

2008-2009

Parent Handbook



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2008-2009 Montessori School Calendar

August 11-15	Staff Preparation Days
August 13	New Parent Orientation 7:00 PM
August 18	First Day of School Year
August 22	PTO Family Night/Ice Cream Social 6:00-7:30 PM
September 1	NO SCHOOL: Labor Day
November 11	NO SCHOOL: Parent Teacher Conferences
November 26-28	NO SCHOOL: Thanksgiving
December 19	Last Day of School before Winter Break
December 22-January 2	NO SCHOOL: Winter Break
January 5	Classes Resume
January 19	NO SCHOOL: Teacher In-service
February 16	NO SCHOOL: President's Day
February 25	NO SCHOOL: Parent Teacher Conferences
March 16-20	NO SCHOOL: Spring Break
May 1	NO SCHOOL: Parent Teacher Conferences
May 25	NO SCHOOL: Memorial Day
May 29	Last Day of School

2009 Montessori Summer Session

June 8-9	Staff Preparation Days
June 9	New Parent Orientation 7:00 PM
June 10	First Day of Summer Session
July 3	NO SCHOOL: Independence Day
July 24	Last Day of Summer Session

Montessori School of Iowa City follows the Iowa City Community School District closings for inclement weather except for early dismissals for heat. The Montessori School is air conditioned.

The Montessori School will make up days missed due to inclement weather if the Iowa City School District does, but only if the days are made up during the school year. **The Montessori School will not extend its calendar beyond the last scheduled day of the school year.** The reason for this is to insure that there will be enough time for the staff to prepare for the start of the summer session.

All Iowa City Community School District inclement weather decisions are broadcast on TV, radio and City Line.

INTRODUCTION

The Montessori School of Iowa City was founded in 1962 by a group of parents seeking a Montessori based educational program for their children. In 1995, the school moved from a house on Reno Street in Iowa City, to its present location in Coralville. In the summer of 2000, the school created two more classrooms in the building's lower level. The additional space allowed the school to begin an elementary program for grades 1-3. The school's total enrollment capacity is about 175 students, ages three through nine.

You have made an excellent choice in selecting our program for your child's early education. We trust that you will find our program and facility to be "second-to-none". Our outstanding staff is committed to challenging and supporting each child through "guided-discovery" type learning activities.

Montessori Philosophy

The Montessori method of education was developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, Italy's first female physician. She opened her first "school" (*Casa dei Bambini*) in 1907. Today, Montessori schools flourish all over the world. Fundamental to all of Dr. Montessori's ideas is a deep respect for a child's ability to learn. She recognized that children go through certain phases during which they learn more easily than at any other time in their lives. This innate potential to learn is dependent upon a loving environment that encourages the active pursuit of knowledge.

Dr. Montessori's developmentally-appropriate approach to learning is designed to fit each child instead of making each child fit into a preset program. She believed that learning should take place in multi-aged classrooms where children who are at various stages of development can learn from and with each other. This learning should take place in a noncompetitive atmosphere in order for each child to develop at his/her own speed.

Dr. Montessori observed that the best way for young children to learn is by active, hands-on experiences. She developed the idea of the *prepared environment*, where the classroom contains a wide variety of cognitive materials that foster learning in numerous areas. The purpose of the materials is not just to impart knowledge to children, but rather to provide them with stimuli that capture their attention and initiate a process of concentration.

Purpose and Objectives

The school's mission statement is as follows:

The Montessori School of Iowa City is a school which follows the Montessori educational principles of providing child-directed, individualized, hands-on learning within an environment especially prepared to meet the developmental needs of the three to twelve-year-old. The school seeks to educate the whole child by meeting the social, intellectual and emotional needs of each individual; to foster student self-respect through experiencing success and independence; and to generate a sense of community among children, teachers, families, and school.

The objectives of the school are:

- To provide a prepared environment in which the stated purpose can be achieved, in keeping with Montessori principles and state regulations.
- To provide an instructional program that follows the curriculum based on the use of Montessori concepts and materials.
- To provide preschool and elementary programs for children 3-9 years old.

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

The Montessori School of Iowa City, Inc. is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt corporation to Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. Members of the corporation automatically include parents or guardians of children enrolled in the school and staff employed by the school. The three-to six-year-old classrooms are fully licensed by the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS). The elementary portion of the school is recognized by the Iowa State Department of Education as Competent Private Instructor.

Board of Trustees

The school is overseen by a nine to fifteen-member board of trustees, which includes the Director with a faculty/staff trustee and an honorary trustee. The board is composed of volunteers from past and present Montessori parents, as well as other members of the community. The board determines school policies in the areas of finance, strategic planning, and administrative accountability. A list of the current members of the board is included in the most recent edition of the Montessori School Directory.

School Administration

The Director and the office support staff work together as a team to lead the school in accomplishing its mission of providing superior early childhood education. The Director is the primary person charged with implementing the school's strategic plan, as determined by the board of trustees.

The Director is responsible for promoting the school, managing enrollment, overseeing financial transactions, maintaining the building and grounds, providing school communications and correspondence, fulfilling licensing requirements, and promotes professional growth of teachers, and performs other duties.

Staff

Each three-to six-year-old classroom is directed by a trained Montessori head teacher and an assistant. Assistant teachers are mentored by trained, experienced teachers in preparation for becoming head teachers.

The elementary teacher is also Montessori-trained and licensed by the state Department of Education.

In addition to the teachers and the director, the school employs an office manager, an accountant, and a cook to assist in carrying out the school's operations. All staff members are required to pass background checks and are trained in CPR, First Aid as required by DHS.

Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)

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

- Back to School Clean Up Day (August)
- Ice Cream Social (August)
- Picture Days (Fall and/or Spring)
- Fall Festival (October)
- Book Fairs (Fall and/or Spring)
- Tower Wish List (Nov. and Dec.)
- Chili Supper (February)
- Recycle a Can-Plant a Tree (all year)
- Staff Appreciation Week and Dinner (May)

Please take the time to fill out the Parent Volunteer Form found in your Enrollment packet.

THE PROGRAM

Hours of Operation

The school's normal hours are from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. In general, the Director can be contacted daily from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., or by appointment. Voice messaging is available to receive calls when the lines are busy, or when the school is closed.

During the school year, there are three core 3 to 6 year old programs to choose from: mornings, afternoons, or full days. In addition to these core programs, the school also offers some before and after-school care. The last pages of this handbook contain details regarding the costs of these respective programs. The general daily class schedule is as follows:

Early Morning Drop-off (primarily for Full Day students)	7:30 – 8:30
Arrival for 6 to 9 Year Old Class and Full Day Classes	8:15 – 8:30
Arrival for Morning Classes	8:30 – 8:45
Dismissal from Morning Classes	11:40 – 12:10 (staggered)
Recess and Lunch	11:15 – 12:45 (staggered)
Arrival for Afternoon Classes	12:30 – 12:45
Dismissal from 6 to 9 Year Old Class	3:15 – 3:25
Dismissal from Full Day Classes	3:30 – 3:40
Dismissal from Afternoon Classes	3:45 – 3:55
Extended Day	3:30 – 5:30

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

Lunch

Each day our cook prepares a balanced and nutritious lunch for the children. The meals are served family style, and parents are welcome to come and eat lunch with their child. (Please call ahead!) Menus for the week are posted in the entryway of the school and a record of meals served during the year will be kept in the office.

School-age children may bring their own lunches to school.

On the child's enrollment form, there is a place to list any food allergies that he/she may have. Parents must detail these and any other conditions or preferences in regards to food so that the staff can act accordingly.

Snacks

Approximately once a month, each child in the 3 to 6 year old program is to provide a snack for his/her class. During the month of a child's birthday, her/his snack day will be scheduled as close as possible to that day. The child's snack day will also be his/her day to "show and tell." The child may bring an object from home or an idea to share with the class

If parents forget to bring a snack on their assigned day, they will need to supply a replacement snack which can be stored without refrigeration for the next time a back-up snack is needed.

Nutritious and simple snacks are the best. Foods and beverages high in sugar are strongly discouraged, although exceptions will be made for a child's birthday and for holidays. Please provide a beverage and all needed paper products. Children will help serve the snack. It will be most helpful for the snack to be ready to serve in child sized portions. Each snack must include two of the following food groups:

- ✓ Milk
- ✓ Fruit or vegetables
- ✓ Meat or protein substitute
- ✓ Bread or equivalent

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

Rest Time

The Department of Human Services requires a supervised nap or quiet time for all children under the age of six who are present at the school for five or more hours. During this time, they sleep or relax quietly on their mats. The mats are provided by the school. Parents are requested to purchase a "Rolle Pollee" which is a self-contained blanket, sheet and pillow. They are available from the school at cost. A book or two and/or a stuffed animal can be brought from home for rest time only (toys are typically not allowed at school). Napping materials will be sent home to be cleaned at the end of each school week so that they may be returned at the beginning of the following week. All napping materials should be clearly labeled and sent in a small bag.

Field Trips

Field trips are occasionally scheduled throughout the year. Whenever a field trip is planned, parents are notified and often asked to assist in transporting and chaperoning the children. The school does not have any vehicles therefore; help is needed from parents to get the children to and from the field trip. Parents must provide child safety seats for the field trip. If a parent wishes to not have their child go on a particular field trip, that child may be kept at home for the day.

The teacher will have a cellular phone and first aid kit. Children must be placed in their safety seats. Children are not allowed to ride in the front seat. No food or drink may be consumed in vehicles.

Typical destinations for these field trips include petting zoos or pet stores, apple orchards, one of the area libraries, a music concert, and/or museums.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents' Rights and Responsibilities

Parents have the right:

- To know that their child is cared for in a safe, supportive environment;
- To unlimited access to their children (unless prohibited by a court order);
- To access to the school staff during the school's normal hours of operation;
- To be informed about serious misbehavior on the part of their own child;
- To be regularly informed of school activities.

Parents have the responsibility to fulfill their obligations as described in various portions of this handbook. These obligations include, but are not limited to:

- Paying fees on time;
- Keeping their child's records up-to-date;
- Following the health policy;
- Making contact with a staff member at the school when picking up a child so that the school knows that the child has been received;
- Letting the school office know if their child will not be attending on a regularly scheduled day;
- Noting any communications from the administrators or teachers regarding their child's behavior, and to cooperate in any efforts to bring about improvement in the situation;
- Attempting to attend school activities that involve parents;
- Informing the school of any significant changes that occur in the home.

Children's Rights and Responsibilities

Children have the right:

- To experience a safe, supportive, and consistent environment;
- To use all of the program equipment, materials, and facilities on an equal basis with all of the other children;
- To receive respectful treatment;
- To experience discipline that is fair and non-punitive;
- To receive nurturing care from staff members.

Children have the responsibility:

- To be accountable for their actions;
- To respect the school rules that guide them while at school;
- To remain with the group and staff at all times;
- To care for materials and equipment properly.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This Parent Handbook constitutes a valid part of the enrollment agreement between the Montessori School of Iowa City and the parents or guardians of children who are enrolled at the school. Enrollment at the Montessori School of Iowa City constitutes acceptance of the following policies.

Arrival and Dismissal

There are two parking lots in front of the school. The west lot is for our staff, while the east lot is for parents. There also is a drop-off location in the circle driveway. This area is used to pick up and drop off students. **We ask that parents not leave their car if it is parked in the circle driveway. It is imperative to keep the circle driveway open in the unlikely event that an emergency vehicle should ever need to arrive at the school and to insure a good flow of traffic in and out of our lot.**

During arrivals, parents can either park in the west lot and walk their child into their classroom, or drop off their child at the drop-off location in front of the school during normal arrival times (specific arrival times are listed on page 4). It is important that children arrive at the school as close to their designated arrival times as possible. A greeter is available between 8:15 a.m. and 8:45 a.m. to escort children who are dropped off in the circle driveway.

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

When pulling into the parking lot, we also ask that persons **do not remain standing at the entrance of the school or in the area between the circle driveway and the west parking lot as doing so would block other cars trying to enter the parking lot and cause a backup onto Holiday Road.** To prevent this, persons should pull completely into the east parking lot. At that point, a person could pull into a parking stall and get out of the car to come into the school, or else he/she may turn around and head back towards the circle driveway.

At the end of the designated time at school, it is imperative that each child is picked up within a few minutes of the stated dismissal time for that class. Due to the large number of students at the school, traffic congestion can become a significant problem if the pickup times are not adhered to. Also, time immediately after (and before) class is valuable preparation time for the teachers. If a child is picked up more than 5 minutes late, parents may be charged a fee of \$1.00 per minute that the child is late in being picked up.

Changes in the Home

In the event that a significant change occurs in the home that could cause distress in the child, parents should inform the teachers as soon as possible. Common causes of distress include parent(s) being away from home for an extended time, a new person living in the home, illness of a family member, an accident or death in the family, a new caregiver, moving, the death of a pet, parents' separation, or divorce. All information will be regarded as strictly confidential.

Closings and Early Dismissals

As noted before, the school generally follows the same schedule as that of the Iowa City Community School District, with the exception of early release days on Thursday. The calendar at the front of this handbook lists the scheduled no-school days.

On days when the Iowa City schools are either delayed or canceled due to bad weather, the Montessori School will generally do likewise. For example, if it is announced that the Iowa City schools will delay the start of school by one hour, those children who normally arrive at the Montessori School at 7:30 will be delayed until 8:30, and those who begin at 8:45 will be delayed until 9:45. In the event of an early dismissal, school would dismiss at the same time as the Iowa City schools. Enough staff would remain at school until every child was picked up.

To determine if school is closed or delayed, listen to local television and radio stations for any information on the Iowa City Community School District. There will not be a separate announcement for the Montessori School. Parents and staff may also call the school to check the voice message.

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

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

Clothing and Other Personal Property

Children should wear washable, comfortable clothes. The staff recommends that an extra set of clothing be kept at school in case clothes become wet or muddy. All items of clothing should be marked with the child's name.

Outdoor activities are planned if the weather permits. Outdoor play will not be allowed in heavy rain or when the wind chill factor falls below zero degrees Fahrenheit. Every child needs to be properly dressed for the weather. In the winter, this includes snow pants, a hat that covers the ears, mittens, boots, and shoes or rubber soled slippers for classroom use. Attaching mittens to coats is very helpful. Staff/child ratios do not permit the school to keep one or two children inside during recess. If the child's doctor requests that the child refrain from physical activity, parents should tell the teacher and s/he will supervise the child outside accordingly.

Children's personal property, clothing, school bags, etc. should be cleared from the child's locker at the end of each day. Although the school attempts to help children stay organized, the school is not responsible for lost personal property. Items found at school will be collected and kept in a lost and found box in the office. Children should not bring money, toys, food, or other unnecessary items to school without checking first with their teacher.

Every child needs to have a school bag as a container for notes, "show and tell" items, a change of clothes, indoor school shoes, etc. At the end of every week, the staff will send home notes, newsletters, snack lists, and the child's work in their bag. A child should bring the bag to school every day s/he attends. Montessori School bags may be purchased from the school, however, any bag of similar size and design is acceptable. **BACKPACKS ARE NOT PREFERRED**, because they are too difficult to open and are often too big to fit in the lockers. As with all personal belongings, the easier the item is for a child to use, the more quickly he/she will become self-sufficient.

Discipline, Outdoor Rules, Classroom Rules, and Discharge

Discipline

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

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

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

- Corporal punishment, including spanking, shaking, and slapping will not be used;
- Punishment that is humiliating, frightening, or causes pain or discomfort to the child will not be used;
- Punishment shall not be administered, or threat of punishment be associated, with food or rest;
- No child will be subjected to abuse, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or the child's family.

Outdoor Rules

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

- The teacher-pupil ratio is the same outside as it is for inside.
- Any type of hurtful behavior is not acceptable, whether it is physical, verbal, or emotional.
- Inappropriate language is not acceptable. Politeness and courtesy are encouraged.
- Children are not permitted to use sticks, rocks, or other hazardous items in harmful ways.
- Sandbox toys and sand stay in the sandbox and on the ground.
- Children are not permitted to climb trees or fences.
- The trikes are to stay on the pavement and away from the back door.
- Children may only go down the slides.
- Teachers are not to lift children to reach equipment that is too big for them.
- The drinking fountain is for drinking purposes only.
- Only one child at a time may go into the building to use the restroom.
- Coats must be worn if the temperature is below 50 degrees.
- Snow shovels are used only for shoveling snow.
- Balls and other toys are not to be used on the playground equipment.

Classroom Rules

These classroom rules are for parents to help them understand the school's operations and expectations:

- All children are free to work with any material displayed in the classroom as long as it is used appropriately. The children may not harm the materials, themselves, or others. They may not use the equipment in any way that disturbs the activity of others.
- A child may work either at a table or on a rug, whichever is suitable. Children are not to work on display shelves as that would obstruct other children's access to the materials.
- Children are to walk in the classroom, being careful to avoid students who are working on the floor.
- Children are to speak to other students during work time using a quiet talking voice.
- To the best of their ability, children are to restore the environment to its original order after an activity.

- No child is permitted to interfere with another's work unless invited by that child. This practice provides security for the child to continue working to completion of the activity.
- Children are not to be coerced into joining a group activity. It is the child's right to keep working at an individual exercise during group activities. A child that has chosen not to participate in a group activity is not allowed to disrupt the group activity.
- Children are free to "do nothing" as long as they do not disturb the work of others. In truth, they may be learning by observing others' work or simply thinking or relaxing.
- Only one child may use the restroom at a time.

Discharge

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

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

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

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

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

While head teachers are ultimately responsible for working out the situation with the child's parent, the teacher involved will keep the school's director updated about the situation. Parents always have the right to appeal any decision made by the child's teacher to the director, keeping in mind that the teachers will normally be acting under their guidance. A final appeal may be made to the board of trustees.

Health and Safety Policy

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

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

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

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

1. contagious disease, not including a cold
2. fever of over 100 degrees during the past 24 hours
3. vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours
4. draining sores or burns
5. a rash, until diagnosed and determined to be non-contagious
6. accident requiring medical attention
7. any condition that prevents the child from comfortably participating in program activities or that results in greater care for the child than what staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children

If a child exhibits any of these conditions while at school, the child's parents will be notified to come and remove their child from the school until the above conditions no longer apply. While waiting to be picked up, the child may be placed in the office in order to remove the child from the rest of the class.

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

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

The school has also developed a series of procedures to follow in the event of a fire, natural disaster or other catastrophe. Staff members receive training on these policies at orientation, and at other times during the year. Anyone wishing to view these policies may obtain a copy of them from the office. In the event that the school should ever need to be evacuated, the children would be walked down to Lensing's Oak Hill Funeral Service, or the Grant Wood AEA office, both located just to the east of the school on Holiday Road.

Weapons and Weapon Look Alikes

Dr. Maria Montessori said, "If help and solution are to come, they can only come from the children, for the children are the makers of man." Peace and peaceful resolutions are at the core of character development in Dr. Montessori's philosophy. It is seen as the responsibility of the school to provide a safe environment that promotes peace and peaceful resolutions so that our children may develop a culture of respect for themselves and others. Therefore, the Montessori School of Iowa City does not allow weapons of any sort on the school grounds. This includes weapons, toy weapons or toys such as action figures or any other object, Halloween costumes, or books that suggest violence in any way. Please refrain from allowing your child to bring these items to school and for show and tell.

Holidays and Other Celebrations

Planned special occasions at the Montessori School of Iowa City can include: Halloween, Thanksgiving, December holidays, President's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Valentine's Day, and St. Patrick's Day, among others. Festivities are simple and usually in conjunction with some curricular activities. The school is sensitive to the multicultural nature of our community and includes cultural diversity in its celebrations whenever possible.

If a child is going to host a home birthday party, we ask that invitations not be sent to school, unless the entire class is invited. If invitations are going to be sent to selected children, please do so by phone or mail so that nobody's feelings are hurt. We also ask that children do not bring gifts to school for after-school parties.

Mandatory Reporters

Under Chapter 232 of the Iowa Code (a copy of which is posted at the school's main entrance), anyone employed by our school is considered to be a Mandatory Reporter. As such, all employees are required to report to DHS any suspicions of child abuse. If in the course of working with a child, any staff member has reason to believe that a child has suffered sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, that staff person must make a report to DHS. According to the Code, any Mandatory Reporter, who in good faith makes a report of child abuse or participates in an investigation of a child abuse, has immunity from any criminal or civil liability.

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

Non-Center Activities

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

Parent Orientation, Communications

Orientation/Education

In June, August, and often in January, there are orientation meetings for parents. At this time, information will be presented regarding the school's specific policies and procedures.

Family events are scheduled throughout the school year and regularly include Meet-Your-Teacher Night, mock classrooms, Thanksgiving Dessert, Valentine Breakfast, and an end-of-the-year event. Parents are encouraged to familiarize themselves with our school and the Montessori system of education by attending these and other school events. For anyone who is interested, the school also has a lending library of pertinent reading.

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

Conferences

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

At the initial conference, parents and teachers generally discuss parental expectations and goals as they relate to the child and the classroom. At the second conference, the child's progress is evaluated and new goals are set. The teachers hope that parents will ask questions and discuss concerns openly. Additional conferences can be scheduled whenever requested by teachers or parents.

Other Channels of Communication

1. In Person

The school strives for excellent communication among parents, teachers, administrators, and the board of trustees. Parents are encouraged to visit with their child's teachers regularly. Teachers are always interested in talking about student progress with parents, not just during parent-teacher conferences. Parents should feel free to initiate questions and express concerns at any time, no matter how "unimportant" they might seem.

Parents are welcome to visit briefly with teachers before and after class to ask questions about their child and/or to provide relevant information pertaining to their child. Teachers are generally available ten minutes before arrival and ten minutes after dismissal for this purpose. Parents are encouraged to make frequent contact with their child's teacher whenever possible.

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

2. In Writing

Newsletters will be sent emailed twice a month to keep parents informed of school events. (Parent contributions to the newsletters are always welcome.) A directory of families, staff, and current board members is prepared in the fall and distributed to Montessori families. When necessary, an announcement of an outbreak of a communicable disease will be posted. Occasionally, teachers may write a brief summary of what the classes have been doing and send it home. Upcoming events may also be posted on the Parent Information Board at the school's front entrance to assist parents in keeping current with school activities.

3. By Telephone

Teachers are available to talk with parents by phone during non-class hours. In some cases, evening hours might be best. Parents should arrange to talk with teachers at a mutually convenient time.

Registration and Enrollment

The Montessori School of Iowa City encourages children of all backgrounds to attend. The school does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, or family composition. The school will also make any reasonable accommodations for children with special needs, per the Americans with Disabilities Act. Attending the school involves a two-step process -- the registration procedure, followed by the enrollment process.

Registration

A child can be registered to enroll in the Montessori School at any time before attending the school. The earlier a child is registered, the more likely he/she will secure a position. Registration requires a parent or guardian to complete a registration form and submit it with a \$35.00 non-refundable registration fee. Parents are encouraged to observe the school as part of the decision-making process. The registration procedure places the child in a “waiting pool” for enrollment.

Enrollment

To attend the Montessori School of Iowa City, a child must be three years old and toilet-trained. If frequent toileting accidents continue after a reasonable adjustment period, the parents or guardians of the child will be asked to withdraw the child from school until toileting habits become reliable. The school does not meet the facility standards required by the Department of Human Services for diapering and changing children.

Full and part-time openings are determined by the student/teacher ratios set by DHS.

Preschool enrollment is determined by the following priorities:

- Balance for three year olds for beginning of each year
- Montessori staff children
- Current Montessori student siblings
- Family Commitment (years of enrollment) to school now or in past
- Former Montessori families from other places (i.e. transfers)
- Balance for classrooms
- All criteria examined within context of waiting list

Elementary enrollment is determined by the following priorities:

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

Enrollment of new students generally occurs in June for the summer session, in August for the school year, or at any other time that an opening should exist. Students who begin in the summer generally continue in the fall. New students are typically not admitted for the summer program only. Parents or guardians of registered children who will attend the school will be sent enrollment forms in early spring. Deadlines for the return of completed forms will be stated in the cover letter accompanying the packet of enrollment information.

Parents will be asked to complete the following enrollment forms:

- Enrollment Agreement
- Enrollment Form
- Release Forms: Picture, Travel, and Directory
- Physical Assessment and Health
- Record of Immunizations
- Parent Emergency Medical Consent (including identification of health care provider)
- Permission to Pick-Up Form
- Parent Volunteer Survey

The school expects the forms to be kept current. The parent must provide new information to the school regarding any changes in pertinent information.

Start of a New Year

If separation will be difficult, please consult the child's head teacher ahead of time to plan an appropriate strategy. The staff is quite experienced in dealing with children (and parents) who suffer from separation anxiety. The first few days of school might be difficult, but separation problems usually subside soon thereafter. Parents are welcome to use the viewing rooms to observe their child unobtrusively during this time of adjustment.

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

Tuition and Payment Policy

The salaries, supplies, and administrative expenses of the Montessori School of Iowa City are supported entirely by tuitions. A one-time registration fee (\$35) covers the cost of the registration process and is not applied toward tuition.

The fall tuition for the school year may be paid for all at once, or divided into ten monthly payments. (Please see the last page of this handbook for current fees.) A non-refundable deposit of \$100 must accompany the enrollment form which is due April 1 or as stated on the Enrollment Agreement. It reserves the student's position in the program. Enrollment forms with the required deposit will be used in the order received to fill openings as they occur. The \$100 deposit is a portion of the first tuition payment. The balance of that payment is due no later than July 15. No student placement will be made if forms are sent without a payment. Any withdrawals received prior to May 1, which must be in writing, will be entitled to a refund of any tuition paid less the \$100 non-refundable deposit. After August 1, no deposits will be refunded.

The remaining tuition payments for the school year are due the first school day of each month starting in September and ending in May. Statements are not sent to parents on a monthly basis, but the Director is available to assist parents in figuring the fees owed. There is no tuition refund for holidays, illness, or vacation days. If a child is absent for an extended period of time, full tuition payment is still required.

If a tuition payment is not received by the 18th, the family will be contacted in writing. After 30 days, the parents will again be contacted and notified that a penalty of 1.5 percent of the monthly tuition will be assessed. If payment is not received after 60 days, the student will not be allowed to attend school unless arrangements have been made. No student will be allowed to enroll in upcoming programs if the tuition account is delinquent from a previous session. A \$30.00 service charge will be incurred for all returned checks.

The summer session tuition may be paid all at once, or split into two payments. A non-refundable deposit of \$25 must accompany the enrollment form which is due April 1 or as stated on the Enrollment Agreement. It reserves the student's position in the summer program. Enrollment forms with the required deposit will be used in the order received to fill openings as they occur.

The \$25 non-refundable deposit is a portion of the first tuition payment. The balance of that payment is due no later than June 1. The second tuition payment is due no later than July 1. Withdrawals received prior to May 1 will be entitled to a full refund of tuition paid less the \$25 non-refundable deposit. No refunds will be given for any withdrawals received on or after May 1.

A limited amount of tuition assistance is available to qualified families for the school year. There is no assistance available for the summer session. Awards are typically distributed only once each year, by a subcommittee of the board of trustees. To be considered for tuition assistance the school must receive the summary of parental contributions by May 1st. Please contact the Director for an application or more details.

If openings exist, the school will accept a limited number of students who qualify to have their tuition paid for under Title XX, as established by the Iowa Department of Human Services. These children are eligible to enroll at the school under the registration and enrollment procedures as described earlier in this handbook. Please see the Director for details and availability of spots.

Withdrawal from the Program

Parents wishing to withdraw their child from the Montessori School of Iowa City must provide a statement, in writing, at least 30 days prior to the discontinuation of the child's participation in the program. Parents will then be responsible for payment of the child's tuition until the child actually leaves the program. If a withdrawal occurs during the middle of the month, that month's entire payment (due on the first) is required.

In the case of a student withdrawing before the program actually has begun, a complete refund minus the non-refundable deposit will be made if the withdrawal takes place before May 1. A portion of the deposit will be refunded if the withdrawal occurs between May 1 and August 1. There will be no refund if the withdrawal occurs after that date.

If a child is withdrawn after spring break, fees must be paid through the end of the school year.

**Montessori School of Iowa City
Tuition Schedule
2008 - 2009 School Year**

PROGRAMS

Mornings	8:45 – 11:45	\$385 (less deposit) due July 15 9 payments of \$385 starting September 1
Afternoons	12:45 – 3:45	\$385 (less deposit) due July 15 9 payments of \$385 starting September 1
Full Day	8:30 – 3:30	\$632 (less deposit) due July 15 9 payments of \$590 starting September 1
6 – 9 Year Old Class	8:30 – 3:15	\$600 (less deposit) due July 15 9 payments of \$610 starting September 1

OPTIONAL SERVICES

Early Drop-off	7:30 – 8:30	10 payments of \$70 First payment due July 15
Lunch & Recess	11:45 – 12:45	10 payments of \$141 First payment due July 15
Extended Day	3:30 – 5:30	10 payments of \$118 First payment due July 15

First day of school: Monday, August 18th

**Montessori School of Iowa City
2008 Summer Program Tuition Schedule
June 11 – July 25**

3 - 6 Program

Half Days	8:30 – 11:30 12:00 - 3:30 When Offered	\$25 deposit due March 31 \$307 due June 1 \$332 due July 1
Full Day	8:30 – 3:30	\$25 deposit due March 31 \$525 due June 1 \$550 due July 1

Elementary Half Day 6 – 9 Camps

June 11 – June 27	8:30 – 11:30	\$25 deposit due March 31 \$197 due June 1
June 30 – July 11	8:30 – 11:30	\$25 deposit due March 31 \$197 due July 1
July 14 – July 25	8:30 – 11:30	\$25 deposit due March 31 \$197 due July 1
June 11– July 25	8:30 – 11:30	\$25 deposit due March 31 \$308 due June 1 \$333 due July 1

Elementary Full Day Camps (Includes lunch)

June 11- June 27	8:30 – 3:30	\$25 deposit due March 31 \$342 due June 1
June 30 – July 11	8:30 – 3:30	\$25 deposit due March 31 \$342 due July 1
July 14 – July 25	8:30 – 3:30	\$25 deposit due March 31 \$342 due July 1
June 11 – July 25	8:30 – 3:30	\$25 deposit due March 31 \$525 due June 1 \$550 due July 1

Optional Services

Early Drop-off	7:30 – 8:30	\$65 due June 1 \$65 due July 1
Lunch & Recess	11:30 – 12:30	\$126 due June 1 \$126 due July 1
Extended Day	3:30 – 5:30	\$107 due June 1 \$107 due July 1

Internal Memo:

For summer enrollment the child must be at least three years of age no later than the end of the first week (the three days) of summer school.

For school year enrollment the child must be three no later than September 15th.

DHS Regulations state three years old to start.