

Community Montessori School

Student and Family Handbook

2019-2020

School Mission Statement

“Peacefully educate, inspire, expect and achieve”

*716 Westwood Avenue
Jackson, Tennessee 38301
731-422-3116*

Principal~ Melinda Harris, Ed.D.
mmharris@jmcss.org

Academic Coordinator ~ Jessica Donnell
jmdonnell@jmcss.org

Community Montessori School

Family Handbook Agreement - Signature Page

As a parent (or guardian) of

(Please list all children's names above)

I understand and commit to the following:

- In conjunction with the policies of the school handbook, as a parent I will keep lines of **communication** open by
 - Attending parent conferences
 - Asking questions when I do not understand a policy or procedure.
 - Reading school and classroom newsletters, monthly school newsletters and other written notes from school.
 - Adding dates of school events and the school schedule to our family calendar.
 - Notifying the school when my child is absent.
 - Notifying the school when there are phone number, address or email changes.
- Reinforcing the **learning environment** by:
 - Bringing my child to school on time well rested.
 - Adhering to attendance, tardy and arrival/dismissal procedures.
 - Reading with my child for at least 20-30 minutes a day.
 - Becoming involved in school and PTO activities in order to understand and be fully engaged in my child's educational environment.
- I have read and understand the CMS handbook as well as the attached JMCSS school board policies.

Parent Name(s): _____

Signature(s): _____

Date: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

Community Montessori School
716 Westwood Avenue
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www.jmcss.org

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Academic Coordinator – Mrs. Jessica Donnell
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Bookkeeper – Mrs. Cheyenne Berry
cbberry@jmcss.org

Attendance Secretary – Ms. Janet Whitaker
jlwhitaker@jmcss.org

Dear Parents,

Welcome to Community Montessori School! Our unique school offers a safe and peaceful setting bolstered by the engaging educational strategies of the Montessori theory of development and philosophy. A committed faculty and staff will lead your child through a productive and fulfilling school year.

Community Montessori School classrooms will appear different to any parent who has not experienced a Montessori environment. Our rooms are organized to provide your child with the most effective and inviting way to learn complex and interesting concepts. We choose the unique materials you see to give your child two gifts: a strong challenge to learn and a high level of support to ensure his/her success.

Our primary goal is to ensure that each child masters essential skills in the core subject areas of language arts, mathematics, science, history, and geography, while integrating the arts, physical activity and community service into the curriculum.

At Community Montessori School, we all learn how to value differences, how to value our local *and* our global world, and how to live peaceful and sustainable lives.

We offer this Family Handbook as a means of getting to know our school and to familiarize you with our **Mission** and **Vision**. Let this handbook be your resource when you have questions regarding policies or procedures at the school. Please read the handbook carefully and feel free to contact me at any time regarding questions and concerns.

It is my privilege to serve you and your children this year. I welcome your enthusiasm, commitment and suggestions for our community.

Dr. Melinda Harris
Principal

Policies and Procedures

The policies and procedures in this handbook could not possibly address each situation that could occur at Community Montessori School during the school year. We have tried diligently to provide you with all the information that is relevant to our school, as the majority of the school system's policies are within the JMCSS handbook. We hope that this information will assist you throughout the year to make the time here at Community Montessori School truly enjoyable.

Please feel free to contact the school at any time should you have a question, a concern, or a need for clarification on some policy or procedure. It is a profound responsibility that you as parents and we as educators have in shaping and guiding our young people. We take this time to promise to you that our staff will strive to do the very best job in preparing your child for life. We will do this by teaching the skills necessary, by modeling good citizenship & by teaching problem solving both in the classroom and in the school environment.

As the year progresses, policies can change. We will keep you informed through the school newsletters and memos of any transitions at Community Montessori School.

We are excited about the new school year and the new opportunities. We expect challenges, but our outlook is always positive, and we want you to share in all that our school is to become.

Scientific observation has established that education is not what the teacher gives; education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual, and is acquired not by listening to words but by experiences upon the environment. The task of the teacher becomes that of preparing a series of motives of cultural activity, spread over a specially prepared environment, and then refraining from obtrusive interference. Human teachers can only help the great work that is being done, as servants help the master. Doing so, they will be witnesses to the unfolding of the human soul and to the rising of a New Man who will not be a victim of events, but will have the clarity of vision to direct and shape the future of human society.

Maria Montessori, Education for a New World

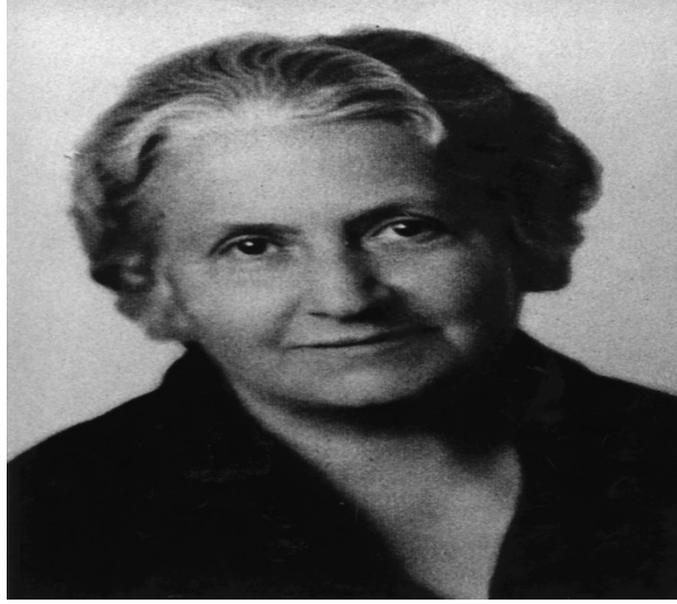
Philosophy of Montessori Education

Montessori Education is a philosophy based on the work of Dr. Maria Montessori. She felt, through her research, that the goal of education should be to cultivate a child's natural desire to learn. This is accomplished in the Montessori classroom in two ways. First, by allowing each child to experience the excitement of learning by making choices and second, by helping children to meet their full potential by preparing the environment to meet the individual needs of all children.

Our school provides a Montessori education within a public school setting. The philosophy looks at the "whole child" and is an approach to education based on human development and the natural stages that children experience. The Montessori curriculum is extremely comprehensive and is correlated with the Tennessee State Standards. The philosophy emphasizes "preparation for life" as well as peace and respect.

Dr. Maria Montessori

Dr. Maria Montessori is the founder of the Montessori Method of education. She was the first female Italian physician and began her work in education in the late 1800's by developing materials for children to increase their abilities to learn and understand concepts. Dr. Montessori devoted her life to the study of child development. Her success led to international recognition and she traveled all over the world lecturing, writing and establishing Montessori training programs. In her later years, "Education for Peace" became a guiding principle in the Montessori method. Her work in peace education earned her a nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. As a result, of Montessori's achievements at the Casa dei Bambini, her method spread rapidly. By 1915, over 100 Montessori schools had opened in America, and many more had opened in the rest of the world. At this time, there are over 4,000 certified Montessori schools in the United States and over 7,000 worldwide.



Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952)

Montessori ~ Grace & Courtesy

The Montessori philosophy uses the phrase “grace and courtesy” to reflect the way in which we endeavor to engage in all of our interactions: with ourselves, with others, and with the environment in which we live. Grace and courtesy expectations are taught, modeled, and practiced at every level in our work and play. Every community has expectations for behavior that are shaped by its culture. Our community’s culture is built on a belief of caring, respect, and consideration for others in and within our environment. We respectfully request the following from our students, staff, and guests.

1. Please follow direct lines of communication by speaking to the person who can directly address your concerns, provide the information that you seek, or offer the support that you need.
2. Clear, prompt, and open communication is essential. Our faculty is available to discuss issues with you; however, the highest priority during school hours is the children. Please do not hesitate to contact the office for information and guidance and to schedule conferences with teachers or administration.
3. Walk and speak softly in all areas where children and adults are working and concentrating.
4. Use a respectful tone of voice when speaking to others.
5. Suggest positive actions or resolutions.
6. Listen attentively and communicate in a clear and timely manner.

We greatly appreciate your desire to support the extensions of the grace and courtesy expectations of our students and staff.

Respect is the primary focus of the grace and courtesy curriculum. Students are taught lessons on specific areas of their social life in order to learn correct and acceptable behavior.

History of our School

The public Montessori program came to Jackson in 1992 and was housed at the Parkview location on 905 East Chester Street. The program began with (88) kindergarten and 1st grade students. Each year a grade was added to accommodate a K-6th grade program and 1996 was the first year to complete that cycle. Middle school (7th & 8th) was added in 2007. The program was moved to Bemis in the fall of 2011 and became The Montessori School at Bemis. In the summer of 2016, we moved again to 716 Westwood Avenue as **Community Montessori School!**

Each year the school has met the requirements to be affiliated with the American Montessori Society (AMS), an international organization based on the studies of Dr. Maria Montessori. Each teacher is state certified and AMS certified. The AMS certification is received after approximately 400 hours of class work, along with course requirements, observations, and internship. AMS is a non-profit, non-discriminatory, service organization dedicated to stimulating the use of the Montessori teaching approach in private and public schools.

Classroom Environments

This year, Community Montessori School offers four kindergarten classrooms, twelve lower elementary co-teaching classrooms (grades 1-3), six upper elementary co-teaching classrooms (grades 4-6) and three middle school classrooms (grades 7-8). Special education teachers are on the faculty to provide individualized educational programs for students with special needs. Students with special needs are afforded the opportunity to meet their individual needs, utilizing an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). Students' IEPs are drafted by the IEP team to provide students with the supports to best meet their needs.

Vision Statement

“When a school community feels that it is really in control of its destiny, teachers, parents, and administrators are more inclined to do the hundreds of little things it takes to make their school work. When people are doing something they believe in, they do it better. There is more passion.”

The Vision of Community Montessori is to:

- Create a safe, supportive, and conducive learning environment
- Model peace and appropriate social conflict resolution skills
- Communicate openly and honestly with students and colleagues
- Be a part of the solution, not the problem
- Encourage parents to become meaningfully involved in the school and in their own child’s educational experience
- Engage the community to build greater ownership for the work of the school

School Mission Statement

“Peacefully educate, inspire, expect and achieve”

Student Creed

“I am an important person in this world.
Now is the most important time in my life:
My mistakes are my best teachers, so I will be fearless.”

School Colors

School colors are royal blue and red. Royal blue or navy can we worn for the uniform shirts.

ARRIVAL, DISMISSAL, ATTENDANCE

Morning Arrival

All single car riders should be dropped off on the east side of the building (auditorium) and all siblings should be dropped off on the west side of the building (gym). **Both gym and auditorium lines will be single lines so that students are not crossing in front of moving cars.**

There will a teacher or an assistant available at the door to greet students, **but students will be expected to exit the car on their own. Please make sure that your child has his/her items ready to exit quickly so that the line waiting.** This not only allows the flow of cars to move more smoothly, but more importantly, it teaches independence for our students from the very beginning of the school year.

In addition, parents should remain in their car and refrain from using their cell phone in the arrival and dismissal line while it is moving.

All students must be **IN** their classrooms by 8:15 or they will receive a tardy slip from the attendance office. If you pull up to the door close to 8:15, students will not have time to walk to their classrooms. The doors will be locked at 8:15 and students will need to come to the front door for a tardy slip. Remember that students must be **in their classrooms at 8:15**, so a late drop off can still constitute a tardy if students do not have enough time to walk to their class. After 10 unexcused tardies, the student and parent will be required to have a meeting with the administrative team.

Afternoon Dismissal

It is imperative that we continue the calm, peaceful, and orderly environment that we maintain throughout the day during our dismissal. To do this, we need the assistance of our parents!

The dismissal procedure works very quickly and efficiently with your help. Again, we respectfully request that you remain in your car and let the staff bring your child to you. Parents coming into the office for pick-up, as well as congestion and noise in the lobby and main hallway at this time of day, hinders our ability to dismiss students safely and quietly. It is also very difficult for teachers to maintain order and structure if parents are visiting classrooms at the end of the day. Please do not plan on meeting with your child's teacher after 2:30 without an appointment. In addition, any student that is signed out before 3:00 is considered an early dismissal, which is comparable to a tardy. If you need to pick up your child prior to 3:00 for an appointment, you will need to do so before 2:30.

- **Single Car Riders**

All single car riders (K-8) will be dismissed through the back auditorium door with the awning/ walk in two lanes. Staff members will be in the parking lot to assist and escort your child safely to the car. You do not need to get out of your car. After your child is in the car, please stay in the line and exit onto Westwood Avenue making a RIGHT turn only.

- **Siblings/ Carpool**

All siblings/ carpool riders will be dismissed through the gym doors on the west side of the building. Drivers will enter from Westwood onto the street that runs from Westwood to Arlington. Drivers will enter into the parking lot from the right entrance near the gym. As you enter the parking lot, drivers will then form a double line (with assistance from a staff member) and pull around to the crosswalk near the front door. Please stay in your assigned lane and do not switch lanes as this is a safety hazard as we are loading students. **Please DO NOT get out of your car and park to enter the building.** Staff members will assist your child into your car throughout the dismissal process. **Students WILL NOT be dismissed to any car without an appropriate school car tag after August 16th.**

- A meeting will be requested with Dr. Harris if a student has more than 3 late pick-ups (after 3:30).

Attendance Reminders

CMS is responsible for following the JMCSS Board policies regarding attendance. Please understand that it is critical that your child arrive to school on time and be in their classrooms by 8:15 and that they are picked up on time, no later than 3:30. When students arrive late in the morning, they miss essential instructional time in their classrooms. **In addition, when students are picked up late in the afternoon, it requires a staff member to stay late until parents arrives and our staff is off-duty at 3:30.** Please refer to the letter in this packet regarding the importance of attendance regarding your position within the magnet school.

All absences and tardies are entered into the JMCSS PowerSchool database.

- **EXCUSED ABSENCES** - Absences are excused if a written note from the parent (preferably in an email to jlwhitaker@jmcss) or a medical note is received within 3 days of returning to school. During the school year, you are only allowed 10 excused absences with a parent note. All additional absences would require medical documentation per Dr. Harris.

- **UNEXCUSED ABSENCES** - An unexcused absence is any absence without a written excuse note or a medical note. After 5 unexcused absences, you will receive a “warning letter” from the school office. After 10 unexcused absences, the truancy officer from JMCSS will contact parents. In addition, your attendance can ultimately impact your position within the Montessori magnet school.
 - 3 Unexcused Absences - Parents will receive a reminder/warning letter from the attendance secretary
 - 5 Unexcused Absences - Parents are required to meet with the School Truancy Team
 - 10 Unexcused Absences - Students name will be referred to the JMCSS District Truancy Officer

Jackson-Madison County School System. School board policy states that:

Continuation in an out-of-zone school is given with the understanding that the student's attendance, conduct, and academic effort will be satisfactory.

- **TARDIES** - Tardies include late arrival (not in class by 8:15) and early pick-up (before 3:00). Ten unexcused tardies/early dismissals per semester would constitute a required parent/student meeting with the administrative team.

Overview Reminders

- Drivers must remain in the car and in the carpool line in the mornings and in the afternoons. It is extremely disruptive to call rooms and dismiss students from the office. **Students will not be signed out early from the office after 2:30.**
- Do not plan on meeting with your child's teacher between 2:30 - 3:30 during the school year without an appointment. Preparing students for the end of the day and dismissal time are very busy times and teachers need to be on their posts and focused on a safe and orderly dismissal for their students.
- Any student that is signed out before 3:00 is considered an early dismissal which is comparable to a tardy. Teachers are officially off duty at 3:30. All students should be picked up by this time. After 3:30, you must come into the office and sign your student out.
- A meeting will be requested with Dr. Harris if a student has more than 3 late pick-ups (after 3:30).

Bus Rules and Regulations

See JMCSS website

Cafeteria

All students within the JMCSS will have free breakfast and lunch this year. All extra, “al a carte” items may be purchased, but no charges are allowed. **The Jackson-Madison County School System has a no charge meal policy due to federal mandates.**

NO food from fast food or other restaurants may be brought into the school. This is a district-mandated policy and will be enforced.

Lunch boxes: Remember, in preparing student lunches, we are a PEANUT-FREE school. Please choose a peanut butter alternative. In addition, carbonated beverages (Coke, Sprite, Pepsi, etc.) are not allowed in cans or thermos. Please avoid high sugar items, candy in lunches, and no lunches from outside of school (McDonalds, etc.) for students. In addition, microwaves are not accessible to students in the cafeteria.

Food Allergies

Due to the increasing number of students with peanut/nut and fish allergies, we ask that you take this into consideration when bringing treats into the building. If possible, please avoid sending items containing fish, peanuts, or any ingredients made from peanuts. Please be aware of the contents of any treats you provide for students. **Please remember that food allergies can be life threatening.**

Celebrations / Holidays / Theme Parties

For theme parties (Christmas, Valentines, End of the Year), teachers will involve parents in menu planning for students. **Our school follows the district “healthy food program” and all**

items must be approved by the classroom teachers. Flowers and balloons delivered to students at school will be held in the office until dismissal time. These items are not allowed on buses.

Curriculum

Although the Montessori curriculum is extremely comprehensive, the teachers have successfully correlated the material with the Tennessee State Standards in order to follow state guidelines. The program stresses the value of “preparation for life” throughout the curriculum and emphasizes peace and respect.

Community Meetings

Community meetings are used to build a student-centered learning community in the classroom and within the entire student body. This type of group setting represents a symbol of unity. The activities are used to enhance the social and emotional development of children. Children learn how to behave properly in a group setting and will soon learn to value each individual within the group. This is a perfect time for children to gain an understanding of their feelings as well as the feelings of others. They learn how to respectfully communicate with their peers.

The teacher is aware of the needs of his/her students and will plan community circles to meet their needs. The teacher and students establish ground rules during several meetings at the beginning of the school year. Eventually, the teacher steps away from the lead role, and the meetings are led by a student. Maria Montessori said, “When dealing with children there is a greater need for observing rather than probing.”

During the community meetings, the students use problem solving skills when role playing and discussing conflict/resolution. Sometimes they discuss problems that may arise in the classroom and share ideas on how to resolve them. A community meeting is the time to celebrate student accomplishments. It also gives students the opportunity to acknowledge and appreciate others’

kind deeds. Community meetings are a wonderful way to establish a respectful, collaborative classroom environment.

In addition to classroom community meetings, our entire student body meets together every Friday morning and students are given the opportunity, throughout the year, to present to their fellow students. This also teaches students the importance of attending and listening, as well as entering and exiting the auditorium peacefully.

Communication Folder

The communication folder enhances your child's organizational skills and contains pertinent information. Communication folders will go home each Monday, unless otherwise instructed. It is the responsibility of the student and the parent to go over all paperwork, sign designated work, and return the folder to school upon the next school day. **Please see that your child always has a communication folder.**

Communication with Teachers

Our school has an open-door policy; parents are welcome at any time, but please make an appointment by calling the school office for any in-class observations or parent-teacher conferences. During school hours, the teacher's primary responsibility is to the children and instructional time is valuable. Therefore, it is difficult for them to leave the classroom to engage in spontaneous conversations with parents. Remember that each classroom has its own routine and unannounced visitors disrupt the workflow of the children.

Short notes, e-mails, texts, and phone calls are welcome and will often clarify questions that you or your child may have. Check the school directory on our website (www.jmcass.org/montessori) for phone numbers, e-mail addresses, etc. Please keep the teacher informed of any changes in your child's routine or behavior that might affect him or her at school.

Crisis Management / Emergency Preparedness Plan

The school maintains and regularly practices emergency procedures for the following emergencies: fire (at least one per month), and three additional safety drills for bomb threats, tornado, earthquake, intruder, or other emergencies.

The principal has developed a crisis management plan and a crisis team for use in the event of any emergency situation and/or crisis. Specific procedures are posted in every room. Training for all school personnel on these procedures is conducted annually.

Closings

The director of schools may close schools for hazardous weather or any other emergencies that present a threat to the safety of students, staff members, or school property. The director of schools will notify the public media and an announcement will be made, typically using the automated ALL CALL system. It is important that you maintain current phone numbers with the school office.

Discipline

Discipline, fair and individualized, is to be implemented in our classrooms. The Montessori philosophy helps children by giving them freedom to make choices but also instilling in them the responsibility that is required to have that freedom. The authority of the teacher is exercised as a directing knowledge, strong in wisdom and sympathy to which the children can appeal with assurance. CMS takes a **PROACTIVE** approach to discipline by incorporating peace education into the curriculum.

At Community Montessori School, we believe that “establishing peace is the work of education.” The school discipline team will Community Service will be required for any student that has received a discipline referral during the week. It will be the parents’ responsibility to have the student picked up from school promptly at 5:00.

Student discipline is a critical factor in maintaining a safe environment for students and staff. While it is important that students be held accountable for their behavior, it is equally important that staff, students, and parents understand the discipline policy and procedures of the school. Please take time to review this section and speak with your child about the school's expectation for behavior and the consequences for unacceptable behavior.

One of the primary goals of the Montessori program is to teach self-discipline. Montessori children are given a great deal of freedom within the classroom, but they are taught that responsibility and self-discipline go hand in hand with that freedom. Teaching children self-discipline prepares them for success in all areas of life. Staff members make every effort to understand a child's individual needs, to direct him/her to make appropriate choices, and to help him/her understand the consequences of his/her choices. School is a social organization in which the good of the group must be considered.

All of our students, beginning with kindergarten, are taught conflict resolution skills and practices. Staff members encourage children to independently resolve problems with their peers whenever possible. As much as possible, children are allowed to experience the natural consequences of their actions. For example, playing during work time may result in a child forfeiting playtime to complete work. Discipline is also tailored to the child's age. Regardless of age, consequences of negative behavior are always age appropriate, never demeaning or physical. CMS has a discipline team in place to meet regarding extreme or on-going discipline concerns.

Dress Code

Please refer to the JMCSS handbook for the comprehensive uniform dress code. Students at CMS may wear white, black, royal blue, or navy shirts.

Field Trips

Field trips are a wonderful extension of the classroom. Parents will receive written

permission slips for their child's field trips that must be signed and returned. Students will not attend a field trip without written consent from the parent.

Guidance

A full-time professional school counselor serves all children and classrooms at Community Montessori School. Each classroom receives class time and the counselor is available for individual counseling by request from the teacher or the principal. The school counselor teaches a developmental prevention based curriculum set forth by the Jackson-Madison County School System and the state standards.

Grading and Progress Reports

Community Montessori School uses a rubric progress report consistent with an individualized curriculum for grades K-3. The report will include the following key in lieu of letter/numerical grades:

4 = Excelling / Exceeding expectations of grade level standards with quality

3 = Meeting grade level expectations with quality

2 = Additional assistance and supplemental materials needed in order to meet grade level standards

1 = Not Meeting Expectations of grade level standards

N/A = Standard not yet presented / Student not at readiness level

For grades 4-8, a numerical grading system based on JMCSS board policy is used. Nine week and mid-nine week reports are available through PowerSchool. A percentage of the final grade will be from the standardized test in the spring.

A = 93-100

B = 85-92

C = 75-84

D = 70-74

F = below 70

Upper Elementary and Middle School - Late work policy

Late Work Policy

Work that is turned in late will result in a 20-point deduction. The highest grade late work will receive is an 80% (C). Work that is not turned in by each 4.5-week grading period will result in a grade of 0.

JMCSS Grading Policy

According to district guidance, PowerSchool weighs daily work grades at 40% and test/exam grades at 60%.

Illnesses

When a child becomes ill at school, parents are contacted. Please make sure the persons and phone numbers listed FOR EMERGENCIES are current. It is imperative that parents respond quickly to incidents of illness since the school does not have the personnel or facilities to care for a sick child.

A child must be free of fever, vomiting, and diarrhea as well as any contagious symptoms for at least 24 hours before returning to school. Medications for continued recovery can be administered by the staff, as long as the child is no longer contagious and can participate in normal school routines.

Medications for Students

If under exceptional circumstances a child is required to take non-prescription or prescription medication during school hours and the parent cannot be at school to administer the medication, only the principal or the principal's designee will assist in self administration of the medication to competent students.

All medication must be delivered to the office in person by the parent or guardian of the student unless the medication is required for immediate self-administration (i.e. asthma inhalers). Parental authorization will be required for a child to keep an asthma medication on his/her person, otherwise, all asthma medications, including inhalers and nebulizers, will be kept in the

office. All medications MUST be in the original package.

Prescription Medications:

1. A written statement will be required from the physician that provides the name of the child, name of the drug, drug dosage, times of drug administration, the route of drug administration, possible drug side effects, if known, and the termination date for self administration of the medication. The physician's name, phone number, and the diagnosis or reason the medication is needed will be required.

2. A statement from the physician outlining emergency care will be required if a prescribed medication could necessitate a serious reaction (e.g. a diabetic child that requires insulin in response to blood sugar levels. The physician, according to the blood sugar level, should order the amount of insulin).

3. Written consent from the parent to dispense the medications should be obtained. The form in the medication manual should be used.

4. If the dosage of a medication or directions to give a medication changes, the parent will be required to complete a new authorization form to reflect the changes.

Non-Prescription Medications:

All non-prescription medication (over the counter medication) will be dispensed at school for only a two week period with parental authorization. The parent should pick up any remaining medication or it will be disposed of by designated school personnel. Should a student need to take a non-prescription medication at school for a period greater than two weeks, a physician's statement with the name of the medication and why it is needed will be required. Volunteer personnel, trained by a registered nurse, may administer glucagon in emergency situations to a

student based on that student's Individual Health Plan (IHP). All non-prescription medication must be in the original package.

Homework

Homework is a meaningful, supplemental activity that corresponds with the student's curriculum. Homework will be individualized by student/teacher. Parents are to support their child(ren) and provide recognition for effort as well as completion of the activities.

Library/Media Center

The library/media center is designed to assist learners to find, generate, evaluate and apply information that will help them function successfully in school and in society. It is also designed to assist the faculty and expand the work of the classroom.

A variety of materials are available to students and staff. The students also check out books and use materials, as needed for classroom research projects. Students may check out one book at a time and renew them if more time is needed. Students are responsible for returning books each week. A fee will be charged for any lost or damaged book.

Lost and Found

Lost articles may be claimed by proper identification. Please mark all personal items with the student's name so they can be returned expeditiously. Items not claimed by the end of each semester will be donated.

Magnet Program – Selection Process

Applications for Community Montessori School are online at jmcss.org. Students will be notified of their selection status by the Board of Education. If more students apply to attend than space is available, a random selection process will be conducted at the Board of Education. Students who are not initially selected will be placed on a waiting list. If a vacancy occurs, the next applicant in

the appropriate grade group will be notified of his/her acceptance for the magnet program. Siblings of students enrolled in the magnet program may attend the same magnet school. Students selected for the magnet school programs will continue their enrollment until the termination of such programs or until such time as they withdraw. Students who withdraw from the magnet schools will be required to attend schools located within the zone in which the student resides. The waiting list for magnet school programs will expire at the end of the first semester of the school year. A new application procedure to fill the available space in the magnet program for the next year will be conducted during January and February of each year.

Montessori Celebration of Life (Student Birthday Celebrations)

For each student's birthday in grades K-3, the entire-class participates in the celebration by telling the child's life story. As parents, you will be invited to come prepared to provide enough information about the child's life to mark the developmental milestones. We suggest that you bring a picture for each year of your child's life. On the day of the celebration, the students will gather in a circle with a lighted candle (signifying the sun) in the center of the circle. The child who is celebrating will hold the earth, while walking around the candle for each year of his/her life as the teacher, student and family members tell their story. This occasion provides the students with the concept of time by showing that the earth goes around the sun one time per year. Typically, the parent provides healthy snacks for this celebration. (See the teacher for a suggested list.)

Students in upper elementary classes and middle school will present "Me" portfolios. The portfolio might contain family pictures, vacation brochures of places you have visited, favorite books, sports awards or other objects.

Montessori ~ Practical Life Curriculum

"A child's work is to create the man he will become, an adult works to perfect the environment but a child works to perfect himself." (Dr. Maria Montessori)

Practical life is an area of the curriculum that is unique to the Montessori method. Using the children's natural interests and inclinations, structured activities are planned for the Montessori classroom to prepare children for life's basic skills. In addition, the activities assist children in lengthening concentration and perfecting coordination. For young children, there is something special about tasks that an adult considers ordinary, such as washing dishes, polishing, and cutting. Practical life lessons are given, based on the needs of the community/classroom.

Montessori Peace Education

“ESTABLISHING PEACE IS THE WORK OF EDUCATION.”

Maria Montessori

The staff, students, and parents of Community Montessori School strive to eradicate conflict and create peaceful children, peaceful schools, and a peaceful world. The strong commitment of educators, parents, and the entire community empowers us to create environments where children truly feel safe and motivated to learn. Our staff recognizes that “peace” needs to be consciously taught and actively lived in our everyday lives. We promote peace and actively teach our children to respect themselves, their peers, their teachers, and their environment. It is our philosophy, as Montessori educators, to prepare our students for life. Peace education embodies and reinforces the state's standards of peaceful resolution to conflict and understanding of good decision making for everyday living.

Observation of Classrooms

It is important for parents to observe classrooms in order to understand the routines and expectations of a Montessori classroom. Observations must be scheduled through the office or

with your child's teacher. All observers need to report to the office, sign in, and follow instructions on the observation form. Your visit and caring comments are beneficial to our growth.

We respectfully request that you take a low position in the room by sitting on the floor or in the designated observer's chair. Please remain seated, quiet and non-interactive, unless directed otherwise by the teacher. In order to accommodate other observers and not distract from the environment, we ask that you limit your time in the classroom to 30 minutes. Additional time may be requested. Please note that capturing images, video, or audio during the observation are prohibited based on the privacy of all students.

Recycling

Students are taught to respect their environment, their school, their home, and their planet. Families are encouraged to become involved in our recycling program. All classrooms, along with the office and other areas of the building, have a recycling bin for paper.

Parent Teacher Conferences

Parent Teacher Conferences are scheduled twice during the year by the school system. However, parents are encouraged to contact their child's teacher to schedule individual conferences when necessary.

Parent Contact Information

It is extremely important that every student maintain an up-to-date address and working telephone number in the school office. Notify the school office immediately if you have a change of address or telephone number during the school year. Keeping student addresses and phone numbers current is extremely important for your child's safety and for school effectiveness. ALL CALL automated phone messages are used frequently by the principal to communicate important school information. Please make sure that your contact numbers are current in the school office.

Parent Involvement

In order for your family to fully benefit from the Montessori method, on-going communication between the school and home is important. Parents can reinforce learning at home by being aware of what their child does at school. Classroom tours, PTO meetings, school functions and family nights are opportunities for parents to learn more about their child's classroom, spend time with the staff, and meet the parents of their child's friends.

Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)

Greater family involvement in children's learning is a critical link to achieving a high quality education. We take pride in our multi-faceted approach to making parents feel comfortable in our school. All parents and families are invited to come by the office, personalize their visit, and let us know how we can better accommodate their child's learning experiences. Calls and visits are welcomed.

The PTO is a vital and important component of our school. Every family is encouraged to become an active member. This organization sponsors many exciting family-oriented activities throughout the school year. It helps raise needed funds for school improvement and helps to coordinate room parents. Children achieve success when families are involved in a partnership with teachers and staff in the education of their children.

Student Records

Parents of minor students have the right to inspect and review their child's education records.

School Accounts

The last 20 days of school all money collected will be cash only.

School Fundraisers and Community Involvement

All fundraisers will be communicated to parents and earmarked based on the school's needs. Students are never to solicit door-to-door. All students and parents are encouraged to participate but may choose not to sell and donations are accepted.

Teacher Requests

Our school does not accept parent requests for teachers. Our leadership team will work together to make decisions based on the individual needs of the students. Our school works diligently to ensure that all classrooms are staffed with quality teachers.

Telephone Usage

Students and parents are to adhere to the following regarding school and cell phone use:

Telephone Messages

Should a parent/guardian need to contact a student, he or she should contact the office and messages will be delivered. The office staff will make every effort to cooperate in getting emergency messages to students. Requests for such messages should come from parents and must be kept to essential or unusual circumstances.

Cell Phones

Students are not permitted to use cell phones in the school building at any time. If a student brings a cell phone to school, it must be stored in a locker or backpack. Cell phones that are taken up by teachers during the day must be picked up from the office from a parent/ guardian. Cell phones will be kept in the office until the end of the following day.

Volunteers

Studies have shown that children whose parents regularly participate in their child's educational process have greater academic success. Our school encourages parents to volunteer in the school's academic programs by sharing skills or experiences with the classes. Parents can

regularly participate by listening to children read, assisting in preparing classroom materials, and performing odd jobs around the school. Involvement as volunteers greatly enhances the goals of the school.

Community Montessori School

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a Montessori classroom?

- Instruction is delivered with each individual child in mind.
 - As a child-centered approach to education, the Montessori classroom is developed under the philosophy that all children are able to learn and that all children WANT to learn!
- The Montessori classroom is a prepared and ordered environment.
 - Each classroom contains age-appropriate, child-sized manipulative materials to reinforce each students' developing skills.
- All Tennessee state standards will be taught.
 - In the Montessori classroom, students work individually and in small groups. All students are encouraged and guided to become self-directed, self-motivated learners. Children are given the opportunity to work together, allowing the opportunity to learn from each other and enhance each other's understanding.
- The classroom is organized into several fundamental curricular areas.
 - These areas include language arts, mathematics, geography, history, science, and practical life.
- Montessori environments are specifically prepared for your child to develop and grow to become successful, independent thinkers.
 - Care and attention are given to each area of the classroom. The room is intended to be a peaceful learning environment with few distractions from the materials.
 - The shelves are prepared sequentially and the work is organized so that children have an understanding and appreciation for order.

What is a magnet school?

Magnet schools are schools that do not have a population of students that are zoned to attend. They do however; offer a specialty or a unique curriculum to “attract” students. Community Montessori School is the only public, Montessori school in Madison County and one of only four public, Montessori schools in the state of Tennessee.

How is Montessori different than traditional education?

Montessori education is a method of teaching that is very different from traditional education. A few of the major differences are:

- Child-centered classrooms
- Multi-aged classrooms
- Individualized instruction
- Multi-sensory manipulatives
- Peace Curriculum
- Freedom of movement

What are the admissions/application procedures for entering Community Montessori School?

Any K-8th grade students may apply. Applications are accepted throughout the months of January and February for the upcoming school year. A computerized random selection is held at Central Office in mid-March. All applicants receive letters confirming their acceptance or the waiting list status.

Do you offer art, music and sports?

Yes, our school offers all extra-curricular subjects that are offered throughout the Jackson-Madison County School System.

In addition, our school is partnered with Rose Hill Middle School for all sports for students in grades 6-8.

How is discipline handled?

We believe that children must be taught the expectations, modeled the expectations and retaught if necessary. All discipline concerns are handled individually and respectfully.

What is the practical life curriculum?

Practical life exercises are taught to fulfill a child's desire to learn practical and meaningful activities, such as pouring, scrubbing, sweeping, dusting, sewing, gardening, animal care, and service projects.

Can I observe my child's classroom?

We highly encourage parent involvement and feel strongly that the relationship between school and home is critical for student success. Observation forms are available in the office so that your feedback can be reviewed by the principal and classroom teacher and your questions can be addressed.

Why are the classes multi-aged groupings?

Montessori environments encompass a multi-aged span, excluding kindergarten. This community allows a vast curriculum to be offered, as children are guided and challenged by the teacher to complete their individual work, fulfilling the state standards. Students are also allowed to work in small groups and benefit from peer tutoring. Developmentally, Maria Montessori proved that students grow, develop, and have similar characteristics in a 3-year age span. In addition, as the student remains in the classroom for 3 years, the environment remains stable and the teacher is better equipped to meet the needs of the child.

Why do some students often work on mats rather than desks?

Students in a Montessori environment are able to move with freedom and purpose throughout their classroom, choosing materials and workspace as needed. Montessori believed that with freedom comes responsibility, therefore students are taught to move with respect toward the environment, their peers and the materials. Many of the Montessori materials require a "layout" presentation on a mat. The desks are used for work that requires more writing.

What is the purpose of the "hands-on" manipulatives?

Dr. Montessori, in her wisdom, realized that the hand is truly the child's teacher. Her work with children enabled her to prepare "hands-on" materials that assisted children in understanding concepts in math, language, science and history. These materials are universal in all Montessori schools and are critical in teaching the child, not only the concept, but the ability to focus and concentrate on his/her work.

Are the teachers certified?

All classroom teachers are Tennessee State certified for the age in which they teach. The Montessori training is approximately 400 hours beyond the State of Tennessee certification requirements.

What is a student work/ learning plan?

A daily or weekly contract is an individualized work plan for every student. Montessori students are not required to all “be on the same page”. Therefore, students are working at their own pace through the curriculum. The tracking folders contain the entire curriculum for each particular grade level. They are used to assist students and teachers in monitoring a student’s progress. The contracts are given each week to allow students the opportunity to organize their work, complete their work and manage their time. The individualized student contract also enhances the Montessori students’ ability to be responsible, independent, and accountable for their work.

What is peace education?

Peace education is a basic tenet of the Montessori philosophy. Dr. Maria Montessori taught, “avoiding war is the work of politics and establishing peace is the work of education.” Montessori education instills within children the desire and skills to handle conflict in a peaceful and respectful manner. Montessori believed that peace is based on the peaceful development of children and that individuals who have fulfilled their potential will have a natural respect and appreciation for others.

Our goal is to instill in our children the ability to communicate effectively and respectfully and to handle all conflict in this manner.

Why does my child not have many worksheets?

Montessori is a “process-oriented” environment, rather than a “product-oriented” environment. This simply means that much of the work that students complete throughout the day may be in the form of a layout work or the use of a material. This method better assists students with the understanding of the concepts.

Student portfolios are maintained in the classroom and are open for parents to view at any time.

Does Montessori education believe in homework?

Montessori believes that homework is an extension of the work that the child is doing in the classroom. In addition, homework is individualized to meet the needs of each student.

Why does The Montessori School not have an Honor Roll System?

Montessori is an inclusive, peaceful, non-competitive, learning environment that prepares students for life by guiding them in reaching their fullest potential. Montessori education focuses on the “whole child” and believes that self-esteem, independence, individuality and responsibility are key factors in academic success.

The truly educated individual continues learning long after the hours and years she spends in the classroom because he is motivated from within by a natural curiosity and love for knowledge.”

Maria Montessori

Suggested Websites

www.jmcss.org

www.amshq.org

www.montessori.org

www.montessoriconnections.com/parents