



Community Montessori School Parent Handbook 2018-19

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SCHOOL INFO

About Montessori

Maria Montessori was an Italian physician, educator and innovator, who developed an educational approach that builds on the way children naturally learn & develop. A true pioneer, she was the 1st woman to graduate from medical school in her native Italy. Dr. Montessori had a keen interest in children and applied scientific methods to the study of their development.

Dr. Montessori opened her first school, the Casa dei Bambini or Children's House, in Rome in 1907. Following world-wide acclaim for the success of her method, she travelled the world, writing about method & training others in its use. She was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 1949, for her work regarding education and world peace. Dr. Montessori continued her work up until her death in 1952.

There are now more than 4,000 Montessori schools in the United States and Maria Montessori's method is embraced in at least 110 countries worldwide.

At CMS we wholeheartedly embrace the philosophy and approach of Maria Montessori. Children are encouraged to follow their interests, develop their passions and challenge themselves. By combining the hand, the mind and the will, the child develops into a self-confident and self-motivated learner.

The mission of Community Montessori School is to provide authentic Montessori education in a nature-rich environment that cultivates collaboration, curiosity, love of learning, and respect for oneself, others and the world

About CMS

Community Montessori School was founded in 1981 by a group of 13 families seeking to provide Montessori education in Georgetown and the surrounding areas. In 2001, the school moved to its current 18-acre campus. CMS currently serves children from 8 weeks to 12 years of age.

CMS is a non-profit, tax-exempt private school governed by a Board of Directors. We are licensed by the Association Montessori International Teachers of Texas (AMITOT) and the state of Texas as a child care facility (TDFPS). CMS is also affiliated with AMI (the Association Montessori International), the organization founded by Maria Montessori to ensure the authenticity of her method and approach. We follow AMI recommendations regarding class size, program hours, and age groupings. Our classrooms are all equipped with Montessori-trained Guides and the full complement of Montessori materials.

MONTESSORI CLASSROOMS HAVE:

- Mixed age groupings that foster peer learning and collaboration
- Uninterrupted blocks of work time allowing for deep concentration
- Student choice of activity
- A prepared environment that meets the developmental needs of children
- Materials developed by Dr. Montessori
- Child-centered learning, where the teacher acts as a Guide who prepares the environment and connects the students with it
- Guides trained in the Montessori method

Recognizing that we live in a diverse interconnected world, CMS strives to create a community that reflects & celebrates this diversity, including, but not limited to, differences in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, family structure, religious preference, national origin, or disability.

The CMS Board of Directors establishes overall policies and directives governing the school and delegates to the Executive Director the responsibility to see that these policies and directives are appropriately followed, consistent with Montessori philosophy and in the best interests of students, parents and staff members. CMS staff consists of Montessori Classroom Guides & Assistants, Extended Hours staff, and Administrative & Support staff, including the Executive Director, Admissions Director, Business Manager, Facilities & Land Manager, and Office Coordinator.

Our Programs

The Montessori method places children in multi-age classes that span 3 years. To fully experience what Montessori offers, it's important for the child to complete the full 3-year cycle.

Programs

Montessori Programs:

Monday thru Friday, 8 to 3

- **Nido:** 8 weeks to 18 months
- **Casita:** 18 months to 3 years
- **Children's House:** 3 to 6 years
- **Lower Elementary:** 6 to 9 years
- **Upper Elementary:** 9 to 12 years

Extended Hours Care:

Offered for all age levels.

- **Before school care** (7:15 - 8 am)
- **After school care** (3- 6 pm)

Additional Programs:

- **Summer Camp:** Programs are offered for all age levels. Summer camp info is released in February.
- **Enrichments:** offered for Children's House and Elementary levels. Afterschool activities from 3 to 4pm.
- **Holiday Care:** offered on selected school closure dates.

Nido (children ages 8 weeks up to 18 months)

The name for our infant community is derived from the Italian word meaning nest. It's a homelike environment created to serve the developmental needs of infants, with an emphasis on developing movement and independence. The Nido & Casita together comprise a 3-year cycle and all these Guides are trained to work with children ages 0 to 3 years.

Casita (children aged 18 months up to 3 years)

Our Casita environments are designed specifically for toddlers learning to care for themselves, with an emphasis on language development and independence, including mastery of the toileting process. Classroom activities incorporate familiar aspects of the home, such as food preparation and gardening.

Children's House (children aged 3 to 6 years)

The Children's House classrooms span the "pre-school" years. The environments encourage curiosity & exploration and offer daily opportunities for outdoor learning. Beginning students rest after lunch while older students "extend" their day with an additional afternoon work period. All students enjoy outside play at the end of the school day.

Elementary Communities (children aged 6 to 12 years)

The Elementary curriculum incorporates the mastery of fundamental skills, individually chosen research, and the "Great Lessons" which excite the imagination and inspire students to learn more. Students have daily opportunities for gardening and, nature study and help care for our CMS chickens. The Lower Elementary class includes students from 6 to 9 years, Upper Elementary from 9 to 12. Children at this level extend their educational endeavors with field trips and older students enjoy overnight class trips several times a year.

Extended Hours & Additional Programs

Extended hours care for children in the Nido and Casita classrooms is an extension of their school day and takes place in their classroom environments. Students at the Children's House and Elementary levels, go to the Extended hours classroom next to the Gym, after school. These students enjoy additional outside play, snack and a variety of class activities including building work, board games and arts & crafts. To ensure consistency for the children throughout their day, this environment is based on Montessori practices such as guided choice of activity, individual and small group work, caring for the environment and treating others with kindness and respect.

Additional programs offered at CMS include afterschool Enrichment classes, Holiday care dates and Summer Camp. Enrichment classes give children opportunities for new experiences & take place after school from 3 to 4. Holiday Care is offered during select school closure dates and follows the Extended Hours format, with younger children remaining in their familiar class environments and Children's House and Elementary students enjoying time in the Extended Hours classroom. Summer Camp runs for 9 weeks in summer with seasonal additions like water play, themed activities and field trips for Elementary students.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES

(in alphabetical order)

Animals on campus

Nature and the outdoors are an integral part of healthy development and the spacious campus we enjoy at CMS provides ample opportunities for this. The fields and gardens surrounding the school occasionally bring us wild visitors, like rabbits, snakes and a variety of birds. Staff teach the children to be respectful of wild visitors and stay at a distance to observe them. We have a flock of chickens on campus, which elementary students help to care for, and a few barn cats (who spend more time in the office than in the barn). Some Guides choose to have class pets. As per state requirements, small animals on the CMS campus are seen by a veterinarian at least once a year.

Arrival

Arrival for all students is 8:00 am. Staff are on hand at the circle drive for the first 15 minutes of the day to greet children and see them from their car to their classroom. Car line procedures are covered below in the Car Line section. Parents who prefer to park and walk their child in should say their goodbyes at the Arrival benches. CMS staff will see that your child gets to their classroom safely. Montessori philosophy promotes the child's independence as much as possible and that includes their arrival at school. Please encourage your child to walk on their own to class!

If your child is enrolled in Before School care, please park and walk them into their designated space. For Children's House & Elementary students, this is the Extended Hours classroom next to the Gym. Casita & Nido students go directly to their classroom. **Parents must sign in** their child upon arrival at Before School care.

Your child's day is greatly affected by arriving late! Activities are already underway in their class and they feel left out and behind. Please do your best to be consistently on time for school. All **late Arrivals MUST be taken to the office and signed in** - this applies to **ALL** students at **ALL** levels. Please do not drop your child at the circle drive after staff have left the area. We cannot

guarantee your child's safety if you do! Classroom doors are locked at 8:15am so office staff must walk your child to class to open the door for them.

Attendance

Daily attendance is taken shortly after the arrival time ends. Children who have arrived at school during our designated arrival time are signed in by staff taking attendance - no need for parents in the car line to sign them in. Parents will be contacted about excessive tardiness and/or absences. Your students' progress may be affected.

Birthdays

Birthday celebrations at CMS focus on the child's passage through time rather than cakes and other traditional birthday items. Parents are respectfully asked to enjoy those things at home. Your child's Guide will provide specific information on how birthdays are celebrated in their class.

Parents may request assistance from the CMS office in distributing email invitations for birthday celebrations held outside of school, provided that every child in the class is invited. We cannot help with distributing written invitations or thank-you cards.

CMS has a tradition of "birthday books" donated by students on their birthday for our school library. Families wishing to do so, should choose a book to buy from the Birthday Book Cupboard in the office. The books selected for this program reflect the needs of the CMS library currently. The child can bring the book to class on their birthday to share with friends, before it is placed in the school library. A placard acknowledging the donation is placed in the book. More information on Birthday Book donations is available in the office.

Car Line

For many years, CMS has employed a staff-supervised "car line" for drop off and pick up during Arrival & Departure time. This practice helps to speed the process for parents and encourages the child's independence as part of their daily routine. For the car line to operate safely, all drivers must adhere to the following:

- Do not pass other cars in the line. Show your child a fine example of Grace & Courtesy by waiting patiently for your turn.
- Be respectful of others by moving through the car line as quickly as possible. If your child needs additional time, pull into a parking space in front of the Red Building.
- No cell phone use by drivers while in the car line please.
- Stay inside your vehicle. Let the staff on hand help the child out or in.
- Staff members are not permitted to buckle your child. Parents may pull into a parking space if they need to get out and buckle before heading down the drive.
- Please refrain from engaging staff with lengthy conversation or questions. We love to wave and say hello, but we must keep our attention on the safety of our students during this time.

Cell Phones & Driving on Campus

Cell phones must be stowed while driving on the CMS campus. Pleasant Valley Drive is a residential street with a speed limit of 30 miles per hour. The school drive has a speed limit of 20 miles per hour. Parents, staff and visitors to our campus are asked to follow the posted limits, refrain from

cell phone use while driving and to be attentive around school parking areas and driveways for any children or parents who may be walking to and from the parking lot.

Clothing

The clothing worn by the children at school becomes a part of the “environment” and can affect behavior during class time. Please do not send items that feature movie or video game characters. Valuable or sentimentally important jewelry should be kept safe at home. Come equipped for the weather. We go out even when it’s cold or damp.

Please label your child’s belongings! Students at all age levels store extra clothing in their classroom for “oops” moments that may occur. Your Guide will provide additional information regarding what to bring for this purpose. Finally, please ensure that your child has shoes suitable for running, climbing and active play while they are at school.

The following items should stay at home:

- Pretend play or costume clothing such as capes, camouflage, or masks
- Cowboy boots, flip-flops, and high heels
- Belts or overalls that may pose a safety hazard to children
- Necklaces and other jewelry that is a safety hazard
- Shoes that light up or have wheels embedded
- Pull up diapers are not allowed in CMS classrooms

Communication

Good communication is essential for school and parents to work together to aid the child’s healthy development. The most effective means of communicating with your Guide is email. During class time, Guides are focused on the children. Emails and phone calls are answered during lunch breaks or after school. You can expect a response from your Guide within 24 hours.

If you have an immediate need or message, please call the office. Office hours are from 8 to 4 daily. Voice messages received after hours will be answered the following day.

Contacting Us

CMS Office hours are 8 to 4 and the office is open Monday thru Friday according to our school calendar. The office phone is 512-863-7920.

Families with children enrolled in Extended Hours care may need to contact staff after office hours. **Please use these**

STAY INFORMED

Weekly Emails

CMS sends out a weekly email to all families every Tuesday. This is our primary method of communication regarding school events and other important information. Please read your Tuesday email!

Guide Emails

Guides also send weekly email updates, usually on Fridays. This is the best way to stay up to date on information specific to your child’s classroom.

CMS Newsletter

Three times a year, a newsletter is emailed out which has more in-depth news, interesting articles, and info on Montessori in general.

CMS Website

The school website is a good source of information such as calendar of school events, links for forms, volunteers needs & opportunities, staff emails and more.

Facebook & Social Media

Office staff is working to expand our school presence in these areas. We appreciate your support by giving positive reviews online of your CMS experience!

Parent Events

Throughout the year CMS regularly schedules events for parents. These are communicated via Tuesday email and the CMS website calendar.

numbers only for immediate needs, such as someone else coming to pick up your child. Nido, Children's House & Elementary classes can be reached by dialing the school number (512-863-7920) and entering the extension code at the prompt.

Nido - 230

Children's House/Elementary - 231

Casita families are asked to text the Casita aftercare cell phone at (737) 808-5805.

Departure

School day departure for all students is 3:00 pm. As with Arrivals, CMS staff are on hand at the benches on the circle drive to see children to their cars. Children are asked to remain seated at the departure benches until a staff member calls them. Parents using the car line are asked to follow car line etiquette, as detailed in the Car Line section. If another person is picking up your child, please inform them of CMS car line procedures.

If your child is enrolled in Children's House or Elementary After School care, please park and walk to the door of the Extended Hours building to pick them up. Casita & Nido students are picked up from their classrooms. Families enrolled in the Nido must park behind the blue building and walk in for their arrivals and departures. Casita parents are asked to text staff in advance of their arrival, so children can have time to use the bathroom before departing. Please note that the circle drive is a fire zone. Parents should not park where the curb is red. Instead, please use the available spaces in front of the Red building or in the main parking lot.

Parents must sign out their child before leaving after school care. Students must be picked up by 6:00 p.m. Please be respectful of staff who work late hours caring for children. We understand issues arise on occasion but appreciate your efforts to pick up on time. **Late fees are assessed for children picked up after their departure time**, as outlined on the Tuition & Fees Schedule.

If someone other than yourself is going to pick up your child, please make sure they are on your Authorization list for pick-up. Please call or email us before departure time. **If this person is unknown to the staff, they may ask to see a photo ID before releasing the child.** Please inform the person picking up your child of CMS departure procedures.

On your child's enrollment form, there is a section for parents to list individuals that have permission to pick up the child. CMS assumes biological parents have this right, unless we have legal documentation on file stating otherwise. We cannot refuse a parent without such documentation. ***Giving someone permission to pick up your child from school is not the same as authorizing them as an emergency contact.*** If you need clarification, please contact the CMS Admissions Director.

Field Trips & School Trips

Off campus trips are limited to Elementary students only. Parents will be notified of off campus trips at least 5 to 10 days in advance, with details of departure and return times, location, and activities planned. Volunteer drivers may be used to transport children. Parents wanting to volunteer must submit driver's license and proof of insurance to the office at the start of school.

In addition to day trips in our local vicinity, full cycle Lower Elementary students take one overnight camping trip each year in the spring. Upper Elementary students take overnight trips twice a year (Fall and Spring) and may elect to participate in the Montessori Model UN program, which requires a longer trip to NYC in early Spring. Parents of students enrolled in these classes will receive additional information from their Guide regarding overnight trips.

Items Brought to/from School

Our Montessori environments are thoughtfully and carefully prepared. Please refrain from allowing your child to bring toys, or other items not requested by your child's Guide. Your Orientation packet provides information on what children need to bring. Other items should remain at home or in the car. If an item from home does find its way to school, Guides will hold on to it until departure. Often, these items create difficulties for staff and children when they get broken or lost.

Sometimes school items, such as Pink Tower cubes or golden beads, find their way into a pocket and come home. Because each item plays an important role in the environment, we ask that parents please return them promptly. We thank you in advance for your understanding and cooperation!

Lunch & Snacks

Lunch at CMS is a relaxed experience, a time to enjoy pleasant conversation and good food. Students set tables with glasses, silverware and dishes provided by the school. Healthy eating is important to sustain children throughout their day. Please avoid sending foods that are primarily empty calories in your child's lunch box. We limit the amount of sugar students consume at school - please do not send sweets in the lunchbox. To ensure the safety of students with food allergies, **CMS is a nut-free campus.** The children's work at school is directly affected by the nutritional quality of their meals so please provide a nutritious breakfast at home each morning. CMS provides water at lunch for the children to drink. Now is the time to educate kids about making good choices. The Harvard "Healthy Eating Plate" is a great place to start!

On occasion, classes will have a special lunch of some kind. Your child's Guide will provide more specific information for their class. Cultural lunches are a fun tradition at CMS. They provide an opportunity for students to explore the tastes of other cultures. In the Elementary, the children choose a country they are interested in researching and host a lunch in celebration of what they learned. In Children's House classrooms, the Guide and parents take a more active role in preparing the cultural lunch for the children.

In the Casita classes, adults and children prepare lunches for the community daily. Parents are asked to volunteer to bring groceries for the week's meals. Nido families collaborate with school staff to provide the right foods for the child at the stage they are currently in.

Cooking is a popular activity for students at CMS and there are a variety of options for this activity, from baking biscuits in Casita to pasta lunches in Elementary. Healthy snacks are offered in some classrooms during the morning work period. Parents are asked to volunteer to bring snack items for the week and students help to prepare the snack in class. Guides will provide more detailed information for parents in their classrooms regarding how this works in their environment. Elementary students may bring additional food in their lunchboxes to be eaten as a snack during the morning work period. After care students are provided with a snack in class.

Observations

Classrooms are open for observations October through May and parents are encouraged to visit at least once or twice a year. Observations are for 30 minutes during the morning work period and are scheduled through the front office. Observers sign in at the office upon arrival on campus and receive a visitor's badge and Guidelines for Observations before we walk you to class. Cell phone use and photography is not permitted during Observations.

Our classrooms are also open for observations by teachers, college students, and prospective parents. All observers are expected to be respectful of the privacy of the students. If you have questions about something you observed, please discuss privately with the Guide and/or Director.

Parent Conferences

Parent conferences are scheduled twice a year, in Fall and Spring. We have 2 days on our school calendar set aside for these meetings. A Winter conference is available upon request, by the parent or Guide, and additional conferences are possible any time there is a concern or question.

Safe Environment Policy

Our mission at CMS is partnering with families to foster the healthy development of children in the Montessori environment. The collaborative community experienced in Montessori classrooms helps children learn how to assert their individual personality while still functioning harmoniously within the group.

At CMS, we recognize that consistent limits, strong role models and instruction on what to do, rather than focusing on what NOT to do, helps children learn appropriate behavior. Our staff provide this support for students as they discover the balance of self and others.

When aggressive or inappropriate behavior occurs at school, adults will address the issue immediately as is appropriate for the specific situation. In most cases, the child will be removed temporarily from the situation or asked to stay with the adult. Minor incidents may only require re-direction. Parents will be informed of more significant occurrences or of repeated or escalating situations by communication from their Guide. The Guide may request a meeting with parents to address the situation and discuss solutions. If we continue to experience issues at school, the Guide, Director and parents will meet to form an Action Plan for the student.

CMS reserves the right, in cases of serious behavioral issues, to require the child to leave school for the day. The Executive Director reserves the right to suspend or expel a student or family from the school at any time. Our goal is to ensure every child has a safe environment in which to learn. This policy is in place to help us achieve that goal.

The Parent Communication Form is a means of informing parents when their child was hurt or involved in an incident at school. The Executive Director receives a copy of the form, as well as parents.

Parents should also note that in accordance with Texas Penal Code, the CMS grounds are a gang-free zone and any criminal offenses related to such are reported to law enforcement immediately. (We are required to report this to you by the State of Texas.)

Solid Ground Program

One of the benefits of Montessori education is that children learn at an individual pace and classrooms support a wide range of learning styles. Montessori materials offer information through a variety of activities, utilizing movement, the senses and language.

There are occasions when a child does not seem to be thriving in one or more areas of development. To determine if they are functioning well in the classroom, we ask:

- Can the child make independent work choices?
- Is the child a peaceful, respectful member of the community?
- Does the child have healthy social relationships within the classroom community?

If we can answer yes to these questions but still have concerns about the child's progress, we may ask for additional support through tutoring, outside evaluations and the like to help a student struggling in one or more academic areas. If the answer to these questions is no, it may be that CMS is not able to serve the needs of that child.

Transitions

The Montessori environments at CMS are tailored to meet the developmental needs of children during specific phases of growth. When a child nears the time at which we would expect them to transition to the next classroom level, Guides, in coordination with the Executive Director and Admissions Director, observe the child and meet to discuss their readiness for transitioning. Generally, children in Elementary and Children's House classrooms transition with the start of the new school year in August. Nido and Casita children transition during fall and spring blocks where they have ample time to adjust before breaks in the calendar occur.

At all levels, students & parents have opportunities for observations, visits and meetings to familiarize themselves with the new environment and Guide before the transition takes place. The form and timing of this process varies by age level. All parents receive a Transition packet with information and Orientation materials for their new class. Any questions about transitions at CMS can be directed to our Admissions Director.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Emergency Procedures

*It is important that CMS have **current contact information** for ALL parents, as well as backup contact persons, in case an emergency takes place during school hours.

Medical: Should a major medical emergency occur while a child is at school, staff will give appropriate First Aid and call 911. Parents will be notified immediately after 911 is called. If transport to a hospital is required, the Executive Director or other staff member will accompany the child and stay with them until parents arrive. Staff will follow the instructions given by EMS. In the case of a minor medical emergency, staff will give appropriate First Aid and parents will be contacted immediately. If medical attention is required, parents may choose to take the child to visit their own doctor or to a medical center of their choice.

Building: Building emergencies include fire and other such situations that make school buildings unsafe for children. In the event of a building emergency, staff will evacuate children following the posted evacuation routes and call 911. If first responders determine that it is not safe for children to re-enter buildings or remain on campus, parents will be notified via email and via phone through our automated notification system, to pick up their child. Staff and students at CMS regularly practice responding to building emergencies and consistent measures will be taken in the event of an actual emergency.

Weather: In the case of a severe weather emergency, such as a tornado in our area, everyone on campus will be moved to a "safe zone" to await further instruction. Children outdoors are brought inside. Staff and students at CMS regularly practice responding to severe weather emergencies and each building on our campus is equipped with an emergency weather radio. Parents are only contacted if the weather emergency results in building damage that requires students to leave campus. Notification comes via our automated system & email.

If severe weather prevents students & staff from safely traveling to school and a closure is necessary, parents will be notified by email and our automated notification system. CMS follows the lead of public schools in the Georgetown/Round Rock area in determining if closure is necessary. This information is usually available via local radio and television stations.

CMS follows State Requirements for sending or keeping a sick child home:

- Oral temperature above 101 degrees or Armpit temperature above 100 degrees, accompanied by other symptoms of illness
- Diagnosis by a health-care professional of a communicable disease that excludes the child from school (as per Texas Dept. of Health)
- Symptoms & signs of illness including uncontrolled diarrhea or 2 or more vomiting episodes within 24 hours.
- If the child has an illness that prevents them from participating comfortably in school activities, including outdoor play
- If the illness requires a need for care beyond that which CMS staff can provide without compromising the safety, health and supervision of other students

A CHILD MUST BE FEVER AND/OR SYMPTOM FREE FOR 24 HOURS BEFORE RETURNING TO SCHOOL

Illness & Medications

Illness: Young children with developing immune systems tend to get sick more frequently than adults. A child who is ill or has been diagnosed with a communicable disease should stay home until they are not contagious anymore. This is a state requirement that is also appreciated by your fellow parents!

If a child becomes ill at school, parents are called to pick up the child immediately. A child with fever or symptoms of communicable disease must be separated from other children. **The child must be fever free and/or symptom free for 24 hours before returning to school.**

CMS Staff emphasize the importance of hand-washing & covering coughs and sneezes. Classrooms are cleaned daily with disinfectant to prevent the spread of germs. Adults, including parents, should emphasize hand-washing with children, as the most effective way to prevent the spread of illness.

Medications: Medication should never be sent to school with a child or placed in a child's lunchbox. All medications are stored in the office for the safety of the children, except for EpiPens, which are stored in the child's classroom, out of reach of students. Medication should be given to a child by a parent at home, whenever possible. If a child must have medication during school hours, the following procedures are followed:

1. Prescription medication must be in the original container labeled with the child's name, date, directions or dosage, and the physician's name.
2. Non-prescriptive medication must be in the original container, labeled with the child's name and the date the medication was brought to school.
3. Parents must bring the medication to the office and fill out the Medication Form authorizing staff to administer medicine.

Injuries

CMS staff members all have current certification in CPR and First Aid. If your child is injured while at school, appropriate First Aid will be administered and a Parent Communication Report describing what happened will be completed. Parents are asked to sign this Form when it is delivered to them. Some minor injuries may be treated but not recorded. If you have specific questions about an injury that happened at school, please contact your child's Guide. If the injury results in a medical emergency, CMS will follow emergency procedures in handling the incident. Copies of Parent Communication Forms sent home are kept in the child's file in the office.

Head Lice

If a child is identified as having head lice, they must be separated from other students and parents will be called to pick up the child immediately. The child must be treated at home and all signs of head lice removed before they can return to school. **A child who has had head lice must be**

examined by CMS staff prior to returning to class. Parents are asked to wait in the office until their child is cleared to return to class.

Safety Drills & Procedures

The safety of our students is a high priority at CMS. We make all possible effort to keep our grounds, building and practices consistent with those promoting the safety of the children. CMS is inspected annually by the Fire Marshal, Health Department and state child care licensing agency. In addition, CMS staff conducts playground checks, monthly fire drills and weather/building emergency drills throughout the school year. Evacuation routes are posted in all buildings and staff are trained in safety and emergency procedures.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Volunteer Hours

Parent involvement is in building a strong community and vital to the academic and social success of children. At CMS we have many ways for parents to be involved and we encourage you to find what fits your family. **All families are asked to contribute 25 volunteer hours each school year.** Hours can include bringing groceries for your child's class for a week, spending a morning in the school library, weeding flowerbeds or helping with a request from your Guide. Parents are asked to read school email communications to stay informed about volunteer opportunities and needs that may arise throughout the year.

Committees

CMS has several parent-led Committees that coordinate special events and activities for the school. Interested parents are encouraged to sign up! Even if you can't attend Committee meetings, you will receive updates on events and activities the committee is undertaking. Current committees include Classroom Support, Gardens, Library and Development (fundraising & events).

Events

A variety of school events are held throughout the year, some are classroom or age-specific and others are open to the entire school. We encourage your attendance and participation! Hours spent attending and/or helping with these events count towards the volunteer hours requested for every family. Hours can be tracked on Track It Forward and parents are provided with log-in information for this site. Here are some of the events held at CMS:

- **CMS 101** - provides an overview of the school and informs parents of policies and procedures in place at CMS. Required for new families and open to all.
- **The Montessori Journey** - is held at CMS every fall, providing parents with a unique view of our Montessori environments & how it all works.
- **Montessori Mornings** - are held monthly after morning drop off. Topics range from Developmental Milestones to Financial planning. Upcoming events are listed in the Tuesday email and on the CMS website calendar.
- **5 Going on 6** - focuses on the final year of the primary environment and its crucial role in bringing together all that the child has absorbed previously.
- **The Elementary Experience** - is a hands-on workshop for parents to see how the Montessori materials engage students in the Elementary years.

- **The International Festival** - is hosted by classrooms every October and features cultural presentations representing & celebrating our diverse community.
- **STEAM Night** - showcases elementary science projects
- **Elementary Winter Concert** - features musical performances by students in the Elementary classes
- **Community Building Days** - bring us all together to pitch in outside making classroom gardens and school gardens beautiful
- **The Annual Oak Tree Auction Fundraiser** - takes place every Spring and is a fun night out for parents

Fundraising & Donations

CMS strives to keep tuition as affordable as possible, so we can offer Montessori education to a wide range of families. Tuition and fees cover the basic expenses of the school. Fundraising is undertaken to improve our campus, facilities and programs, provide scholarships to students, fund professional development for our staff, and offer special opportunities like the Montessori Model UN program. CMS is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation and all donations made to the school are tax deductible. Many employers offer matching donations and parents are encouraged to take advantage of these programs.

The Annual Fund program gives contributors the opportunity to earmark their donation for a specific purpose. The annual Oak Tree Auction Fundraiser is a fun night out with dinner, drinks and auction items to bid on. CMS also hosts restaurant nights, collects Box Tops for Education and participates in other fundraising programs, such as Amazon Smile. Details are available in the Tuesday email and on the Parents Page of our website. All donations, large and small, are hugely appreciated and all benefit the students at CMS!

Volunteer Drivers

Staff and parents who volunteer to provide transportation for school trips must submit insurance and driver's license information to join the Approved Drivers List. Information must be submitted to the office by September 15th.

SCHOOL POLICIES

Confidentiality & Ethics

Adults working with children provide guidance and act as role models for behaviors such as courtesy, kindness, and respectful words. CMS staff members and volunteers who work with children are obligated to act in ways that we would wish the children to emulate. All CMS staff and volunteers should be aware that any and all information seen, overheard, or observed is strictly confidential and should not be shared with anyone not authorized to receive that information. When questions arise regarding confidentiality, please contact the Executive Director for guidance and clarification.

Conflict Resolution

The CMS Conflict Resolution policy demonstrates our commitment to settling differences by focusing on mutually satisfying options and acknowledging the respective rights and responsibilities of all those involved. This process allows for open discussion of disputes without retaliation.

The first step is the timely discussion of the problem between the parties involved. For example - parents concerned with classroom operations should first discuss their concerns with the Guide directly. The parties are encouraged to resolve the problem together. If they cannot reach a mutually-satisfying result, then either party may inform the Executive Director who will assist in resolution, by meeting with both parties to discuss concerns and offer solutions. Confidentiality regarding the conflict and steps taken to resolve it is expected from all parties involved.

Child Abuse & Neglect

If a CMS employee or volunteer has reason to suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, Texas law requires them to report it to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services or a law enforcement agency within 48 hours. The individual reporting may do so anonymously or may elect to inform the Executive Director.

All employees of CMS undergo a criminal history check and fingerprinting, which includes a search of the central registry of reported cases of child abuse and neglect. Staff at CMS also receive annual training in the recognition and prevention of child abuse and neglect; as well as positive discipline methods and the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Service Minimum Standards for care givers. Expectations for employees working with children at CMS are also conveyed in the CMS Staff Handbook and during pre-service training.

Drug & Alcohol Policy

Community Montessori School must and will be free of alcoholic beverages or controlled substances whenever children are present. Alcohol may be served at adult functions on the CMS campus outside of school operating hours, when no children are present.

CMS reserves the right to request drug and/or alcohol screening from any employee or volunteer that appears to be under the influence of such substances while on CMS grounds during the school day. The Executive Director has the right to send home any staff member or volunteer suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Harassment Policy

CMS maintains an environment free of harassment and intimidation for all staff and volunteers. The school has a zero-tolerance policy for vulgar, abusive, humiliating or threatening language or other inappropriate behavior in the workplace. CMS will not tolerate the harassment of any employee or non-employee by another employee or non-employee or Board member for any reason. Employee violators of this policy are subject to immediate termination. Non-employee violators of this policy are subject to immediate expulsion from CMS grounds. Furthermore, CMS may report violators to the appropriate authority. Any harassment observed or experienced should be reported promptly to the Executive Director.

CONTACT NUMBERS

TDFPS Contact Information

Our local licensing office for the Texas Dept. of Family and Protective Services is in Round Rock and can be reached at 512-388-6200 or on the web at: www.dfps.state.tx.us. Parents may ask to view a copy of the TDFPS Minimum Standards at any time. A copy is kept in the school office and available through the Office Coordinator. It is also available on the above website. **Parents may also view our most recent inspection report, which is posted in the office workroom.**

Child Abuse Hotline

The Child Abuse reporting hotline number is 1-800-252-5400.

Non-Discrimination Policy

In accordance with federal law, this institution is prohibited from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

To file a complaint of discrimination, write to:

USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights

Room 326- W, Whitten Building

14th and INDEPENDENCE Avenue, SW

Washington, DC 20250-9410

Or call 202-720-5964. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

CMS reserves the right to change and/or update this handbook at any time. Parents will be notified when changes are made.