



2024-2025 Parent Handbook

Embracing the world
around us



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Our School

About This Handbook

This handbook will help to explain our school and our operational policies further. We reserve the right to update this handbook at any time, but we will let families know if we do. Please take a few minutes to become familiar with this information, along with the Enrollment Agreement provided to you. On your Enrollment Agreement, you will be asked to acknowledge your receipt and agreement to the policies outlined in this handbook.



Our Philosophy

We believe in the importance of bilingual education. As a bilingual school, we are committed to providing instruction in both English and Spanish, allowing our students to develop language skills that will enhance their academic and professional opportunities, as well as foster cultural understanding from an early age.

Our Mission

Is to provide a nurturing and stimulating educational environment that empowers children to reach their fullest potential. We are dedicated to fostering academic excellence, social development, and emotional well-being through a child - centered approach that respects each child's individual learning style and pace.

Our Vision

We envision a world where every child is equipped with the skills, confidence, and compassion to make a positive impact on their community and the world. Through our commitment to Montessori philosophy, we aim to inspire a generation of critical thinking, problem-solvers, and lifelong learners.

Dr. Maria Montessori

Maria Montessori was born in 1870 in Italy and became the first woman to receive a medical degree from the University of Rome. In the first decade of the twentieth century Dr. Montessori observed children carefully and experimented with different materials and teaching methods.

Dr. Maria Montessori believed, "A child's work is to create the person he will become." Children are born with great mental capacities, which aid in the work of their own construction. They accomplish the task of self-construction with purposeful movement, exploration, and discovery of their environment. A Montessori classroom provides this freedom within the limits of an environment, which develops a sense of order and self-discipline.

Dr. Montessori visited various schools throughout Europe seeking effective teaching approaches. Unimpressed with the teaching styles and methods of the day she returned to her observation of the child to determine the most effective teaching approaches. From careful observation and experimentation Montessori developed the world famous Montessori Method and Montessori Curriculum Materials.

"Follow the child." This simple but profound truth inspired Montessori's lifelong pursuit of educational reform, methodology, psychology, teaching, and guide training – all based on her dedication to furthering the self-creating process of the child. Montessori was nominated for The Nobel Peace Prize for her work in developing Peace Education curricula for children.

What Makes Us Unique

Our curriculum is rooted in the Montessori method, which emphasizes hands-on, experiential learning and encourages children to take charge of their own educational journey.

Essential to the Montessori Method is **the prepared environment**. Attention to quality, detail, and Beauty is the cornerstone in drawing the child to activities in the classroom. By providing an attractive, enjoyable, organized, and child-centered classroom, our programs enable children to be free to explore and experience the learning-rich, prepared environment fully.

Also fundamental to Montessori's philosophy is her discovery of the **Sensitive Periods** in children's development. During these periods, children seek certain stimuli with immense intensity, to the exclusion of all others. It is during this time that a child can most easily master a particular skill. Dr. Montessori devised special materials to aid children in each specific Sensitive Period. Our guides are trained to recognize these periods in individual children and guide them to the appropriate materials in the classroom environment.

The focus of Montessori education continually changes to adapt to the **child's natural stages of development**. Montessori described these stages as Planes of Development, which occur in approximately six-year intervals, each of which is further subdivided into three-

year segments. These Planes of Development are the basis for the three-year age groupings found in Montessori school classes, ages 0 to 3; 3 to 6; 6 to 9; 9 to 12; 12 to 15; and 15 to 18.

From this environment comes concentration, a clear and peaceful mind, a profound sense of security, and respect for others and one's self. The program constantly evolves based on the needs of the children while remaining firmly grounded in the Montessori education philosophy.

Experienced Educators: Our dedicated team of certified Montessori educators brings passion, expertise, and a deep commitment to fostering each child's growth. They guide, support, and challenge students while respecting their individuality.

Holistic Development: We focus on the whole child, promoting not just academic skills, but also social, emotional, and physical development. Our programs include practical life activities, peace education, and outdoor learning experiences.

Community Engagement: We believe in the power of community and actively involve families in the educational process. Our school hosts regular events, workshops, and volunteer opportunities to build a strong, supportive community.

Family and School Partnership Agreement

As staff, parents, guardians, and students, we believe we are all stewards of our school community. We believe we have an obligation to care for and treat each other with respect and compassion. We assume positive intent. We work together to lift each other and our school up to our greatest potential. When we see something that needs improvement, or just a little love, we act on it. Most importantly, we come together in partnership for our children to provide a warm, safe, and supportive community that nurtures a lifelong love of learning.

The 5 Principles of Montessori Education

1: Respect for the child

Children are treated as individuals with their own unique potential.

2: Sensitive Periods

Sensitive periods refer to critical windows of opportunities when children are particularly receptive to learning specific skills or knowledge. Montessori Educators observe and identify these periods to introduce appropriate activities that align with children's natural interest and developmental readiness. By capitalizing on these sensitive periods, children achieve remarkable growth in areas such as language, order, movement and social relations.

3: Self-Education

Children are natural learners who educate themselves in the right environment. Children gradually develop self-discipline through freedom of movement and freedom of choice. The Montessori materials give them a sense of satisfaction, which encourages them to concentrate and complete activities.

4: The Absorbent Mind

Children possess an acute sensitivity for absorbing and learning from their environment.

5: Prepared Environment

A classroom designed to facilitate independent learning and exploration. Children are encouraged and guided toward independence as early as possible to become well-adjusted and able to function confidently by themselves and within a group.

Children gain an understanding of their importance and impact on their community and world through practicing the skills necessary for self-care and tending to the environment.

Our Peace Commitment

At 7 Continents Montessori, we are committed to helping children grow up as confident individuals who respect others and embrace the rich diversity of their community and world. Our peace and cultural curriculum develop an awareness of the similarities and differences among people in their own communities and around the world. **The essential components of the Montessori peace curriculum are:**

- Self conscious
- Consciousness of Others
- Love and Respect of Nature
- Global conscious
- Peaceful Conflict Resolution

Our peace curriculum also focuses on each individual's development and sense of inner peace. By creating an environment that allows the child to explore at their own pace, our hope is that our children develop a deep appreciation for the peacefulness that can be achieved through concentration on a particular task or work. As our children grow into adults and move out into the world, we hope that the foundation of peacefulness through concentration will stay with them as they engage in the responsibilities of adulthood.

Finally, the classroom has a peace table where children can go to discuss and work through misunderstandings and conflicts. Initially, children are guided through the language they need to express their feelings before becoming confident and comfortable in both sharing their feelings and listening to the feelings of a friend on their own. As they mature, children refine their communication skills and resolve conflicts to utilize the peace table independently without adult mediation. Our children carry this skill into the world to use with peers, siblings, parents, and others.

Our Administrative Organization



A Brief History



Board of Director

Rocio Acevedo Lobato, Executive Director,
Owner and Business Manager.

7continentsmontessori@gmail.com

Cell phone: 407-969-1897

Background and Education

Rocio Acevedo is the Early Childhood Specialist of the School. She is responsible for staff development of the teachers, and the curriculum development of the program. She has been involved in Montessori education for over ten years as an Assistant Teacher and Teacher, Owner of a Montessori School in Mexico. Rocio has her American Montessori Society Teacher Credentials at the Early Childhood.

Inspired by Dr. Maria Montessori's vision of child-centered education, Rocio believes in creating an environment where children are empowered to explore, discover, and learn at their own pace. She is committed to fostering a nurturing and inclusive classroom that supports the holistic development of each child, encouraging independence, creativity, and a lifelong love of learning.

Accreditation and Affiliations

7 Continents Montessori is a member of the American Montessori Society.

7 Continents Montessori is licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC).

To obtain your own copy of EEC Small Group Child care Regulations, you may download them from the EEC web site.

Parents may contact EEC for information regarding 7 Continents Montessori compliance.

History to the local EEC regional office, whose contact information is as follows:

Address: 360 Merrimack Street, Building 9, 3rd Floor,
Lawrence, MA 01843

Phone Number: 978-681-9684



AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY®
education that transforms lives



MASSACHUSETTS
Department of
Early Education and Care

Non-discrimination

7 Continents Montessori has no religious affiliation. 7 Continents Montessori does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, class, gender, gender identity and/or expression, age, sexual orientation, religion, culture, nationality, or ethnic origin in the administration of its admissions policies, educational programs, hiring practices, financial aid or other school-administered programs.

Our Staff

Each staff person must receive 10 hours of continuing education in child development or special education each year. This requirement is over and above what state licensing regulations require and is crucial in maintaining qualified teachers for the ongoing success of the 7 Continents Montessori program. All teachers must have some level of experience with young children and demonstrate a genuine interest in children. All staff members must have an initial physical, TB test, criminal records check, and a reference inquiry before employment begins.

7 Continents Montessori strives to surround our students with consistent, well-educated, positive role models who love learning and are passionate educators. All programs are led by a certified Montessori guide who has earned (or is in the process of earning) a credential through the American Montessori Society or the Association for Montessori International. Many of our assistant guides have attended Montessori assistant training as well. Professional development is a priority for all staff. Teachers and administrators regularly attend conferences, workshops, and seminars to both inspire and educate themselves.

Our Funding

7 Continents Montessori is an independent school. As such, it receives no state or federal education funds. Revenue for the school's operating budget is generated through tuition. 7 Continents Montessori is a non-profit organization.

Admissions and Administrative Details



Admission Procedures

We have an open houses that allow prospective parents and opportunity to tour the school and meet the Lead Montessori Guides.

After the Open House, parents join us for an initial virtual or in person check-in. Upon completing this, parents receive an enrollment application, if they still need to complete one. Applications are returned with a \$200 application fee and \$100 for each additional application which is non-refundable and will be applied to materials used during the school year. If space is available in the desired program, families will be contacted to schedule a classroom visit for their child with a Montessori guide. If a family did not attend an open house, this would also be an opportunity to view the school.

An acceptance, non-acceptance, deferment letter, or request for a second classroom visit will be sent to the family following the interview. If space is not available, the registration will be placed on our waiting list and potentially forwarded to our next enrollment period.

Please note that toilet training status is not an eligibility requirement for enrollment.

Registration & Requirements for Enrollment

After parents are notified of the admission date, you must complete the 7 Continents Montessori Enrollment Application (found on our website) and pay the non-refundable registration fee.

Upon receipt of the enrollment application and payment of registration fees, the parent receives the enrollment agreement, family handbook, permission forms (photo, sunscreen), and health and immunization forms.

On the first day a child attends school, the office must have in each child's file:

- A completed Enrollment Application, including Schedule & Tuition Agreement
- A signed Enrollment Agreement
- A completed set of enrollment paperwork
- Completed medical action plan (if applicable).

Within 30 days of a child's first date of attendance:

- A health assessment by a licensed physician
- A record of immunization or a completed exemption form

PLEASE NOTE: We are required to have each of these forms in our files in order to maintain our license to operate. State law requires us to exclude from school any student whose files are incomplete until we have received their missing paperwork. We appreciate your cooperation.

Tuition Payments and Late Fees

7 Continents Montessori uses BRIGHTWHEEL Tuition Management (formally known as Smart Tuition) for its tuition billing service. Through BRIGHTWHEEL Tuition Management, payments can be made through credit cards or bank transfers. Parents may opt to pay in full for the year, semi-annually with 50% due by August 1st and 50% by January 1st, and a monthly payment plan. Monthly payments are due the first day of each month, beginning in August and ending with the May payment. Payments received 10 days later than their due date will be assessed a \$45 late fee. Accounts with checks returned for insufficient funds will be assessed a \$45 service charge.

Delinquent Accounts

Tuition and fees must be current by the child's start date, or the child cannot attend or return to the program. If the family's account becomes more than 30 days delinquent, the parents must make arrangements to bring the account current, or the child will not be permitted to attend School.

Contract Cancellation Policy

If a student withdraws on or after May 1, 2024, the undersigned parties on the enrollment contract is/ are responsible for 100% of tuition and deposit as liquidated damages. No portion of tuition and fees, paid or outstanding, will be refunded or canceled, even in the event of absence, early withdrawal, or early dismissal. Please see your enrollment contract.



Withdrawing

If you need to withdraw your child from 7 Continents Montessori, you must give 30 days in advance notice in writing. The 30 days notice begins the day it is received in the school office. You will be charged tuition during this 30 days notice period, whether your child is in attendance or not.

Schedule Change Policy

Schedules may be changed by the parent(s)/guardian(s) in writing with 90 days notice. The first schedule change is free of charge, after which a \$75 fee per schedule change will be charged.

Financial Assistance

It is our strong belief that all children, regardless of socio-economic background, can benefit from a Montessori education. We accept funds for EEC financial assistance. AMS also has a tuition assistance program of its own. Requests for Financial aid is submitted prior to the enrolling school year.

School Hours

The school is generally open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily, with the exception of scheduled early release days. Please see the school year calendar for dates the school is closed or has early dismissal.

Extended Care

Early drop off is available from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. daily and requires advance notice for those not signed up for the full program. This is based on space availability. Early drop of cost is \$15.

Extended Care is available from 2:45/3:00–5:30 p.m. daily, and requires advance notice for those not signed up for an Extended Care option. This is based on space availability. If your child is not signed up for Early drop off or Extended Care, additional hours are \$15 per hour, billable in half hour increments. Availability is limited and may not always be available for students not regularly signed up for Extended Care.

Late Pick-up Policy

Children who are not picked up at their dismissal time will remain in their classroom or Extended Care if space is available. If space is not available, the child will wait at the reception area. Extra hours fees will apply. Parents picking up after their scheduled pickup time will be charged \$20 for the first 10 minutes, and \$5.00 a minute every minute thereafter.

Media Policy

We take a lot of pictures and videos throughout the school year for our website, slideshows, our marketing, and social media. If you have concerns about your child's image appearing in 7 Continents Montessori-related materials, and do not want your child photographed, please contact Rocio Acevedo at 7continentsmontessori@gmail.com before Tuesday, August 27th. In using your child's name associated with a photograph, we will only use their first name and occasionally a first name with first initial of the last name if we need to differentiate between two students in the same class with the same first name.

Please note this must be renewed for each school year.





Parent Involvement

Parent Observation and Participation

Once the school year is underway and settled, parents are always welcome to observe their child's classroom. We ask the parent to schedule an observation or visit in advance, just to be sure the classroom does not have atypical programming taking place at the same time.

Parent/Guide Communication

Strong parent/guide communication is a key component of a vibrant and happy school community. Guides can be reached through BRIGHTWHEEL, a phone call to the main office with a request for a return phone call, or by filling out a communication form and passing it to a guide or assistant. During Back to School night, the Montessori guide will also share the best way to get in touch when needed.

Please note our Guides are not required or expected to communicate or work outside of their school hours; this includes evenings, weekends, and school breaks.

Building Our Community Night

Back to School Night is a time to get to know your child's guide, learn about special events, daily schedules, and classroom projects, build your community, and ask all your questions. We strongly suggest that parents/guardians (or at least one parent/guardian from each family) attend. This is a parents-only event and childcare is not available.

Parent/Guide Conferences

Conferences for all parents and guides are conducted in November for all students. Your child's guide will discuss your child's use of time and materials, cognitive development, how they respond to the environment, and how they are developing social relationships. This is also a wonderful time for both parent/guardian and guide to ask questions and share ideas. Children should not attend these conferences.

The primary program will receive a progress report before the November conference and again in May to summarize the school year.

New families will have a short conference with the child's guide in September/October. This will not be accompanied by a written progress report and is meant to be a check-in on the child's first six weeks in school.

Policy Regarding Parents Hiring 7 Continents Montessori Staff

7 Continents Montessori prohibits our staff from working independently for current parents of 7 Continents Montessori as babysitters, nannies, or otherwise.



Attendance: Transition, Arrivals and Dismissals



Transition Plans

There are several transitions during your child's first day, e.g. recess, lunch, etc. Our goal is to make these as smooth as possible for the children. A guide lets children know what is going to happen next, and then accompany them in their transition. You will learn about class transitions during our short conference in September/October and your child's guide will keep you informed of any changes or individual variations.

Children who transition between programs always have a classroom guide who accompanies them to the next program and children are given a verbal alert before the transition occurs. This provides strong communication between staff and each child.

Parents of children who finish the school year will be asked to complete an exit survey if their child is not returning to 7 Continents Montessori the following school year. Classroom discussions regarding the child's departure from a program are done at the parent's discretion per the parent's wishes.

Attendance/Absences

If your child is going to be absent, please call the school at 407-9691897 prior to the start of the day's class session. It is helpful to know why the child is absent, particularly in the case of certain contagious illness (chicken pox, strep throat, etc.), as we may need to notify other families of the situation.

Absences, Sick Days & Vacations

Children need to be present on a regular basis to learn from our program. As participants of the EEC programs, it requires attendance records so we must record attendance.

- Please notify your child's teacher if you know that your child will be out of school ahead of time for an appointment or vacation.
- If your child is sick, please notify us as soon as you can. You can send all notifications to your child's teacher via messaging within the Brightwheel app.

- If your child has been absent two days in a row for unknown reasons, a staff member will touch base with you to check in and ensure the child is well and when to expect their return.

Arrivals

Parents are responsible for transporting their children to and from school. 7 Continents Montessori does not provide transportation for students. Furthermore, field trips organized by the school are always "walking trips" for our students and parents, so that cars, buses, etc are not utilized.

Punctuality is important in our school environment. Students should arrive promptly between the arrival window (8:15-8:30 a.m.) daily to promote socialization and ensure a stress-free transition while allowing ample time for work activities. It is especially important for children who are experiencing separation anxiety to come to the classroom early as this can provide a smoother transition.

All arrivals will be done at the main entrance door only. Staff will be greeting you and your child.

Late arrivals are incredibly disruptive to your child's learning, and it also interrupts the learning happening in the classroom. We ask for your commitment to on-time arrival out of respect for the community and to help ensure a smooth and successful work cycle. Any arrivals after 8:45am will need a doctor's note unless previously arranged with the Head of School.

Dismissals

Please pick your child up promptly at his or her dismissal time. Our days are scheduled tightly, and staff often have an immediate obligation to other children following a dismissal time. If you must pick your child up before a regularly scheduled dismissal time, please notify the school in advance by calling ahead or sending in a written note for that day.

12:15/12:30 pm Dismissal

Parents are asked to arrive at 12:15/12:30 pm to pick up their children. Please park your car and a staff member will bring your child to the main door entrance.

2:45/3:00 pm Dismissal

Parents are asked to arrive at 2:45/3:00 pm to pick up their children. Please park your car and a staff member will bring your child to the main door entrance.

Emergency Closings and Delays

We know that our families are depending on us to care for their children. Many of us are also working parents and know the stress caused by school cancellations. 7 Continents Montessori follows the Wakefield Public School calendar. So it will be easier for you to know when school will be closed.

Here are factors that go into our decision-making process for closures, delays, and early releases:

- **Teacher Professional Development**
- **National Weather Service information:** We also consider official statements from the National Weather Service regarding weather conditions and snowfall amounts and timing, especially when they issue winter storm warnings.

Emergency closing information will be available by 6:15 a.m. from the following sources:

1. Via BrightWheel Urgent Alert. It is vitally important that you follow the steps to complete your BrightWheel account preferences to ensure receipt of a text/phone call in the event of a closure or emergency.
2. Posting on 22News, wwlp.com

Parking & Carpool

To ensure our children's safety, it is of utmost importance that we practice safety and courtesy while in the parking lot. Please watch out for others, drive slowly, and hold children's hands. If you are entering the building, please DO NOT hold the door open for others. The person behind you may not be a parent.

Change in Pickup Person

The safety of our students is our top priority. Please notify your child's teacher if someone other than you will be picking up your child. 7 Continents Montessori staff will only release your child to the parents and guardians or the other adults you authorized on the student's Enrollment Application or within the Brightwheel App. If you need to authorize a new pickup person, please send the request via email. For your child's safety, any time a person we do not recognize comes to pick up your child, we will ask for a government-issued photo ID.

Inclement Weather Days

In case of inclement weather, 7 Continents Montessori will close as determined by [local institution, such as public school system].

- If [local institutions] are CLOSED, 7 Continents Montessori WILL BE CLOSED.
- If [local institutions] are opening on a 2-hour delay, 7 Continents Montessori WILL OPEN AT a 2-hour delay.
- If [local institutions] are opening on a 3-hour delay, 7 Continents Montessori WILL OPEN AT a 3-hour delay.





A Day in the Montessori Environment

Snacks

7 Continents Montessori does not provide snacks. Parents need to provide an individually packaged, nutritious snack labeled with the child's name. Students who attend extended care will need two snacks, both individually wrapped and labeled with their name. For snacks that are not individually wrapped, please package them either in a reusable snack bag or a disposable baggie, such as a Ziplock baggie or wax paper baggie.

Please ensure your child can open any containers their food is packed in.

Please do not hesitate to send extra snacks for your child. They are busy and hungry during the day, and it is always better to have extra food available.

Lunch

All children should bring a packed, trash-free lunch to school. Please provide an insulated lunch bag or cloth bag. We recommend reusable containers or thermos. The child must be able to open their lunch container to minimize assistance from the teacher. Prepackaged food in single-serving containers is often difficult for children to open, and since it can't be resealed, often results in wasted food. The school can refrigerate or heat lunch for students.

Please provide the items listed below in your child's lunch:

- A well-balanced nutritious meal
- Thermos for foods meant to be eaten warm
- Ice pack to keep meats and dairy products cold
- A drink if desired (7 Continents Montessori provides water to accompany lunches and snacks)
- A napkin
- Utensils
- Placemats

Some ideas for a healthy lunch:

- **Protein:** Tuna fish, hard-boiled eggs, slices of meat, chicken, nuts (NO peanuts or peanut butter!), beans, tofu, yogurt, cottage cheese, other cheeses, etc
- **Fruits and Vegetables:** Carrots, celery, lettuce, cucumbers, apples, bananas, oranges, grapes, green, orange, and red peppers
- **Grains:** Whole wheat bread, rice crackers, whole wheat crackers
- **Dairy:** Milk, cheeses, yogurt

Please do not send the items listed below in your child's lunch:

- Juice boxes (they are high in sugar)
- Gogurts (they are high in sugar)
- Candy and other sweet foods (they make it difficult for the children to rest or work afterward)
- Items with caffeine (all chocolate contains caffeine)

We suggest that the children be included in the lunch-making process at home as they are more apt to eat the food they bring if they have helped to choose or make it. All unfinished food and beverages will be repacked and sent home with your child. This allows you to gauge your child's appetite and adjust the size of portions according to his/her consumption.

Peanut Free School

7 Continents Montessori is a PEANUT FREE SCHOOL.

We have a few children in our classrooms with a life-threatening allergy to peanuts. Please DO NOT SEND ANY PEANUTS, PEANUT BUTTER, or PEANUT INGREDIENTS into the classroom for lunch. Your cooperation in carefully reading all ingredient labels is greatly appreciated. Even trace amounts of peanuts may create an unsafe situation.

Some parents replace peanut butter with almond butter, sunflower butter or cashew butter.

What to Wear

One of the qualities fostered in a Montessori classroom is independence. Sending students in easily manageable clothing such as elastic waist pants or shorts, and slip over shirts or dresses will help develop confidence in their own abilities. Please make sure all jackets and sweaters have easy, working, full zippers. For all students, clothing and footwear must be appropriate for active and creative play. Children will paint, play, and get dirty!

Please make sure clothing can endure our busy days.

Footwear needs to have both a closed front and some type of back, allowing children the freedom to climb and play safely. We also recommend a closed toe to protect feet from the cement. Please do not send children in shoes with significantly high heels. Sneakers are always a good choice.

The family will need to provide their children with two complete changes of labeled clothing that are kept in or near their cubby in a separate container. **Please include:** two shirts, two pairs of underwear, two pairs of pants or shorts, socks, and a pair of indoor shoes with a rubber sole to remain at school such as slippers, with both a closed front and some type of back.

Please make sure all items that come to school are labeled with indelible markers. Even children who no longer have bathroom "accidents" may encounter water, paint spills, or puddles.

When a child has an accident, an adult will be available to help the child to clean their body with wipes and put on clean clothes.

Rest Time for Students

Please send a Sleeping mat nap with your child's name. Your child may also include a stuffed animal for rest time, which will need to remain in the nap bag. Please mark each item clearly with your child's name. Plush comfort items or pacifiers can be sent in for naptime but will stay at school with the nap linens and will be sent home every Friday (or the last day of your child's weekly schedule) to be laundered.

The school provides individual sleeping mats for each child.

While we will provide the rest opportunities after lunch, please note that we will not force your child to sleep, nor will we force them to stay awake.

The Department of Early Education and Care mandates that each child under the age of five be provided with the opportunity to rest each day.

Show and Tell from Home

We appreciate children's desire to share personal treasures and experiences with their classmates. We ask that parents help their children exercise tasteful choices in what they bring to 7 Continents Montessori. **Here are some guidelines:**

- Natural specimens (rocks, shells, flowers, nests, etc.)
- Item which connects to an important story the child can relate from his personal life
- Interesting books, especially those depicting a real-life situation. Just one at a time please
- Items from other cultures
- Something the child has made
- A photo or a newspaper article which has particularly interested him/her

During our group times, children enjoy hearing about trips or other experiences of their classmates. You might discuss with your child any interesting experiences, which could be shared with the group.

When your children bring objects to share, it is also helpful if you can discuss the object with your child so that they will be able to share some information with their classmates about the object, such as where it is from, how they got it, what it's for, etc. It is important that your child is familiar with the object they bring in.

Sharing is not usually an everyday occurrence; be prepared for the object to spend a few days here. In some cases, the guide may ask your child to bring it again.

Please Note: We ask that toys, cosmetics, stickers, jewelry, notebooks, pencils, and the like be used at home and not brought to school. We find these types of items can distract children from the special environment of the classroom and can cause stress if they are lost or damaged. These items also cause arguments and feelings of possessiveness.

Learning Support

When families and/or guides have concerns regarding a student's academic performance, physical development, or social and emotional well-being, the Head of School, and the child's teachers, will meet to discuss issues and strategies with an open and proactive approach. Together the head of school, teachers and the parents identify the student's strengths and needs in detail, and put structures and strategies in place to help students reach their highest potential.

The following guidelines are followed, step by step, until results are achieved. **The teacher will inform the parents of each step of the process.**

1. The teacher observes the student to discuss issues and strategies with the Director.
 - a. The classroom Lead and Assistant guides put strategies in place to see if improvements can be made within the classroom over a two week period to assist the child. These can include problem solving with students, changes in room layout, more or less direction, and additional activities to meet student Interests.
 - b. Observations are kept to track success and areas that may need adjustment.
 - c. The guide will meet with parents to discuss all of the above.
2. If more support is needed after a two week period, the Director will have a follow-up observation and meeting with the guide to create and implement an Action Plan.
 - a. The action plan is shared with the parents and will include information about follow-up evaluations and additional services recommended, if necessary.
3. The Action Plan is followed continuously. If further diagnostic evaluations or services are recommended, the guide will meet with outside services and providers (REACH, the Collaborative, etc) as needed to ensure the child's needs are met. Regular parent communication regarding the Action Plan and the child's progress continues.

Conflict Resolution



Guidance and expectations are clear and consistent in the Montessori classroom. Our guidance is based on an understanding of the developmental history and individual needs of each child. The goal is to maximize the growth and development of each child, protect individuals within the group, and maintain a calm classroom atmosphere that is conducive to learning.

In the event of conflict, our highest priority is to respect and nurture a child's self-esteem. Holding a child's sense of self in high regard at all times, we then set out safety and security standards. The guide is the peacemaker – always working to understand and validate the child's feelings and to restore order. The core social message of a Montessori classroom is based on being respectful: "Your body, feelings, and things are important, and need to be taken care of." "It is important to take care of your friends' bodies, feelings, and things."

Ground Rules

The classroom's established ground rules are based on the Montessori concept of freedom within limits. This gives children the opportunity to make work choices that interest them. With this freedom of movement and choice comes the responsibility of taking care of the environment, themselves, and each other. **Our three basic rules are:**

- Be safe
- Be gentle
- Be kind

Disregarding Ground Rules

When a child disregards one of the classroom ground rules, positive language will be used, and one or more of **the following steps will be taken:**

- The child will be gently reminded of the ground rules of the classroom and the reasons for following them.
- The child will be redirected to an appropriate activity ("come with me, I've got something special, I want to show you..."). This distraction method works very well with our young children.

If the behavior continues after a message has been given, the child may be asked to "take a break" from his/her activity or move away from a particular child(ren).

The child may be given a logical consequence such as "you will lose the privilege of using the bead box if you throw beads." The child remains in the classroom and may decide to sit and observe until his privilege is reinstated. This break is designed to change his/her focus and break the behavior cycle.

In the event of a tantrum, when a child is physically out of control and lashing out, he/she may need to be removed from the class to prevent potential injury to other children. The child will be accompanied by an adult at all times.

Sometimes we find what works best is to change the environment – a calming walk outside in nature or sitting outside offers a soothing opportunity for a private discussion of the incident or action.

Humor often works wonders and is one of the most important ingredients in a guide's bag of Tricks.

Example of a Conflict Resolution

Most disputes over space, materials, or social disagreements are resolved by guides helping children according to the model/methods that we provide training in. **These steps are:**

- APPROACH CALMLY; stop any hurtful actions or language. (Place yourself between children, on their level. Use a calm voice and gentle touch.)
- ACKNOWLEDGE FEELINGS. ("You look really upset.")
- GATHER INFORMATION. ("What's the problem?")
- RESTATE the problem. ("So the problem is...")
- ASK FOR IDEAS FOR SOLUTIONS and choose one together. ("What can we do to solve the problem?")
- GIVE FOLLOW-UP SUPPORT as needed. ("You solved this problem")

Mediation/Peace Time

In case of a child repeatedly disregards the rules, one or more of the following may be implemented as deemed appropriate to the situation by the guide.

A PEACE TIME between guide and child will be arranged. This mediation is designed to teach children how to work out their own problems. The child may be told "your next work or activity is to come and talk to me (the guide). This is important and we need to talk about this FIRST before you can choose another activity or join your friends again. Then when the child appears to be ready to listen and willing to talk the issue out, the guide will gather the other child(ren) involved. The problem will then be discussed and possible solutions will be agreed upon.

Some possible creative conflict resolution methods we use are:

- Reflective listening
- "Smoothing over" small rifts
- Storytelling
- Role-playing and role reversal

Our staff is also trained to use creative conflict resolutions. This method is based on building empathy by bringing the children eye to eye and teaching the child to recognize the needs of others. By "reading" their body language we can guide them in developing empathy for other children. The children are encouraged to come up with solutions that work for them both.

Accident/Incident Reports

When Do We Use an Incident Report?

Incident reports are used at 7 Continents Montessori to document certain situations and behaviors. It is important to have clear lines of communication between staff and families about things that occur during the school day. **In general, the following situations require a written report:**

- A non-accidental act that damages or destroys materials
- A non-accidental act that results in harm of another, or in the need for first aid of any kind
- An act of excessive disrespect

When an incident occurs, families of all children involved in the incident must be notified with either an accident or incident form.

Primary Program/Children's House

- 1st Incident: an Incident Report is written and shared with parent/guardian at dismissal
- 2nd Incident: an Incident Report is written, a phone call home is made, and the report is shared with parent/guardian at dismissal
- 3rd Incident: an Incident Report is written, a phone call home is made, the report is shared with parent/guardian at dismissal, and a mandatory parent/teacher conference is scheduled

Biting

Biting is a normal part of child development. Young children bite for various reasons, such as teething or exploring a new toy or object with their mouth. Biting can also be a way for toddlers to get attention or express how they're feeling. Frustration, anger, and fear are strong emotions, and toddlers lack the language skills to deal with them. If they can't find the words they need quickly enough or can't articulate how they're feeling, they may resort to biting.

Biting tends to occur most often between 12-24 months of age. Biting past the age of two and a half to three is less common. For repeated biting instances with preschoolers, we may request a parent/teacher conference.

The purpose of the parent-teacher conference is to discuss what may be causing the child to be upset, frustrated, confused, or afraid and therefore lead to biting. Additionally, we would develop a joint plan of action following our behavior guidance procedures listed in this handbook. If your child bites or is bitten, you and the family of the other child involved will receive an Incident/Accident Report that keeps the identity of both children confidential.

Parameters and Follow-Up

For the primary programs, the following considerations will be discussed at all parent-teacher conferences:

Guiding Questions:

- What is happening at school or in the home, in regards to behaviors?
- What is currently being done at school to tend to the behaviors?
- What can be done to plan for follow-up and support for the child?

Parameters:

- Partnership established between guardians and school representatives.
- The head of school will be informed of Incident Reports.
- If an agreement to follow-up steps cannot be reached during the parent-teacher conference, the Head of School will become involved in the process.

Possible Follow-Up Steps:

- The Head of School may become involved in the process.
- The child may be sent home as per the direction of 7 Continents Montessori staff.
- Recommendation for follow-through for internal services and/or external evaluation.
- Formal observations and action planning to be guided by the head of school.
- Schedule of regular parent-teacher communication is established

Once a parent-teacher conference has been conducted and an action plan put in place, the child will be observed for 30 days for behavioral improvements. If no improvement is seen, further meetings will be held regarding what future planning will best suit the student's needs.

Guidance Procedures

7 Continents Montessori does not condone or tolerate the use of physical punishment of any kind on 7 Continents Montessori property. This policy restricts parents and staff from using physical punishment on their children while on 7 Continents Montessori property. Also, 7 Continents Montessori will not tolerate psychological abuse, coercion, threats, derogatory remarks, withholding, or threatening to withhold food as a form of discipline.

Reinforcing at Home

When a child's behavior disrupts the classroom community on an ongoing basis, classmates may begin to voice reluctance to come to school. If one child begins to adversely affect the actions of other children in this way, we will take steps to protect the collective good of the class.

A PEACE TIME will be arranged between the guide and the child. We talk a lot about how the school came to be and how 7 Continents Montessori is a fun and peaceful place for children to come, learn and play. With the child's assistance, the guide will write down, in language easily understood by the child, that EVERYONE must follow our rules or it would NOT be a fun, safe place.

Then all parties would talk about the behavior we all agreed was appropriate of him/her while at school. This process primarily focuses on one specific positive behavior we seek. It gets the child to focus on one positive action. This is how we inform the parents of the rule being broken and obtain the parents' support in reinforcing this rule at home. The parent should let the child overhear them tell the guide that they all understand and agree that this is an important rule to practice.

Collaboration and Support

Our commitment is to work collaboratively with parents when children have significant behavioral issues or needs we cannot meet. We will provide conferences between the parent and guide to discuss the needs of the child, and options to help avoid suspension or termination, including seeking outside guidance. The Head of School may also attend these conferences.

During these conferences, 7 Continents Montessori will often offer an Individual Plan to outline the modifications and structures the school can offer to support the child in the classroom and school setting. The Individual plan will also list support systems the parents need to utilize at home to support the child's continued growth and development. The Individual plan is a living document, and we ask for collaboration from parents on developing and utilizing it to support the child.

Seeking Outside Guidance

When a particularly challenging or difficult situation presents itself to our professional staff, we may ask the parent(s) to seek outside assistance to aid us in best meeting the child's needs. We offer referrals to parents for the child's evaluation and for diagnostic and therapeutic services. 7 Continents Montessori and the head of school also will bring in specialists to train staff and provide consultations when appropriate.

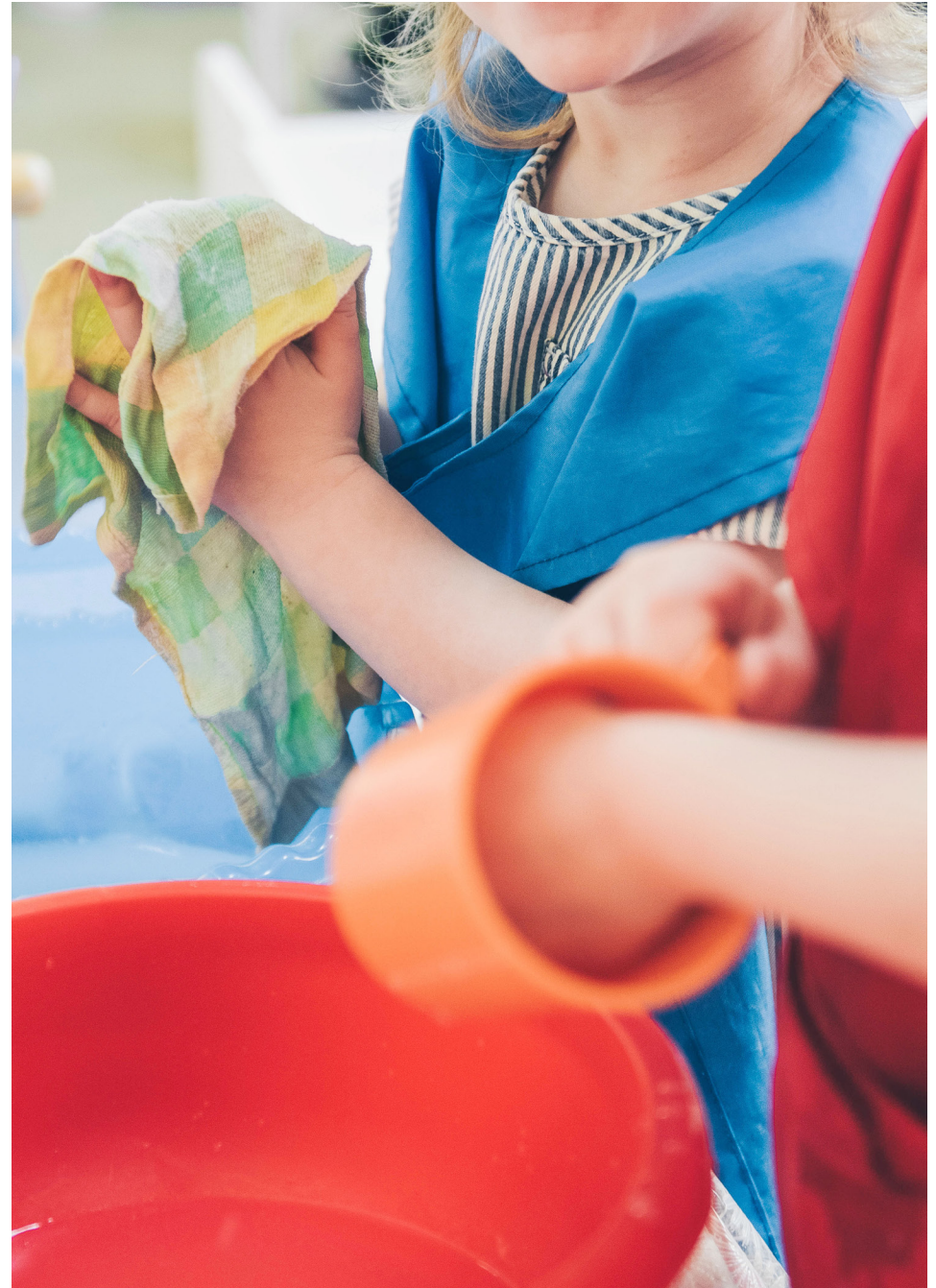
Dismissal Procedures

If, after meeting with the child's parents and considering outside guidance when necessary, the needs of the child have exceeded what the staff at 7 Continents Montessori is able to offer, we will then recommend that the family seek a different program for their child. If it is within our expertise to do so, 7 Continents Montessori will try to assist the family by making a recommendation on the type of program that would best suit the child's needs. 7 Continents Montessori reserves the right to terminate the enrollment contract if the Montessori Method is not the right fit for the student.

Contract Cancellation Policy

Because 7 Continents Montessori believes that a positive and constructive working relationship between the school and a student's parent/guardian is essential, the school reserves the right to terminate the enrollment contract if the school reasonably concludes that the actions of a parent or guardian make such a positive and constructive relationship impossible, or otherwise interfere with the school's ability to accomplish its mission.

If a student withdraws on or after June 1, 2024, the undersigned parties on the enrollment contract is/are responsible for 100% of tuition and deposit as liquidated damages. No portion of tuition and fees, paid or outstanding, will be refunded or canceled, even in the event of absence, early withdrawal, or early dismissal. Please see your enrollment contract.



Health and Safety



Illness and Health Policy (When to Keep a Child Home)

For the protection of all our children, your child should be kept AT HOME if they show ANY of the following symptoms:

- A temperature of 100 degrees or more
- Discharging eyes or ears
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- Nausea
- Fatigue that makes them unable to participate in the day
- Headache
- New loss of smell/taste
- A bad cold (w/ colored discharge)
- An unexpected rash
- Coughing
- Sore throat
- Any other signs of illness

Children must be free of the symptoms listed above for a full day (without medication) in order to come back to school.

Children who are sent home from school with any of these symptoms must be kept home from school the following day. For example, if your child is sent home on a Wednesday at 12pm with a fever, your child must stay home the following Thursday for the entire day (you may not bring them back to school at 12pm) If your child becomes ill during school, we will contact you immediately.

A child who may be contagious will be temporarily isolated until parents can be reached. If you do not pick up your child within 30 minutes, we will begin to call the Emergency Contacts you have on file. We will keep them as comfortable as possible until the parent arrives.

It is important that we have on file the health history and emergency information form with a listing of persons to contact in case of a health emergency and a phone number where a parent or guardian can be reached.

Dispensing of Medication

The dispensing of medication by school personnel is prohibited except as provided below:

Staff may administer topical, non-prescription medications once a parent has submitted a signed medication authorization form. These do not require a medical signature.

If a student needs medication, which has been prescribed by a doctor, or over the counter pain medications, the following procedure will be used. Written instruction signed by the parent AND the physician should include:

1. The name of the medication
2. The dosage and time of administration
3. The doctor's name

*If the medication is an epipen or inhaler, the school requires an action plan and a medication consent form.

Medicine must be sent in its original container with the prescription label by the parent and given to Rocio Acevedo, Head of School, who will then provide it for the guide. The classroom guide and the school office has forms available for this purpose. Since it is so easy to forget a refrigerated medication at the day's end, we suggest having the pharmacist divide the medication into two appropriate portions so one may be left at school. If more than one day's dosage is to be given, please be specific on dates the medication is to be given.

Medication will be kept in a supervised area, refrigerated if necessary, and always administered under the supervision of a guide. Any child who needs life saving medication should have an individual health plan on file at the school. With the written permission of the child's health care practitioner, parents will train staff in the implementation of the child's health care plan.

Only staff members who have been trained according to EEC guidelines on medication administration may administer medication. Furthermore, staff will be evaluated annually prior to the start of the new school year to determine that they are still following EEC guidelines.

Communicable Diseases

If a child has been exposed to a contagious disease, 7 Continents Montessori must be notified. We specifically need to know when a child will return to school after a communicable disease according to the following schedule:

- **Chicken Pox:** One week to ten days after the appearance of blisters AND after ALL blisters have scabbed over
- **Streptococcal Infection (aka "Strep Throat"):** 24 hours after medication has started (must continue medication for 10 days)
- **Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye):** 24 hours after medication begins and no visible drainage from eye or with written physician permission
- **Impetigo:** 24 hours after oral medication begins or 48 hours after ointment medication begins
- **Head lice:** Morning after first treatment

Immunizations

7 Continents Montessori requires families to submit a current immunization record (within the last year) and the Massachusetts school health record for each child. These documents can be requested from your child's medical provider and must be submitted with registration paperwork before a child can start at 7 Continents Montessori.

All public and private schools in the state of Massachusetts are required to report vaccination information for all students aged 2 and older to the state.

Additionally, EEC requires that we collect and report the lead testing of all 2, 3, and 4 year olds.

The state of Massachusetts requires staff at 7 Continents Montessori to prove MMR immunization or immunity.

Fire Drills

Fire drills will take place on a monthly basis during the school year. Most fire drills are in the morning, but a few will take place in the afternoon.

For the first several months, guides will prepare the children for the drill and let them know that the alarm will be going off. After January, the drills will not be announced to children unless a child is particularly terrified. NOTE: THERE WILL BE NO TIME TO PUT ON CHILDREN'S COATS, SHOES, OR BOOTS SO PLEASE SEND SLIPPERS WITH SOLES AS YOUR CHILD'S INDOOR SHOES.

Emergency Evacuation Plan

Emergency Evacuation Plans are posted at all exits. During an emergency evacuation, the Montessori guide or classroom assistant will be responsible for taking the attendance book and for leading the children out of the building. Administrative staff will assist in the evacuation and check rooms to ensure no one has been left behind. A staff member will make a visual inspection of the classroom and bathrooms before exiting the building. All classrooms, once evacuated, will meet in a designated evacuation gathering area and wait for the go-ahead by the Head of School or the designated staff member before entering the building.

During all evacuations, staff will carry the emergency backpack, which includes a first-aid kit, and emergency contact numbers, medical treatment forms, and special medications needed by children. A staff member will have a cell phone to allow for calls to local authorities to determine whether to evacuate or seek shelter in the event of a natural disaster. Calls will also be made to parents via a staff member's cell phone.

Children are always counted before exiting the building, upon arrival at the designated area, and upon returning to the building. Attendance is taken when arriving at the designated "safe area" outside to ensure that individual children are present.

The school maintains a daily attendance list that is current. Staff members are responsible for signing children in and out of the school by arrival and departure times. The attendance list will be kept in a designated spot and be readily accessible in case of an emergency evacuation.

The Montessori guide will be responsible for taking the attendance book and accounting for all of the children in the class once they are safely out of the building.

Emergency evacuation drills are conducted every month at different times of the program day as determined by the Head of School. Children and staff should practice using different evacuation routes so that they will be familiar with them.

The Head of School will maintain documentation of the date, time, and effectiveness of each drill in the fire drill log. This documentation will be maintained for five years.

In event of a fire, natural disaster, or other situations, requiring evacuation of the area, emergency vehicles will take the Greenwood School. 7 Continents Montessori is included in the Town of Wakefield telephone and email bulletin regarding town disasters and/or unsafe conditions.

Emergency Plan for Missing Child

Attendance is taken every morning and counts of children are consistently made throughout the day. If a child were discovered to be missing, the guide would immediately alert the other guides and the administration. Bathrooms and closets and all nooks and crannies would be checked, followed by looking outdoors for the child. Administrative staff would call the parent and 911. Once the child is found, the Department of Early Education and Care would be alerted about the Situation.

Mandated Reports

We, as caregivers at 7 Continents Montessori, are required by law to report any suspected child abuse, physical or sexual, to the Department of Children and Families.



Special Events



Birthdays/Ceremonies

We have a very special birthday walk for children celebrating birthdays. The school will provide a birthday fruit cocktail during the birthday walk as a special celebration to the child.

It is a Montessori tradition for children to present their class with a book of pictures of themselves since the child was born until his actual new birthday, as a part of their birthday celebration. This act enables children to share some of their favorite things to do while they are that age and learn the value and pleasure of giving rather than receiving and is harmonious with the school's "spirit of giving" theme. After that each child gives a kind loving world as a presents for the child.

Parents wishing to participate in this tradition can inscribe the book with the child's name, birth date, and the number of birthdays the child is celebrating. For parents' convenience you may ask the classroom guide if there is a book that the class would particularly enjoy. Most parents purchase their child's favorite book. This old favorite at storytime will hold the most meaning for you and your child's special day. Participation, of course, is voluntary.

School Events and Holiday Celebrations

We celebrate holidays from a cultural perspective rather than a traditional or religious one. We strive to avoid the over-commercialization of most holidays and consciously focus on instilling in the children have a sense of the true meaning of a celebration – that of sharing and loving. Seasonal events include our harvest festival, the spring celebration, and the end of school celebration.

Field Trips and School Events

For all field trips we will all meet at the field trip location (dropoff & pickup).

For school events, the children will enjoy local walks around the neighborhood, including a visit to the fire department that is conveniently located across the street. Parents will be notified of trip details in advance of each excursion via email.





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