



MSH Parent/Student Handbook

Montessori School at Hampstead 5251 Hampstead High Street, Unit #111, Montgomery, AL, 36116, admits students of any race, color, national and/or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at Montessori School at Hampstead. The Montessori School at Hampstead does not discriminate in any way on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin or in the administration of its educational policies, athletic, and/or any other school-administered programs.

MSH operates as a church exempt facility associated with Yielding Vessels Ministry and is exempt under law from some regulation by the Department of Human Resources. The student to teacher ratios are 1 to 7 for Early Childhood and 1 to 12 for Primary. We actually maintain a lower student to teacher ratio because of the individualized learning style of the Montessori environment. We follow the requirements for background checks and every teacher has an FBI/ABI background check before being in the classroom.

Updated July 2020

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Our Mission

Growing tomorrow's leaders by empowering today's child.

Montessori School at Hampstead is an independent and sustainable school that embodies the principles of best practice in Montessori education.

MSH's goal is to nurture intelligence, curiosity, creativity, and imagination while supporting and developing each student's unique talents. Our ultimate mission is to prepare students for the next step in their academic experience, wherever that may be.

MSH teaches universal values and instills a global perspective, responsible citizenship, and encourages an entrepreneurial spirit. Our aim is to educate young people who are balanced between their knowledge and character: lifelong learners, critical thinkers, and active leaders in their local community, their country, and the world. The seeds are planted here at MSH.

1.2 Our Philosophy

This is a very broad overview of our philosophy.

Our program rests on four pillars:

We cultivate within our students a passion for excellence in everything they do, both in and outside of school;

We nurture among our students a strongly held set of universal values, which include self-respect, respect for others, honesty, integrity, responsibility, empathy, compassion, kindness, peacefulness, a sense of concern for others, warmth, and a love of community;

We help our students to develop a love of learning both inside and outside of the classroom environment, accompanied by a sense of connection to the Earth and a commitment to stewardship of the environment; and

We encourage our students to have an excitement about challenges that will contribute to them making a positive difference within our society as a whole.

1.3 What MSH Offers

A Cosmic Curriculum

We put the world into the palm of our students' hands, studying and celebrating the cultures and nations from which we, or our families, came.

Our Method allows us to engage students at a deep level of conceptual understanding while all the time working within the developmental needs of each student. Our Montessori Methodology gives us the ability to encourage students to go further in subjects that they find exciting and in which they have interest and to also encourage students in subjects that they might find challenging. Often our students participate at academic levels higher than their years because of the way we introduce concepts with concrete materials and because we work with students individually.

Sustainability

We place emphasis on creating a sustainable environment both inside our classrooms and our school.

Students are taught ongoing lessons on living a life that is more in harmony with a sustainable environment.

A Family-Friendly School

MSH follows a 10-month school year for all students.

We offer extended day programs for working families and an optional summer program.

A Montessori, Partnership-Based School Community

All of our administrative and board decisions are based on clear, written, and commonly understood values and principles of MSH as a partnership.

In a partnership-based Montessori community, we are a 'Circle of Equals.' MSH is led by an experienced staff; however, every voice may be heard in a culture of kindness and respect as we search for the best solutions.

We schedule many opportunities to come together in celebration as a community.

A Peace Academy

Just as Maria Montessori taught peace and partnership skills at schools around the world, we teach peacemaking and leadership skills to our students (and interested parents).

Our students learn how to communicate clearly and assertively in ways that express kindness and respect. Students also learn conflict resolution, consensus building, and the development of strong relationships.

Computer and Web-based Communication Technology in Everyday Learning

Because of the nature of young children's brain development, research suggests that early extensive use of computers may be harmful and is definitely less desirable than hands-on learning. As a consequence, computers do not play any role in our classrooms.

2.0 How the School is Organized

2.1 Board of Trustees

MSH is a non-profit 501-c-3, tax-exempt Alabama corporation. It is governed by a Board of Trustees made up of leaders in the local community, present parents, and friends of the school.

The Board of Trustees:

- establishes the school's institutional mission and core values;
- appoints the Head of School to run the school on a day-to-day basis;
- provides fiscal oversight; and
- plans for the school's future.

2.2 Administration

Head of School

The HOS is charged with implementing the school's long-range plan of Montessori programs and overseeing the effective administration of all aspects of the school's operations. The HOS has the authority to modify the handbook as needed, without notice.

3.0 Student Life

3.1 Montessori at Hampstead's Fundamental Ground Rules: All Ages

As a school founded on Montessori ideals, we believe that every person deserves respect. Montessori at Hampstead expects all community members to demonstrate kindness, courtesy, and respect toward the school, students, parents, teachers, staff and administration.

The goal of a Montessori education is to establish a safe, warm, and caring environment within which we teach students positive and appropriate ways to handle situations, as opposed to

assuming that misbehavior and punishment are inevitable. We also seek to develop a strong sense of self-discipline, responsibility, and courtesy, and to develop an atmosphere conducive to peaceful studies.

Our ground rules are essentially the same at every age level of the school, although the language and emphasis changes somewhat for the older student. This is how we explain them to younger students.

Please review these rules with your child:

- Be kind and gentle to one another.
- Everyone has a right to privacy and concentration. Please do not disturb anyone who is trying to concentrate on his or her work.
- Everyone has a right to his or her personal belongings. Please do not touch anything that is not yours without the owner's permission. If you accidentally lose or break something, please replace it without a fuss.
- Everyone here has the right to feel safe and secure. We encourage all people to use words that do not insult or threaten someone else.
- Everyone here has the right to be physically safe. Do not hurt or endanger anyone.
- At Montessori at Hampstead, no one is allowed to fight, push, trip, or use any other aggressive behaviors.
- Use the playground equipment as intended. For example, go down the slide and up the ladder.
- Let everyone who wants to play have the opportunity to join in your game.
- Throwing mulch, sticks or rocks are not permitted.
- Montessori children play fairly and cooperatively; roughhousing or careless play isn't allowed.
- Put all balls, ropes, and other outdoor equipment away when you are finished playing with them.
- Children must be carefully monitored by their parents/guardians when playing on the school grounds after school hours. They must follow all of the rules above.
- Parking may only occur in designated parking spots
- Children may not be unsupervised in the front of the MSH buildings.
- Children will need to follow MSH procedures when in front of the school building: No walking on the white walls. No running; must use crosswalk to cross the road.

When anyone at Montessori at Hampstead finds it difficult to follow the school's guidelines for personal conduct, we will quickly bring the student, family, and staff together to work toward a solution.

3.2 Discipline

Discipline means, “to teach.” At Montessori at Hampstead, we use a positive, non-violent approach to discipline. We notice the things that our students are doing correctly and encourage them in that regard. Examples are: “You concentrated so well on that activity.” “Thank you for being so patient or cooperative.” “Thanks for welcoming our visitor.” “That was so friendly.” “You are really being creative today.” In addition, we use neutral moments to teach social skills through role-plays, discussions, and skits so that our students have practiced appropriate language and actions before situations arise. A large piece of our curriculum at all levels is “Grace and Courtesy,” which includes control of movement and manners. Should a conflict occur, our students are coached in conflict-resolution skills and community meeting skills. If a pattern of misbehavior continues, then the parents will be contacted to help determine the cause and find solutions.

We follow an approach based on empowerment, mutual respect, and trust. Neither corporal punishment nor physical or emotional intimidation are allowed at Montessori at Hampstead. If anyone consciously or flagrantly violates the social contract regarding safety, kindness, and courtesy, our response is to identify the appropriate and natural consequences of these actions. For example, if something is broken, it must be replaced or repaired, preferably not by the parents alone, but by the student whose actions led to the damage.

Any theft, vandalism, or damage to property, whether deliberate or accidental, must be repaired or repaid.

We have worked together to create a system of ground rules and discipline that is firm, fair, and consistent in order to help students maintain the school’s values and character. All students are expected to adhere to and respect them to protect one another. Montessori at Hampstead expects full cooperation from students and families during school hours or whenever the student/family represents the school, whether on Montessori at Hampstead property or away from the campus.

The school must always be a safe learning environment. The Head of School or his or her designee may temporarily or permanently exclude any student who repeatedly breaks the ground rules, or interferes with the health, safety, or educational development of him or herself, other students, faculty, or staff, from attendance at school. In this extreme situation, we need to reiterate that there will be no reduction, credit, or remission of tuition or fees.

3.3 Starting School

Even very young children tend to have a general idea of what “going to school” means. However, the actual event is sometimes overwhelming for both child and adult. Montessori at Hampstead will help you both with starting school.

Whether it's your first day at Montessori at Hampstead, or the first day of the new school year, many young children and their parents feel a bit nervous when they leave one another and are in an unfamiliar situation. A few tears may even be expected.

Here are a few points that will help each of you establish some comfort with school.

Try to keep the morning stress free by being on a regular schedule.

Remind each other that you both have been looking forward to "going to school."

Remind each other that the children at school are just like you and that the adults at school love children.

Use the teachers' names whenever possible.

Remind each other of how proud you both are that this "first day" is here.

If this is your child's first year at Montessori at Hampstead, we encourage you to visit the campus frequently before school starts to allow him/her to become familiar with the new setting. Generally, be reassuring as you talk with your child about his/her new school.

On the first day of school, please don't linger too long at the classroom door or react with alarm if your child is hesitant about the separation. It is very important to reassure him/her about where you will be during the day and by what time you will pick him/her up in the afternoon. Some children may be sad for a little while during the first few days, but kind words and reassurance almost always alleviate their fears. The teachers are wonderful in helping the children through these situations.

3.4 Attendance Policy

All students, even our youngest, are expected to attend school on a daily basis, arriving before the start of the school day.

Students are expected to be in class by 8:30am, to be present in class for the full school day, and at other required school activities. Students are considered tardy for class after 8:30am. Consistency and routine are important to every child's development, but they are especially important for younger students. We depend on your family's full support in this area.

Even though we are less formal and more flexible than many schools, consistent attendance and prompt arrival are still critical and essential. Regular attendance will help your child(ren) adjust more quickly to the routine. The normalization process happens much more easily when regular attendance is established.

Although our program is individualized, it still depends upon consistency and continuous progress. Every time children miss school for whatever reason, there is a period of re-adjustment as they try to get back into the routine of their schoolwork. The longer the absence, or when children consistently miss a day or two of school here, and a day or two there, the more detrimental it becomes to their educational development.

Please call the front office (334-356-1969) between 8:00-8:30am if your child is absent for any reason.

Late pick-ups:

Early Childhood students dismiss at 3:00 pm each day. We give parents a 15-minute window to pick students up from the program, but after 3:15 pm our faculty have other responsibilities and students will be placed in the office and parents contacted.

Late Pick-up fees will be assessed for students picked up after the dismissal time of the program selected in this contract. Late Pick-up Fees are assessed as follows: \$5.00 for the first 5 minutes, and \$5 for each additional minute for the period thereafter. This applies to tardiness after 3:15 pm (Early Childhood/Primary programs).

3.5 School Dress Code

There are two basic reasons that a School Dress Code is employed. Emotionally, children need not feel the power nor the defensiveness that “fashion” can create, even in very young children. The child, not the empowerment that clothes can create (or take away), is the issue at Montessori at Hampstead. No emotional or social advantage should be sought through children’s fashion. Second, Montessori at Hampstead works very hard to create a safe physical environment and, therefore, asks that children wear play clothes, which includes shoes that are suitable for running. Open-toe or open-back shoes, very loose-fitting shoes may not be worn to school. Please wear only closed toe shoes.

Toddlers

Toddlers should dress in clothing that they can put on and fasten for themselves: elastic waistbands, Velcro™ sneakers, etc.

Toddlers should wear closed shoes with non-slip soles at all times.

Please label all students’ clothing.

Primary Students

For field trips, students are expected to wear the following: The Montessori at Hampstead school shirt in good repair.

Primary students should wear closed shoes with non-slip soles at all times. They should not come to school wearing sandals or flip-flops, shoes with cleats, shoes with wheels, or shoes with platform soles.

Sneakers are required for athletic activities.

Again, please label all students’ clothing.

All Age Levels

Also, please adhere to the following requirements:

Jewelry can cause a significant distraction and safety issue; therefore, we ask students to limit jewelry to earrings; if these become a distraction they may be kept with a teacher-guide until a student goes home.

3.6 Supplies Students Need at School

Toddler & Primary Students

Two extra sets of clothing, including socks, to be kept at school, held in a one-gallon Ziploc™-type bag labeled with your child's name.

Light blanket or napper for children who nap consistently.

An insulated plastic lunch box with an insulated bottle (for hot lunches when appropriate) that the child can open, a plastic cup, and utensils, which can be sent home nightly. Include a reusable freezer block to keep perishables fresh.

Toys should not be brought to school.

3.7 Lost and Found

Everything brought to school should be clearly marked with the owner's name. Any unlabeled belongings that are found will be kept in our lost and found in the office for one month, during which time we will attempt to identify to whom the items belong. After a month, any items that are still unclaimed will be given to Goodwill.

3.8 Lunch

Montessori at Hampstead students bring their lunch to school every day in a clearly labeled lunch box. We also offer hot lunch each day. This can be purchased in advance online or the day of up until 9am. The cost is \$5 per day and the vendors who deliver are: Chappy's Deli, Urban Cookhouse, Zoe's, Jason's Deli and The Tipping Point.

Our school places great emphasis on the importance of good nutrition. Lunch is a very important part of not only your child's school day but his or her health education as well. We need to count on you to work with us to teach the students about health and nutrition.

We ask that you do not send your child with items that contain highly processed foods or candy.

With younger children, it is a good idea to prepare food in small, easy-to-handle servings, such as cutting sandwiches into quarters, slicing up fresh fruit, and preparing bite-sized slices of cheese.

Please do not send your child to school with sugary desserts (such as cookies/cake) or drinks, including sodas.

We recommend lunch boxes with built-in cool packs. Please send water in an insulated bottle or a securely closed plastic container. We encourage you to place foods in reusable or recyclable containers.

All uneaten food that can be contained will be sent home. You'll want to monitor your children's lunchboxes to see what they like and dislike and to determine the correct amount of food to pack. We appreciate your care in preparing healthy lunch and snacks for your children.

3.9 Snacks

Parents will be in charge of their child's individual snacks. Please provide your child with an appropriate healthy snack.

Special Dietary Restrictions: Some students may follow a special diet for religious or medical reasons. Please be sure to notify the teachers if your child should avoid certain foods. We will accommodate unique allergies and medical conditions. Brightwheel is a great tool for communicating any changes in allergies for your child.

3.10 Field Trips

Classes will periodically take field trips to local points of interest during the year. They are planned to coordinate with subjects being studied by a class or to take advantage of special community events. Notice of upcoming events will be sent home in advance. Parents often help out with transportation and are welcome to join the class in these activities. If you are interested, please speak with your child's teachers.

All students need a signed permission slip to participate in a field trip. School shirts are to be worn on all field trips.

Parent Volunteer Drivers and Chaperones on Field Trips

Volunteer field-trip drivers must have a copy of a valid driver's license, a copy of their automobile insurance, and a cell-phone number on record in the school office. The school's insurance does not cover field-trip volunteer drivers.

If you volunteer to drive, please plan to stay with the group during the field trip unless the teachers confirm that you are not needed to chaperone as well.

If you wish to volunteer to drive or help chaperone on a field trip, please **DO NOT** bring any younger siblings along. As a parent volunteer, we need to closely monitor the children from the class. If younger children come along, this is almost impossible.

In the event that you will be coming along to chaperone but are not driving, please ride in the car to which you are assigned. We do not allow students to switch cars to sit with friends and ask that you model that procedure.

The teachers will have a handout with further suggestions for making the field trip a success.

Students on Field Trips

All MSH students are asked to wear an MSH t-shirt for field trips.

3.11 Birthdays

Children love to celebrate their birthdays with their friends. At the Primary level, we have a special birthday ceremony in which we tell the class the story of the birthday child's life. Please send in a photograph of your child at each age level: at birth; one year-old; age two; etc. You will also want to send in a short written narrative describing some of the things that were happening in your child's life and your family at each age level. It is especially nice to send in a special snack in honor of your child's birthday.

3.12 Celebrations

From time to time over the year, classes will present lessons or activities designed to bring cultural celebrations to life. They are designed to explore the culture and traditions of other nations or cultural groups within the United States from a child's perspective, as is appropriate to the age level of the class. Some have their origin in religious tradition, such as Christmas, Hanukah, Easter, and Passover, which are typically presented at low key and simple levels. Some may involve international festivals that we may celebrate as part of our studies of other countries, such as Diwali from India and Chinese New Year from China. Some of the other holidays that we celebrate at the class or school-wide level include:

Thanksgiving

Winter Festival

Grandparents' Day

Valentine's Day

Presidents' Day

Earth Day

Commencement Ceremonies

We do not teach religion, even though some of the cultural activities are religious in their origin. In such cases, we present them from an age-appropriate child's perspective, as special days of family feasting, merriment, and wonder. Young children rarely catch more than a glimmer of the religious meaning behind the celebration. Our goal is to use cultural celebration to build a sense of community within the classroom and to introduce children to the different cultures of the world. We focus on how children would normally experience a festival within their culture: the

special foods, songs, dances, games, stories, presents—a potpourri of experiences aimed at all the senses of a young child.

On the other hand, one of our fundamental aims is the inspiration of the child's heart. While we do not teach religion, we do present the great moral and spiritual themes, such as love, kindness, joy, and confidence in the fundamental goodness of life in simple ways that encourage the child to begin the journey toward being fully alive and fully human. Everything that we do is intended to nurture a sense of joy and appreciation of life, a sense of the poetic, and humanity's interrelationship with the earth.

It does not help to avoid the issue of cultural differences. We teach our students to understand and accept them. Truly, though we are all the same inside, we are very different from one another in the ways we live our lives and perceive the world. To build peace, we must learn to see people as they really are and not be afraid of that which is different from our own ways.

We don't mean to suggest that we ought to teach children that everything that people do is equally good. Over the centuries, humankind has begun to develop global standards by which we judge certain actions and political systems to be destructive of the human spirit.

While Dr. Montessori felt that we must teach our children how to live in peace and how to make a positive contribution to the society in which they live, she believed, first, in the importance of nurturing and protecting the dignity and integrity of the individual.

We will always let families know about any cultural celebrations that are planned in advance. Please contact us if you ever have any questions, or if you are uncomfortable having your child participate in a particular topic.

4.0 Health and Safety

4.1 When Your Child is Ill

Whenever your child is ill and will not be coming to school, please call the school office in the morning between 8:00am and 8:30am to let us know that he/she will be absent.

Students with infectious diseases must stay out of school until the contagious stage has passed. For the sake of the other children's health, it is vital that you let the office know your child's diagnosis as soon as possible. This is especially important during the pandemic we are in currently. Please refer to our COVID-19 policies and procedures for further information.

Please keep your child home as long as there is a fever present, a sore throat, eye infection, continuous and colored nasal excretions, or persistent chest cough. We determine the need to send a child home by both the symptoms listed above and by their behavior. Children who fall

asleep during the morning work cycle or who are unusually cranky or sad during the day (not their usual temperament) may be sent home. Students with symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, head lice, or an undiagnosed skin rash should remain at home also. Students will be sent home if any of the above symptoms appear while they are at school. They should remain at home for at least the next 24 hours or until a negative result has been attained if COVID-19 is suspected.

4.2 If Your Child Gets Sick at School

In the Toddler classrooms, the teachers are diligent about assisting children with keeping their noses and faces clean and free of mucous. The children are learning this process but require more adult intervention during the times of the year when illness is more prevalent. In the Primary classrooms, we teach children how to blow their noses and wash their hands. We strongly encourage parents to help their children practice these skills at home and support the development of these very important self-help skills.

If your child ever feels ill, we will keep him or her quiet and comfortable. If he/she seems too ill to remain in school, we will contact you to arrange for your child to be picked up, which needs to occur within an hour. If a parent cannot be reached within half an hour, we will begin calling the emergency contacts on the "Medical Emergency Information" form that is kept on file in the office. The child will be isolated from the rest of the children until someone is able to take him/her home. We understand how difficult it can be for working parents to break free during the day, yet all of our children get ill from time to time. You will want to make arrangements in advance with a friend or a relative for times when you cannot come yourself.

Because colds, flu, and other childhood illnesses spread from child to child with alarming speed, please do not send your child to school if he/she has a fever, is nauseous, or displays any other symptoms of illness.

Weather permitting, students will go outside to play every day. If you feel that your child may be too sick to go out to play, then he or she should not come to school until he/she can participate in all school activities.

Toddler students do not go outside when it feels like the temperature is below 40 degrees Fahrenheit and above a heat index of 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

Primary students do not go outside if it feels like the temperature is below 32 degrees Fahrenheit nor when the heat index is above 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

4.3 Emergency Care

In the event of any medical situation that requires immediate medical attention, we will want your child to see a doctor right away. Please remember to keep your Emergency Medical Information form up-to-date with the office. We must be able to reach you at any time during the school day.

If your child needs immediate medical attention and you cannot be reached, your enrollment agreement authorizes us to seek medical care in your name. We will take your child to the emergency room at Baptist East. Naturally, we will continue our efforts to contact you.

4.4 Medications, Sunscreen and Bug Spray

Except under extraordinary situations (please see examples), we do not administer medication at school.

Please do not send in any medication with your child, including aspirin or other over-the-counter drugs or topical creams, except under a doctor's instructions as explained below.

Antibiotics and other medications should be scheduled so that dosages are taken during hours when the student is at home. When children are so ill as to require frequent medication, they probably should not be in school for a full day.

We also ask that students do not bring vitamins, flower essences, or other homeopathic remedies to school.

When, in the opinion of your child's physician, it is necessary that medication be administered during school hours, a representative of the school will give said medication to your child in accordance with the following procedures:

Any medication brought to school must be left with the staff in the school office where it will be kept in a locked area.

Our staff members are prohibited from providing or administering any medication, including aspirin, to any student except as authorized by you, as parent or guardian, and by the child's physician, in accordance with the following procedures:

- All medications sent from home must be accompanied by the Authorization to Administer Medication form before the first day the medication is to be administered at the school. We cannot administer any medication sent to school without the appropriate, completed authorization form. If this happens, we will attempt to contact you.
- The original bottle containing the medication must be clearly labeled with the student's name, medication contained, and the time(s) and amount(s) of dosage.
- As parent or guardian, you are responsible for administering the first day's dosage of any new medication at home.
- A copy of the Authorization to Administer Medication form may be obtained from the office.

We do not provide sunscreen or bug spray. In the hotter months of the year, please ensure that your child has an application of sunscreen before coming to school. Sun screen and/or bug spray may be give to faculty to administer only if an Authorization to Administer Medication form is completed indicating the specific sunscreen/bug spray that staff will be asked to administer. Please label your child's sunscreen and/or bug spray and hand it to the lead educator in the classroom.

4.5 Safety Drills

The office will conduct monthly drills that respond to a number of safety challenges. If parents are on campus during a drill, they are expected to join the drill as directed.

- The alarm will ring continuously in the event of a fire or a drill.
- When the bell rings, all classes will dismiss into designated areas and remain in their groups.
- The office staff will make certain that the room is empty and close the doors.
- Students and teachers are expected to remain in the designated area until informed that they may return to class.

4.6 Incident Reports

In the event that a child has a behavioral incident or is injured at school, the teacher or staff member in attendance will complete an Incident Report. This form will explain the circumstances of the incident. Parents will be asked to read the report, sign it, leave a copy at the school, and take a copy home. Feel free to call us if you have additional questions related to an incident.

4.7 Child Abuse Reporting Policy

All employees are required by the State of Alabama to read the Alabama Department of Children and Families' Professional Guide titled, "Child Abuse and Neglect in Alabama," and to remain informed of Alabama law regarding child abuse.

Alabama Statute, Chapter 39, Part II, requires anyone who knows of, or has reasonable cause to suspect, child abuse, abandonment, or neglect, to immediately report such knowledge or suspicion. MSH employees who are acting in their official or professional capacity and become aware or suspect that a student has suffered or faces the threat of any physical or mental wound, injury, disability, or condition that reasonably indicates child abuse or neglect shall immediately notify the Alabama Department of Family Services Central Abuse Hotline (1-800-96-ABUSE).

Alabama law allows for anonymous reporting. However, we encourage our staff to inform the Head of School that a report has been made. At such time, a written record would be made and placed in the child's file of any physical injuries, suspected sexual misconduct and evidence

thereof, signs of neglect, drastic changes in behavior, and direct quotations from the child indicating abuse. This information would also be given to the proper authorities when reporting suspected abuse. In the event that such a report was made and the administration was notified, the parent would be informed by the Head of School.

4.8 School Cancellation Due to Weather

If severe weather conditions make travel hazardous, school will open late, close early, or be cancelled. We will make these decisions based on the safety of students and staff. Closing will be broadcast to parents by email, text messaging, Brightwheel and/or public newscast.

In the event of a tornado watch, the school will remain open. If a tornado warning should go into effect during school hours, the students are required to remain on campus until the warning has been lifted. We will not dismiss students during a tornado warning.

5.0 Faculty and Staff

MSH is committed to setting high professional standards for personnel and programs. Our promise is to physically and emotionally protect all students, and deliver the highest quality instruction and learning experience.

All members of our faculty and staff share:

- Commitment to children's well-being;
- Commitment to Montessori education;
- Loyalty to MSH's vision and mission; and
- Ability to work with others in delivering quality education.

Our faculty and staff:

- Support the school's mission and each other;
- Abide by established professional standards and the conditions of accreditation;
- Abide by the laws of the State of Alabama and all federal laws that govern our relationship and our work; and
- Submit for local and federal background checks. (All volunteers who spend time with children, including unsupervised coaches or leaders of any activities, must also have the same background check.)

All members of our faculty and staff are supervised and reviewed as indicated by the Organizational Chart and are consistently guided to set goals for themselves and their programs.

6.0 Parents and the School

6.1 Creating Partnership

Parent involvement creates partnerships, builds community within the school, and gives the children a sense of connection outside the school day. Being directly involved in the school also provides an opportunity to view the school from a unique, internal perspective, giving families a much deeper appreciation for how devoted the teachers are to the children and how committed the administration is to their vision.

We encourage families to feel at home and participate in the broader life of the school through social, educational, and volunteer activities. As a community of parents and educators, our ideas and input help to literally shape the school.

6.2 Volunteering the Gift of Time and Talent

Parents play a crucial role at MSH. This is a community of parents and educators, many of whom are MSH parents as well.

MSH strongly encourages families to feel at home and to participate in the broader life of the school through social and educational activities, committees, task forces, and class and school-wide community meetings. Many parents spend a considerable amount of time at MSH as volunteers. We appreciate it immensely!

One of the most valuable contributions that families make to the school is the gift of their time and expertise. Parents, grandparents, and friends of the school are often found helping out in the office, assisting in the classrooms, serving as field trip drivers, planning the next special event, or serving on school committees.

Parents and grandparents, who give of their time and talent, share special memories and experiences with their families that endure well beyond their children's graduations.

A few ways in which you can help out at MSH:

- Volunteer a few hours a week to help in the office;
- Lend your time and support to fundraising efforts;
- Volunteer to be an Ambassador Family to parents who are new to the school;
- Serve on one of the school's committees;
- Help the teachers organize field trips or special lessons;
- Join us for open houses to meet prospective families;
- Help organize special events;
- Share your talents and special interests;
- Volunteer your time to coach a team or after-school club;
- Serve as a Room Parent;

MSH depends on our combined talents.

6.3 Communication between Home and School

Communication between school and parents is vital. Feel free to ask questions or discuss anything related to your child's progress.

Please remember that the teachers' responsibility during the school day is to the children. Morning arrival and dismissal times are particularly sensitive transition periods when the students need the attention of their teachers. For this reason, we ask that interruptions during these times be kept to a minimum and for emergencies only.

If you must speak to your child's lead teacher in the morning, make arrangements to do so before school begins. Likewise, you can make arrangements to speak to the lead teacher after school. Otherwise, you can correspond via Brightwheel or email and the teacher will get back to you within 24 hours.

During the school year, we will send home emails, letters, notes, newsletters, and announcements. Generally, such information will be sent electronically directly to your email address. Occasionally, we will send home some printed correspondence. Updates that are more time sensitive will come through Brightwheel, so make sure and download the app. Come into the office if you have any questions regarding the installation and use of Brightwheel.

Please check your email daily. We use email, Facebook™, the school's website, and Brightwheel to communicate with families. This saves trees and is consistent with our sustainability goal.

6.4 Community Conduct

MSH is a community of students, parents, teachers, administrators, staff, and trustees where everyone is expected to demonstrate kindness, courtesy, and respect toward all members of the community and the school.

All communication by parents with MSH teachers, administration, staff, trustees, or others, must be courteous and respectful and must not include personal attacks. Communication, in any form, that does not comport with this standard is destructive and can lead to termination of the enrollment contract(s) and dismissal from the school. Parents should refrain from undermining MSH, its teachers, administrators, staff, trustees, and community by engaging in communication, gossip, rumor or innuendo that could jeopardize community or school moral and cohesiveness.

All questions and/or concerns involving organizational, administrative or classroom issues should be directed to the appropriate teacher, administrator, staff member or trustee, following normal procedures and chain of command.

6.5 Observing the Classes at Work

Parents are invited, and even urged, to observe the children at work. Contact your child's teachers to ask them when would be convenient. Unless arrangements have been made in advance, they may not have time to speak with you. You will want to see the class at its normal routine and not responding to the novelty of your presence; therefore, when you visit, please sit in the designated visitor's chair in the classroom. Much can be learned by patient and quiet observation of your child and his/her classmates at work in a classroom.

During the first sensitive weeks of the school year, students (especially the younger children) are familiarizing themselves with a new routine and new environment. For this reason, we do not allow class observations during these periods.

All visitors and volunteers need to sign in and obtain a visitor name tag from the school office upon arrival. You will also be given an Observation Feedback form that will assist you in observing and will give us much appreciated feedback about the classrooms.

Points to Look for When You Observe

- As you sit to carefully observe in a Montessori classroom for the first time, what catches your eye? What do you notice on your second or third visit?
- How is the classroom organized? What do you notice about the layout of activities, furnishings, and shelves?
- Pay attention to the way the adults interact with the children. What do you notice?
- Perhaps, during your observation you will see the teacher redirect or discipline a child. What do you notice?
- As you observe, try to look for any unwritten rules and procedures that the children are following.
- Focus on a particular child other than your own. Follow that child's work during the course of at least a half hour. How does he/she spend her time? How does he/she select work?
- We are hopeful that you will see the teachers present several different lessons to either small groups or individual children during your visit. What do you notice about the way they teach?
- What do you notice about the educational materials on the shelves and how the children work with them?
- What about the Montessori materials seems to be most attractive to the children?
- Focus on a few different Montessori materials. What concepts or skills does each isolate?

- How do the teachers introduce the children to the materials? Try to catch one child learning from another.
- Try to observe children correcting their own work through the control of error built into each Montessori material. How do they self-correct?
- As you observe the children at work, do you sense that there are certain tasks that the children prefer? Are there any that they seem to avoid?
- How do you, as an adult, respond to the Montessori materials? Are you drawn to them? Do you wish that you could have gone to a Montessori school?
- What sort of interactions do you notice between the younger and older students?
- During your observation, did the teachers spend most of their time with the younger or older students?
- Based upon what you observed, try to determine what factors led them to concentrate most of their attention on one age group or another?

6.6 “So, What Did You Do At School Today?”

Have you experienced frustration when asking this question? Do you get the common answer, “Nothing”? Or, possibly, your child tells you every day that he or she did the same thing such as play-dough or spooning beans. Do not be alarmed. We can assure you that your child is very busy at school doing a variety of learning activities designed to support his/her development.

Young children, in particular, often have difficulty talking about what they do at school. They have done so many things that they often cannot sort out the specifics. Sometimes they do not remember the name of the materials that they used - such as the trinomial cube, the metal insets, or the addition strip board.

In addition to the difficulty children may have talking about their school experience, you may have noted that not many papers come home depicting your child’s work. They can be doing complex math, word-building, writing in a sand tray or on chalkboards, geography, or science lessons, all with manipulative materials that will have no paperwork to show you their progress. However, you will get updates through Brightwheel and also by checking your child’s cubby in the Primary classrooms.

How can you find out what your child is doing in school?

- Ask your child questions that are more specific. “Did you do a counting lesson today? Did you build the tower or work with colors?”
- Set up a time to observe your child in class.
- Read a Montessori book.
- Set up an appointment for a quick conference with the lead teacher to check in.
- Attend school meetings, parent development nights, Coffee with the Head of School and the many school-related family functions.

- Play school with your child at home. Sometimes, children will show you through their play what they are learning.

Be patient. In time, it will be obvious that your child is growing and learning every day.

6.7 Supporting Your Child's Experience at Home

Parents are often amazed by the level of independence and sense of responsibility they observe in their children when they are in their Montessori community. Parents often ask, "How can we get them to be this way at home?" Typically, home is a more laid back environment than school (as it should be). One can, however, encourage more independence and responsibility at home by applying some of the same principles we apply when preparing our classrooms.

Here are some suggestions to help bridge the school and home experience and assist your child in feeling that he or she is a capable person and a contributing member of the family.

- Provide a stable stool to assist your child in reaching the sink, light switches, toothbrushes, books, toys, and other items of personal use.
- Hang clothes on a low rack in the closet so that the child can hang up his own clothes. Organize clothing in drawers, grouped for mixing and matching to make choosing clothing easier. Keep appropriate school clothes separate from other clothes to avoid the morning argument.
- Encourage your child to help with laundry. Younger children can fold and help put clothes away.
- Hang mirrors and art at your child's eye level (at least in their room; but a few carefully placed in other areas of the house are nice, too).
- Place appropriate, nutritious food items in a lower cabinet so that your child can prepare his/her own snack when hungry.
- Place everyday dishes in a lower cabinet so children can help unload the dishwasher. This also helps when children are preparing snacks.
- Put milk, juice, and water, in smaller containers in the refrigerator so the child will be able to successfully get his own drink.
- Provide clean-up supplies for your child and give him a lesson in how to clean up his own messes. (Suggested supplies: small broom and dustpan, carpet sweeper, dust buster, sponges, and towels.)
- Place toys, art supplies, and books on reachable shelves instead of in a toy box. Rotate these items so that the child has only a manageable amount out at any given time. Use baskets, desk organizers, and crates to keep similar items together and to display them in an attractive manner.
- Provide a shelf or an area in every room for your child to keep some of his/her activities.
- Create a self-quieting corner for each child, so they have a special place to go when they need to calm themselves or when you need to recommend that they take some time to calm down and get centered.

- Ask yourself, “What new thing can I show my child how to do for himself or herself this week?”
- Invite an older child to help reorganize or redecorate his room.
- Involve even the youngest children in chores around the house, increasing expectations as the child gets older.
- Monitor and limit TV and computer time.
- Read to your child. (No matter how old he or she is, read together.)
- Talk about feelings with your child.
- Use natural consequences instead of punishment. Natural consequences are the result of an action taken by a child that actually helps a child, without adult intervention, to learn about how that action affects them and others.

6.8 Photo Restrictions

MSH currently allows individual families to limit the taking and use of photographs of their child/children. MSH makes every effort to protect and honor express, written use restrictions and has an internal procedure to help ensure that photographs are properly screened and handled.

MSH will follow the directions on the MSH Photo Usage form, for the current school year, as completed and returned by each family. Signed Photo Usage forms are kept on file in the office and, if unrestricted usage is selected, images and photographs may be used in the following media: the MSH Newsletter, the MSH Facebook page, MSH fundraisers, the MSH Website and field trips posts. No students will be tagged or named directly in any media without a parent’s approval.

MSH allows families to film or photograph students at school activities, but requests that families be sensitive to the concerns of other community members and not use/post photographs of other students when posting on any digital media site and that individual students not be tagged or named directly.

7.0 Academic Life

7.1 Technology in the Classroom

MSH believes that computers and other technology can be valuable learning tools. However, based on current child development and brain research, we feel that younger children receive more benefit from the use of manipulative learning activities. For this reason, we do not make use of computers in our Early Childhood/Primary classrooms.

7.2 Family Conferences

It is very important for teachers and parents to establish and maintain close communication. Please feel free to ask questions or to discuss anything related to your child's progress. We ask, however, that you understand that the teachers' responsibilities during the school day are to the students. Morning arrival, in particular, is a very sensitive period when the teachers are greeting each student and setting a calm, pleasant tone for the day. Interruptions need to be kept to a minimum. If you must speak with a teacher in the morning, please make arrangements to meet before school begins. Otherwise, you can correspond via a note, email, or Brightwheel and the teachers will get back to you by phone or will send a note to set up a conference as needed.

Conferences are scheduled throughout the year. See the school calendar for details.

7.3 Evaluations of Student Progress

Our Montessori curriculum is carefully structured and sequenced. The teachers maintain careful records of each student's academic progress. We use the Montessori Made Manageable cards for the Primary Environment to track the individual progress of each student.

Because Montessori schools do not compare students against an arbitrary standard or to the performance of their classmates, we do not use familiar letter grades. Parents will receive student evaluations in October, February and June to review the student's development and to discuss how the Montessori program is contributing to the student's growth. The reports in October and June are generated from our record keeping system, Montessori Made Manageable.

7.4 Student Learner Outcomes

The school stimulates and supports students in their pursuit of personal mastery of any given subject area. Students will normally be promoted at the end of the school year if they have accomplished the proficiency goals and norms that have been established. Advancement to the next program (for example from the Early Childhood to the Primary) is based on an evaluation of the child's total academic, social, emotional, and physical/motor development. Because the classes can individually tailor the child's academic program to a large degree, regardless of which group he or she is placed in, the most important criteria for advancement to an older group is often the student's social adjustment, independence, work habits, and maturity. Normally, parents will work with us in reaching these decisions, and together we consider what will be in the child's best interests. We have identified the readiness goals for transitioning from the Early Childhood classroom to the Primary classroom. We are happy to share the progress that is made once that process begins at conference/progress report time.

7.5 Transcripts

By written request, the parent/guardian may ask that a photocopy of the student's file, along with completed recommendation forms, be issued to another school. Copies are sent directly to the school, are marked "Official Transcript," and are noted in the file; we are not allowed to give transcripts for other school's usage to parents. Transcripts and student evaluations will not be provided unless all financial accounts are current.

7.6 Privacy of Student Files

Student files are confidential records and are kept secure from unauthorized access.

Parents or guardians may have access to the child's file by written request to the office at least twenty-four hours in advance. The file must be viewed in the presence of a MSH staff member. If a parent/guardian disagrees with any item in the file, a note may be inserted into the permanent file with relevant comments.

Officials of the State or County Health Department may have the right to view student files without the parents' or guardians' permission. With a written court order, other government officials may inspect the contents of a student's file without the permission of the student or parent/guardian, and the school will inform the student and his or her family in writing if such an inspection has been requested or made.

A copy of the student's file may be sent to an outside professional, such as a psychologist or educational diagnostician, if requested in writing by the parent(s), guardian(s), or student if he or she has.

8.0 Financial Policies

8.1 Tuition Policies

MSH is a non-profit organization dependent on tuition as its principal source of income. Student accounts must be kept up to date. Your cooperation is essential and very much appreciated.

Families are responsible for prompt payment of all outstanding tuition and fees. Evaluations and transcripts cannot be issued if a student has a past due outstanding balance on his/her account. They will be forwarded once the account has been brought up to date.

All monies due under the enrollment agreement are due and payable according to the terms of the contract. No extensions or delays in payment will be recognized unless in writing and signed by an authorized agent of the school and one of the signatories. If a family is unable to fulfill their financial obligations to the school, the school will ask for the student to be removed from the program.

8.2 Re-enrollment

Invitations to continue at MSH are normally automatic but are not guaranteed. Decisions are made by the administration and faculty, based on an annual review of each student's academic progress, social and emotional development, any special needs (if applicable), along with the attitudes and values expressed by the child and parents. As always, our goal is to help each child and family find the right match between the student, home, and school.

Re-enrollment materials will be emailed home. If the school has not received a student's re-enrollment materials by the date specified, his or her space will be made available to new students who have applied for admission to the school.

No student may begin the next school year if there is an outstanding balance remaining on his/her account.

9.0 Fundraising

The act of giving to charitable causes is known as philanthropy. A philanthropist is a person who donates time, talent, and treasure and takes action to support the common good. Perhaps the greatest benefit of philanthropy is that it creates a very positive impact. It can bring about very important changes. These changes create positive life experiences for others.

Giving to MSH is a great way to make a difference and create a positive life changing experience. We are launching 2 annual fundraisers beginning this year. One will happen in the fall and one in the spring.

You probably have a dream about the extraordinary things your charitable gifts could accomplish now and for years to come. Partnering with MSH is the way to convert that into practical reality. We want to successfully connect parents', students' and staff dreams with our mission.

Your support will allow us to define our future and prepare our students for their important part in tomorrow's exciting and unpredictable world.

AFFIRMATION OF RECEIPT OF COPY OF THE FAMILY HANDBOOK

We require that each student's guardians must sign and return the following written statement.

I/We, _____, and _____
have received and read The Montessori School at Hampstead Parent Handbook, which
includes the school's discipline policy and child abuse procedures.

Parent/Guardian Signed

Parent/Guardian Signed

Parent/Guardian Name Printed

Parent/Guardian Name Printed

Date

Date
