# Family Handbook

## 2026-2027

15975 Chaney Thompson Road
Huntsville, AL 35803
(256) 881-3790

**www.montessorihuntsville.org**

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# Contact Information

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**MSH School Board of Directors**
bod@montessorihuntsville.org

**Website:**
www.montessorihuntsville.org

**Classroom Emails:**
Toddler 1: toddler1@montessorihuntsville.org
Toddler 2: toddler2@montessorihuntsville.org
Primary 1 : primary1@montessorihuntsville.org
Primary 2: primary2@montessorihuntsville.org
Primary 3: primary3@montessorihuntsville.org

Lower Elementary : lowerel@montessorihuntsville.org
Upper Elementary: upperel@montessorihuntsville.org
Adolescent: chelsea@montessorihuntsville.org

**Administrative Emails**
Front Office: office@montessorihuntsville.org
Business Office: accounting@montessorihuntsville.org
Development: support@montessorihuntsville.org
Admissions & Enrollment: admissions@montessorihuntsville.org

## Mission Statement

The Montessori School of Huntsville (MSH) guides children to be independent learners, critical thinkers, and tomorrow's leaders while preparing them for a life of purpose, integrity, and academic accomplishment.

## Nondiscrimination Statement

The Montessori School of Huntsville shall not discriminate, endorse, or affiliate with those who discriminate on the basis of age, religion, genetics, race, creed, ethnicity, color, disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or national origin.

## Vision for MSH

The Montessori School of Huntsville (MSH) will be well-known in the community as an accredited provider of quality Montessori education for Toddlers through Adolescents. MSH will operate as the leading exemplar of Montessori education in Huntsville. We will provide an environment that nurtures children to reach their fullest potential and teaches them to love learning, while creating a high-quality, enriching environment for staff and a welcoming, open partnership with parents and families.

## MSH Core Values

Our guiding principles are at the heart of our daily work with children and are the foundation of our mission and vision. As members of the Montessori School of Huntsville faculty and staff, we hold these core values:

Deep and abiding love for the child

- We meet each child with curiosity and a belief in their possibility. We trust that the child will reveal their greatest potential through engagement in an environment strengthened by secure, loving bonds.

Conscious community

- We create a welcoming, open partnership with families and the larger community that embraces difference and celebrates connection.

Educators as leaders and innovators

- We are committed to the Montessori pedagogy and as such, we are dedicated to reflective practice and continuous improvement informed by current research and best practices.

## Welcome

We welcome you to the MSH community where children, families and faculty work together to create a nurturing learning environment guided by Dr. Maria Montessori's vision for world peace through the development of the child--physically, socially, intellectually, and emotionally.

## The Structure of MSH

The Montessori School of Huntsville was founded by Imogen Stooke Wheeler and Miriam Hoyle Gates in 1965. It operates under the auspices of the Montessori Society of Huntsville, a non-profit corporation formed by the founders of the school. When your child is accepted into MSH, you become a member of the Society. Two MSH Society meetings are held each year--one in fall and one in spring. The primary purpose of the fall meeting is to introduce the Board members and answer questions about the school. At the spring meeting, new Board members are elected, if necessary, and a presentation about the school's current strategic goals is shared with families.

The school is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, elected by the Society members. Board of Directors meeting minutes are posted electronically in Parent Square for families to view following each meeting.

MSH is proud to be an accredited school through the Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS) and Cognia (formerly Advanc-Ed). MSH is a Verified School with the American Montessori Society (AMS), a national organization that certifies guides and evaluates schools to ensure they follow Montessori principles to maintain the highest professional standards.

Our Early Childhood programs are licensed by the Alabama Department of Human Resources, requiring our compliance with the *Child Care Licensing and Performance Standards for Day Care and Nighttime Centers*. A copy of the DHR Standards is available for your inspection in the office, and the inspection report is posted.

## A Word About Our Non-Profit Status

As a non-profit, 501(c)(3) corporation, donations you make to the school for which you do not receive goods or services in return, may be considered tax-deductible. Your taxes or employment benefit plan may require our Employer Identification Number **(EIN): 63-0504958.**

## Admission Policies and Procedures

Children from 18 months of age through ninth grade are eligible for admission to MSH. Because the Montessori curriculum is uniquely designed based on interdependent phases of development, we encourage enrollment at an early age for maximum benefit. Enrollment is granted to children at MSH with an understanding that the family intends to commit to the duration of the curriculum cycle in which the child is enrolled, i.e. 3-5 year cycle for children in early childhood programs, a 6-year cycle for children in the elementary programs, and a 2-3 year cycle in the adolescent community.

1. **Group Tour and Online Student Application:** To initiate the admission process, families will register for a group tour and/or submit an online application between September and May for students grades 1st - 9th and September and June for students 18 months through kindergarten. We recommend that families review the handbook ahead of time.
2. **Virtual Admission Appointment:** Following attendance at a group tour or receipt of an online student application, families will receive an email inviting them to schedule a virtual admission appointment with our Director of Enrollment.
3. **Student Application and draft non-refundable $200 application fee:** The completed application, fee, and requested records as applicable (see below) are required for families to move forward with the next step in the application process.
4. **Student records/transcripts:**
    a. **Complete the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) and submit to the Admissions Director.** (included in the application packet for **toddler and primary applicants** only) The ASQ-3 is a screening tool that provides a snapshot of your child's development. The ASQ-3 supports our ability to individualize children's education and to evaluate availability of resources to meet each child's needs.
    b. **Student Records:** If your child is currently attending another school, please request their records to be sent to the Montessori School of Huntsville ATTN: Admission 15975 Chaney Thompson Rd. Huntsville, AL 35803 or via email to admissions@montessorihuntsville.org
    c. **Letters of Introduction:** For children rising to **1st-9th grades**, we request a Letter of Introduction from the child's current or most recent teacher and their parents/guardians.
    d. **Immunization Record:** A current Alabama Immunization Record must be on file for your child's first day of school. Delays in submission of this document will postpone the start date for your child and tuition will not be prorated for days missed.
5. **Child and family interview:** Families who apply during the application period will be contacted between January and February to schedule the child and family interview. Interviews are conducted between February and March. For families who apply later in the year, interviews will be scheduled following receipt of the application, fee, and records.

6. **Notification of enrollment status:** Assuming that families, guides, and the administrator agree that enrollment is recommended, your child will be assigned to a class.
7. **Enrollment Appointment. During the virtual enrollment appointment, all admission documents and the enrollment agreement will be completed.** Admission paperwork and the enrollment contract will be sent to the email address provided via Transparent Classroom, our online record keeping system and then signed during the appointment. All admission and financial documents must be completed in full and signed before your child will be able to attend their first day of school.
8. **Tuition Deposit:** Upon re-enrollment (or enrollment for new incoming families), a $500 tuition deposit will be required at the time of enrollment to guarantee your child's spot in their class. This fee is credited towards the first month's tuition for the upcoming school year [and can be made in two installments if necessary].
9. **Supply Fee:** A supply fee is due on March 1 or at the time of enrollment if enrollment occurs after March 1.
10. **Student Visit Day:** A student trial day is scheduled for all primary through 9th grade students.

Enrollment in MSH is renewed annually, with the student records updated and fees required each year. Currently enrolled families have priority registration in the month of December to secure their place for the next year before enrollment is opened to the community at large on January 1.

## Program Eligibility by Age

The Montessori School of Huntsville offers programs for children 18 months through ninth grade. Applicants to the school may be admitted to our programs based on the following ages:

**Toddler 18 through 36 months**

Children may enroll in the Toddler program on or after they turn 18 months of age. Children in the Toddler program must move to the Primary program by 36 months of age.

**Primary 2½ through 6 years of age**

All new-to-MSH children must be 3 by September 1 to be eligible for entry into the Primary program. Children moving up from the Toddler program may begin the Primary program as early as 2½ years of age and remain in the Primary program typically through their sixth birthday. The capstone year of the Primary program is referred to as the Kindergarten year. Children must be 5 by September 1 to be considered as a Kindergarten student.

**Lower Elementary 6 through 9 years of age**

Children may join the Lower Elementary classroom at 6 years of age. Children must be 6 by September 1 to be eligible for the Lower Elementary program.

**Upper Elementary 9 through 12 years of age**
Children may join the Upper Elementary at 9 years of age.

**Adolescent Community 12 through 15 years of age**

## Adjusting to a New Program

An adjustment period is expected for all newly enrolled children and children bridging from one program to the next. All toddler and new-to-MSH primary children (18 months - Kindergarten) will have a phasing-in week at the beginning of each school year, or upon entry into either program midyear. Children returning to the primary classroom in their second, third, or fourth year will attend their regular schedule from the first day of school.

The phasing-in process is designed to assist children with settling into the new environment. Each child is different, and one may need more time than another to feel comfortable in a new setting. Your child's guide will contact you to set up an abbreviated schedule that allows your child to transition smoothly into the new classroom environment. Please note that the phasing-in schedule may be extended beyond the first week of school if it is determined to be in the child's best interest. Your child's guide will communicate and work with your family to ensure your child's success transitioning into their new classroom. Good communication between you and your child's guide will smooth the transition.

**Morning and afternoon extended care are not available during the phase-in week for new-to-MSH toddler and primary students.**

**Children bridging from the toddler to primary program who were previously enrolled in the full day toddler program will be considered on a case by case basis for morning and/or afternoon care during the phasing-in week.**

While the phasing-in period lasts just one week, many children need anywhere from four to six weeks to adjust to the new environment, caregivers, and routines. When a child has difficulty transitioning into a new environment, families and guides will collaborate to develop a plan of support including, but not limited to interventions, accommodations, schedule adjustments, and outside evaluations.

## Waiting Pool

The Montessori School of Huntsville reserves the right to accept applicants based on the following priorities: (1) Siblings of currently enrolled families (2) Children of MSH staff (3) Children of previous MSH Society members and legacies. Within each of these enrollment categories, enrollment is offered according to longevity on the waiting pool and availability of age-related space.

If the class is full, your child's name will be placed in the waiting pool upon receipt of the application fee. Once a spot becomes available your family will be notified, and you will be given three business days to respond before we move to the next family.

If the spot offered is accepted, you will have one week to complete a contract and pay all applicable fees.

# School Policies

**Arrivals and Departures**
Operating hours for the current academic year are 7:30 a.m.- 5:00p.m.

**Your Right to Visit MSH Campus**
You have a right to visit our campus at any time and ask to see your child. Parents may not be permitted inside of classrooms but may observe from the classroom window or visit with your child in the hallway.

**Late Arrivals or Pickups Outside of Dismissal Times**
We ask that you make every attempt to drop off and pick up your child during our scheduled drop off and pick up windows. Please consider this when planning appointments for your child. **Any child that arrives late will need to be escorted in by an adult and checked in through the office in the Early Childhood building.**

Families who need to pick up their child outside of our pick up windows must contact the administrative team and their child's teacher. The best way to contact the campus is to email office@montessorihuntsville.org and cc your child's classroom team.

Email is the preferred way to reach our faculty and staff. Please plan additional time in the event we are unable to meet you promptly upon your arrival. Families of children who are enrolled in school day or full day schedules are encouraged to arrange to drop off or pick up their child during the half day dismissal window (12:15-12:30).

**Late Pickups**
*Children who are not picked up by the end of your contracted day* will incur a late-pick up charge of $5 for the first 5 minutes and $1 per minute thereafter. The fee will be invoiced to your school account and paid directly to the staff members who stayed late with your child.

**Sign-in & Sign-out**
All children in the toddler and primary programs must be signed in and out every day by their adult in Transparent Classroom. We maintain daily records of each child's attendance, as required by our licensing organization. Upon signing your child out, we ask that you gather their belongings and exit the school premises.

Classroom teachers will record attendance in Transparent Classroom for students in grades one - nine.

Children who have been signed out for the day are not permitted to remain on the playgrounds, in classrooms, or other areas on campus including the front awning and

parking lot. Families may use the Parent Square directory to schedule play dates or other gatherings off campus after children have dismissed.

**We will not release your child to anyone who is not authorized for pick up on the "Admission Addendum" Form unless we have written authorization from you for that specific date.** A parent/guardian must submit an email or written note to authorize a one-time pick up by an adult not listed on the child's Admission Addendum in Transparent Classroom. Families should only add adults to their child's Admission Addendum Form who are able to have unrestricted access to their child. Unfamiliar persons will be asked to show a photo ID before a child is released to them. You may email your classroom team and cc office@montessorihuntsville.org to authorize someone for pick up.

**Arrival and Dismissal Schedule**

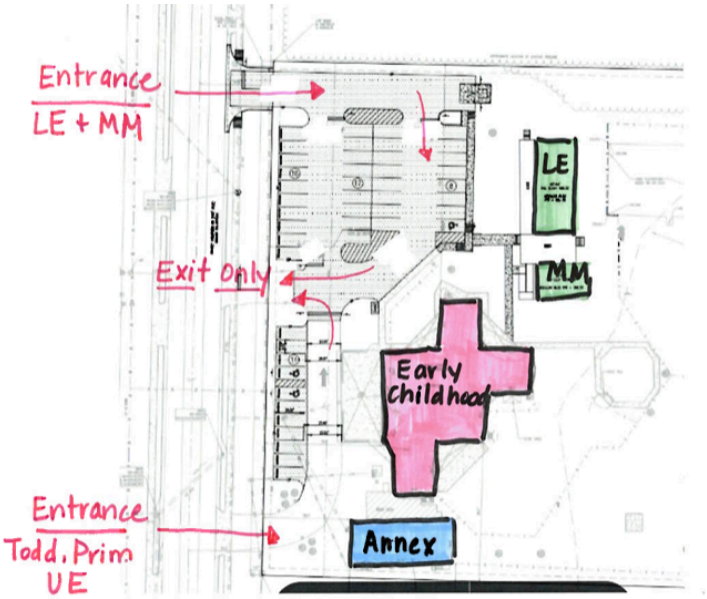
Arrival Windows

- 7:30-7:45 Early Arrival Morning Care
- 7:45-8:00 Elementary and AC Programs
- 8:30-8:45 Toddler and Primary Programs

Dismissal Windows

- Half Day Programs 12:15-12:30
- Primary School Day Programs 2:30-2:45
- Elementary & AC School Day Programs 3:00-3:15
- Full Day Toddler Program 3:45-4:00
- Extended Day Program 3:00-5:00 (Primary - Upper EL only)

**Carline Logistics**



- **Enter f**rom the North end of the driveway to drop off LE. Toddlers may use either entrance and park in the lot.
- **Enter** from the South end of the driveway to drop off Toddler, Primary, UE, and AC. There are two car lanes when entering the driveway.
- **Exit** from the middle of the driveway.
- The **speed limit** in our driveway is 5MPH.
- **Distraction-Free Zone:** Our driveway and parking lots are cell phone and distraction-free zones. Please do not engage in phone calls (even through bluetooth), text messages, check your email, etc. even when your car is in park in our driveway.
- **No crossing guard on duty.** We rely on families and staff to follow the traffic patterns to keep everyone safe.
- **Toddler Family Parking:** Families of Toddler children (including those with Primary and/or Elementary children) must pull through the driveway and park in the parking area.
- **Designated Drop Off Spaces:** There are three designated spaces in the car lane for families who are dropping off children. Please do not exit your vehicle if you are not yet in one of these designated spaces.

**Lunches, Snacks, and Other Food-Related Policies**

We will provide a daily snack for your child. If your child stays for afternoon extended care, an afternoon snack will also be provided. Snacks will consist of two food groups, such as a protein and a carbohydrate, e.g. hummus and snap peas, cheese and grape tomatoes, and will not be heavily processed or have added sugar or dyes. Your teacher will request a set of reusable bowls or plates for your child to use for daily snack.

We do not provide cafeteria-style lunches. Please keep nutrition a priority when helping your child choose items for their lunch each day, even if you doubt that your child will eat it all. Letting your child help plan their lunch is an excellent opportunity to talk about food and nutrition. In packing your child's lunches, we ask that you follow these guidelines:

- **Please send in a lunch that does not require heating.**
- Thermoses are great if you would like to send your child a hot lunch.
- **Do not send sweets or heavily processed foods containing added sugar.** If you'd like to send a dessert for your child, send in fresh or dried fruit.
- **Our school is nut free. Do not send in nuts of any kind. This includes peanuts and tree nuts (including almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, walnuts, pecans, pistachios, and Brazil nuts).** Please be sure to inform our staff of any known food allergies so we can ensure each classroom environment is safe for all students.
- **Avoid artificial food dyes** which are known to adversely impact health and behavior.

- If you choose to send juice, send only 100% fruit juice (check labels). We encourage children to drink water at meals and throughout the day. Water will be provided to all children during snack and lunchtime. Do not send sugary or caffeinated beverages.
- Label lunch and snack boxes, bags, containers and water bottles clearly with first and last name.
- Remind children that they cannot share food with others.
- We cannot refrigerate children's lunchboxes. Please include an ice pack in the lunch box if needed.
- We have a pizza fundraiser every Wednesday school is in session. Children will receive pizza and fruit or veggie side for $6. Ordering information and instructions will be shared with you at orientation. The pizza day fundraiser helps us send teachers to professional development opportunities.

**Rest and Napping Times**

At the beginning of the year, the youngest Toddlers may have a short morning rest/nap period around 10:00 a.m. or as needed throughout the morning work cycle. Children who attend School Day and Afternoon Enrichment schedules begin preparing for nap and rest between 12:30-1:00 p.m. These times are subject to change depending on the needs of the children and staffing. This period generally lasts until 3:00 p.m. in Toddler and 2:30 p.m. in Primary. We ask that you make every effort to respect the rest/nap schedule when planning appointments or picking up your child outside of their regularly scheduled day.

Children in the Primary program who no longer need a nap will have a rest period of 45 minutes before joining afternoon activities. Kindergarten students are not required to nap or rest, but may join the afternoon rest period if needed. Quiet activities are allowed during the rest period.

All children must cooperate in maintaining a calm and quiet sleeping environment for their friends. **Assistants and guides will work to support all the children's needs during the rest and nap period; however, should this prove challenging for a resting child, faculty will reach out to families to discuss possible solutions, which may include shifting to the 12:30 p.m. dismissal.**

MSH provides cots and sheets for napping and resting children, but each child needs to bring a small (crib-size) blanket or other covering. If your child prefers a pillow, it must be a very small one because of storage limitations. Your child may bring a small stuffed animal just for rest time. Blankets and the cot sheet your child used will be sent home each week to be washed and returned.

**Appropriate Use of Technology in the Classroom**

Screen time is defined as any media content viewed on mobile phone, tablet, computer, television, video, film, and/or DVD.

Screen time is prohibited in all early childhood environments, i.e., toddler and primary classrooms. Teachers may use classroom technology to play soft music during the work

cycle and nap/rest times and to play audiobooks during group times provided the screen is not visible to the children. Classroom technology will be used for record keeping and to take weekly photos.

Teachers and staff will refrain from using personal devices in the presence of children, including but not limited to cell phones, tablets, and smart watches, with the exception of cell phone use for emergencies, e.g., panic alert, call 9-1-1, etc.

**Rotation of Classroom Materials Policy**
Montessori teachers rotate classroom materials throughout the year based on the progression of the planned curriculum as well as the developmental needs and interests of the children. Many of the iconic Montessori materials are available throughout the year, such as sensorial, math, and language materials. Montessori cultural materials, e.g., zoology, botany, geography, physical science, continent/cultural studies, etc. are generally rotated monthly, while materials in practical life are rotated more frequently.

**Early Arrival and Extended Day Programs**
MSH offers limited Morning care (MC) and Extended Day/Aftercare programs (EXD) to families needing care before or after the school day. Due to limited availability in each program, annual enrollment is required to participate.

Occasional or drop-in care is not offered. If your family has an emergency, and you need support past your child's normal hours, but within the school's operating hours, contact the front office immediately to see if care can be arranged for that day.

Full time MC and EXD is paid monthly with tuition and is considered late if unpaid by the first working day following the 5th of the month. Registration for these services are contracted for the academic year, therefore the termination of enrollment policy applies to these services.

**Seasonal Break Care**
Care for seasonal breaks, i.e. Fall Break, Spring Break, and Summer Session (June and July for elementary, July for toddler/primary) is offered. Operating hours during seasonal breaks are 8:00-4:00. Early arrival and late pick up are not offered during seasonal breaks.

There is no care offered during the Thanksgiving and Winter seasonal breaks. Please refer to the school calendar for seasonal break dates.

**Screening and Assessment**

The Montessori Method of education provides a nurturing, supportive environment for children with different abilities and learning styles. Montessori education recognizes that each child learns differently and at their own pace. Montessori respects each child's unique learning path. Your child's educational plan is matched to their unique developmental level, learning style, and interests. Therefore, each child in the early childhood program will be asked to fill out a parent assessment upon application to MSH, then annually by MSH staff on their birthday.

MSH utilizes the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3). ASQ-3 is recommended by top organizations such as the American Academy of Neurology, First Signs, and The Child Neurology Society and is used across the world by early childhood education programs, health care practices, social workers, and more.

The results will help you see your child's developmental progress and alert you to any potential concerns that you can talk over with your healthcare provider. MSH keeps information on community resources in the parent resource library.

**Attendance and Absences**

We ask that you inform us of planned absences and report unexpected absences by emailing your child's classroom teachers and cc'ing office@montessorihuntsville.org. If your child is absent from school due to illness, you must complete the Illness Notification Form within 24 hours.

**Regular and prompt attendance is required for continued enrollment in all programs and may be used in determining an offer for re-enrollment or continued receipt of financial aid for the following school year.**

If staff sees a pattern of excessive absences, the family will be asked to have a meeting with MSH administration to discuss how we can partner to support the child in attending school on a regular basis. **If a child receiving financial aid exceeds 12 unexcused absences in an academic year, financial aid may be revoked.**

We ask that you inform us of planned absences and report unexpected absences by emailing your child's classroom teachers and cc'ing office@montessorihuntsville.org. If your child is absent from school due to illness, you must complete the Illness Notification Form within 24 hours.

Students in grades 1-9 must arrive between 7:45 - 8:00 a.m. Students arriving after 8:00 a.m. constitute one tardy. **If you arrive after 8:00 a.m., an adult must escort the child to the main office to sign them in.** Five (5) unexcused tardies constitute one absence.

****Starting in the Elementary program, Alabama state guidelines mandate 12 unexcused absences are grounds for retaining a student in the same grade the following year. ****

When children in the elementary programs frequently miss school, they miss out on valuable lessons that can be difficult to make up later on. We understand that exceptional opportunities for travel may arise from time to time and these experiences can be enriching to children. To the greatest extent possible, we ask that you plan vacations and other planned absences around the breaks built into the calendar.

**Early Checkout**

*Early Childhood Programs*

When scheduling appointments, please be mindful of nap times. If a child needs to check out in the afternoon prior to school dismissal, please do so after lunch before they lie down to rest. When children check out during nap time, it disrupts the other resters.

*Elementary Programs*

For elementary students, please check out **before 2 p.m.** as to not interfere with afternoon lessons.

**Engaging MSH Staff for Babysitting, Transportation, or Other Services**

MSH staff, including substitute staff, may not be engaged by currently-enrolled families to provide any services outside of their employment with MSH, whether paid or unpaid. This includes, but is not limited to, after-hours childcare, babysitting, house cleaning, and transportation services.

## Dress Code and Outdoor Play Essentials

For all programs, please dress your child in comfortable clothes and shoes that are easy for them to manage and are suitable for extended periods outdoors. We go outside every day with the exception of extreme or truly inclement weather.

**Clothing**
Please send your child to school in clothing and shoes that they can independently manage and are suitable for extended periods outdoors.

Note for Early Childhood: Children's clothing should be simple and comfortable and should be free of any licensed characters, e.g. Frozen's Elsa, Paw Patrol, Spiderman etc. This includes socks and underwear. Flip-sequin clothing is not allowed.

**Shoes**
Shoes should be free of licensed characters, without lights, sounds, wheels, or other accessories, and your child should be able to independently manage them with minimal adult support. Shoes must be suitable for extended outdoor play. Your child must be able to tie their shoes independently to wear them to school, otherwise they need to wear

shoes with velcro closures. We teach shoe tying in the Montessori classroom, so they will be able to practice on the dressing frames before wearing them to school.

**School Bags**
All new students will receive a branded MSH canvas tote upon enrollment. A replacement bag may be purchased from the office for $15.

Early Childhood: **Please do not send your child to school with a backpack**. New students will receive an MSH tote bag. Extra totes may be purchased in the office. We do not send many things home and other than lunch boxes, water bottles, and occasionally changes of clothing, there is not much to send to school.

Elementary Students: Students may bring a small backpack.

If your child travels between households, they may bring an overnight bag to school that will be put up and sent home with them at dismissal. Please send their regular school bag in addition to the overnight bag if there are items they need to bring for the school day, e.g., water bottle, etc.

**Year Round Outdoor Play**
Many of the developmental tasks that children must achieve—exploring, risk-taking, fine and gross motor development and the absorption of vast amounts of foundational knowledge—can be most effectively learned through outdoor play. For this reason, children at MSH will play outdoors every day, with the exception of truly inclement weather. Even on cold or wet days, children will be given brief opportunities for access to the outdoors. Dressing in layers is best for ensuring comfort with changing weather conditions and activity levels. Proper attire is required. If we do not have enough extra items to loan to underdressed children, you will be called to bring your child additional clothing.[1]

**Here are some suggestions for school clothing and outerwear for year round outdoor play:**

Daily Clothing:

- Simple, comfortable clothing that is easy for your child to manage independently, including dressing and undressing themselves, and is suitable for activities such as playing in the dirt/sand/gravel/mud, painting, food preparation, activities involving water, etc.
    - Please send extra clothes to keep at school in a one-gallon ziploc bag clearly labeled with your child's name. Please clearly label each item of

[1] For more information about the benefits of outdoor play see:
American Association of Pediatrics. 2007. "The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds." American Academy of Pediatrics. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2006-2697.

clothing. Extra clothes should be appropriate to the season and include socks and underwear.
    - **Do not send your child to school in costumes or clothing that resembles costumes, e.g. superhero capes, princess dresses, unicorn or cat headwear, etc. or other clothing that may be distracting to the environment or work cycle.**
- Simple, comfortable play shoes and indoor shoes that your child can manage independently.
    - Soft-soled shoes with laces or velcro-closings are ideal for outdoor play. Shoes must enclose the toe and heel.
    - Crocs or simple house slippers are ideal indoor shoes.
    - **Please do not send your child in light-up shoes/slippers, sandals, flip flops, clogs, or heavy boots.**

Rainy Day Outerwear:
- Rain jacket
- Rain boots

Fall/Winter Outerwear
- Light jacket or sweatshirt (think layers)
- Winter coat (Go for warmth *not fashion*. Many "coats" are not really intended for extended outdoor play.)
- Mittens or gloves, scarf, winter hat
- Thermal underwear--if your child wears thin pants like leggings or is particularly sensitive to the cold

UV Essentials
- Sunglasses
- Sun hat
- Sun-protective clothing

**Items from Home**
Children may not bring gum, candy, money, toys, dolls, action figures or weapons (real or pretend–including pocket knives) to school. Please do not allow your child to get out of the car with such items.

Your child's teacher may invite your child to bring a special item from home on occasion to present to the class. You will be provided with examples of acceptable and prohibited items to help your child choose something special to present. If your child has a special experience or has something special they would like to share with their friends during group time, you may reach out to the lead teacher to ask if the item is appropriate for sharing and to coordinate a day in advance.

We do not allow children to give away their things to other children. Such exchanges should take place away from school.

**Device Policy**
Cell phones, smartwatches, and tablets may not be kept at school unless a parent/guardian has emailed the teachers about a unique situation. Any devices brought to school will be kept in a designated area of the classroom and may be obtained by the student at dismissal.

**Things in Pockets**
Occasionally small pieces of school materials may make their way into pockets or tote bags. They may not seem significant, but they can be very expensive and take weeks to replace, causing work to be removed from the shelves. If you find any objects in your child's pockets (marbles, balls, wooden or glass beads, cubes, etc.), please return them to the school promptly. There is no need to scold younger children. Simply explain that school items stay at school.

**Lost and Found**
A Lost and Found collection area is maintained, usually in the administrative offices. Please check it for any items your child may have lost. Be sure to put your child's name on all clothing, lunch boxes, etc. to help in their return. Lost and found items will be donated every two months.

**Children's Birthdays**
Beginning at age three through age six in the Primary program, birthdays are observed with a Celebration of Life ceremony. A few weeks before your child's birthday you will need to ask their guide to send home the special *Celebration of Life* form on which you write a sentence or two about each year of your child's life. If your child has a summer birthday, you and the guide may decide whether to celebrate their half-birthday.

If invitations to a party are distributed at school, **all children** in the class must be invited to the party. Please do not expect guides to pass out birthday party invitations. Families may use the Parent Square platform to share birthday party information. We cannot accommodate private birthday parties on school grounds.

## Especially for Toddler Families

**Toilet Learning**
Toilet learning is part of the ongoing toddler curriculum. All toddler children will be introduced to toilet learning as part of their daily experience in the Toddler environment. The Toddler environment is structured to emphasize developing independence. Your child's guide will work with you through this process and will provide resources to guide you to an informed understanding of the toilet learning process, if needed. It is critical that you do not discourage your child from toilet learning and follow the recommendations given to you by your child's guides.

We ask that you provide an adequate supply of diapers or pull ups, extra clothes, and underwear as requested. Please refer to the Medication section regarding MSH policy for applying diaper creams and ointments.

## For Elementary and Adolescent Families

**Montessori Homework[2]**

Homework is intended to support children and their development. This can sometimes mean familiar homework like regular practice on memory work, such as basic math tables. It should also mean expanding the creative and integrative work that the children do from the classroom to the wider world. In this sense 'homework' is any activity that augments and amplifies the curiosity and exploration of the child. Homework in this broader sense includes many activities in which children may participate with their families and peers, such as scouting, campfire, shell/rock collecting, working in community shelters, reading aloud, and sports.

Generally, homework should fall into two classes. It might be work in which some additional repetition and practice will aid in gaining fluency. The other sort can be work or activities that cannot be done in the school setting.

The Montessori classroom is rich in reading, language and mathematics activities. Children cannot bring the Montessori materials home. Therefore, Montessori homework aims to extend the classroom work into the home environment, while involving the parents and possibly other family members.

**"Going Out" - Field Trips in the Montessori Elementary Program**

Children in the second plane of development, i.e. ages 6-12, are naturally curious and driven to discover the world around them and their place in it. Field trips or "going out" experiences in Montessori help children make connections between what they are learning in the classroom and the outside world. Field trips provide opportunities for independence, responsibility, and good citizenship in addition to building curiosity, research skills, social-emotional skills, and more. This is a big part of Practical Life in the Elementary classroom!

Field trips may be planned well in advance or they may be more spontaneous depending on the interests of the children in the classroom and opportunities that arise in the community for further exploration of a topic. We will give at least two weeks notice for field trips. Permission slips are sent and signed through the Parent Square app.

*Field trips are part of the curriculum. They are not optional.*

We travel by charter bus or 15 passenger vans to and from field trip destinations. Families may not drive their child separately or pick them up early from the field trip. Buses leave

[2] Dorer, Michael. "Montessori Homework." *Tomorrow's Child,* January 2016, p.17.

MSH promptly at the stated time. Families who arrive late to school on field trip day will be sent home and the child counted absent for the day.

Beginning in 4th grade, children will take an annual **overnight trip**, usually lasting 3 days. The purpose of this trip is to give children opportunities for greater independence, leadership, and collaboration, and helps to build a strong community with their peers. If your child has never been away from home overnight, we will work with you ahead of time to prepare you and your child for the upcoming trip.

## Building a Family Partnership

**Community Service Hours**
Each family is required to perform 15 hours of service each year (20 hours for multiple children). This requirement is prorated for mid-year enrollments. Should you choose to withdraw your child from MSH during the academic school year, your account will be billed for any unfulfilled volunteer hours at a rate of $20 per hour.

Your child not only benefits from the effort you contribute through service to the school, they benefit from the countless hours other MSH families have contributed each year through volunteer efforts. You may choose from a variety of jobs that can be done either at school or at home. School Committees are an excellent way to focus your volunteer efforts in a meaningful way. Family members can choose to serve on a committee or support as a volunteer for special projects and events.

If you choose not to contribute service hours, you may pay $300 ($400 for multiple children) by October 1 to cover the cost of having these jobs done. MSH families will document their hours using the Volunteer Hours section of Parent Square located under Participation. Any hours not fulfilled by April 1 will be billed at the rate of $20 per hour on May 1 and drafted with the May tuition installment.

Community service hours are calculated based on time spent on a requested task or requested monetary contributions at a rate of $20 per hour. Please submit receipts for goods purchased to receive credit for community service hours.

The following activities have a specific assigned value:
- Society Meeting - 1 hour per family
- Semi-Annual Family Satisfaction Survey- 0.5 hour per survey response. One survey may be submitted for each parent/guardian.
- Community Learning Opportunities - 1 hour per family

**School Committees**
MSH Committees give families the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to their child's school experience while supporting our school mission. Families may choose to join a school committee as an active member or can be identified as a committee volunteer to support a specific committee's projects and events.

**Montessori Society of Huntsville Membership**
Parents/guardians of currently-enrolled children in good financial standing comprise the membership of the Montessori Society of Huntsville. As members, your attendance at the fall and spring Society Meetings is vital. In addition to nominating and electing board members, this is your forum for receiving information, asking questions, discussing issues, and sharing your input with the MSH Board of Directors and school administration.

## Communicating with MSH

**General Information**
Effective communication is critical to maintain a welcoming, open partnership with you and your child. Please observe the following channels of communication.

Email is the best way to reach your child's teaching team. Classroom staff check their email daily during school hours, but around class times, and will respond to emails within 24-48 business hours. Families should avoid communicating with MSH staff regarding their child via text message or social media.

If you need immediate assistance or need to relay a message to your child's guide for that specific day, please call the office (256) 881-3790 or email office@montessorihuntsville.org.

Lead teachers and members of the administrative team maintain their own Calendly page for families to schedule a phone, virtual, or in-person meetings when needed. Please contact your teacher or appropriate member of the admin team if you need to schedule a conversation or meeting outside of listed times.

**School Records**
School records may be requested in writing with a minimum of 14 days advance notice. Recommendation letters, evaluation forms and written communications for similar purposes require more time and every effort should be made to give as much advance notice of such a request as possible. *Please note: if your account is in arrears, you must pay your balance before records are released.

**Family Conferences and Progress Reports**
Schoolwide Family Conferences are scheduled twice a year, midway during fall and spring semesters. MSH campus is closed on these days. Please refer to the school calendar for dates.

Quarterly progress reports for children in early childhood programs are published to parents through Transparent Classroom. These progress reports contain a lesson list of proficiencies, outlining the work each child is engaged in within the program level's curriculum. Additionally, the end-of-semester progress reports, sent in December and June, contain narratives, written by the teachers,

Families may request a conference with their child's guide at any point during the school year. You do not need to wait for regularly scheduled conferences to share information or concerns regarding your child. Conferences, whether in person, virtually, or over the phone, will be scheduled outside of the morning work cycle, during the regular school day. We encourage you to reach out to us as the need arises.

**If you happen to catch your child's guide when they are available for a few moments of face-to-face conversation, please show your child the respect that they deserve by refraining from talking about them in their presence.** Your child's guide will do the same.

**Website**
The MSH website www.montessorihuntsville.org is a good place to review the Family Handbook, school calendar, tuition rates, and financial aid information.. It is also a good way for you to invite your friends to learn more about MSH from the comfort of their homes.

**Social Media**
We have a public Facebook page and a public Instagram account. If you use any of these social media platforms, please follow us!

**Transparent Classroom**
We use Transparent Classroom (TC) as our online record keeping system. Applications for enrollment, registration forms, enrollment contracts, child information, and academic records are maintained through Transparent Classroom. Your child's progress reports will be shared via TC, in December and May. TC enables you to view the Montessori scope and sequence for your child's current program and access descriptions of lessons to help you understand or formulate questions for your child's guides regarding the curriculum. The scope and sequence shows the curricular areas of each program and sequences lessons and materials that will be accessible to children throughout the program cycle. The curriculum for each program is extensive and it is important to understand that there is significant overlap from one program level to the next and it is therefore not necessary that a child cover all of the lessons before moving to the next program level. **The scope and sequence is not a checklist of lessons that every child will cover during the multi-year program cycle; rather, it is a roadmap of the content areas that your child will likely encounter.**

**Please contact office@montessorihuntsville.org if you need to update any information in Transparent Classroom, including authorized pick up lists, address or phone number updates, etc. We will provide the necessary link to update your info.**

**Parent Square**
Parent Square is our digital communication platform which provides a secure space for school-home communications. All families will be added to Parent Square upon enrollment and are expected to check it regularly. An app is available on most devices

and daily digest settings are available to minimize notifications. This is our primary mode of communication with families for schoolwide and classroom updates, events, conference sign ups. Families can expect to receive a regular schoolwide update, "This Week at MSH," every other week, and weekly updates or information from their classroom guides. Families should contact office@montessorihuntsville.org for support with Parent Square.

**Family Education**

Family education is an important aspect of our partnership agreement. We will provide community learning opportunities throughout the school year to learn more about Montessori philosophy, child development, and current research that supports education and parenting practices.

We have a family lending library that is available for all MSH families located in the Early Childhood building lobby. If you are interested in available titles, contact the MSH administrative team. We are happy to share lists of our favorite books, what we are currently reading, as well as scholarship, magazine articles, and videos of interest.

**Student Computer/Technology Policy**

MSH will utilize technology when appropriate in its elementary and adolescent programs. We are committed to teaching the skills, knowledge, and behaviors students need to be respectful and responsible in a technology rich world. Examples of tools utilized are computers, iPads, internet websites, wikis, pod-casts, and other online resources that support learning. The goal in providing internet access is to promote educational excellence by facilitating sharing, innovation, and communication. The use of technology comes with responsibility, and those using it inappropriately might have their access restricted.

Students in the Lower Elementary-Adolescent Program will sign a computer use agreement upon the beginning of the school year recognizing their responsibility to be a good digital citizen.

**Keeping MSH Informed**

Please let MSH know when you have changed your address, place of employment, home phone, work phone, cell phone or email address. When there is any change in the phone numbers of the persons who are permitted to pick up your child (or a change in the persons themselves) or those you have listed as emergency contacts, please email office@montessorihuntsville.org. We will share a link with you to update this information on the Transparent Classroom Admission Addendum.

Please reach out to your child's classroom guides when changes occur in your home routine or situation, such as moving into a new home, pregnancy, a death or serious illness in the family, including pets, a parent on an extended trip, or parents separating or divorcing. Events like these almost always affect children's behavior. It helps your child's guides to be generally informed about significant events in your family and the potential

impact they may have on your child, and we promise that such information will be treated with the confidentiality it deserves.

**Suggestions, Feedback, and Stakeholder Surveys**
We welcome any feedback or suggestions you have regarding MSH and its operation. Throughout the school year, you will receive short surveys regarding your experience at MSH. Your participation is valued and appreciated. Please help us make our school the best it can be.

**Grievance Procedure**
If you have a concern about a classroom occurrence, please discuss it first with your child's teacher. Concerns regarding MSH faculty or school operations should be addressed to the Head of School. Concerns regarding the Head of School or school governance should be addressed to the Board of Directors Chairperson, chair@montessorihuntsville.org.

## Support Services

Here at MSH, we offer support services in the areas of student behavior and literacy.

In every Montessori classroom, universal supports are available to every student. The classroom environment allows for bodily autonomy, flexible seating, individualized instruction, and access to nature. Additional sensory supports such as headphones, weighted lap blankets, wobble seats, chair bands, and sensory tools are accessible. When additional support is needed, students may be referred to the Student Support Specialist or one of our Literacy Specialists.

**Student Support**
Our Student Support Specialist (SSS) holds a B.S. in Psychology, has a background in behavioral therapy, served full time as an Outdoor Educator at Nature's Classroom, and worked as a Montessori Lower Elementary Assistant. The Student Support Specialist is MSH's equivalent of a counselor, providing additional social-emotional and behavioral support across all program levels. The role includes leading Child Study, maintaining documentation, and facilitating Child Study meetings with teaching teams and families. The SSS facilitates small group lessons, co-regulation, body breaks, conflict resolution, and restorative practices based on student needs.

**Literacy Support**
We have two Literacy Specialists—one specialist to serve students Kindergarten – 3rd grade and a second to serve students in 4th – 9th grades. Both Literacy Specialists hold an AMS Montessori credential and an Orton-Gillingham certification.

Literacy Specialists collaborate with classroom guides to provide structured literacy support, using the research-based Orton-Gillingham approach, to students in Kindergarten through 9th grade. Orton-Gillingham works for children with Dyslexia as

well as those with reading, writing, and/or spelling challenges. Students receive services in a small group or 1:1 setting twice a week for 45 minutes.

The Orton-Gillingham approach is direct, explicit, systematic, sequential, and emotionally sound. It marries well with the Montessori Philosophy of educating the whole child with respect. The Literacy Specialists utilize the Gallistel-Ellis Informal Dyslexia Assessment to target student needs before beginning instruction. As part of MSH's commitment to family partnerships, literacy specialists are present at fall and spring conferences, as well as focused meetings to collaborate about student needs, especially if a formal Dyslexia assessment is necessary.

**Child Study Overview**

Child Study is our high-level intervention process. It may sound like Child Study solely addresses behavior, but the deeper goal is to support the needs of your children. This may also address behavior, but it is not our primary focus.

Children requiring additional behavioral or academic support will be referred to the Child Study Lead. The Child Study Team (CST) partners in designing intervention strategies and providing ongoing support to the child within the classroom environment. The CST is made up of the Child Study Lead, the student's teaching team, and other supportive MSH guides.

The Child Study Process is a collaborative, Montessori-aligned multi-tiered system of support that guides teachers and families in supporting children who are experiencing difficulties. Families are brought into the Child Study process through an initial family meeting. The CST will develop a written plan with specific goals, support strategies, and tools for monitoring progress. Information will be shared with families throughout the process and additional meetings may be scheduled by the teacher and/or the family.

This process promotes open, two-way communication, and families are encouraged to reach out to their child's teacher or the Student Support Specialist with questions or concerns about the process or their child's progress. Recommendations may include referrals for outside services, including but not limited to Occupational Therapy (OT), Speech-Language Pathology (SLP), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, General Assessment, or screening/evaluation for learning differences or disorders, as well as a request to have information from the service provider or screening/evaluation shared with the team to improve intervention strategies.

A collaborative and supportive partnership is the best method for supporting children. Families are expected to participate in conferences, as requested, and to provide outside support as determined by the Child Study Team.

# Discipline in the Montessori Environment

In a Montessori environment, discipline is recognized as ongoing inner work refined through the planes of development and skill-building rather than through punishment or coercion. The prepared Montessori environment, classroom culture, and academic lessons cultivate inner discipline in children by promoting a sense of autonomy, belonging, and purpose. At times, however, children need additional support to meet classroom expectations or build skills needed for self-regulation.

Montessori pedagogy fosters an education for peace. Children in Montessori classrooms learn to care for their individual needs while recognizing the needs of others. In addition to setting expectations for how to treat one another in the classroom, children learn a set of shared values within the classroom community. At every level, children learn lessons in 'grace and courtesy,' Positive Discipline, prosocial skills, and conflict transformation. Each of these lessons is an opportunity to develop skills for inner discipline and peace. When a child struggles to learn a particular skill or to meet classroom expectations, additional lessons will be provided.

**Nonnegotiable Behaviors**
Nonnegotiable Behaviors are those behaviors that are deemed dangerous, destructive, demeaning or distracting to the learning environment. Distracting behaviors become nonnegotiable after a pattern of behavior has emerged. In the event of a nonnegotiable behavior, children are removed from the classroom environment and parents are notified. Depending on the severity of the behavior and the regulation of the child, children may be sent home. A restorative conservation takes place, and a plan for reentering the environment will be made.

Every student deserves to feel safe, respected, and supported at school. Bullying, intimidation, violence, and threats of violence are prohibited at MSH. Students are expected to treat other students with courtesy, respect, and dignity, in compliance with classroom agreements and program level non-negotiables.

Click Here to Read Our Anti-Bullying Policy.
Click Here to Access the Student Version of our Anti-Bullying Policy.

**What is Positive Discipline?**
We believe in using Positive Discipline to guide, encourage, and support children. Positive Discipline is predicated on the belief that all children need belonging and significance and that misbehavior is often a sign that a child has an unmet need. The Positive Discipline framework provides educators with tools to support children in developing the capacity for navigating difficult feelings, resolving conflict, and finding meaningful ways to build and strengthen the classroom community. Effective positive discipline begins with the adult's behavior, e.g., kind and firm limit setting, clear

communication of these limits, and taking time to practice the expectations so adults know that children absolutely understand what is expected of them.

Faculty and staff will manage typical discipline encounters with helpful, positive solutions such as redirection, distraction, curiosity questions, reflective listening, "I-messages" / "bugs & wishes," conflict resolution, class meetings, and helping children recognize, name, and cope with strong emotions. We strive to recognize the signs of anxiety and stress and to help children learn calming techniques through co-regulation and self-regulation practices.

All staff are trained to create a positive, secure, and consistent environment for children to learn necessary social and life skills. We consider what the child is thinking, feeling, and learning and encourage them through the process. Positive Discipline is effective long term because it teaches children important life skills such as respect, concern for others, problem solving, and how to cooperate with others.

Effective communication and problem-solving skills focus on the solution rather than punishment or adult-imposed consequences. We strive to encourage children by noticing their efforts and improvements, not just their successes. When children receive interactions from adults that are characterized by a high degree of warmth and predictability, they develop good self-concepts, problem-solving abilities, and self-discipline.

**Conflict Resolution and the Restorative Process**

The MSH Restorative Process is a school-wide initiative that was rolled out in the Fall 2024 after six months of development. RP is derived from indigenous conceptions of community justice that are focused on healing and intrinsic motivation rather than punishment. RP practices at MSH are aimed at fostering strong classroom bonds through community building exercises and circles, and then making amends and creating an agreement for the future when addressing harm that has been caused.

The process is based on Diane Gossen's work on Restitution in Schools. The intention of this plan is to empower children to take responsibility for their actions and become self disciplined.

MSH does not utilize punitive punishments (ex. time out) Instead, we invite children to engage in conflict resolution and a restorative process to reenter the community after a breach of the community agreement has been made.

The foundations of the restorative process are the proactive measures embedded in each classroom's systems of being and doing. Restorative process from start to finish:

- Proactive Measures
- Responsive Measures
- Restorative Measures

**Proactive Measures**
Proactive Measures are things that are intentional and routine within the environment. These vary depending on the age level and include skills/activities in the following areas: Sense of community, grace and courtesy lessons, emotional intelligence, building a peaceful environment, healthy conflict resolution skills, positive discipline, community meetings, leadership skills, and strong family relationships.

**Responsive Measures**
Responsive Measures are used when a child has a need that is not being met and either does not know how, or is unable to express this need in words. We meet our children with curiosity and compassion — as opposed to unhelpful, or even triggering, reactions — in the face of tough behaviors and emotions. Responsive measures include redirection and various interventions within the classroom environment.

**Basic Restorative Process**

1. Proactive measures and preparation of the environment
    a. Reflection on the environmental design. Guides prepare and design the environment that encourages peaceful movement, exploration, independence, freedom within limits, beauty, harmony and a sense of order and trust.
    b. Grace and Courtesy Lessons are given at the beginning of the year for all the ways of being in a classroom. Lessons such as how to come to a circle, how to check on a friend, how to wait your turn. We don't expect a child to know how to do something without teaching them, thus we are preparing them to be active, respectful and responsible in their community. Each classroom develops a social contract. A social contract is an

agreement created by all members that describes how they want to be together and how they want to treat one another. The school creates a social contract for the entire school based on the classroom contracts.

2. Responsive steps
    a. Observed challenge or non-negotiable behavior
        i. The child finds a solution (self-solve)
        ii. Two choices
        iii. Guide chooses
    b. Pattern of challenges/non-negotiable behavior (teaching team and student support informed + parents notified)
        i. Begin formal observations (by guides and/or members of admin)
        ii. First intervention: adjustment to environment (which may include teacher-student communication)
        iii. Plan B (CPS)
            - What is CPS?
            - more about Plan B
        iv. Second intervention: additional adjustments to environment as needed (continuing to include and prioritize teacher-student communication)
        v. Third intervention: continue to provide environmental adjustments as needed (which may still include teacher-student communication)
    c. Child Study (families will be informed during a Family Meeting prior to initiating the Child Study process)
        - Teaching team, student support, and parent collaboration
        - Identify intervention strategies ways to support the student
        - 4-6 week cycle of data collection and progress monitoring
3. Restorative Process with a Family meeting
    a. Intervention
4. Restorative Process with a Family meeting
    a. Intervention - with a deadline
5. Restorative Process with a Family meeting
    a. Intervention or discussion of whether we can meet this child's needs

Families will be notified if the restorative process has been initiated and any action needed on your behalf.

# Health and Safety

**Immunization Policy**

All children at MSH must have a current immunization record on file at all times. We accept a *very* limited number of religious exemptions at each campus. We encourage all families to consider vaccinations for communicable illnesses according to their physician's recommendations.

**Communicable Illness Policy**
Families and staff members must complete the Illness Notification Form for Students and Staff to report illness symptoms and communicable illness diagnoses. We monitor this information so we can take necessary actions to mitigate the spread of illness within our school.

**Common Illness Symptoms and Exclusion Period Guide**

| Symptom | Exclusion Period | Readmission Criteria |
|---|---|---|
| Fever above 100.0 | Until 24 hours symptom-free without the use of fever-reducing medicine and physician's clearance to return to school or 48 hours symptom-free without physician's clearance. | Return to school when the exclusion period has been met. |
| Vomiting or sore throat | Until 24 hours symptom-free without the use of anti-nausea or pain-relieving medications and physician's clearance to return to school or 48 hours symptom-free without physician's clearance. | Return to school when the exclusion period has been met. |
| Diarrhea / gastrointestinal upset | Until 24 hours symptom-free without the use of anti-diarrheal medications. | Return to school when the exclusion period has been met. |

Please note that we require a written physician's diagnosis on file for seasonal allergies, asthma, or any other chronic health condition with symptoms similar to those associated with communicable illnesses, e.g., wheezing, shortness of breath, congestion. If your child has a diagnosed condition, they do not need to be excluded from school for symptoms provided no symptoms unrelated to the diagnosis are present, e.g., diagnosis of asthma but has a sore throat. Families who do not wish to provide information about health conditions must follow the exclusion guidelines above.

The guidelines above are not exhaustive. Symptoms or conditions not listed in the chart above will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. We follow the ADPH's communicable illness guidelines for exclusion periods and reporting. Certain diagnoses will require specific exclusion periods and may require reporting to ADPH for monitoring.

If your child is not able to fully and comfortably participate in school activities, regardless of symptoms or diagnoses on file, we will ask you to keep your child home until they feel well enough to return to school. This includes itchiness from bug bites or other skin irritations, headache, stomach ache, etc.

**Injuries at School**

If a child receives a minor injury at school, we will provide appropriate care. We will notify you if your child sustains an injury to the head, an injury that bleeds, an insect/animal bite or sting, or sustains a fall from playground equipment. The staff member will report what occurred (whether observed by a teacher or self-reported by the child), observable physical characteristics of the injury, first aid administered, if applicable, and observable emotional state of the child. You may choose to pick up your child to seek medical guidance or treatment based on this report. A written report of the injury will be kept on file at the school. A member of our school staff will contact you within 24 hours of the injury to inquire whether emergency or physician's care was needed in response to the injury. Please notify us immediately if you seek emergency or physician's services following an injury at school.

**Medical Emergencies**
MSH is committed to training all staff in Pediatric CPR and First Aid. At least one staff member with current certification will be on campus during operating hours when children are present.

HEMSI emergency personnel will be called if we suspect serious injury. If it is determined that the child needs emergency treatment, they will be transported, at your expense, to the hospital that you indicated on the Admission Addendum.

**Medications**
MSH will only administer medication and medical procedures when the parent or guardian has completed, signed, and dated a Parent Authorization for Administering Medication (also available to download on ParentSquare and on our website). You must include specific information regarding what conditions require administration of the medication, exact dosage (e.g. 5mL or dime-sized amount), and the frequency (e.g. every four hours or 30 minutes prior to sun exposure). You must also note the time it was last given at home.

You, the parent/guardian, or your child's physician, must give detailed instructions for administering medication, even medications purchased over-the-counter. Instructions such as 'apply liberally,' 'give as needed,' or 'small amount' are unacceptable. Instead, use specific language such as, "apply 5mL to arms and legs 30 minutes prior to sun exposure." You will be asked to provide a corrected form before we can administer the medication to your child.

All medications, including but not limited to prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, sunscreen, insect sprays, medicated chapstick, must be in their original container and labeled with the child's name. Please provide a dosage cup or spoon. Medications must be handed directly to a staff member by the person dropping off so it can be stored properly.

Never send medication or items requiring a medication form, like sunscreen, in the child's bag. When no longer needed, medication will be returned to families. Medications not picked up by the last day of the school year will be disposed of.

A Parent Authorization Form is valid for no more than seven days and should be used only for medications that are needed during a short period of time. A Medical Practitioner's Authorization to Continuously Administer Medication Form (available in the office or from our website) may accompany the Parent Authorization Form. When submitted together, the forms are valid for one full year. Both forms are required to maintain medications on campus throughout the school year such as EpiPens, sunscreen, insect repellent, allergy/emergency medications, topical creams such as lip balm, anti-itch, or diaper rash ointments.

We request that you apply sunscreen and/or insect repellent at home because of the amount of class time it takes for staff to do so. We will reapply it as directed if we have a current medication form.

**Severe Allergies**
While the following guidelines are intended to minimize the risk of potential contact with known allergens, MSH cannot guarantee that a child will not be exposed to potentially hazardous or life-threatening allergens.

Children with severe or life-threatening allergies may be admitted to MSH. They may attend classes when the following conditions are met:

- An Allergy Emergency Health Care Plan is completed (at least annually) and on file in the office.
- An EpiPen or similar device is delivered to the school with required medication forms.

It is the family's responsibility to inform MSH in writing of a severe or life-threatening allergy and to obtain the Allergy Emergency Health Care Plan with a physician's signature. If a class has a child with a severe or life-threatening allergy, families of other children in the class will be notified, when necessary, about specific products that are not allowed to be brought into the classroom.

**No Smoking or Tobacco Use Anywhere on MSH Campuses**
According to our licensing requirements, MSH is a tobacco-free facility. Smoking or tobacco usage, including e-cigarettes and vaping devices, is prohibited on MSH grounds. Any person using these products on school grounds will be asked to leave immediately.

**Emergency Closings**
MSH will notify staff and families of school closings using the Parent Square platform. Emergency alerts can be shared via app notification, email, text message, and voice call. Please do not attempt to pick your child up *during* a tornado warning. During a tornado warning, children will be moved to the reinforced hallway in the main building.

**Emergency Preparedness**
MSH is currently invested in a multiyear consulting relationship with a leader in emergency preparedness and crisis management. Administrative staff meet regularly with the consulting team throughout the school year to review and update emergency response plans and communication protocols. All staff receive annual training in emergency response and biennial training in CPR and First Aid.

Emergency drills are conducted monthly. MSH holds at least two shelter-in-place and two lock-down drills during the school year. Fire drills are conducted in any month that another emergency drill is not scheduled. All emergency drills are performed in developmentally-appropriate ways and are designed to help children and teachers confidently respond to potential emergencies without creating undue stress or panic.

The architect and the Emergency Management Agency have identified the reinforced hallway in the Early Childhood building as the designated storm shelters. Buildings are certified annually by an inspector from the Fire Department.

In the event of a fire, power failure, water shut-off or other problem that would interfere with the children's well-being, families will be contacted immediately to pick up their children. **Families must pick up by the stated dismissal time or late charges will occur at a rate of $5 for the first 5 minutes and $1 per minute thereafter. If school is closing due to an emergency or other crisis, ALL adults will be asked to present a photo ID before any child will be released.**

In the event of a toxic spill, gas leak, earthquake or other emergency that would require evacuation of the building and area, the local Emergency Management Agency would direct our relocation and families will be contacted as soon as possible.

**Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect**
All MSH employees, enrichment specialists, approved volunteers, and board members are required by law to report to the local Department of Human Resources any incident of suspected child abuse or neglect. The Department of Human Resources is tasked with investigating all reports of suspected abuse or neglect. Our staff and approved volunteers receive training annually in identifying and reporting abuse.

## Annual Fund, Fundraising, and Gifts

**Charitable Gifts Made to The Montessori School of Huntsville**
Like nearly all independent schools, MSH relies on more than tuition alone to meet its full financial needs. Charitable gifts are an important and necessary part of the school's fiscal management. All MSH children benefit from the generosity of parents, grandparents, faculty, staff, alumni/ae, former parents, corporations, and friends whose faithful support through gift giving helps further our mission to prepare children for a life of purpose, integrity, and academic accomplishment.

**Annual Fund Campaign**
Each year the Board of Directors appeals to current parents, alumni, and staff to join the board in contributing to the Montessori School of Huntsville Annual Fund. Contributions to the Annual Fund bridge the gap between tuition income and the true cost of a quality Montessori education. Faithful giving to this fund has supported financial aid, school technology, facility upkeep and improvements, and teacher/staff continuing education. The Annual Fund is the most effective avenue of giving to the school, and we hope every family will join us in this critical endeavor.

All gifts to the Annual Fund are tax-deductible as contributions to our 501(c)3 nonprofit institution. We are grateful for any and all contributions made by our donors and encourage you to give according to your family's financial means. We strive to earn 100% participation from board, current parents, faculty, and staff as it significantly increases our chances of receiving grants from foundations and government organizations by demonstrating that 100% of our constituents support our mission and vision.

Disbursement schedules for pledges to the Annual Fund may be designed to suit your family's needs within the school's fiscal year.

**The Montessori Families Endowment Fund**
In 2018, Dr. Robert & Nenita Fry generously seeded our first endowment, the Montessori Families Endowment Fund. We are so grateful to them for their incredible generosity and commitment to scholarship through this long-term investment.

The Fund is managed by the Community Foundation of Greater Huntsville, and donations can be received from anyone interested in supporting the longevity of authentic, quality Montessori education for children in our community. Donations are tax-deductible and the principle is protected per the policies of the Community Foundation.

**Kathy O'Reilly Memorial Scholarship Fund**
The Kathy O'Reilly Memorial Scholarship Fund was created in memory of Kathy O'Reilly, former teacher, administrator and board member, who passed away in December 2009 after a battle with cancer. Kathy was at the heart and soul of MSH for 23 years. She is remembered for her delight in working with children, her compassion for those in need, and a lifelong commitment to peace education.
The scholarship fund is designed to benefit children from families with limited financial resources who would not otherwise be able to attend MSH. Recipients will be added as funds permit.

**Employer Matching Programs**
Employer matching programs allow your tax-deductible contributions to go even further while helping these employers contribute their tax-deductible dollars to valuable community initiatives. Please consider contacting your HR department to see if your company has any matching programs available.

**Memorials and Honoraria**
Each school year, gifts are received to honor a special person, memorialize a loved one, or celebrate special events such as birthdays and graduations. MSH administration will notify the individual or family of these thoughtful gifts upon receipt. We are fortunate that some grandparents and other extended family generously choose to donate to our school in the interest of their family's education.

**Gifts-in-Kind**
Gifts of tangible property or professional services may be designated by an individual donor for a special one-time project or purpose not included in the operating budget of the school. Although gifts-in-kind do not count toward the Annual Fund, their value may be tax-deductible and is always greatly appreciated by MSH.

## Financial Obligations

The Montessori School of Huntsville is a 501(c)(3) institution that complies with all appropriate federal and state laws.

**Application and Supply Fees**
A $200 Application Fee is required with each application. Currently enrolled children also pay an Application Fee when they enroll for the coming year ($150). A supply fee is due by March 1 for all children who have enrolled prior to that date; for children enrolling after March 1 but before the start of the school year, the supply fee is due immediately upon acceptance into the school. All fees are non-refundable and non-transferable.

**Tuition Deposit**
In order to complete enrollment eligibility, a $500 deposit is required. This deposit is due at the time of signing the enrollment contract. The deposit is credited towards the first month's tuition payment in August (if billed monthly), or deducted from the total tuition amount if paying in a lump sum.

**Tuition and Termination of Contract**
When you sign your enrollment agreement, the school plans staffing and budget for the entire year based on your child's attendance. Because of this, this contract is considered a full-year financial commitment. No portion of tuition or fees will be refunded or canceled in the event of absence, withdrawal, dismissal, or changes in family circumstances, except through the Tuition Refund Plan, if applicable.

<u>Termination of Contract Before the First Day of School:</u>
Families are responsible for three months of tuition if the student withdraws before the first day of school.

<u>Termination of Contract During the School Year:</u>

Families are responsible for the full remaining balance of tuition from the date of withdrawal through the last day of the school year.

School-Initiated Withdrawal:
If the school must dismiss a student for reasons such as non-payment or serious behavioral concerns, tuition remains non-refundable

Tuition is quoted as determined by your family's enrollment preferences and contract, and is due in full on August 1 of the academic year in which you are enrolling or upon enrollment when enrolling midyear.

Families may elect to have their tuition divided into equal monthly installments, e.g. August through May (1-9th grade), or August through June (toddler & primary). This means tuition remains the same during the months where there are fewer regular school days, e.g. August (Phase-in), November (Thanksgiving Break), December (Winter Break), March/April (Spring Break), and May (Memorial Day break).

If a family is offered enrollment midyear, tuition will be billed in the month that they accept the enrollment. **Tuition will not be prorated for children starting in the middle of the month.**

Montessori School of Huntsville is wholly supported and operated from the income derived from tuition, fees, and donations.

**Tuition Refund Insurance**
MSH is happy to provide Tuition Refund Insurance through the Marsh McLennan Agency to protect your annual financial obligation. Your enrollment contract with the school financially obligates you to pay the full amount of tuition and fees for your child to attend regardless of withdrawal for any reason. Covered Reasons under this policy are listed in the terms linked here. If you suffer a covered loss, Marsh McLennan will pay the percentage listed in the Declarations for that covered reason of the student's average daily cost for tuition expenses and fees. The cause of any withdrawal or discharge must occur during the policy period. Coverage begins 14 calendar days after the first day of class or 14 days from the student's date of enrollment in the program, whichever is later.

**Statements**
Monthly statements will be sent via email, usually five calendar days before the first of each month. Your statement will reflect monthly tuition installments dated on the first of the month and any elective charges (e.g. donations, catered lunches) from the previous billing cycle. We do not accept personal checks or cash payments for tuition and fees.
**Other Fees and Charges**
- Tote Bags - $15
- MSH Shirts - $15
- Pizza lunches - $6

**Charges for Late Pick Up**
To ensure appropriate staff to child ratios as well as quality programming in our afternoon extended day programs, we ask that you make every effort to pick your child up by their stated times. Families who need regular care past their child's dismissal time should sign up for the annual extended day program. If you require occasional aftercare for extenuating circumstances, please email our office staff for assistance. Accommodating these requests are wholly dependent on enrollment and staffing.

Children who are not picked up **by the time designated on the enrollment contract**, and who are not enrolled in our annual afternoon care program, will incur late charges.

Children who are not picked up by your contracted school day time will be charged $5 first 5 minutes and $1 per minute for each additional minute. **This policy will apply to the adjusted dismissal time if school is dismissed early for inclement weather or other emergency.**

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have provided MSH with up-to-date contact information for reaching you in an emergency as well as staying connected to MSH when severe weather is likely. All children and adults must have left the building by the stated closing times. If you know that you will be late, please call the school so we can reassure your child that you are on the way.

**Student Accounts and Late Payments**
Invoices are due on the 1st of each month and should be paid in full. There will be a $25 late fee for payments received after this date. Any extenuating circumstances regarding late payment must be made known in writing to accounting@montessorihuntsville.org

No records of any kind, including report cards and test scores, will be released on behalf of any child whose account is in arrears. The Head of School, after conferring with parents whose accounts are in arrears, may prohibit the child from attending classes until the accounts are brought current.

The Head of School has final jurisdiction in the enforcement of these policies. Every effort is made to be responsive to the needs of MSH families and to ensure fairness in the implementation of the financial policies. An unsatisfactory record of tuition and fee payment, however, is considered a factor in the decision whether to offer a family an enrollment contract for the next year. Families whose financial accounts are not current will not be extended an enrollment contract until the accounts are made current.

**Tuition Refunds and Credits**
Refunds are not given for absences, even absences of several weeks. Refunds are not given for closings due to inclement weather or other emergencies. Tuition is based on your child's academic school year and is due in full August 1 of the academic year in

which you are enrolling. Families may elect to divide their annual tuition into equal monthly installments. We are unable to reduce tuition for extended vacations or other prolonged absences.

## Dismissal from MSH

MSH has the right to dismiss a child if the staff determines that the child is not ready for the school program and the family is unwilling to provide support and/or services as requested by a school Child Study Team, or for other reasons including but not limited to academic, behavioral or financial concerns. MSH reserves the right to dismiss a child if it is determined that the child poses a significant risk to the safety and wellbeing of MSH children and staff. Families dismissed from MSH are subject to the terms of the enrollment contract.

## Additional Resources and Links

- Pre-arranged Absence Form
- Allergy Emergency Health Care Plan
- Medical Practitioner's Authorization to Administer Medication
- Parent Medication Authorization Form
- Primary Celebration of Life Form

Other Useful Information:

- Key Philosophical Messages that Make Montessori Unique
- The Four Planes of Development
- The Montessori Teacher
- Family-Child-Guide Partnership Expectations
- Preparing Ourselves to Receive Our Children's Reports of Concern from Their Community