



COMMUNITY  
MONTESSORI SCHOOL  
- est. 1981 -

# Parent Handbook

## 2021-2022

**To our new and returning families,** we extend a warm welcome for the 2021-22 school year. We are so happy you are a part of our CMS family and are honored to be partners with you in fostering the development of your child.

This Parent Handbook contains information about our school policies, practices, and procedures. It's important that you read it thoroughly and keep it handy for any questions that might come up over the course of the year. The handbook is available on our website at [www.community-montessori.org](http://www.community-montessori.org) along with our school calendar and other information.

We look forward to a wonderful and productive year filled with joy and growth for your child. A Montessori education fosters a love for learning that lasts a lifetime. We welcome you to our school community and hope you are excited to be a Montessori parent!

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*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.*

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# OVERVIEW

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## ABOUT MONTESSORI

The Montessori approach was established by Dr. Maria Montessori, an Italian physician, educator, and innovator who developed an educational philosophy based on the way children naturally learn and develop. She opened the first Montessori school in Rome in 1907. Following world-wide acclaim for the success of her method, Dr. Montessori traveled the world, advocating for children and giving voice to a new perspective on education until her death in 1952. There are now more than 4,000 Montessori schools in the United States and the Montessori method is embraced in more than 100 countries worldwide.

At CMS we wholeheartedly embrace the Montessori approach. We are affiliated with AMI (the Association Montessori Internationale) which is the organization founded by Montessori to preserve the legacy of her vision. Our mission is to provide children with an authentic Montessori education. We have a deep respect for children as unique individuals and our priority is the development of the whole child – social and emotional, intellectual, and physical. We follow AMI guidelines in establishing classroom environments that have:

- A prepared environment tailored to the developmental needs of the child
- Mixed age groupings that foster collaboration and peer learning
- Child initiated choice of activity within the guidelines of the community
- Uninterrupted blocks of work time which cultivate deep concentration
- A Guide trained in the Montessori method and certified for the age level of the class
- An appropriate number of children to foster social development

## ABOUT CMS

Community Montessori School was founded in 1981 by a group of parents who wanted Montessori education for their children. The school moved to our Pleasant Valley location in 2000. We are proud of our history and our beautiful 18-acre campus! CMS serves students from 8 weeks to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. We are a non-profit 501c3 organization. Our Board of Directors establishes the policies and directives governing the school and delegates to the Executive Director the implementation of them, consistent with Montessori philosophy and the best interest of students, families and staff members.

CMS staff consists of Montessori Guides & Assistants, Extended Hours staff, and Administrative staff. For an up-to-date list of CMS employees, please go to our website [www.community-montessori.org](http://www.community-montessori.org). Our school is licensed by the state of Texas as a child care facility and by the Association Montessori International Teachers of Texas (AMITOT). We follow AMI guidelines for best Montessori practices in regards to class size, age groupings, staffing, and classroom materials and practices.

## DIVERSITY & NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

*“The needs of mankind are universal. Our means of meeting them create the richness and diversity of the planet. The Montessori child should come to relish the texture of that diversity.” - Maria Montessori*

At Community Montessori School, we embrace and celebrate the diversity of our world. Our differences – including those of culture, race, ethnicity, religion, age, family structure, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, socioeconomics, learning style, world view, and more – form and inform a rich environment that is a crucial part of educating children on their path to maturity and global citizenship. Our interactions across our entire school community are characterized by guiding principles of respect, equity, inclusion, humanity, peace and personal responsibility.

CMS admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs and activities made available to students at our school. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, or gender identity in the administration of school policies, including admissions, financial assistance, and other school-administered programs. We oppose discrimination and consciously recognize the value of diversity in our hiring practices, professional conduct, community and classroom activities.

## PROGRAMS

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### MONTESSORI CLASSROOMS

Our Montessori classrooms are designed to match the interests and needs of children during distinct developmental stages. CMS offers the following Montessori classrooms:

- Nido - for children from 8 weeks old up to 15 months
- Casita - for children 12/15 months (walking well) up to 3 years
- Children's House - for children 2.5/3 years up to 6 years
- Lower Elementary - for children from 6 to 9 years (1st thru 3rd grades)
- Upper Elementary - for children from 9 to 12 years (4th thru 6th grades)
- Adolescent - for children from 12 to 15 years (7th & 8th grades)

### EXTENDED HOURS

Extended hours programs are offered for some age levels before and after the school day. Space is limited. Please contact our Admissions Director for more information or to request enrollment for your child.

- Before School Care - students enrolled in this program may arrive at their classroom between 7:30 and 7:50 am.
- After School Care - students enrolled enjoy a snack, outdoor time, and indoor activities and parents may pick up at any time before 5:15 pm.

### ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS

CMS provides a Summer Camp each year, which is a blend of outdoor play and themed activities. Details and registration materials are released in the Spring. CMS Alumni and siblings of current students may register as space allows. After school Enrichment classes are occasionally offered for students in the Children's House and Elementary age levels. Information is communicated to parents in the weekly Tuesday email.

### ADMISSIONS AND PLACEMENT

Admissions, including class placements, is coordinated by our Admissions Director. CMS is fortunate to have an entire faculty of outstanding and fully certified Montessori educators. Each classroom community upholds the standards of AMI and has the full array of Montessori materials. Placements are made at the discretion of CMS and are considered carefully to ensure balance and social diversity in each classroom. Enrollment is entered into with the school and not contingent upon a particular class or teacher. CMS cannot honor enrollments that are contingent upon a requested classroom or teacher.

### STUDENT TRANSITIONS

Student transitions are anticipated and planned for by our Administration. The individual child is observed for readiness and transition is coordinated by our Admissions Director, with input and coordination from the

Executive Director, Classroom Guides and the child's family. Generally, student transitions take place in the following time frames:

- Transition from Nido to Casita classroom – between 12 and 15 months
- Transition from Casita to Children's House classroom – between 2 ½ and 3 years
- Transition from Children's Nap to Children's House Extended Day – between 4 and 4 ½ years
- Transition from Children's House to Lower Elementary classroom – upon completion of year 3 in the Children's House classroom
- Transition from Lower Elementary to Upper Elementary classroom – upon completion of year 3 in the Lower Elementary classroom
- Transition from Upper Elementary to Adolescent classroom – upon completion of year 3 in the Upper Elementary classroom

Our Admissions Director provides transition information to parents and initiates the process which includes Guide and Parent observations, student visits, and transition meetings with Guides and families.

## STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The Montessori philosophy and methodology offers a multi-stimulus approach to education. Children learn by doing and they learn from each other. If a child is struggling in a particular area, our staff will discuss and work with parents to support the child. Depending on the specific needs of the child, CMS may request that parents seek outside assistance and/or evaluation, so that we can provide appropriate classroom support. This may include speech or language assessment, hearing or vision testing, dyslexia evaluation, or other services that CMS is not able to provide. We ask parents of students needing additional support to honor our request and to fully disclose results to our administration and staff. While CMS does not recommend particular providers, we can help by sharing information from other CMS families. If a requested assessment or evaluation is not obtained and the school feels that the child's need cannot be met by our program, CMS reserves the right to terminate enrollment.

## SCHOOL OPERATIONS

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### HOURS

The school day is from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm. Office hours are from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. Operating Hours for the school are 7:30 am to 5:15 pm.

### SCHOOL PHONE & EMAILS

Our main number is **512-863-7920**. During school hours, all calls are directed to our front office. If you have a question for your child's Guide, please email or leave a message with our office.

If your child will be absent from school, please email [attendance@community-montessori.org](mailto:attendance@community-montessori.org) to let us know. Administrative emails are as follows:

Executive Director, Stephanie Sayre  
Admissions Director, Rachel Chamberlain  
Business Director, Jennifer Stewart

[ssayre@community-montessori.org](mailto:ssayre@community-montessori.org)  
[admissions@community-montessori.org](mailto:admissions@community-montessori.org)  
[jstewart@community-montessori.org](mailto:jstewart@community-montessori.org)

## ATTENDANCE, TARDINESS & ABSENCES

CMS staff take attendance each morning. **If your child will be absent from school, please email [attendance@community-montessori.org](mailto:attendance@community-montessori.org) before 9:00 am.**

Timely arrival sets the tone for your child's day. All families use the car line and this routine helps your child to feel a part of the community by sharing greetings and starting their day alongside their peers. Late arrivals must check-in at the office and students will be walked to class by office personnel.

Regular school attendance is important to a child's growth. CMS families are asked to schedule trips and vacations during school breaks. If a student has excessive absences or tardies, your Guide will be in contact to discuss. Excessive absences can have a detrimental impact on the child's progress and development and may jeopardize a student's continuing enrollment.

## ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

CMS employs a car line system for arrival and departure of students. Our first goal is safety and secondly to get cars through in a timely manner. *Please do not pass other vehicles in the car line.* Your Parent Orientation packet includes car tags, a map, and instructions for the Car Line. The car tags help us direct traffic and get students to their car more quickly. We appreciate your cooperation in making them visible in your car. Drivers are asked to stay inside their vehicle. We have two lanes of traffic and this is for everyone's safety.

- **Arrival begins at 8:00.** CMS staff are on hand in the Circle drive to greet children and see them safely from car to classroom.
- **Departure begins at 3:00.** Students are seated at the benches and walked by staff to their car.

Please refrain from engaging staff in lengthy conversations during arrival & departure. We love to wave and say hello, but we must keep our attention on the safety of students and want to be considerate of everybody's time. Drivers on our campus are expected to keep their cell phone stowed, follow speed limit signs, and engage in courteous, responsible, and safe practices. If someone besides yourself will be dropping off or picking up your child, please inform them of our procedures.

## LATE ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES

Students arriving after 8:20 are considered tardy. Your child's day is greatly affected by arriving late! Activities are already underway in class and they may feel left out or behind. Please do your best to be on time. Late arrivals **MUST** check in at the front office. Office staff will walk your child to their classroom. Please do not drop your child at the Circle Drive after staff has left the area. We cannot guarantee their safety!

If you are late to pick up your child, late fees will be assessed based on time, as stated on the CMS Tuition and Fee Schedule. A staff member will wait with your child.

## EXTENDED HOURS ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Families enrolled in Before School care may arrive between 7:30 and 7:50 am. After 7:50, you will need to join the car line for arrival. Parents must park and walk their child to the door of the classroom and sign in.

Families enrolled in After School care may pick up anytime between 3:15 and 5:15 pm. Please park and walk to the door of the classroom to sign out your child. Please be respectful of staff that work late hours caring for children and pick up your child on time! Late fees will be assessed after 5:15 pm, as specified on the CMS Tuition and Fee Schedule.

## AUTHORIZED PICKUP PERSONS

Enrollment forms ask parents to list individuals who have permission to pick up their child from school. CMS assumes biological parents have this right, unless we have legal documentation on file saying otherwise. Giving authorization to pick up your child is not the same as an emergency contact. Please contact our Admissions Director if clarification is needed.

If someone other than a parent is picking up your child they **must** be listed as an Authorized Pick up Person on your child's enrollment form. If this person is unknown to our staff, they may be asked to show a photo ID. To add or remove a person from your child's Authorized Pick Up list, please call the CMS office. CMS Staff cannot be listed as Authorized Pick up Persons without a signed release waiver on file in the office.

## COMMUNICATION

Good communication is essential for school and parents working together on behalf of the child. Having correct e-mail addresses and contact information for each parent is very important. Please contact our office if you need to update your family's information. *It is important that CMS have current contact information for ALL parents, as well as backup contact persons, in case we need to get a hold of you in an emergency situation.*

\*CMS utilizes One Call Now, an emergency messaging system to contact parents in the event of an emergency or weather closure. If severe weather prevents students and staff from safely traveling to school and closure or delayed start is necessary, notification will come from this messaging system.

The main number for the school is **512-863-7920**. Our office is open from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. Messages received after office hours will be answered the following day. Families with children enrolled in Extended Hours Care may need to contact CMS staff outside of office hours. After School staff can be reached by dialing the main number and entering the class extension code at the prompt. Guides devote their whole attention to students during class time and will return calls after school or during their scheduled break time.

Email communications are sent weekly, including the Tuesday Email which goes school-wide and communicates important school news. Guides send weekly communications specific to their class group. Communicable illness alerts are sent as a courtesy to families who may have exposure. Parents with questions about classroom needs or events are encouraged to email their Guide. You can expect a response within 24 hours, or in case of a weekend or holiday, the end of the next school day.

Families are encouraged to visit our school website at [www.community-montessori.org](http://www.community-montessori.org) or look for our school on Facebook. Updates and information are regularly posted.

## SCHOOL DIRECTORY

CMS offers a School Directory with the purpose of facilitating social engagements amongst classmates and families at our school. Families are given the option to participate during enrollment. Those who opt to do so can choose to share their phone, e-mail and/or home address with other families in the class. Parents participating are expected to respect the purpose of this Directory and not use it for complaints, negative gossip, solicitation and the like.

## INCLEMENT WEATHER DAYS

Please note that CMS makes independent decisions about whether to close or delay school in the event of inclement weather. Our families come from many different directions and we do not follow any particular

school district in regards to bad weather days. Any decision to cancel or shorten a school day is not taken lightly and is always made with consideration for the safety of all members of our community.

## CONFERENCES

Parent-Guide conferences are scheduled twice a year in the Fall and Spring and we have 2 school closure days designated for this purpose. Printed conference reports are provided to parents and signatures are requested. Additional conferences or meetings may be requested by families or Guides any time there is a concern or question.

## OBSERVATIONS

Our classrooms are open for observations from October through April. Parents are highly encouraged to sign up! Observations are scheduled through the CMS Office for a 30-minute period during the morning work time. Our classrooms are also open for observations by CMS staff, Montessori teacher-trainees, and prospective parents. All observers are expected to respect the privacy of our students. Photography and cell-phone use are not permitted. Observers must check in at our school office and will receive a visitor's badge and guidelines for observations before being walked to class.

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT & CODE OF CONDUCT

When schools and families work as partners, students flourish. There are many ways for parents to be involved at CMS. The most important ones are simple. Read communications from the school and stay up-to-date on news and activities. Attend parent conferences and ask your child about their day! CMS families are asked to contribute 25 volunteer hours each school year. Parents can learn about volunteer opportunities at Parent Orientation or in weekly e-mail communications. We encourage you to find what best fits your family. Like to garden? Volunteer to help your child's Guide with their backyard space. Enjoy hosting parties? Sign-up to help with school events. Are you a bookworm at heart? Volunteer for the CMS Library. Parent drivers are also needed on occasion to take Elementary and Adolescent students on outings and field trips.

*Please note that volunteers working directly with students are required to have a background check on file in our office. Volunteer drivers must also provide a copy of their driver's license & proof of insurance. Please contact the CMS Business Director for more details.*

Parents who enroll their child at CMS become part of our Community. Our community thrives because we all agree to treat each other with respect and courtesy. Your signature on your Enrollment Agreement indicates your agreement to abide by CMS policies, procedures and guidelines, including our Parent Code of Conduct.

**Respect** - Please help us maintain a culture of respect and trust by safeguarding the privacy of children, families, and staff. All CMS parents and volunteers should be aware that any information heard, observed or overheard is strictly confidential.

**Courtesy** - Adults are role models for courtesy & kindness. CMS parents are expected to adhere to high standards of courteous behavior. Parking and traffic laws must be followed, and consideration shown for our environment and others in our community, including staff and other CMS families.

**Conflict Resolution** – Differences that arise between parents or parents and CMS staff should be addressed in a respectful and private manner. The CMS Conflict Resolution policy calls for direct communication between parties with the goal of a mutually satisfying resolution. Confidentiality is expected from all involved. The use of broadcast emails to engage other parents about sensitive issues involving a child, CMS policy, or staff member is inappropriate and may result in termination of

enrollment. Parents who have concerns about the behavior of other students in their child's class should follow procedures given in the Student Behavior section.

**Zero Tolerance** – CMS has zero tolerance for harassment or discrimination of any person on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, gender identity, political affiliation, disability or ethnicity. Violators of this policy are subject to immediate expulsion and CMS may report violators to the appropriate authority.

## PHOTOS AND PHOTO PERMISSIONS

CMS staff occasionally take photographs and video recordings of students at school. This is a great way to communicate information to our CMS community and also to celebrate student achievements. Parents have the option during enrollment to have photos emailed or texted to them, via Transparent Classroom. A CMS yearbook is published every Spring which utilizes some of these photos. CMS also uses these images on our website, in school-wide emails, social media platforms, and in printed marketing materials. Children's names are never published alongside their photographs externally. Any questions on Photo Permissions should be sent to our Admissions Director.

Please be aware that other parents may take photographs of your child during classroom parties, field trips, festivals, or other school-related activities. CMS cannot control the extent to which other parents share such photographs on social media or in other forums, and assumes no liability for any such publications.

# CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

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## LUNCHES & SNACKS

Healthy eating is important to sustain active children throughout their day. We are a **no/low sugar campus** and limit the amount of sugar students consume while at school. Please do not send sweets in the lunchbox. To ensure the safety of students with food allergies, **CMS is a peanut-free campus**. Other food preferences or sensitivities are addressed on an individual basis. Now is the time to educate kids about making healthy choices. The [Harvard Healthy Eating Plate](#) is a great place to start!

Lunch at CMS is a relaxed experience for pleasant conversation and good food. Parents are asked to send food items that children can manage independently during lunch. We also request that parents use refillable containers rather than disposable items. All classrooms at CMS are equipped with dishes, silverware and drinking glasses. Water is served at lunch. Please do not send silverware or drinks in your child's lunchbox. In addition, students should bring an item to have for a morning snack. More information about lunch & snacks for specific class levels is provided at Parent Orientation.

Food prep & cooking are popular activities for students at CMS and take a variety of forms depending on the student's age level – from slicing bananas in Casita to cooking cultural dishes in Elementary. Parents receive specific information about cooking in their child's class at Parent Orientation night.

## CLOTHING

Clothing worn by children at school becomes a part of the class environment and can have an influence on behavior during class time. Please do not send your child with items that may be distracting to them or other children. The following items should be enjoyed at home:

- Clothing that features characters from movies or video games
- Items associated with pretend play like capes, camouflage, etc.
- Shoes that light up, have wheels, or have a high heel that may inhibit movement while running, climbing and playing outside
- Necklaces, scarves, or other items that may pose a choking or safety hazard
- Pull up diapers are not allowed at CMS

Please label your child’s clothing! [Mabel’s Labels](#) are inexpensive and durable. They are also a fundraiser for CMS and highly recommended by our parents! *Students of all ages* store extra clothing in class for those “oops” moments when they need to change. Your Guide will provide specific information about what to bring at Parent Orientation. **Children should come to school equipped for the weather.** Our students go outside even when it’s cold or damp.

## BIRTHDAYS & CELEBRATIONS

Birthday celebrations at CMS focus on the child’s passage through time rather than traditional birthday customs like cake and candles. Parents are respectfully asked to enjoy those things at home. We’ll acknowledge their day Montessori-style! Your child’s Guide will provide specific information on birthday celebrations at Parent Orientation. Families wishing to send invites for a birthday celebration held outside of school are asked to use the School Directory for this purpose.

The CMS Library has a tradition of “Birthday Books,” which are donated by students in honor of their birthday. Birthday books are available for purchase in the CMS office. Books selected reflect the needs of the CMS Library and your donation is greatly appreciated! A placard acknowledging the donation is placed in the book. More information about Birthday Books is available in the CMS office.

Our school community is a wonderful tapestry of ethnicities, religions, and cultural identities. All are welcomed and respected. Students at CMS learn about customs and traditions around the world. Celebrations at CMS are geared toward school and classroom events more than traditional holidays. For instance, we host an international festival in the fall, but we don’t have Halloween parties at school. Other events at CMS celebrate student achievements, such as the Moving Up Ceremony or MMUN Showcase. Upcoming events are in Tuesday emails and posted on social media and our school website. Occasionally, classes will have a special lunch or celebration in class that relates to topics students are studying. Your child’s Guide will provide more specific information in their Parent Orientation.

## ANIMALS ON CAMPUS

We are fortunate to have a beautiful 18-acre campus. Nature and time outdoors are an important part of healthy development for children and our spacious campus provides ample opportunities. The fields and gardens at CMS occasionally bring wild visitors like rabbits, snakes, and birds. Our staff teaches children to be respectful and stay at a distance. We have a flock of chickens, which Upper Elementary students help to care for and some Guides choose to have an animal in class, such as a hamster or fish. As per state requirements, small animals on campus are seen by a veterinarian at least once a year.

## FIELD TRIPS AND GOING OUTS

Off campus trips are limited to Elementary and Adolescent students only. Parents are notified in advance, with details of departure and return times, location, and activities planned. Occasionally, volunteer drivers help to transport children. Parents wanting to volunteer must have a background check, copy of their driver’s license and proof of insurance on file with our office before they can be added to our CMS list of eligible drivers.

Day trips in our local area may be scheduled for the whole class or a small group may organize a “Going Out” related to a research project they are working on. Upper Elementary & Adolescent students take overnight camping trips twice a year (Fall and Spring) and may elect to participate in the Montessori Model UN program, which requires an additional trip to attend the MMUN Conference. Lower Elementary full cycle students (3rd graders) take a one-night camp trip in the Spring. Parents receive more information about off-campus trips for their child’s class at Parent Orientation.

## SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

Our mission at CMS is to provide children with a Montessori education and instill a love of learning and respect for others. We partner with families to foster the healthy growth and development of our students. The collaborative community experienced in the Montessori classroom helps children learn to assert their individual personality while still functioning harmoniously and peacefully within the group.

At CMS we recognize that consistent limits, strong role models, clear expectations, and instruction methods that focus on what to do rather than what not to do, help children learn appropriate and peaceful behavior. CMS Staff are trained to provide guidance and support for students as they discover how to balance the needs of the self with the needs of others.

The culture of respect at Community Montessori School encompasses how children treat one another and how they treat adults; how adults treat one another and how they treat children; and includes the school environment, property of the school, and property of others in the environment. This culture of respect is demonstrated in different ways, depending on the age group. All children at CMS are learning to navigate relationships and develop social and emotional skills and it is the job of staff, parents and the whole CMS community to support them in this process.

## STUDENT BEHAVIOR ISSUES

CMS retains the right to address student behavioral issues in accordance with professional discretion and school policies, as it pertains to individual situations. When aggressive or inappropriate behavior occurs, adults present will address it immediately. Minor incidents may be resolved with redirection and/or verbal mediation. This is normal social development and part of the daily classroom activities. Parents are informed in situations where behavioral issues are more significant, serious or ongoing, according to the following steps:

- E-mail or phone call from Guide to parents
- Meeting between the child’s Guide and Parents to discuss the behavior issues and formulate a plan for addressing them at school. If the situation improves or resolves, the process ends here. If the issues continue or escalate, then we move to the next step.
- Meeting between the child’s Guide, Parents and the Executive Director to discuss the situation, what efforts have been made to address it, and to outline the next steps that are necessary. In some situations, student participation may be appropriate. This must be agreed upon by both parents and CMS staff beforehand. It is possible that the Behavior Plan that is developed may include a request for outside counseling, assessment or other intervention. Follow up meetings, phone calls or emails will be agreed upon to assess progress.

If the behavioral issues escalate or are not resolved through the process outlined here, CMS reserves the right to suspend or terminate enrollment for the student. Privacy and confidentiality during this process is insured. Information is only shared with CMS staff members whose involvement is required.

Parents who are concerned about the impact of another student’s behavior on their child should communicate their concerns to CMS staff according to the following guidelines. Please respect the individuals involved by addressing concerns through school channels, rather than contacting other parents directly.

- E-mail or phone call to your child's Guide expressing your concerns with specific details of events or situations that have occurred
- Allow time for the Guide to address the situation
- If the situation does not improve, email the Guide and Executive Director with your concerns

CMS is guided by Montessori principles and positive discipline strategies in addressing student behaviors. Questions regarding discipline and behavior policies at CMS should be directed to the Executive Director. Please note that the following are prohibited at CMS: corporal punishment and any threat of such; humiliation, ridicule or subjecting children to harsh or profane language; punishment associated with food, naps or toileting; requiring a child to remain still or silent for an inappropriately long period of time.

## STUDENT PROGRESS & ASSESSMENT

In a Montessori classroom, the child's progress is assessed through observation, demonstration of skills and an understanding of concepts. Students demonstrate their learning by active use of materials, interactions with other children, presentations of reports or projects, and engaging in activities with their Guide and classmates. Guides at CMS evaluate student progress on a weekly basis, keeping careful record of lessons presented and skills and concepts mastered. Transparent Classroom is the record-keeping program used at all levels to track, record and report on student progress. Guides communicate this information to families by way of formal Parent-Guide Conferences and Conference Reports, and informally via emails, photos and work that is sent home. Conference Reports do not include grades; they are skill based and reflect the whole child, looking at, physical, cognitive, and social emotional development in addition to their academic learning.

## TECHNOLOGY & STUDENT DEVICES

Elementary & Adolescent students at CMS have limited access to computers and other technology on our campus for educational purposes. Students should know that behaviors that are not appropriate in person are not appropriate online either. While CMS staff make reasonable efforts to supervise student use, we must have student cooperation in promoting responsible use of technology while they are at school. Students cannot use school computers to access personal email, social media or other online accounts and must follow class procedures and guidelines for computer use.

Cell phones, internet watches, and other such personal devices may not be used by students during class time and must be turned off and stored according to the rules and procedures established for the class by their Guide. CMS cannot be responsible for any damaged or lost devices. Our preference would be for personal devices to stay at home. Students on school trips off campus may bring their phone but use will be limited. Your child's Guide will provide more information at Parent Orientation.

# HEALTH & SAFETY

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*\*At the time of publication, Covid-19 mitigation measures are in place at CMS, as outlined in the Covid-19 Addendum. We will look to public health guidance for what measures continue in Fall of 2021.*

## ILLNESS

Please be considerate of others and keep your child home if they are unwell. This is greatly appreciated by your fellow CMS parents and staff! We emphasize the importance of hand-washing and classrooms are cleaned & disinfected daily, but we need your help to prevent the spread of germs.

If your child is ill and will be absent from school, please email us at [attendance@community-montessori.org](mailto:attendance@community-montessori.org) to report the absence. If the illness is a communicable disease, please provide that information so we can notify others in the community. CMS is obligated to follow Texas health regulations regarding notification and exclusion of children with a communicable illness. In most cases this means being free of fever and other symptoms for a 24-hour period. Our office will let you know if there are other requirements for the specific illness your child has. Please call us if you have questions.

If your child becomes ill while at school, our office will call and request that you pick up your child as soon as possible. Symptoms, fever and other relevant information will be recorded on the Parent Communication Form that is signed and sent home with the child.

Head lice is a communicable disease! A child with head lice must be picked up immediately and treated at home. The child must be checked in our office by CMS staff prior to returning to class. Parents are asked to wait in the office until their child has been cleared.

## MEDICATIONS AT SCHOOL

Medication should be given by parents at home whenever possible. [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. The only exceptions are epi-pens and inhalers, which are stored in the child's classroom, out of reach of students. If a child must have medication during school hours, the following procedures are followed:

- Prescription medication must be in its original container labeled with the child's name, date, directions or dosage, and the physician's name. Non-prescriptive medication must be in the original container, labeled with the child's name and the date the medication was brought to school.
- Parents must bring the medication to the office and fill out the Medication Form authorizing staff to administer medicine.
- If your child has an epi-pen or inhaler that needs to stay at school, the Medication Authorization Form must be filled out and signed by a parent.

## ALLERGY ACTION PLANS

Students who have been prescribed an epi pen due to an anaphylactic reaction must have on file an Allergy Action Plan that is signed by the child's physician and posted in their classroom kitchen. If your child has other medical issues that our staff should be aware of, please contact the Admissions Director.

## INJURIES & OTHER INCIDENTS

All CMS staff members have current certification in CPR and First Aid. If your child receives a minor injury at school, appropriate First Aid will be administered. If First Aid is given, the injury is recorded on a Parent Communication Form, which is signed by a parent at departure. If you have questions about an injury that happened during the school day, please contact your child's Guide.

If an injury occurs which may require medical treatment, the office will call parents, relay what happened and determine what next steps may be necessary. If a major medical emergency occurs while a child is at school, staff will administer First Aid and call 911. Parents will be notified immediately. **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.** Our staff will follow instructions given by EMS, accompany the child to the hospital if needed and stay with the child until parents arrive.

If your child is involved in an Incident while at school, such as biting another child, this will be recorded on a Parent Communication Form, given to and signed by a parent at departure. Your child's Guide will be in contact about the situation.

## SECURITY ON CAMPUS

The safety of our students is a high priority at CMS. We make every possible effort to keep our grounds and facilities safe and to ensure that our school procedures provide a safe environment for children. We require families and visitors to our campus to abide by our school safety procedures. CMS is inspected annually by the Fire Marshal, Health Department and state child care licensing agency. Our staff conducts playground checks, fire drills and weather/building emergency drills throughout the school year. Evacuation routes are posted in all buildings and our staff has annual training in safety and emergency procedures.

## EMERGENCY DRILLS

Students and staff at CMS take part in regular safety drills to ensure we are prepared for any situations that may arise. Here are the basic procedures we follow:

- **Outdoor Drills** – ensure the safe evacuation of students and staff in the event of a fire or other unsafe situation by regular practices of evacuation procedures. In the unlikely event of an actual emergency, staff would evacuate children and call 911. (Or our Fire Monitoring Service will do this for us.) If first responders determine that it is not safe for children to re-enter a building, we will relocate those students temporarily to a safe location on our campus. If first responders determine it is not safe for children to remain on campus, parents will be notified via our Emergency Text Messaging System and asked to pick up their child immediately.
- **Indoor Drills** – ensure the safety of students and staff in the event of severe weather or an intruder or other incident on campus. In the unlikely event of an actual emergency, we call 911 and move students and staff to a “safe zone” to await further instruction. If a situation occurs that requires students to leave campus, parents will be notified via our Emergency Text Messaging System and asked to pick up their child immediately. *Please note that CMS has yearly visits from Community Relations Officers at Georgetown Police Department and they work with us on best practices for keeping children and staff at CMS safe.*

Parents should note that all staff at CMS are trained and instructed to be calm and matter-of-fact with children when emergency drills are practiced and to speak generally in terms of safety rather than particular threats. We refer to drills as Outdoor Drills and Indoor Drills and staff do not discuss with children what actual situations might occur that would require us to use these skills.

## SAFE SLEEP FOR INFANTS

Staff members who work with infants in our Nido program receive annual training on Safe Sleep practices and these guidelines are followed in our Nido environment at all times:

- Infants under 12 months of age should always be put to sleep on their back
- Infants must always sleep on a firm surface free of toys, pillows, blankets or other soft items

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## REQUIRED NOTIFICATIONS

Parents should 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.)

Parents may ask at any time to view a copy of the Texas Child Care Licensing Minimum Standards and/or the most recent inspection report for our school. These items are accessible in the school office.

Concealed weapons or weapons of any kind are not allowed on the CMS campus. Persons on our campus with a permitted weapon must lock them in their vehicle while they are on our campus.

The CMS campus must be free of tobacco, alcoholic beverages and/or controlled substances whenever children are present. Alcohol may be served at adult functions on campus if held outside of school operating hours and when no children are present. Use of tobacco and drugs is never allowed on campus. 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 operating hours. The Executive Director has the right to send home any staff member or volunteer suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol while on campus during operating hours and to prevent a parent who appears to be intoxicated from picking up a child.

If a CMS employee has reason to suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, Texas law requires them to report it to Child Protective Services. The individual reporting may do so anonymously or may elect to inform the Executive Director. If CPS comes to our campus to investigate a report, CMS staff will cooperate fully with their process. All employees of CMS undergo a criminal history background check and fingerprinting, which includes a search of the central registry of reported cases of child abuse and neglect. Our staff receives annual training on the recognition, reporting and prevention of child abuse and neglect.

As directed by the Texas Department of State Health Services, CMS requires families to submit a Statement of Health signed by a health care professional for each child and a copy of the child's immunization records or a notarized immunization waiver annually. Students must also have vision and hearing screenings and spinal screenings as required by the state of Texas. Guidelines can be viewed on the Texas Department of State Health Services website: <https://dshs.texas.gov/vhs/>