

# *Montessori Method*

The name Montessori comes from the first Italian woman to become a doctor, Maria Montessori. She lived and developed her educational theories in Italy in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Using her scientific background, she began observing children. She developed unique materials, a child-centered environment and stressed respect for the child, freedom of expression, self-education, and an attention to the child's sensitive periods of development.

Montessori is as much an attitude about education and children as it is a specific method. Montessori teachers prepare an environment where a child can learn self-discipline, independence, order, concentration, self-direction, and basic human values.

"The basic idea in Montessori approach to education is that every child carries unseen within himself-herself the potentialities of the man or woman he/she will some day become." In order to develop his/her physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual capacities to the fullest, he/she must have a freedom to achieve through order and self-discipline.

The world of the child is full of sights and sounds which at first appear chaotic. From this chaos, the child must gradually create order, and by learning to distinguish among the impressions that assail his/her senses slowly gains mastery of himself-herself and of his/her environment. Dr. Montessori developed the "prepared environment" which possesses a certain order and disposes the child to develop his/her capabilities at his/her own speed, according to his/her own capacities in a non-competitive atmosphere.

A child most easily learns the ground rules of human behavior between two-and-one-half or three and six years. These years can

be constructively devoted to “civilizing” the child – freeing him/her through the acquisition of good manners and habits to take his/her place in contemporary culture. The child who has had the benefit of a Montessori environment is better prepared at a later age to devote himself/herself to the development of his/her intellectual potentialities. Since the child has learned to work by himself/herself in the prepared environment, enjoying the presence of other children, but not working necessarily directly with them, the Montessori teacher is able to teach a child individually, thus fostering within him/her competence as an independent learner. The structure of Montessori learning involves the use of many materials with which the child may work individually. At every step of the learning process, the teaching material is designed to test his/her understanding and to correct any errors.

Dr. Montessori has recognized that the only valid impulse to learning is the self-motivation of the child. Children move themselves toward learning. The teacher prepares the environment, directs the activity, functions as the catalytic agent, offers the child stimulation and guidance, but it is the child who learns, who is motivated through the work itself to persist in the given task.

If the Montessori child is free to learn, it is because he/she has acquired from exposure to both physical and mental order, an “inner discipline.” This is the core of Dr. Montessori’s educational philosophy. Patterns of concentration, stick-to-itiveness, and thoroughness established in early childhood, produce a self-confident, competent leader in later years.

Montessori introduces children to the joy of learning at an early age and provides a framework in which the intellectual and social disciplines go hand in hand.

In brief, Montessori is an approach designed to help the child build within himself/herself the foundations for a lifetime of

creative learning. In a rapidly changing society, this objective becomes evermore important. A love of learning and confidence in self as an independent learner are prerequisites in a world of constant change. Our children are a precious gift to us all. It is incumbent on us all to wake and nurture and cherish their growth so that they will come to full stature and make our planet a better place to exist.

## *Nature's Way: About the School*

Nature's Way Montessori opened in 1981 and has since grown to be what we think is one of the very best private school options in the Knoxville area.

The Toddler and Early Childhood Communities follow the educational philosophy of Maria Montessori carefully. As the children move into the Elementary Communities, they are introduced to more traditional methods in the basic skills areas. If you observe in the elementary community, you will see a surprising blend of traditional and Montessori education. The children move in and out of basic skill groups, complete follow-through work, choose reinforcement work from appropriate shelves, and exhibit the confidence of children who are taught but also can organize their own teaching.

Science, Cultural Studies, and Geography are considered core subjects. Work on shelves, group projects, and individual pursuits in each of these areas are everyday concerns. Curriculum in each area is carefully defined.

Carried throughout the whole program at Nature's Way Montessori is order, grace, independence, self-discipline, cleanliness, the ability to negotiate in conflict, and a belief in basic human values.

## *First Day*

The first day is often harder for the parents than for the child! Although the child is experiencing a new environment, new rules and new people, the day is planned to help him/her to adjust to these changes. Often the parents worry through the day while their child is easing through this period of transition.

There are many things you can do to help yourself. Come by the school with your child several times before the first day so you are familiar with the location, entrance route, rush-hour traffic patterns, etc. Come in if school is open and talk to the staff.

Read your parent handbook carefully and call with any questions or concerns before the first day of school. Plan to speak to your child's teacher and assistant several times before the first day of school so that you will be familiar with the routine and personnel of your child's new environment.

Find out what the first day's schedule will be so that you can talk to your child about what he/she should expect. Use the teacher's name and assistant's name frequently so your child becomes familiar with their names.

Be prepared. Make sure you have provided any items the individual class teacher has requested.

Let us know after the first day's experience what might help other parents to ease the first-day stress.

If you feel anxious during your child's first day at school, feel free to call around lunchtime when it is possible for the teacher to come to the phone.

## *Clothing*

Please send your child in sensible clothing – comfortable, washable, play clothes and preferably tennis shoes (boots and

sandals are discouraged). In the Toddler and Early Childhood Communities closed toes shoes with Velcro straps are encouraged. Although children will wear aprons or smocks when working with water, paint, clay, polish, etc., accidents do occur.

Children should be able to use the bathroom by themselves (or in the case of toddlers, be assisted in the bathroom), so please avoid overalls, pants with heavy snaps and belts, leotards, or any other clothing that is difficult to unfasten, remove, or put back on. A good criterion is: Can the child dress himself/herself in the morning? Please use thought and care in selecting your child's clothing so he/she will not feel restricted in choice of activity or movement. The child's dress is a powerful instrument in developing image and self-respect.

To avoid unnecessary confusion and to prevent loss of clothing, label all clothing with your child's name, especially garments that are frequently removed (e.g., sweaters, jackets, raincoats, hats, gloves, etc.) A lost and found basket is maintained in each class and cleared out weekly.

Shoes are not worn in the classroom. All children need to wear socks or have indoor slippers at school.

## *Arrival & Dismissal*

Classes begin at 8:30 a.m. Children who arrive between 8:15 and 8:30 a.m. can be greeted at the car by a staff member or safety patrol student. You are always welcome to park on the left hand side of the driveway and walk your Middle School, Upper Elementary or Lower Elementary child to the entrance of the classroom. Your Toddler or Early Childhood Community child will be greeted at the gates to their respective classroom outdoor areas.

If you need to talk with a staff member, please send a note with your child asking the teacher to call. Do not hold up the line of cars with a lengthy conversation at either arrival or dismissal time. These guidelines will facilitate transition time for young students and will make separation in the morning or reuniting in the afternoon easier for both you and your child.

The driveway can be a great source of frustration for parents and staff. Please help us by following instructions given at the beginning of each year.

The following may help you to say good-bye to your child(ren) in a brief and positive way:

1. Tell your child when you will return for him/her. Explain this in a way he/she can relate to: "I'll be back at suppertime."
2. Don't try to stop your child from crying or expressing unhappiness in other ways when you leave. Such expressions are important for the child. Accept the protests and offer reassurance that you will return later. Remember that this crying is likely to end as soon as you leave.
3. Be sure to make it clear throughout the parting process that you are definitely leaving. Your calm and certainty will help your child accept the separation. If you show that you are upset or unsure, he/she will intensify his/her protests.
4. Any departure ritual may ease the transition, whether that ritual is a special good-bye game or a song you sing together. Like bedtime rituals, departure routines reassure your child at an anxious moment. But be warned: once adopted, they can be altered only at your peril!

Please be sure to pick up your child promptly after class is over, especially if he/she is not an after care person.

Two common complaints of parents upon retrieving their children at school are:

- “My child is starving when he/she gets home from school.”
- “My child wants all of my attention when we get home.”

Here are some suggestions for dealing with these behaviors:

1. **Food please.** By the time they get home, children have burned off much of what they ate during the day through hard work and play. You can stop afternoon cravings by providing a nourishing snack that is not filling. Fruit and small amounts of nuts, milk and crackers, cheese, raisins and raw vegetables work great. Put the snack where it can be easily reached by the children when they get home. Keep it in the same place so that they always know where to look.

2. **Attention please.** Giving a little immediate attention will allow you to return to your other duties and chores. You can ask the children about their day while in the car. The auto trip home every evening is a good time to cue your children on what you need help with. Ask them what they would like to do when they get home. Sing songs!

When you get home, spend time with the children and then direct them to an activity that you may have discussed with them earlier. Help them prepare a snack and share it with them. Read a short story together. Think about how much you treasure extra attention from your spouse or friends after you have been separated even for a short time.

## *Bringing Items to School*

Please do not let your child bring candy, gum, jewelry, or toys to school. Although children enjoy sharing their toys with

classmates, they always cause confusion and distraction, and sadness if the object becomes lost.

Items of special interest such as flowers, seeds, books, pictures, insects, rock, shells, souvenirs, etc., are always welcome and should be identified with your child's name. Your child's teacher will inform you if she has a special day planned each week for sharing.

Handheld video games, cell phones, and other electronic devices may not be brought to school.

## *Conservation Commitment*

Nature's Way is totally committed to the environment and conservation. We were the first school to earn a Level 4 Earth Flag from the Ijams Nature Center. The Earth Flag program was designed to promote healthy conservation practices in the Knox County public and private schools. Nature's Way does the following:

- recycles all of our paper, glass, cardboard, aluminum, plastics, and tin cans
- composts at least 90% of our food waste and yard waste
- maintains a nature trail, herb garden, bird feeders and boxes, and organic garden
- plants trees and protects a vernal pool area
- reuses paper and instructional materials
- uses rags, table scrubbers for clean-up (instead of paper towels)
- uses washable dishes, utensils, and cups
- studies conservation

We encourage you to recycle, reuse, and reduce in your own home to reinforce what your student does at school and to

conserve valuable resources. We can all be proud of the work we do toward building a sustainable future.

The pond you see in the front of the school was added in 1999. It attracts wildlife, and enhances our various animal habitats by providing water at ground level. Please enjoy the pond with your children. You can help us protect this special environment by instructing your child to follow the respectful procedures listed on the sign in the pond area.

## *Lunches*

Nature's Way Montessori encourages all children to eat foods that are healthy. We ask that you provide a healthy breakfast each school day and send nutritious lunches. We encourage you to talk to your child about the health benefits of the foods you include in their lunches. **PLEASE DO NOT BRING FAST FOOD LUNCHES TO YOUR CHILD AT SCHOOL.**

Please do not send dessert items such as candy, cookies, Twinkies, jelly sandwiches, soda pop, 10% fruit drinks, chocolate milk, etc. A dessert is easy to define as anything you would not serve with a main meal at home. For example, you would not serve a candy bar along with a main dish and vegetables; therefore, it is a dessert. For example, you would not serve a chocolate covered granola bar with chocolate chips along with a main dish and vegetables; therefore, it is a dessert. Another test of a dessert if the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup>, ingredient is listed as a sugar product (for example in Danimals Drinkable Yogurt there is 3 tsp of sugar in less than ½ a cup). Please feel free to ask us about any item you are uncertain about. If you begin the school year by telling your child that certain kinds of foods are not allowed in school, she/he will soon cease to request them.

Children like to have small amounts of many different foods in their lunches – be creative! So that you will know the things that

your child is and is not eating at school, we will ask your child to take home food that is not consumed at the beginning of the year. Please inspect your child's lunch box to assist you in preparing acceptable quantities and variety. Later, children will learn to compost their garbage at school. Classes may have a microwave oven. If so, information on the use of it for heating lunch items will be shared with you early in the year.

## *Lunch Boxes*

**Please do not send metal lunch boxes. They rust, the paint chips easily and they are noisy. Plastic or cloth containers are a sensible and sanitary alternative.** We strongly encourage you to send foods in reusable containers. Avoid plastic bags and heavily packaged foods. Please choose a lunch box your child can open and close. *JUICE BOXES CANNOT BE RECYCLED OR REUSED AND SHOULD NOT TO BE SENT TO SCHOOL.*

## *Snack*

In the Toddler through Lower Elementary Communities, you will be asked to help us by providing snacks for your child's class on a rotating basis. Please involve your child in preparation of the snack. He/she will love preparing and sharing it with classmates. In the Upper Elementary Community, students bring their own snack from home in their lunch boxes each day.

# *Food Allergies*

We recognize that a food allergy is one of many differences that a student can exhibit at our school. Each year we have about 16% of our population that is allergic to something known. Approximately one-half of those are allergies to a food substance. The school is responsible for an overall policy about safety for all children and specifically the child who has an allergy to a common food item.

The school will adhere to the following procedures:

1. The school will provide a questionnaire to all parents of children with allergies to define how severe it is (airborne, contact or ingestion) and what form the reaction takes.
2. All staff will be aware of the allergies of each child enrolled in case that child happens to be in their care during the school day. Staff will be aware of how to help the child should he/she come in contact with the allergen.
3. Children with life threatening allergies will be asked to wear a medical alert bracelet stating the nature of their allergy.
4. No snacks, projects, lessons, etc., will contain the food allergen of the severely affected student in the affected classroom.
5. Parents who have a student in the affected classroom will be asked to avoid sending the allergic food substance in their child's lunch or snack. Although we will not ban the substance in individual lunches, we will appeal to the parents' sense of respect and tolerance for differences and ask them to model this for their children.
6. Staff will help to educate the children about the importance of taking care of each other and honoring the differences of each child by helping out.

## *Nap*

Children attending the Toddler Community nap between 12:00 and 2:00 p.m. each day. In the Early Childhood Community the youngest children and any older children that nap will lie on their mats for a sufficient time to achieve sleep. If they do not sleep, they will be invited to choose lessons in the classroom. Nature's Way provides the nap mats. Parents provide a standard crib sheet and blanket and optionally a small pillow and sleep aid (small stuffed animal, etc.). All napping materials are sent home at the end of the week unless they need to be changed earlier.

## *Birthdays*

Birthdays are a special time of sharing for the children. We celebrate your child's birthday with a special snack and walk around the sun ceremony to symbolize the earth's yearly orbit. Please talk with your child's teacher about providing a nutritious snack. Some suggestions are yogurt with toppings (coconut, fruit, applesauce, etc.), fruit kabobs (fruit layered on sticks), banana bread, popcorn or a variety of small finger sandwiches. Children are delighted with these special treats.

Please do not bring gifts or favors such as balloons, party hats, horns or other such items or send flowers to your child at school. If flowers arrive, they are kept in the office until dismissal.

If you plan a birthday party outside of school, send invitations by mail. Invitations distributed through the school cause upset and rejection for those children who are not invited. *Parties are excellent events to teach your child kind and careful ways to include and exclude.* A current school directory will be available on our website early in the fall.

# *Celebration of Life*

We share each child's birthday with a special time called the Celebration of Life. Each child benefits from experiencing this happy occasion for his/her birthday. Summer birthdays can be celebrated in the last month of school, vacation birthdays before or after the vacation.

The Celebration begins with the birthday child walking "around the sun" (a yellow circle representing the sun). Each complete trip around the symbolic sun represents one year of the child's life. As the child walks around the circle, a statement is read about his or her history for that year. This continues until the child has circled the sun the number of times equal to the birthday being celebrated.

Many things are gained through this ceremony. The children gain awareness of the time sequence of life and the special events that they may have experienced in that sequence. They enjoy sharing their lives with their classmates and build confidence through increased knowledge of themselves. They expand their appreciation for the unique life journey their classmates are experiencing. The children also learn that they travel around the sun once each year.

Please plan the celebration with your child. Allow your child to choose the pictures and events that have special meaning. This will avoid the possibility of a child feeling uncomfortable and make the celebration more meaningful for him/her.

The following example describes one year in the life of a child and is provided to give you an idea of what we are looking for:

*John was born in Denver, Colorado, on December 15, 1970. He was a happy, healthy baby. During the summer, he went to visit his grandmother in Austin, Texas. He took along his favorite toy – a*

*brown bear named Oscar. When John was one year old, he stood up and walked to his dad. For his birthday, his cousins came to share his birthday cake. He made friends with the next-door neighbor's dog, Spot. So the first word John said was "Spot." Etc.*

## *Gifts to Staff*

Nature's Way has long asked parents to consider a gift to the classroom or the school rather than an individual gift to one or more teachers. Children can understand that a gift to the school is a gift to **all** of the children and **all** of the teachers. If you would like to gift your classroom or the school, find below teachers' ideas:

- Contribution to our scholarship fund.
- Gift of time volunteered on one of our many projects.
- Gift certificate to purchase desired classroom items.
- Providing one of the items on a class's wish list.
- A gift to a charity in the name of Nature's Way.
- A gift of your talent – sharing yourself or a project with the class.

What if your child wants to give a gift to a teacher? How can he/she honor a teacher without purchasing a gift? What a wonderful conversation you could have with your child! Ask your child to think of gifts that cost nothing. They are ready to think beyond the idea that a gift has to be a physical object and will come up with many wonderful and creative ideas – a special song shared, an instrument played to delight and entertain, the gift of service (sanding and refinishing a special piece of work, etc.), a certificate promising to perform a service to a teacher or class, i.e., *This certificate can be exchanged for 1 helpful deed!*

If several children model gifts that are not "objects," other children will catch the idea and it will grow. Children will then

grow in their understanding of service and good will as possibilities for gifts to their communities and the world.

## *Illness--Accidents*

A sick child does not belong in school both for his/her own welfare and for the health of the other children. Your child should remain at home until he/she has been fever and/or diarrhea free for 24 hours, if she/he has an upset stomach, vomiting, diarrhea, pinkeye, head lice or nits, ear infection, rash, or a contagious disease.

If your child is absent for more than three days, kindly report the cause to the school. If you obtain verification that your child has a communicable disease, please call the school immediately so we can add the disease to the list. The office will keep a list of infectious diseases by class and will e-mail parents when several families are reporting their child with the same illness. If your child gets ill, please share this information with your doctor to help him diagnose the illness.

If your child becomes ill at school, you will be notified immediately and requested to come and pick him/her up **within the hour**. By acting promptly, you reduce the amount of time a contagious condition might have to spread in the classroom, free the staff to continue with the everyday routine with the remainder of the class, and facilitate the comfort of your child.

Minor accidents occurring during the school day receive prompt and careful attention of the staff members. In the event of serious illness or accident, the family is notified at once and arrangements are made for the child to be transported home or to the medical facility specified on your Emergency Information Form. An accident report is filled out immediately after the mishap and is filed in the student's file.

**We cannot emphasize too strongly the need to inform the school immediately of any change of telephone numbers during the year.** We must be able to contact one parent at all times in case of emergency.

## *Medicine*

All medications must be received from the parent or guardian by a staff person. It must be accompanied by a Medication Form. Medication forms are available from the office and in every classroom. A copy is printed on p. 41 of this manual for your reference. Please be reminded that you need to fill out a Medication Form if your child is taking a **prescribed or an over-the-counter medicine**.

Prescribed medicines given to children for various reasons, and common over-the-counter medications that are given to children to help with allergies, colds, coughs, and other minor ailments on a regular basis or periodically **often have side effects** in children. Common side effects we observe at school are *sleepiness, hyperactivity, diarrhea, indigestion, headaches, vision changes, disorientation, nervousness, aggressiveness and lack of motivation*. If we know your student is taking a prescribed or over-the-counter medication, and we know the side effects that he/she might experience, we can make an informed decision about what to expect from him/her during the day. We can also let you know what he/she is experiencing at school.

If your child is on a regular medication that is designed to affect attention or mood please notify us of **any change** in dosage and/or the timing of doses.

## *Release of Children*

Leave written instructions with the office or call the office on the day that your child is to be picked up by someone who is **not** included on the child's **Identification and Emergency Information Form**. Give the individual's name and the approximate time the child will be picked up. Inform the individual picking up your child that they may be asked for I.D.

## *In-Service Days*

During the school year, in-service days have been set aside for our staff. These will be utilized for visitation to other schools, educational seminars, and/or material preparation. These are important days for teachers to plan ahead, refresh various skills, or add to the materials in their classrooms. Although it may cause you some inconvenience as child care schedules are interrupted, the benefit to your child's school experience is immeasurable!

## *Emergency Closings*

Nature's Way Montessori School announces its own closings on local TV broadcast stations WATE (ABC), WBIR (NBC) & WVLT (CBS). The Director, will be electronically notified by Webb School of their decisions regarding weather closings and will make a decision based on this information regarding closure of Nature's Way. The decision will be broadcast before 10:00 P.M., or before 6:30 A.M. If school is delayed for an hour or closes early, under these circumstances our Early Morning Care and After Care programs will not be available.

Remember, the announcement for closings or delays will read

*Nature's Way Montessori School.*

## *Communication with the School*

Feel free to call the school office with any concerns, information, or questions. Phone calls will not be transferred to classrooms during regular classroom hours however your call is important and teachers will be asked to return your call. Information can be given to the office and will be hand carried to the classroom if it is important the teacher receive the message immediately.

Occasionally you will reach our voicemail. Please leave a message and someone will return your call as soon as possible.

It is often more expedient to leave a written message with a staff member. This can easily be accomplished during drop-off and pick-up times. E-mailing the school or teacher is another reliable method of communication.

## *Communication from the School*

We want to keep you informed of your child's experience at school and of important events and information. We maintain an updated website that includes a Parent Center. Each community posts their most recent news and pictures on their Parent Center classroom page. E-mails from the office or individual teachers are sent as needed to keep you informed of upcoming events and news.

## *Custody Information*

Parents or guardians shall have the right to receive information contained in school records concerning their minor child. The school, unless informed otherwise, assumes there are no restrictions regarding the non-custodial parent's right to be kept informed of the student's progress through educational records. If restrictions are made relative to the rights of the non-custodial parent, the custodial parent shall be requested to submit a

certified copy of the court order which curtails these specific rights.

Unless there are specific court-imposed restrictions, the non-custodial parent, upon request, shall be given access to all of the student's educational records including but not limited to the student's cumulative file and the student's special education file, if applicable.

The school shall not permit a change in the physical custody of a child at school unless:

1. The person seeking custody of the child presents the school official with a certified copy of a valid court order from a Tennessee court designating the person who has custody of the child; and
2. The person seeking custody gives the school official reasonable advanced notice of his/her intent to take custody of the child at school.

Under situations where the responsibility and custody for children is shared between separated parent households or other guardianship arrangement involving relatives or non-family members, the school requests that only one responsible adult be designated to receive the announcements and information from the school that pertain to the child's schooling activities.

It will be the responsibility of the designated adult to share the child's school information by some means of agreement.

## *Special Information from Home*

In the event that a significant change occurs in your home, please consider informing your child's teacher and/or the Administrator/Director, Mary Smith. All information will be regarded as confidential. We will accept your judgment as to the kinds of changes that may affect your child's behavior, security

and general well being. Common causes of distress include: either or both parents being away from home for an extended time, new persons living in the home, illness of either parent, illness of a sibling, any hospitalization, divorce, accident or death in the family, moving, or death of a pet.

The teacher or administrator will keep you informed of any significant changes in the school environment that may affect your child.

## *Early Intervention*

Nature's Way considers itself an *early intervention school*. The lead teacher in each class has extensive experience with the developmental stages of the children that she teaches. They are able to ascertain differences that make a difference in the child's social, emotional, intellectual, educational, behavioral, and physical adjustment. Good teachers will adapt to the needs of the child automatically in order to aid that child in maintaining a positive self opinion while they work to grow in the affected areas.

The director and the parents will be informed by the lead teacher when extensive adaptations are made for a student. The parent will be encouraged to seek outside screening procedures and intervention to support the results of the observation and testing when necessary. The results of a careful screening will give teachers the tools they need to support the investment you have made in their education. As you have taken the time to research and place your child in a school concerned with individual needs, it makes sense for us to be concerned that your child is reaching his/her potential.

We encourage you to take advantage of the speech and language screening offered at the school in the fall. The valuable information received may reassure you that your child is

developing as expected or it might alert you to an area that needs help during the child's sensitive period for developing a skill or ability.

## *Conferences/Contact*

Parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled during the year. We suggest you take full advantage of these conferences and ask for additional conferences if needed. We do ask that you refrain from discussing with us any problems related to your child in his/her presence. Please ask for a conference whenever you feel the need.

Be assured that frequent parent contact is an important goal of all the staff at NWMS. If you feel you would like more personal communication concerning your child, please ask.

The director and/or previous teachers are available to join a conference with a teacher and parent upon request.

## *Parent Participation*

The spirit of Montessori emphasizes the importance of parents' or guardians' participation in the education of their child. The school grows not only by the quality and longevity of the staff, but by the individual efforts of the parents who provide valuable services and contributions to the school.

You will be asked to fill out a parent participation form when you first register your child. Please let us know at any time of special services you would be willing to offer the staff or children of the school.

## *Classroom Visitation*

Parents are urged to visit the classroom at least once during the school year. Classes are open for observation starting in October.

Please call your child's teacher for an observation time so he/she will be expecting you. Following your observation, please feel free to schedule a time to ask questions or make comments.

The classroom is available for your child to share with you. If your child would like to share some special work with you or some item in the classroom, feel free to come in when you pick up your child.

Please note the demeanor of the classroom staff if you choose to spend time in the classroom. Use a soft voice, encourage other children to continue with their work, and make your presence in the class mirror that of the other adults.

## *Before and After Care*

After care is an extension of the Montessori program and is provided both before and after regular school hours. After care staff are trained and familiar with the basic ground rules expected in the regular program. Late afternoon is a time when the young children need a slower routine, being nurtured with reading and looking at the books in the class, being close to an adult in a family atmosphere, doing handiwork and other practical life activities, or playing freely outside.

Often it is hard for a child to make the transition from child care to the car in the afternoon. This is a time when most parents are anxious to get home and begin their evening routines. Whether outside or inside the child's responsibility is to restore the space/lesson he is working in/on before greeting parents. If you are not able wait for these transition activities, please feel free to call the child care person as you are leaving work or home and ask that your child be prepared for your arrival.

Your child is expected and encouraged to follow the ground rules of the school at all times. Some children have a difficult time

following the rules when being picked up. Your cooperation is necessary to ensure that the children are not confused and forget to follow the rules.

- To ensure adequate staffing, please call the office if you are requesting after-school care that you have not signed up for previously.
- Our child care closes at 5:30 p.m. during the academic year. Charges for child care after 5:30 p.m. will be billed at a per-minute rate.
- Our EMC opens at 7:30. DO NOT DROP OFF YOUR CHILD BEFORE THIS TIME.
- All students must be signed out by the party picking them up.
- Call if you will be late. Children worry if their parent does not arrive at the time they expected them and after care staff cannot always comfort or reassure them.
- When you arrive to pick up your child, he/she becomes your responsibility. You are welcome to stay on campus with them but please directly supervise them and require them to follow school rules.
- If you bring a pet with you to pick up your student, please be sure it is on a leash and does not come in the classroom. For the children's and pet's safety, make sure that students are not allowed to handle it aggressively or in a "mob."

## *Resource Programs*

Nature's Way Montessori has traditionally supported several resource programs.

Art is provided in small groups each week to elementary and middle school students. TC and ECC staff will provide art lessons and materials at all times in the classroom and children will transition to the art room at various times for some special projects. At Nature's Way we believe art should teach children important perceptions involved in "seeing" the art inherent in nature and the manmade world as well as the techniques for creating art. This does not involve coloring dittos or other time-filling work. It includes painting, collage, sculpture, design, history of art and much more. We feel a child's knowledge of art through study and practical experience is relevant to every area of academic pursuit. Art is one way to refine your child's perceptions and appreciation of life.

Music is incorporated in the curriculum of each class. Each teacher plans and coordinates their own music and music related activities, lessons, field trips and guest visitors. A resource teacher provides music classes for all students one day each week.

Spanish is one of the three most widely spoken languages of the world. Therefore, we feel it is important to provide this language at Nature's Way. Emphasis is placed on vocabulary, conversation, listening comprehension, cultural celebrations, and use of Spanish in the Nature's Way community. Spanish is offered to students in all classes.

## *Attendance*

Nature's Way feels your child's attendance at school is important. Much goes on in a day that is planned for his/her academic and personal growth. Although we have no attendance policy for

preschoolers, we strongly encourage attendance for the continuity and comfort it gives your child.

Daily attendance is kept on all **school age children**. All absences need to be excused. A note to the teacher to the class concerning the nature of the absence or a call to the office will suffice. If there are a total of 5 unexcused absences, we will request a conference with the parents or guardians to determine the best way to avoid these.

**School-age children** are encouraged to be at school when the day begins. Your student will miss the transition time prepared to allow for a smooth entry into the class if he/she is not present between 8:30 and 8:45 a.m. Late entries also disturb the smooth flow of the class. If a child is consistently late for school, we will request a conference to seek a way to avoid this.

## *Classroom Ground Rules*

- **Any child is free to work with any materials on display as long as he/she uses them with respect, i.e., does no harm to the material, to the environment, to him/herself or others, or does not disturb the activities of others.**
- **The child takes the material that he wishes to use to a rug (which he/she has gotten from the rug storage area) or to a table or other work area appropriate to the activity.**
- **After using a set of materials, the child returns it to its place on the display shelf in the condition in which he/she found it.**
- **The child “restores the environment” after an activity.**

When the child is through with his/her activity at a rug, the rug is returned to the storage area. If he/she has been working

at a table, the chair or stool which he/she has been sitting on is pushed under the table. When a chair or stool is not in use (as a seat), it is placed under a table and not left out in the middle of "traffic" or floor work areas.

When a child spills such things as water or paint, he/she cleans it up with the appropriate materials provided. If he/she does not know how to do this, the teacher demonstrates it. She never forces him if he/she resists. She may "do it for him/her" the first or second time by way of demonstration. Her intention is not to clean up after the child but to show how to do it in a satisfactory way, i.e., a way that will provide success and satisfaction for the child.

This ground rule helps the child develop responsibility because it encourages him to accept the consequences of his actions. It develops a respect for materials and tools and a pride in work well done. It encourages respect and thoughtfulness of others, as a messy, uncared-for environment impedes the active progress of others who use the same facilities in common. Also, the habits of orderliness, cleanliness and gracefulness which are fostered by this ground rule are closely related to the development of body coordination and control.

➤ **Children do not touch the work of another child or interfere with another's activity.**

This provides security for a child to choose and carry to completion the activity which is selected. The right to initiate, complete and even to repeat an activity undisturbed by others (children or adults) must be protected by the teacher. If the child must leave his activity temporarily, e.g., toileting, the work is left with the security of knowing that upon return, everything will be as it was left and the activity can be resumed.

- **A child may join another child who is using a specific piece of equipment only if invited by the child to so do.**

The refusal to be allowed to join a child's lesson or to share a piece of equipment may result in a long wait for the equipment. But the refusal and the wait are part of those real conditions that promote the rights of others.

- **No child is ever forced to share with another the materials that he/she has first chosen for an activity.**

Generosity and the ability to share must develop from within the child and never be imposed from the outside. If "sharing" is imposed by the teacher or strenuously "suggested" by her, the opposite attitude may well develop in the child and he/she may become excessively possessive in an attempt to protect his/her rights. As a child matures and feels secure within, sensitivity to the needs and rights of others will grow and his/her generosity will expand. If there are enough materials and ground rules are effective, sharing will come naturally, in cases where sharing is appropriate or necessary.

- **Each child deserves the right to "do nothing at all" if he/she so desires as long as he/she does not disturb the activities of others.**

So-called "doing nothing" or musing or just sitting is really a positive pastime. A child may be observing others at work (and learning much from them) or he/she may be "thinking" or simply relaxing. The ability to be quiet and happily alone with oneself is certainly a healthy sign.

## *Discipline*

In a Montessori school, our goal is to help the child develop self-discipline.

First, we must differentiate between discipline and punishment. Punishment is short-term, brings some satisfaction to the adult, and has no long-range educational goals for the child. Discipline, on the other hand, is designed to alter behavior and has as its goal long-range effects through education of the child. We want eventually for the child to discipline him/herself.

Self-discipline is encouraged within the classroom by several means. For example, there is only one exercise in the classroom. A child must wait until a particular exercise is returned to the shelf. The wait may be long and he/she may become frustrated but he/she still must wait. Children are allowed to work only with materials with which the teacher has given them a lesson. Since the materials are designed to be attractive, the child must learn to control his/her desire to touch and work with all materials. Again, he/she must make a judgment and wait.

Discipline takes place through a system of logical consequences. As in any group of people, there are rules necessary for the protection and harmony of all. Our classrooms have certain rules. For example, materials are to be handled carefully, "inside" or quiet voices are used, children walk instead of run, respect for each other's work is as important as well as respect for the individual person. Physical means of handling anger or disagreement are inappropriate and discussions of feelings are encouraged. If a child clearly understands these rules and refuses to cooperate, that is his/her prerogative. However, certain consequences will follow. The teacher may first try to distract the child from the negative behavior and direct him/her to a productive activity. If he/she persists in the behavior, the teacher may have him/her move around the room with her, holding his/her hand and restricting his/her freedom. He/she observes lessons she is giving and often becomes interested in an activity. If neither tactic succeeds, she may ask the child to sit at the side of

the room on a chair for a few minutes. The child's freedom is thus curtailed and he/she must observe the others happily and busily engaged in activity. Freedom is very important and the child will usually cooperate to obtain it. The point is that the child has made the decision to break his/her will, that he/she sees cooperative behavior will benefit him/her. This is another step towards self-discipline.

Consistency is the most important ingredient in discipline. Rules are reasonable and agreed upon by the adults in the environment. Rules are consistent within each class.

Many times parents find it helpful to use the same manner of discipline at home as we do at school. The important thing to remember is "be as consistent as possible and follow through." If you are having problems or have a concern, please discuss it with your child's teacher. An objective opinion can sometimes be helpful.

Having responsibilities in the home as at school helps children feel useful and important and works for positive behavior. Children like to feel as though they function as part of the household. They do not like to feel as if they have been forced to do something. Use the statement, "I need your help...." Making the children feel needed goes hand in hand with building their confidence and self-esteem.

The children like to perform or assist in the following chores:

<i>Setting up lunch and snack</i>	<i>Washing and drying dishes</i>
<i>Cleaning areas they use</i>	<i>Carrying messages</i>
<i>Serving lunch or snack</i>	<i>Cleaning sponges</i>
<i>Dressing themselves</i>	<i>Cleaning tables</i>
<i>Folding</i>	<i>Dusting and sweeping</i>
<i>Cracking nuts</i>	<i>Straightening shelves</i>
<i>Cutting bread</i>	<i>Mopping and vacuuming</i>

*Grinding crackers  
with a mortar & pestle*

*Polishing wood, silver, and glass*

If children are given an opportunity, provided a little extra time, and treated with patience, they can do numerous things at home, too.

Being independent with their clothing and possessions also contributes to positive behavior. Arrange drawers and closets so that children may choose their own clothing (if they are going somewhere in the morning, have the children choose their clothing the evening before). Clothes should be placed where they are easily in reach of the child. Place shirts inside pants or shorts that match. Hang matching clothes together on hangers (allow the children to hang their own clothes on hangers). Put socks and underwear at a level they can reach. Organize shoes in a row (shoe racks are a good idea for helping children organize). Combs and brushes should be placed near a mirror where the children may examine their dress before leaving the house.

Store toys in a designated space (shelves are great for this). Place toys with many pieces (for example, Legos, Lincoln Logs, and Tinker Toys) in separate containers. When all the toys are placed in a large box, many small pieces are lost, broken, or never played with again. If a child has lots of toys, you may wish to store some of them. Bringing old toys out of storage allows you to change toy variety periodically.

## *Preschool Age Children*

Preschoolers are very special people. They are in a constant period of transition from total dependence to considerable independence. A great deal of their time will be spent learning to dress, toilet, eat, sleep, and talk – most of which we as adults tend to take for granted. This is their work. Be proud of their accomplishments!

In addition to the fact that this may very well be a first “separation” from parents, it is probably your child’s first group experience. His familiar world has suddenly fallen apart. Help him/her to minimize the change by doing the following:

1. Keep his/her schedule filled with routine. Be consistent in your activities before and after school, and also the time of day you bring him/her and pick him/her up.
2. Be prepared to give your child a lot of attention. He/she needs a one-to-one relationship with you as he/she has been with a group and others all day.
3. Talk to your child about things which will become familiar to him/her in the next few weeks – his/her teacher’s name, the way to school, where you go all day and when you will return.
4. Avoid “babying” your child. He/she can and will do things for him/herself. An overriding interest is his/her desire to act grown-up. The most degrading insult to children is to charge that their behavior is similar to that of babies. If your child has an attachment to bottles and pacifiers, wean him/her. His/her adjustment to school will be accomplished much more readily and he/she will learn to handle stress in a more constructive manner.
5. Listen to your child. Even the youngest child has much to say. Repeat what you think he/she said and you will reinforce the desire to talk.
6. Accept your child’s growth. Be cautious about “pushing” in areas like toileting. Your child learns by success and not by failure. Physical readiness, body awareness, some language and self-control are necessary for success.

7. Support your child's attempts at independence even though it means bearing with some disagreeable negative behavior. Just be sure that what he/she is doing is safe. Negativism is a sign that a preschooler is beginning to understand that he/she is an individual separate from others and that he/she is forming personal ideas.

When a preschooler comes to school, the teacher guards the secure feelings of the child and makes the child feel at home in his/her new environment. To achieve this aim, the teacher is sympathetic, cheerful, and consistently shows affection. Your interest and enthusiasm for his/her school activities will help in the development of secure feelings toward the "new" school environment.

# *Questions Frequently Asked*

## **1. Why should I send my child to preschool?**

Most educators and psychologists today agree that the single most important period in the development of a person's intelligence occurs between birth and six. A child's mind is extremely absorbent and his curiosity is at a peak during these early years. When properly nourished and stimulated, the child's mind forms patterns for learning that will serve him well throughout his/her life. The Montessori system of preschool education has proven to be one of the most effective and fastest growing methods to guide a child through these critical years.

## **2. How is a Montessori Preschool different from other preschools?**

In most preschools the children are taught educational concepts in a group by a teacher. In a Montessori Preschool, the children learn concepts spontaneously as they work independently with the many materials in the environment.

## **3. What is in the Montessori classroom?**

The Montessori classroom is a child-sized world. Whatever is in the world outside can be incorporated meaningfully in the Montessori classroom. To a child, the world is unmanageable – it is too big, too complex and too confusing. By careful selection of materials by the teacher, an environment is set up that allows the child a place to explore life on a level he/she can understand. The materials or exercises are designed to stimulate independent exploration. This prepared environment entices the child to proceed at his own pace from simple activities to more complex ones. Through this process, the child's natural curiosity is satisfied and he/she begins to

experience the joy of discovering the world about him/her. Materials and curriculum center around Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, Math, Geography, History, Science, Art, and Music.

**4. How do children interact in the environment?**

As the children develop a sense of pride in their work, a feeling of confidence, well being, and joy begins to manifest itself. A classroom of Montessori children is a pleasure to watch. There seems to be a spirit of respect, love and cooperation among the children.

**5. What is the role of the Montessori teacher?**

The Montessori teacher carefully plans the environment in the interest of the children, facilitates the classroom activity and helps the children progress from one activity to the next. She is trained to work with each child individually, helping him/her choose from many activities within his/her range of ability. She stands back while a child is working and allows the child the satisfaction of his/her own discovery.

**6. With all this freedom, isn't there confusion?**

The concept of freedom in the classroom is "freedom within limits." A child is allowed to work freely so long as he/she does not disturb others. Actually, the children having the freedom to follow their interests are generally happy and busily involved in their work.

**7. How do Montessori children adjust to public school?**

Children who have been in a Montessori environment are generally very flexible and adjust quite easily to the public school situation. They are generally better students and spend

their time in more productive ways because of their self-direction and positive attitude toward learning.

**8. Why is a Montessori experience for five days?**

The Montessori classroom experience is for five consecutive days in order to allow the spontaneous learning of the child to flow smoothly. A child taken in and out of school every other day does not have the same opportunity to pursue his/her unfolding interests.

**9. What about socialization and group work?**

Socialization is very much a part of the Montessori method. In the classroom, you will notice children interacting continuously, choosing to work on projects together, and older children helping younger ones. Each day there is outside play and some small & large group activity.

**10. For whom is the Montessori method designed?**

The Montessori method is an “approach to learning” and as such has no distinction of class or intelligence. It has been used successfully in all parts of the world and in all types of programs.

**11. Why is a Montessori school more expensive?**

Tuition charges in Montessori schools throughout the country are higher than most other preschool and primary schools because of the extensive materials encompassing the environment, curriculum and trained staff. It is, however, a very reasonable cost in contrast to other activities you would plan for yourself and your child. It becomes a matter of choice and what you value most. To give your child the finest possible experience in his/her most sensitive years is to give

him/her a strong foundation throughout life and probably ward off investment later to correct or remedy that which was missed. Many educators believe that it is wiser to invest in a child's preschool and primary education than in his/her college education. The child who enjoys learning and becomes self-directed at this critical preschool age will benefit through all his/her years of learning. The expense now is a profitable long-term investment.

## **12. Does Montessori employ current research and theory in educational methods?**

Montessori is not a closed or static system of education. While there are certain materials and methods that have been proven effective through the years, Montessori is as much an attitude about education and children as it is a specific method. We do incorporate new materials all the time, if we see they can be used in a Montessori approach.

## *Payments & Payment Guidelines*

Please indicate on all checks to the school what the amount should be credited to (i.e., tuition, \$535.00; deposit \$35.00, occasional care \$18.00).

If you are making a payment in cash, put it in a labeled envelope. No loose cash, please.

Please drop your payment by the office, place it in the locked metal box by the ECC gate or put it in the brown manila envelopes provided in the LE - MS classrooms.

Please review your enrollment contract and tuition agreement for further information.

## *Fees*

The Deposit Fee is one month's tuition. All or part of the deposit, less any outstanding account balance, will be refunded within 30 days after your child has been officially withdrawn by written notification.

Requiring a deposit may seem to impose an additional financial expense. However, our program is planned and scheduled for the full 9-month academic year, and our operating budget is formulated for the same period. A tuition deposit is the fairest mechanism to offset budgetary problems created when a child leaves the school without his/her parents completing tuition payments.

## *Personal Safety Policy*

The Department of Human Services requires that all children be taught personal safety as a deterrent to child abuse. Rather than using a program designed to teach personal safety, Nature's Way integrates those concepts in the everyday respect that is given and taught to each child.



At Nature's Way, personal safety is taught, modeled, and reinforced on a daily basis in all classes.

Children are taught that they have a right to an undisturbed working space. They learn to prepare a space, a mat on the floor or table, on which they place the work they have chosen. They are taught and practice how to walk around a mat on the floor so that they do not violate the space of another student. They are taught what it means to respect another's chosen work. They learn to wait patiently instead of interrupting another child who is working.

Children learn to negotiate when in conflict. They learn to use words instead of body parts to express themselves. They learn to tell how they feel when another person acts in a way that shows disrespect or emotionally or physically hurts them. Adults model these negotiating skills when dealing with the behavioral differences of all children.

Children are taught to use words to protect themselves or their space. They are taught to be assertive with their words so that their message has only one meaning. Phrases that are commonly modeled are: move away, stop, you can't touch me like that, etc.

Adults in the environment ask permission before they look at a child's work, touch or move their work or possessions, or touch their bodies. Examples: May I sit in the chair next to you? May I give you a hug? May I help you move your work to a more private place? If the child declines, the adult accepts that. By extending the child this courtesy, the child learns to extend it to others.

Our experience is that these daily procedures help make strong children who know when and how to protect themselves and feel the right to do so.

## *Everyday Safety*

Your child(ren)'s safety is always on the mind of every staff member. The following are everyday procedures at Nature's Way that limit the access of our campus to unknown persons or alert us to the presence of unknown persons.

Our greatest assets are our opportunity to be in visual contact with our surroundings, and our large staff. Unlike many other schools, we have extensive visual access to the approach ways in our school. Every room has large windows along two sides. There

are five classrooms with a potential of 9 staff members that have window views of the drive. Staff in those classes call the office if they see anything they are uncomfortable with including unfamiliar persons on the property.

Teachers and the office regularly post, on the communal calendar inside the office door, any outside visitors for which they have arranged. Scheduled visitors are announced in advance to the entire staff. A staff news clipboard is circulated every morning that details, among other things, the visitor schedule for the entire week, who is visiting the school that day, and the time they will arrive on campus. Visitors are instructed to come to the office before entering a classroom and are often escorted to their destination or the classroom is notified to expect them.

In addition to the above, our school does have an emergency/disaster preparedness plan covering most natural and other emergencies. This plan is reviewed with staff annually and as needed.

## *Students' Safety during Emergencies*

We are required by law and have in place a thorough emergency/disaster preparedness plan covering most natural disasters and other emergencies that is reviewed with staff yearly.

As parents/guardians, you play an essential role in keeping students safe during the unlikely event of an emergency. Please consider the following guidelines that are of particular importance to parents in emergencies so that you may help our staff respond effectively to an emergency.

1. **Be prepared for early dismissals.** In some emergencies, such as in a snowstorm, school officials will deem it

prudent to send students home early. A message will be placed on our school telephone line confirming early dismissal and we will also attempt to contact you by telephone. Please make sure you provide us with up-to-date contact information so that we can easily reach you if there is an early dismissal.

2. **If no early dismissal, do not pick up children in the event of a school or area emergency.** If you do not learn about an early dismissal but learn of a school or area emergency, please do not rush to school to pick up your child. Traffic will block any needed emergency vehicles, and your presence in the school building during, say, an evacuation, may delay the process. Keep in mind that police will bar parents from school grounds in some emergencies. The safety of our students is paramount to us, and we have a plan that will reunite students and parents as soon as possible.
3. **Get information from local media in emergency.** In an emergency, stay tuned to local radio and television for current information, including how parents will be safely reunited with their children.

**NATURE'S WAY MONTESSORI SCHOOL  
MEDICATION FORM**

A staff member must receive all medications. Please do not send medications in lunch boxes. Medicines need to be in the original prescription container, labeled with the child's name and include the physician's directions for use.

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Medication \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of medication \_\_\_\_\_

Dosage \_\_\_\_\_

Time(s) to Administer \_\_\_\_\_

Prescription \_\_\_\_\_ Over-the-Counter \_\_\_\_\_

Special storage requirements \_\_\_\_\_

Possible side effects \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

*To be filled out by staff member administering the medication. Give form to parent with any unused medication.*

*Time(s) administered:*

M \_\_\_\_\_ T \_\_\_\_\_ W \_\_\_\_\_ TH \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_

*Initialed by staff* \_\_\_\_\_

*Date unused medication returned to parent* \_\_\_\_\_

*Parent's Initials* \_\_\_\_\_

*Noted side effects* \_\_\_\_\_

## *Notes*

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# *Notes*

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