

Montessori Academy at Westridge  
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# Parent Handbook



*"Raising Life Long Learners"*

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# Montessori Academy at Westridge

## Parent Handbook of Policies

### **Mission Statement**

Montessori Academy at Westridge's mission is to establish a foundation of life long learning in a challenging yet nurturing environment. Through the development of self-worth, the child grows into a talented, motivated and contributing member of our society.

### **The Philosophy**

The Montessori Method was developed in the late eighteen hundreds by Maria Montessori, Italy's first female physician. She realized that a young child had a great potential for learning. To challenge a young mind she developed an alternative method of teaching that emphasized specially trained teachers and uniquely designed learning materials and apparatus-thus stimulating a pre school age child.

### **Montessori Academy at Westridge**

We are committed to providing the best possible service to our children and parents. The Montessori Philosophy of education and care fosters and supports the development of each child. Each child that enters the community has full, unrestricted experiences for them to develop into an independent, well-rounded, thoughtful and positive person. The Montessori Philosophy allows freedom of choice gained through the child's choice of appropriate material and level of participation. Each child develops according to his/her own pace acquiring and refining skills in accordance to his/her needs.

### **Objectives**

- To provide developmentally appropriate practices. This includes experiences that meet the needs of the individual child within the environment, providing for the active expiration and self-discovery; such practice, therefore, promotes each child's self-esteem and positive attitude toward future learning.
- For children to develop to their fullest potential in all areas. Language and creative development, intellectual, social and emotional development.
- Staff and parents will develop a partnership in which there is open communication based on trust, respect and mutual understanding leading to positive and supporting relationships.
- Staff will have sensitive, responsive interactions with all children. All children will be treated equally and with sensitivity regardless of their race, religion, gender, or special needs.
- Staff work together to provide a safe, healthy, pleasant and educational environment for children and their families. The team approach allows for a balanced program and continuity of policy implementation.

### **Diversity of Students**

The Montessori Philosophy embraces diversity. All children, regardless of race, religion, gender or disability have opportunities and access to Montessori Academy at Westridge without discrimination. Prior to enrollment of a child with special needs, special consideration will be given to the capability of Montessori Academy at Westridge to accommodate the child's needs. If another facility would be more appropriately suited to the developmental needs of a child, the center director will inform the child's parents at that time.

## Diversity of Staff

Montessori Academy at Westridge is an equal opportunity employer.

## Operations

The hours of operation are 7:00am - 6:30pm, Monday through Friday. Convenient, year-round programs include Spring, Summer and Fall Semesters. These programs are comprised of Full Day (7:00am - 6:30pm), School Day (8:30am - 3:00pm), and Half Day (8:30am - 11:30am).

School Day and Half Day students may add extra hours to their program. The cost of these extra hours is \$10 per hour. We ask that advance notice be given for all extra hours requests in order to staff classrooms accordingly.

## Communication and Conferences

Parents play a critical role in the education of their children. It is widely accepted that education begins at birth (or before) with the parent in the home environment. The parent is a child's first and most influential teacher!

Montessori Academy at Westridge is a natural extension of the home. Healthy and regular interaction between staff members and parents is important for ensuring the best environment and support for the child and the family.

### Avenues of Communication

- **Arrival & Departure:** a brief and informal exchange of necessary information, as well as appropriate greeting.
- **Handbook:** each parent, upon enrollment will receive the school handbook outlining the policies and procedures of Montessori Academy at Westridge. Policies and procedures may also be found online at [www.montessoriacademywestridge.com](http://www.montessoriacademywestridge.com) in the Parent's Corner section.
- **Newsletters & Articles of Interest:** articles focusing on family and parenting issues are printed in the regular newsletter. The newsletters will also update parents on monthly events for their child's classroom.
- **Infant Charts:** each child under the age of 18 months will be given a daily, individualized information sheet with detailed information of the child's day.
- **Conferences:** formal conferences are scheduled twice per year for all children. From time to time, the parent or the teacher may ask for an additional conference to discuss issues that may arise.
- **Visits:** parents are invited to visit their child from time-to-time to have a meal, share an activity, or simply observe the class.
- **Accidents & Mishaps:** minor scrapes or bruises will be handled at school and an accident report will be given to the parent at pick-up detailing the incident. Other injuries will be reported to the parent by phone and an accident report will be given to the parent at pick-up detailing the incident. All accident/incident reports must be signed by the parent to be kept in the child's student file.
- **Parent Education:** at different times throughout the year, different educational workshops will be provided to allow parents to learn more about the Montessori Philosophy, activities at school or other topics related to the child and the family.

## Confidentiality

To ensure the respect and privacy for children, families and staff in dealing with all areas of running the school, only those required to know for the performance of their duties will have access to confidential information. Staff, relief staff and parents or guardians at Montessori Academy at Westridge are expected to respect the privacy of each child, family and staff member. All must maintain confidentiality with information that may come to them during the course of the day.

**Access to each child's records will only be given to**

- Members of the permanent staff working with that child
- A substitute teacher working with that child
- The Director, Assistant Director and Administrator
- A member of the Texas Department of Family & Protective Services
- The parents or guardians of that child

**Information regarding children will be given to the following people only after WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION from the parent or guardian:**

- Office of the school where child is or will subsequently attend
- Specialist working with a child in or outside of the school

No phone caller or any person unknown to the staff is ever told that a particular child is enrolled at the school or whether he/she is at school that day.

Each child's records will be kept for a minimum of three months after the child has left the school. Names, Addresses and Phone Numbers of Parents Students or Staff will only be given out with permission from the parent, legal guardian or staff member.

## **Custody Issues**

Unless a court order is presented to Montessori Academy at Westridge, no restrictions will be placed on the parents of a child regarding visitation, drop-off or pick-up.

## **Open Door Policy**

All parents are welcome to observe their child from the observation windows during business hours. Open communication between staff members and parents is essential. If, at any time, questions or concerns arise, we urge parents to bring these to the attention of the classroom teacher &/or the administrative staff at the facility. All parties will do their best to find appropriate resolution to the situation in the timeliest manner possible.

## **Attendance**

Regular and prompt attendance is very important for continued progress throughout the academic year. We strongly encourage your child to arrive at the beginning of their program.

- **Arrival** - Please park in a safe area that allows your child to safely exit the car, or allow your child to be taken out of the car. All parents are encouraged to utilize the carpool lane. The purpose of the carpool lane is to allow parent drive-through drop-off service without having to park and bring their child into the facility. For efficiency and the safety of all children, we ask that parents use the parking lot if they would like to enter the building. The administrative staff will clock in students entering through the carpool lane. Students who do not utilize the carpool lane must be clocked in by their parents upon arrival.
- **Departure** Parents must ensure their child does not leave the facility without notifying a member of the staff. Before exiting the building, all parents must clock-out their child.
- **Authorized Pick-Ups:** Upon enrollment, persons authorized to pick-up your child should be noted on the enrollment documents. Additional authorized pick-ups may be added with the receipt

of an email or phone call from the parent stating the person's name and phone number. This person will be expected to provide their ID before exiting the building with your child.

- **Late or Non-Pick-Up** If a parent knows they will be late, notification must be given to the school of the expected time of arrival, or if other arrangements have been made for the child. If the parent or other authorized person has not picked up the child and no additional communication has been received by the parent within an hour of the child's regular pick-up time, the following people will be called and arrangements will be made for the child: emergency contacts listed in the student's file, the director (if not on-site).

## Safety

For the safety of the students, families and visitors, Montessori Academy at Westridge requests that all individuals within the facility follow the policies of the school. These policies include but are not limited to the following:

- We walk in the hallways
- We use inside voices
- Students are not allowed to exit the building without their parent or authorized pick-up
- Exit doors should be opened by adults only
- Parents shall carefully supervise children in the parking lot

## Behavior Management

*“Let us remember that inner discipline is something to come to and not something already present. Our task is to show the way to discipline. Discipline is born when the child concentrates his attention on some object that attracts him/her not only with the useful exercise but with the control of error.”*

**Maria Montessori, The Absorbent Mind**

### Introduction:

True discipline, Montessori believed, comes from within. Our aim is to show the child the way to discipline. The child who can obey his/her inner guide is a disciplined child, Montessori wrote,

*“The peaceful atmosphere that pervaded the classroom as the children pursued their work was extremely touching. No one had provoked it, and no one could have obtained it by external means.”*

This type of discipline is a developmental process. In a Montessori classroom, there are children who have developed a degree of self-control and those who have little. The teacher must observe the children and endeavor to put them in contact with work which engages their concentration. For it is only through the work of the child that true discipline will come.

Children in a Montessori school are free – free to choose what work they will do and free to move about. They do not sit at fixed desks/ this does not mean there is no organization. In fact the opposite is true. The organization in a Montessori classroom has to be extremely thorough in order for the child to be free. The child guides him/herself in work. The established, logical classroom rules; materials or logical consequences often provide the children with the guidance (or limits) they desire. Since much of the material is self-correcting, the child learns to solve problems by himself first or seek out help, as well as developing critical thinking skills. Children learn their strengths and challenges and accept those with confidence, with the desire to learn more.

The following will serve as guidelines for supporting children in their road to self-discipline. As such, these strategies aim to clarify our approaches to common situations with children as they gain self-control. They are not directives, however, and it is essential to remember that each situation with each child will require its own responses to best support that child's growth.

### Rationale of Behavior Management

We believe setting limits for behavior is important for the safety and protection of children, others and the environment. We believe consistency to be important in order to help the child orient him/herself in the world. An atmosphere of clarity and consistency also enhances the staff's ability to help children to learn

and to be safe and secure. Ultimately, setting limits for behavior aims to teach children self-discipline. We aim to help children to learn the consequences of their behavior so that they understand how their actions affect those around them. Children become self-disciplined and self directed so that their needs and interests become clearer to themselves and those around them. Children have an enormous capacity for social learning. This means that they absorb information all around themselves, including social and cultural “cues” regarding themselves, others and the environment in which they live. Awareness of self, others and the environment is a vital quality for all children to develop in order to live harmoniously. Discipline is a means by which children are helped to develop that awareness.

#### **Underlying Principles of Behavior Management:**

- We respect ourselves and other people
- We are careful with our own work and our friends’ work and belongings.
- We are respectful to insects, animals and plants.
- We keep ourselves and our surroundings clean.

By setting appropriate and consistent limits to behavior we provide a secure environment in which children can explore their physical and social world.

#### **Discipline is instructive when:**

- It supports self-esteem and allows children to feel capable, competent and pleasant with others
- It takes into account a child’s developmental level of understanding and ability
- It changes as children’s needs and behavior changes (there is change and growth)
- It acknowledges caring, cooperative, desirable behavior
- It is expressed positively. We speak of what we “do” and not what we “don’t do”
- It guides, gives simple explanations, and offers alternatives so that a child can make choices. In time, this will aid the making of appropriate choices
- It is consistent
- It is based on self-discipline and self-control (not coercion)

#### **Setting limits helps children to:**

- Feel secure and orient themselves in the world
- Find appropriate expressions for feelings that are hard to control
- Initiates the joy of life long learning

#### **The following are some strategies of behavior management used by our staff:**

##### **Prevention**

- Knowing the children: this helps to tailor disciplining instruction to each child
- Prepared environment: this helps to facilitate freedom of movement
- Awareness of transition time: teachers help children move from one activity to another without disruption
- Modeling good behavior

##### **If prevention doesn’t work**

- Try first to distract or defuse the situation, giving children a release
- Use “do’s” (rather than “don’ts”) and give brief explanations
- Respond in a calm but firm manner, indicating what is expected from the child and what choices the child has
- Help the child to realize the consequences of his or her actions
- Follow through with consequences

When it is over, it's essential to restore a positive relationship between the staff member and the child, before either goes home. Please see the Parent Handbook Supplement for details on Common Situations.

## **Child Protection**

All child care workers are mandated to report to the Director and notify the Office of Children and Family Services if they have “reasonable grounds to suspect” that a child has been physically, emotionally, or sexually abused or neglected.

**Definitions of Abuse & Neglect:**

- Child Abuse can be defined as a “Violation of a child’s body and mind” physically, emotionally or sexually. Often there can be an overlap between these categories.
- Child Neglect is continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life. The basic necessities of life include but are not limited to food, clothing, shelter, emotional security, medical and dental care and adequate supervision needed for the child’s growth and development.

**Domestic Violence**

- Domestic Violence is violence is defined as abuse and intimidating behavior perpetrated by one person against another in a personal, intimate relationship, causing fear, physical and/or psychological harm. Domestic violence has a profound effect on children and constitutes a form of child abuse.

**Abuse/Neglect Notification**

Reasonable grounds to notify Child Protective Services of abuse/neglect relate to the facts of the concern, the nature and seriousness of the allegations being mindful of the child’s age and circumstances. The following are some ways a child may indicate they have been abused or neglected. If one or more of the following occur, the staff member will have grounds to notify the state of Texas of suspected Abuse or Neglect:

- When the child tells a staff member they have been abused or neglected.
- When the child tells a staff member they have been abused or neglected (as they frequently refer to themselves).
- When the experience of a staff member indicates an observation of a child’s behavior or physical condition, or knowledge of children generally leads to a suspicion of child abuse.
- If there is suspected domestic violence and there are children within the home.
- When someone tells a staff member (perhaps a relative, friend or sibling of the child)

After the employee has grounds for notifying suspected abuse or neglect, the following procedure will be followed:

1. The director will be informed.
2. The staff member is obligated by law to report any suspected abuse to the Child Protection Services department of the state of Texas who will make a decision as to whether there are grounds to make a notification. The CPS department will handle any investigation and liaise with the center as to the progress and the child’s special needs.
3. The notifying staff member remains immune from civil or criminal prosecution. Wherever possible, the identity of the notifier will remain confidential.
4. The Officer from CPS will deal with the family.

Please note, any authorized person who attempts to pick up a child from Montessori Academy at Westridge must not be under the influence of any illegal substance. In the case of this occurrence, the school will consider this an act of child abuse/neglect and will notify the local police department immediately.

**Emergency Weather Procedures**

In the event Frisco ISD closes due to inclement weather, Montessori Academy at Westridge will be closed. However, if there is an inclement weather day in which Montessori Academy at Westridge feels the safety of the students &/or staff members are at risk, we reserve the right to close. If there is an inclement weather delay, school will be opened at 10:00 am.

**Health & Illness Policies**

Montessori Academy at Westridge recognizes the need to maintain a safe, healthy, stimulating environment for children in our care and ensure practices that prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Upon enrollment with

Montessori Academy at Westridge, parents are required to complete enrollment paperwork which includes questions regarding the student's allergies, recurring illness and any medication taken they may prescribed. Additionally, a signed Health Statement is required from the child's primary care physician stating the "child has been seen by that doctor within the past twelve months and the child is healthy to attend school" along with the child's immunization records. Information including allergies, illnesses and prescriptions should be updated by the parents immediately as this information will be kept in the student's file.

### **Exclusion from care**

There are circumstances which may call for a child to be excluded from care at Montessori Academy at Westridge.

- The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities (including outdoor play).
- The illness results in a greater need for care than caregivers can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children in care.
- The child has an oral temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater.
- The child has an under-arm temperature of 99.4 degrees or greater
- The child is lethargic.
- The child is breathing abnormally.
- The child has two or more vomiting episodes in 24 hours.
- The child has diarrhea.
- The child has rash with fever.
- The child has mouth sores with drooling.
- The child's behavior changes or the child exhibits other signs that the child may be severely ill.
- A health-care professional has diagnosed the child with a communicable disease and the child does not have medical documentation to indicate that the child is no longer contagious.

### **When a Child Becomes Ill While in Care**

If any one of the previously listed signs or symptoms occur, the following procedure will be followed:

- The child will be removed from the classroom and taken to the sick room.
- The child's parents will be called to pick him/her up.
- The child will be given appropriate attention and supervision until the child's parents arrive.
- Extra attention will be given to hand washing and sanitation.

### **Readmitting a Previously Ill Child**

A child who is sent home due to a contagious illness or contagious disease must obtain a doctor's memo noting the child's illness, a statement that the child is no longer contagious, and a statement that the child will be able to attend school. In the case of temperature or other minor symptoms, the child must be temperature and symptom free for 24 hours before the childcare facility can readmit the child.

## **Medication**

Parents will be expected to complete a Medicine Authorization Form if their child is to receive any prescription medicine, over the counter medicine, lotions, creams, inhalers or breathing treatments while in the care of Montessori Academy at Westridge. All medicine must be in its original container and be dropped off in the office. No medicine should be taken to the classroom by the parents or students. All medication will be given according to the label provided. Additional doses will not be administered. Over the counter medication will not be given in excess of three consecutive days without written instruction from the child's primary physician. **Medication cannot and will not be administered through a child's bottle or food.**

## **Medical Records:**

Please see Confidentiality section.

## Medical Emergencies

Each student must have on file a notarized form stating the following:

- name, address, and phone number of the child's doctor
- name, address, and phone number of a hospital where the child can receive emergency medical attention

Procedure for minor injuries:

- Parents will be notified via telephone
- Parents will receive written documentation of the event upon arrival

Procedures for major injuries

- Administrative staff members will call 911
- Parents will be notified via telephone
- Parents will receive written documentation of the event upon arrival
- A staff member will accompany the child to the hospital and will stay until the parent arrives.

## Allergies

Montessori Academy at Westridge is a nut-free environment.

Upon enrollment, each family must give written details of any allergies their student may have. This will be kept on file and a copy will be given to the staff members who care for that child. If allergies develop after enrollment, parents must submit a copy of formal documentation from the child's physician.

## Meals & Nutrition Policy

With a commercial kitchen, Montessori Academy at Westridge will prepare hot lunches for the students based on the school's menu policy. In addition to the hot, nutritious lunches, morning and afternoon snacks will be served. Please note, this is a nut-free facility so no nuts, nut items or nut products will be allowed in the facility. School lunches will cost \$2.40 per day. Parents may decide to send additional snack items with their child to school. These items should be nutritional. Please do not send candy in your child's lunchbox. Please note, when parents send sack lunches or other food items from home, the parents of that child are responsible for supervising the nutritional content of those food items.

## Clothing

We are excited about the uniform policy at Montessori Academy at Westridge. Offering the most convenience to the students and parents, we have considered the following:

- **Cost Effectiveness** – parents can choose the most affordable khaki selections. We ask that no graphics be displayed on the clothing items. We also ask that students not wear cargo pants as the baggy pockets may become a distraction.
- **Color Combination** – with a clean white shirt and clean, pressed khaki pants, each student will feel fresh each day!
- **Clean Look** – students who feel good about themselves do better at school. Students will dress for success each day!
- **Clean Environment** – Indoor and outdoor shoes will help keep the students' environment clean. We ask that students wear plain white shoes for inside and plain black shoes for outside. We ask for no character or light up shoes please!
- **No Distractions** – students wearing this uniform will not be distracted by their clothing items or the clothing items of other students.

## **Naps**

Maintaining compliance with the minimum standards for the state of Texas, all students aged four and a half and under will have a nap each day while in care. Infants will nap according to their schedules. Toddler and primary students will nap from 12:30 – 2:30 Monday through Friday. Students should bring a roll-up nap mat for use at nap time. All nap items should be clearly labeled with the child's first and last name & will be sent home each Friday to be washed.

## **Holidays**

School will be closed all major holidays. An annual calendar will be published at the beginning of each academic year. Monthly tuition will be due regardless of the number of days closed each month. Please see a member of the administration regarding alternative care during winter break.

## **Outdoor Play**

Maintaining compliance with the minimum standards for the state of Texas, students will have no less than one half hour of outdoor play in the morning and one half hour of outdoor play in the afternoon, weather permitting. These students will enjoy the play equipment as well as an open field. On inclement weather days, students will engage in physical activities inside the classroom, library or dance room as a substitute for outdoor play.

## **Skin Protection**

Students are welcome to bring hats and sun glasses to wear outside during play time. Parents may also supply sunscreen for their child. Sunscreen should be applied by the parent in the morning time and the teacher will apply the sunscreen again before afternoon play time. Students will not be allowed to share sunscreen. All items should be clearly labeled with the child's name.

Outdoor activities to be held in shaded areas whenever possible.

## **Holiday Celebrations**

Celebrations including birthdays, religious, cultural and national holidays are celebrated at Montessori Academy at Westridge. We respect all traditions and celebrate and discuss many holiday that might not be a part of every family's lifestyle. This will allow the students to understand other cultures and become more accepting to the diverse world around them.

## **Celebration of Life**

Each student will have an opportunity to celebrate their birthday with a Celebration of Life. This celebration will occur on the child's actual birthday, however, if the child's birthday falls on a weekend, the Celebration of Life can be held on another day throughout the week. Parents are asked to make a poster with their child detailing the stages of their life. For example, the child should have a picture on their poster when they were an infant, a photo when they were a little older, and so on. This is the first lesson a child will have on a timeline as they will begin to see how things in life progress through time. During the Celebration of Life, the child will be asked to show the pictures to the class and share their joy about the photos of themselves. After the celebration, the posters will be displayed in the classroom or in the display case outside of the classroom.

Parents are welcome to bring goodie bags for the students in the classroom. Additionally, parents are welcome to bring snacks for the children to eat after the Celebration of Life. There are a few guidelines which should be adhered to when considering goodie bags, classrooms snacks and other items on the day of the Celebration of Life.

- Montessori Academy at Westridge is a nut free school
- Balloons are not allowed (as they are a choking hazard)
- Candy is not allowed (as this is not nutritious)
- Food items should not be high in sugar (cupcakes should have minimal or no icing)
- Food items should be nutritious (fruit, cheese, & juice are preferable to cupcakes)
- Instead of bringing store bought items, parents may send a cake mix for the students to prepare in class for their friend's birthday.

Instead of bringing gifts for a birthday child, we ask that parents make a donation on the child's behalf to the classroom in the form of a plant, book or other item that students can use all year long. A wish list of these items can be found with the classroom teacher or the administration.

## **Transportation / Field Trips**

No staff member will be allowed to transport any student at any time without expressed, written authorization from the school. Likewise, no student will leave the facility for the purpose of a field trip without the prior, written consent of their parent.

## **Tuition & Payment Methods**

Tuition will be due the first day of each month. If the first day of the month falls on a day that school is not in session, we ask that parents give a post-dated check in advance of the first. Tuition will be considered late as of the fifth of each month. A late charge of five dollars per day will be charged until tuition has been received. Each family will complete a tuition contract upon enrollment. Additional details related to the tuition & fees, payment of tuition and extended vacation policies and procedures can be found in this contract.

## **Additional Fees**

Additional fees may be accrued for a variety of circumstances. One way a family may accrue additional fees is upon pick-up. Relative to each student's schedule late charges are applied in the amount of one dollar per minute five minutes after their scheduled pick-up time. This amount will be due upon arrival or the next business day.

Additional fees may also be accrued for the participation in extracurricular activities. These activities are offered for the convenience of our families. Fees for the extracurricular activities are payable to the vendor who provides the service.

## **Withdrawal**

In the event a student must withdraw from school, a written thirty day notice must be given to the school in order to be refunded your deposit. If this written notice is not given, the deposit will not be refunded.

## **Dismissal**

Montessori Academy at Westridge reserves the right to discontinue care for any student. These decisions will be made based on the child's ability to succeed in the environment. Furthermore, if the student

presents a danger to him/herself, the teacher, or other students or if their needs are out of the range of what Montessori Academy at Westridge is able to provide, we reserve the right to ask the family to make alternative arrangements.

## **Minimum Standards & Licensing Office**

The Minimum Standards are the regulating documents that provide a framework for how childcare facilities are to operate in the state of Texas. At any time, a parent may request from the administrative staff a copy of these standards to review. These may also be found online at [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us).

At any time, a parent may request to view the most recent inspection from the Licensing Office. To view this document in its entirety, please ask the administrative staff at Montessori Academy at Westridge. This report as well as previous inspection results may also be found online at [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us).

At any time, a parent may wish to contact the local childcare Licensing Office. The Licensing Office contact information can be found below:

Childcare Licensing Office  
Texas Department of Family & Protective Services  
550 East 15<sup>th</sup> St., Ste. 120  
Plano, TX 75074  
1-800-582-6036

Report Suspected Child Abuse  
24 hours per day / 7 days per week  
Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400  
[www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org)