

# **Montessori Circle of Friends**

**Parent Handbook**

**2017-2018**

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Dear Parents,

Welcome to Montessori Circle of Friends! This handbook has been prepared as a reference for you about the school and its policies, procedures and practices.

Montessori Circle of Friends was founded in 2008, out of the needs expressed by parents for a high quality, affordable education alternative, where their children were the focus.

We offer children a safe place to explore their world and discover a love of learning. They will develop a sense of responsibility and self esteem. With guidance from our highly qualified, nurturing staff, children will learn about math, history, geography, language, and culture. Enrichment programs in art, music, yoga, sign language, and theater are also offered.

Our mission is to help enable children to develop their individual gifts within a respectful, loving, and supportive community. Children will develop skills of concentration, motivation, and self-discipline. Each child will progress at their own pace and rhythm, according to their individual capabilities, and is inspired to learn with wonder and confidence. Our school bears witness to the viability and brilliance of the Montessori method.

With this mission in mind, we have created the policies, procedures, and practices you will find in this handbook. Please be aware that handbooks are ever-evolving. Circle of Friends reserves the right to change or add policies as needed, at any time, with appropriate written notice to parents.

### **Montessori Philosophy**

The basis of the Montessori philosophy of education is the belief that all children carry within themselves the foundation of the person they will become. In order to develop physical, intellectual, and spiritual potential to the fullest, the child must have freedom: a freedom to be achieved through order and self-discipline. As Montessori educators say, the world of the young child is full of sights and sounds, which at first appear chaotic. From this chaos, children gradually create order, learn to distinguish among the impressions that assail their senses, and slowly, but surely gain mastery of themselves, and their environment.

Dr. Maria Montessori developed what she called the *Prepared Environment*, which already possesses a certain order and allows children to learn at their own speed, according to their own capacities, and in a non-competitive atmosphere. *"Never let children risk failure until they have a reasonable chance of success."*

At each stage of development, the child acquires the tools necessary for critical thinking, decision making, and respect for all. Under the guidance of a Montessori trained educator, the child chooses what helps them to construct themselves, which results in a love of life and learning, while fostering independence, self-esteem, and growth.

The Montessori Method has proven effective for over one hundred years. Maria Montessori was a careful observer and her life's work was based on the direct study of children. From the use of current technology and neuroscience, we know how we best learn. The observations of Dr. Montessori have an uncanny resemblance to the best practices recommended by neuroscientists today. Additionally, there is ample research that shows that the Montessori Method is successful for children regardless of race, class, socio-economics, religions, cultural traditions, etc.

We strongly encourage parents to learn more about Montessori.

### **Admission Procedure**

Montessori Circle of Friends admits students without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national and ethnic origin. We consider children on a first come, first serve basis. Interested families should submit their application to the school office as early in the year as possible to ensure available space in the program.

### **Observation**

We encourage all parents to schedule a time to observe the classroom during school hours. Observations will begin in mid-October, on Wednesdays, between 9:30 and 11:00. Observations should be about 30 minutes in length; allowing time for any questions or comments with the director after observing.

## **Enrollment and Admission**

Upon acceptance into the Circle of Friends program, the family completes and returns a registration packet which consists of a health assessment, including immunizations, an application form, and a student information card, with all emergency contact information. At this time, parents will also sign a parent contract acknowledging their acceptance of our policies and indicating which tuition payment plan they have chosen. Also, a non-refundable \$250 materials fee is due to the school to secure your child's place in our program.

## **New Student Probation Period**

While most children acclimate to the Montessori classroom within 30 days, occasionally we have a child who would benefit from a different environment. During the 30 day period, teachers will observe the child to make sure our program is a good fit. If teachers, parents, and director of the school mutually agree that the child would benefit from a different learning environment, the family will be released from their enrollment agreement. Tuition will be prorated and reimbursed if necessary.

## **Payment Plan**

Annual tuition and before/after school care fees may be paid on a monthly basis with ten equal payments. The first 1/10th payment is due on August 25th and the last is due on May 25th. All tuition balances must be paid by the start of the following school year in order for the student to continue, unless other arrangements have been made with the director prior to the start of the school year.

## **Withdrawal**

Should circumstances arise where parents need to withdraw their child prior to the end of the academic year, parents must submit notice in writing. The notice must be received by Montessori Circle of Friends 30 days before withdrawing their child. Tuition payments incurred in the past are not refundable. Tuition payments falling due within the thirty day written notice period must also be paid. Parents are not responsible for any additional payments which are due past the expiration of those 30 days. If a child is withdrawn without 30 days written notice, parents agree to pay any tuition payments that would normally be due during the course of the 30 days after they have withdrawn their child.

### **School Hours**

Our school day is from 9:00am to 3:00pm, Monday - Friday. from the end of August through mid June.

Before school care is available beginning at 7:30am and after school care is available each day until 5:00pm. If students are not picked up by 5:00pm and have not contacted the school an additional fee may apply.

### **Arrivals**

Students may arrive beginning at 8:40am. All students are due in class by 9:00am. Promptness in a child's life is very important. Children who arrive late have a difficult time adjusting to the routine of the classroom. If you are going to late please notify the school before hand if possible. Enter the building through the playground side door. Please do not enter the classroom, as this disrupts the other children. A teacher will great you in the office where you will say "good-bye" and allow your child to enter their classroom independently.

When dropping off children, please enter the driveway and stay to the left hand side. Pull up to the end of the sidewalk leading to our entrance and wait there. A staff member or parent volunteer will meet you at your car so that you can sign your child into school. They will assist your child into the classroom. Two adults will remain in the building to help students put away coats, lunches, etc. and transition into the classroom.

While we understand how difficult separation can be for young children, especially at the start of the year, our experience tells us that a brief good-bye at the car is the easiest for the child. Children will often mirror our emotions. If you are positive about the good-bye, your child will notice!

If you need to enter the school in the morning, please park in one of the designated parking spots on the left-hand side of the school driveway. Please do not leave your car unattended in the drop-off area.

### **Dismissals**

Weather permitting, all dismissals will take place from the playground area. Half day students will be released from school at 12:40pm, immediately following lunch and recess. Please plan to arrive by 12:40pm so that the students remaining will not be disrupted as they transition back into classroom activities. Full day students will be released from school at 3:00pm, unless they are staying for after care. Parents may begin arriving at 2:50pm, but please respect that the students may still be engaged in their work and keep noise in the lobby to a minimum.

If a parent or emergency contact cannot be reached by 3:00pm for half day students or 5:00pm for full day students, the Chester Police Department will be contacted to help locate the parent(s). Two staff members will remain with the child until the parents have arrived.

Students will only be dismissed to parents, or caregivers, listed on your child's release form. Please make sure that all caregivers and car-pool drivers are listed on your release form. Specific written permission is required if a student is to leave with anyone other than those on your list. This includes children leaving school with a friend. In the event of an emergency, a phone call will be deemed sufficient notification.

### **Attendance**

Parents are asked to notify the school when a child will be absent from school by 8:30am. Please contact using the phone (860)526-9995 or email provided: **marthak1965@gmail.com**. Advance notice of any changes in your child's schedule due to doctors appointments, vacations, etc. is requested.

## Health Policies

- **When to Stay Home**

- Children must be excluded from school if during the past 24 hours they have had: Vomiting, diarrhea, fever over 100 degrees, communicable diseases(chicken pox, strep throat, etc), unexplained rash or hives, lice or nits. Children must be fever free for 24 hours. This means they have not needed Tylenol or Motrin.

- **Administration of Medication**

-All medications, prescription and over-the-counter, can only be administered by school personnel if an "Authorization for the Administration of Medication by Child Day Care Personnel" has been completed and signed by both the parent and the physician. This includes topical medications as well. We may NOT apply sunscreen, anti-itch cream, or anything of the like without written permission.

The form must contain the following information:

- Name, address and DOB of the child
- Drug name and dosage
- Method and time of administration
- Possible side effects and management of side effects
- Prescriber name, address, and phone number

-Childcare personnel will sign off on the form acknowledging receipt of the medication and authorization.

-All medications must be given to the school in their **original** container, clearly labeled with the child's name, dosage and prescriber information.

-All medications will be stored with the accompanying forms in the lock box in the first aid cabinet in the hallway or in the refrigerator if necessary.

-The first dose of any new medication must be given by the parent. Subsequent doses can then be administered as directed.

-Only personnel that have been trained in the Administration of Medications to children will be permitted to administer any medications.

-The Staff member that administers the medication should complete the Medication Administration Record noting the date, time, dosage, and any other relevant information.

## **Lunch**

Lunch will be served each day from 11:15am – 12:00pm and from 12:00-12:45pm. All students should pack a nutritious, well-balanced meal. We would recommend an insulated lunch container with a cool pack to ensure freshness. We would also encourage low sugar choices to aid concentration on afternoon activities. Water, napkins, and all utensils and dishware will be provided. Water bottles that the children can drink from throughout the day have proven helpful.

As a community, we have chosen to embrace a **“trashless lunch”** philosophy. Each component of your child’s meal should be packed in reusable containers that will return home with your child. This will greatly reduce the amount of trash that the school produces and in many cases promote healthier choices at the supermarket. Appropriate food waste will be composted.

Our lunch room allows nut products to be consumed. For students with allergies or sensitivities, we offer a nut free table. This table includes labeled chairs and cleaning materials to ensure the safety of your child. Aside from allergies, we have students who do not pack nut products sit at this table, too. This helps keep the children seated with peers, as well as opens seating at the other tables. Please inform the staff if you plan on keeping your child’s lunch nut free.



## **Snack**

Snack is available throughout the day for the students. They may have snack once in the morning and once in the afternoon. A snack list will be made available once the school year has started. Parents will be responsible for providing snack for the week during the school year. Snack should contain a fruit or vegetable ,and a dairy or carbohydrate.

## **Storm Closings**

In the case of inclement weather, all school closings, delays, or early dismissals will be announced on television channels WFSB 3 and WNBC 30, by email to parents, and on our school Facebook page. These announcements will be made no later than 6:30am for late opening and 10:30am for an early dismissal.

If severe weather, such as a hurricane, becomes an issue, staff and students will remain indoors, safely away from all windows and doors. A first aid trained staff member is always on site. Parents will be contacted after the immediate danger has passed. Local emergency personnel will be contacted if it is deemed necessary and appropriate.

## **Emergency Plans**

- **MEDICAL**

All of the staff members at Circle of Friends Montessori are first aid and CPR certified. In the event of a medical emergency, 911 will be called while first aid is being administered. Then a parent, guardian, or emergency contact will be contacted and instructed accordingly. A teacher will accompany any student that needs to be transported by ambulance to a health care facility, Middlesex Medical Center, Shoreline. That teacher will remain with the child until a parent or emergency contact arrives. If this reduces staffing to less than a 1:10 ratio, a substitute will be called in to bring the classroom back to ratio.

- **FIRE**

- In the event of a fire, all staff and students will immediately exit the building through either the main entrance or the rear playground door depending on the fire's location. The directress or head teacher is responsible for bringing the daily attendance sheet so that the staff can account for all students. A first aid kit, cell phone, and student contact information will be brought as well. 911 will be called. If we are unable to return to the building due to fire damage, teachers and students will walk next door to the United Church of Chester and wait until a parent or caregiver can pick them up. Parents will be notified by phone.

- **EVACUATION**

- If the building needs to be evacuated for any reason, the above fire procedure will be followed.

### **A Day in the Life in Our Circle**

- **Clothing**

- Children should dress daily in comfortable clothes in which they can play and move. They should also dress for independence. This might include shirts without buttons, pants with an elastic waist or shoes with Velcro, depending on the age of your child.

- **Slippers**

- Children will wear slippers in the classroom. Please send a pair that they can keep here at school. Please NO oversized character slippers. They can be a distraction and a safety issue.

- **Spare Clothes**

- Each student should keep at least one change of clothes at school that is seasonally appropriate. Bins labeled with your child's name are located in the hallway near the main entrance. Please be sure to include socks and underwear! Refresh your child's bin as necessary for the changing seasons or growth spurts.

- **Winter Gear**

- We go outside daily as much as possible, even in the winter. Students need jackets, boots, mittens, hats and snow pants to fully participate in outdoor winter activities. Be sure gear is labeled with at least a first name.

### **Parents as a part of our circle**

Positive parental involvement is an integral part of our success at Circle of Friends. We acknowledge and celebrate parents as partners in their children's education.

Our school has an open door policy for parent observation. We strongly encourage all parents to observe their child in the classroom setting. Observations begin mid-October on Wednesdays between the hours of 9:30am and 11:00pm. Please respect the students as they progress through their day and maintain the role of a silent observer.

Parent teacher conferences will be held twice each year, in the fall and in the spring. In addition to these scheduled conferences', we always welcome communication from our parents. Feel free to schedule an appointment before or

after school if you have any questions or concerns about your child's experience. The director also welcomes email correspondence.

Please remember that many of the conversations that take place between parent and teacher are of a confidential nature. Be respectful of the presence of your child and other families. Whenever possible, an appointment should be made so that these issues can be discussed appropriately.

A "Peak into our week" will be posted on Thursdays and Fridays on the entrance bulletin board so that parents can see the main concepts and activities that have been introduced to the group. Bi-weekly news letter's will also be sent home.

Volunteer opportunities in and out of the classroom are numerous. Throughout the year we will need help with gardening, laundry, lunch, event planning, field trip coordinating... the list is endless. Please let us know of your interests, talents, and availability.

### **Discipline Policy**

The Montessori program nurtures self-discipline, which develops over a period of years. The basis of self-discipline is respect: respect for oneself, for others, and for the environment. The adults and children in the prepared environment set limits for behavior based on the group's need for a safe and mutually respectful community.

If a student has difficulty following the rules of our community, the response will be age appropriate. Personal attention, distraction, substitution and removal from the situation are typical approaches.

Many instances resolve themselves as the student, within the bounds of safety and common sense, experiences the logical consequences of his/her actions (i.e. wiping up after throwing paint on the floor).

If the student disregards the rules of the classroom community, the directress seeks the underlying causes in order to help the student understand the inappropriateness of his/her actions and to find a constructive alternative. In some instances, the directress will work with the student to complete an awareness paper

with the student that will be sent home to help open a dialogue between the student and parents about the behavior. The child will have an opportunity to draw a picture of the incident and discuss how he or she was feeling at the time. Discussion will also take place about what can happen differently next time.

The following are some general guidelines of Montessori discipline that parents may wish to apply at home as well:

- Hold the child to a high standard and s/he will rise to expectations.
- Make reward internal, not external. **\*\*EXAMPLE**
- Seek clarity and consistency.
- Catch children “doing something right”.
- Engage and interest the child.
- Involve and stimulate the child.
- Redirect the child from destructive, negative behavior.
- Maintain unconditional love, love is not a bargaining chip.
- Use humor to support and defuse, not deflate. Sarcasm hurts.
- Let natural consequences flow from inappropriate behavior.