible for addressing this situation, however, 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.

The Head of School will explain to the unauthorized person that the school is responsible for the safety and welfare of the children and that only authorized persons are allowed in the school and/or on its grounds. The Head of School will invite the visitor to visit the school at a more suitable time.

Should the Head of School or his/her designee determine that it is appropriate to allow an unauthorized person to be in school and/or on its grounds, then that person will supervise and monitor the unauthorized person by accompanying him/her during his/her stay.

The Head of School will ask the unauthorized person to leave the premises immediately. If the unauthorized person does not comply with the request to leave, the senior staff member will ask a second time, and if the request is not complied with, the senior staff member will call the police for assistance.

## Biting Policy

A child biting is one of the most common and most difficult behaviors in-group childcare. It can occur without warning, is difficult to defend against, and provokes strong emotional responses in the biter, the victim, the parents, and the caregivers involved.

For many children, the biting stage is just a passing problem. Children try it out as a way to get what they want from another child. They are in the process of learning what is socially acceptable and what is not. They discover that biting is a sure-fire way to cause the other child to drop what they are holding so the biter can pick it up. However, they experience the disapproval of the adults nearby and eventually learn other ways of gaining possession of objects or expressing difficult feelings.

For other children, biting is a persistent and chronic problem. They may bite for a variety of reasons: teething, frustration, boredom, inadequate language skills, stress or change in the environment, feeling threatened or to feel a sense of power.

No matter what the cause, biting in a group situation causes strong feelings in all involved. It does help, however, to be aware of the potential problem before it happens, and to form a plan of action if it does occur. The following plan of action will be used if and when biting occurs in any of our rooms.

When biting occurs:

### 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. The caring attention is focused on the victim.
2. The biter is talked to on a level that the child can understand. "I can see that you want that truck, but I can't let you hurt him. We don't put our teeth on people."
3. Redirect the child.

4. Parents will be given a written accident report and a copy, which a parent has signed, 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.
3. Administer first aid
4. Parents will be given a written accident report and a copy, which a parent has signed, 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 staff will meet with the Head of School on a routine basis for advise, support, and strategy planning.
2. Chart every occurrence, including attempted bites, and indicate location, time, participants, behaviors, staff present, and circumstances.
3. Let all parents know that there is a problem and the procedures that will be followed to deal with it.
4. "Shadow" children who indicate a tendency to bite:
  - a. Head off biting situations before they occur.
  - b. Teach non-biting responses to situations and reinforce appropriate behavior.
  - c. Adapt the program to better fit the individual child's needs.
5. "Shadow" children who have a tendency to be bitten:
  - a. Head off biting situations.
  - 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 a joint strategy for change.
7. Hold a conference with the parents of the biting child to develop a written plan of action. Schedule follow-up meetings or telephone conversations as needed.
8. Consider early transition of a child "stuck" in a biting behavior pattern for a change of environment, if developmentally appropriate.
9. Prepare the parents of the biting child for the possibility that the child may be removed from the school and help them to make contingency plans.
10. If it is deemed in the best interest of the child, center, and other children, terminates the child from school enrollment for the duration of the biting stage. Written warning will be given to the parents before this action will be taken.

## **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 responsibility of the school 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, Halloween costumes, or books 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 usually in conjunction with some 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. If invitations are going to be sent to selected children, please do so by phone or mail so that no one's feelings are hurt. We also ask that children do not bring gifts to school for after-school parties.

### **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 to be a Mandatory Reporter. As such, all employees are required to report to DHS any suspicions of child abuse. If in the course of working with a child, any staff member has reason to believe that a child has suffered sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, that staff person must make a report to DHS. According to the Code, any Mandatory Reporter, who in good faith makes a report of child abuse or participates in an investigation of a child abuse, has immunity from any criminal or civil liability.

Under this same rule, in the unlikely event that any founded act of abuse would occur while the child is at the school, DHS would contact every family who has a child presently enrolled at the school.

### **Non-Center Activities**

Many children take part in sports and other activities outside of the school's program. In the event that a child attends an "outside" activity during the normal school day, it is the parents' responsibility to transport the child to and from that activity. The school's responsibility for the child would end once the child is received by the parent or other designated pickup person. The school's responsibility for the child would re-start once the child is returned to the building and contact is made with a staff person.

### **Parent Orientation and Communications**

#### **Orientation/Education**

There are orientation meetings for parents in August before school starts and on as needed basis 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 which is located in the lobby.

One of the best ways to learn more about our school is to observe a class in session. All parents are encouraged to come and see their child at work. Our observation rooms are always open to parents. It is best to schedule direct visits with a teacher in advance. For liability and supervisory reasons, it is not possible for children who visit the school to take part in classroom activities.

### **Conferences**

During the school year there are scheduled parent-teacher conference days. Parents are asked to sign up with the child's teachers for one conference time each semester. There is no school on conference days.

During conferences, the child's progress is discussed. The teachers hope that parents will ask questions and discuss concerns openly. Additional conferences can be scheduled when requested by teachers or parents.

### **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 with their child's teachers regularly. Teachers are always interested in talking about student progress with parents, not just during parent-teacher conferences. Parents should feel free to initiate questions and express concerns by scheduling a meeting.

If there is an issue that parents want to discuss in greater depth, they should try to schedule a mutually convenient time to voice their concerns. If parents are not satisfied with the outcome of the meeting with the teacher involved, they should schedule a visit with the Head of School.

#### **2. In Writing**

Newsletters will be emailed to keep parents informed of school events. Staff and current board members will be listed on the website. When necessary, an announcement of an outbreak of a communicable disease will be posted. Occasionally, teachers may write a brief summary of what the classes have been doing and send it home. Upcoming events may also be posted on the Parent Information Board at the school's front entrance to assist parents in keeping current with school activities.

#### **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**

### **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 at any time before attending the school. The earlier a child is registered, the more likely he/she will secure a position. Registration requires a parent or guardian to complete a registration form and submit it with a non-refundable registration fee. 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 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 Human Services for diapering and changing children that are not part of the Pre-Primary class. To attend the elementary program, a child must be age 6 by September 15.

Full and morning openings are determined by the student/teacher ratios set by DHS.

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:

- Balance for three year olds for beginning of each year
- 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

Elementary enrollment is determined by the following priorities:

- Current Montessori staff children
- Current Montessori elementary siblings
- Current Montessori students
- Years of enrollment family has in school
- Montessori students from other schools (year of experience)
- Teacher recommendations
- Interview with child and family

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. Parents or guardians of registered children who will attend the school will be sent enrollment forms in late winter. 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)
- ACH Tuition Withdrawal Form
- 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 will be difficult, please consult the child's head teacher ahead of time to plan an appropriate strategy. The staff is quite experienced in dealing with children (and parents) who suffer from separation anxiety. The first few days of school might be difficult, but separation problems usually subside soon thereafter. Parents are welcome to use the observation rooms to observe their child unobtrusively during this time of adjustment.

No child will be released to anyone without the parents' prior written authorization. Teachers reserve the right to request some type of identification in order to verify someone who is picking up a child. Any change in pick-up procedures is to be made in writing.

### **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 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. This covers the student through his/her first academic year or first summer and academic year if the student registers for both.

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

### **Tuition Deposits**

When a student is registered for a program, a non-refundable tuition deposit will be collected. This deposit must accompany the enrollment form on or before the due date of the enrollment form. Enrollment forms with the required deposit will be used in the order received to fill openings as they occur. No student placement will be made if forms are sent without a payment. The deposit is used to pay a portion of the first tuition payment. The balance of that payment is due on its regular due date. The tuition deposit is not refundable if the student withdraws before the term.

### **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 on August 1 prior to the start of the academic year. If tuition is divided into 10 payments, the remaining tuition payments for the academic year are due the first school day of each month starting in August and ending in May. Statements are not sent to parents on a monthly basis, but the office is available to assist parents in calculating the tuition owed.

The summer session tuition may be paid all at once, or split into two payments. The first tuition payment is due on June 1. If tuition is split into two payments, the second payment is due on July 1.

If a tuition payment is not received by the 15<sup>th</sup> 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 Human Services. These children are eligible to enroll at the school under the registration and enrollment procedures as described earlier in this handbook. Please see the Head of School for details and availability of spots.

### **Withdrawal from the Program**

Parents wishing to withdraw their child from the Montessori School of Iowa City must provide a statement, in writing, at least 30 days prior to the discontinuation of the child's participation in the program.

If a child is withdrawn before a program starts, advance tuition payments may be refunded. For either the summer session or academic year, any withdrawals received prior to May 1 will be entitled to a refund of any advance tuition paid less the non-refundable deposit.

If a child is withdrawn during a program, parents will be responsible for paying the child's tuition until the child actually leaves the program. If a withdrawal occurs after the first of a month, that month's entire payment (due on the first) is required. If a child withdraws after spring break during an academic year, tuition must be paid through the end of the academic year.