

A
Parent's
Guide



A childcare center exactly like nothing else!

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Welcome to Villa Montessori!

Our entire staff welcomes you and your child to our program! We appreciate your confidence in our ability to care for your child during these most important years of growth, development, and learning. We are committed to promoting the well-being of your child and your family. This Parent Handbook is designed to provide you with essential information concerning our program. Please check the Montessori Compass Bulletin Board feature (select Updated – All Time) or with the School Director for the most up to date version available to you.

Goals and Philosophy

Connect. At Villa Montessori (VM), we believe that relationships are built from strong connections – between us and the children in our care, between each child, between families, and between children and their environment.

Daily we seek connections between two educational philosophies – that of Maria Montessori, and the early childhood programs developed in Reggio Emilia, Italy. We have discovered that each philosophy is an extension of the other and provides us the opportunity to help our children develop more holistically, which in turn allows them to have a richer and deeper understanding of their environment and how they fit within it. Given the freedom and support to question, to explore deeply, and to make connections, Montessori/Reggio students become more confident, eager, and self-directed learners. They become critical thinkers who can work collaboratively with teachers, students and their environment – a skill set for the 21st century.

Guide. Maria Montessori founded her method on one basic principle – “follow the child.” A Montessori classroom is carefully prepared to allow the child to work independently and allow the joy of self-discovery. Teachers are merely guides who introduce materials that children are free to choose from again and again, working and discovering, and ultimately mastering ideas. Lessons are given, but the goal is for children to discover the answers by using auto-didactic or self-correcting materials that are found only in Montessori classrooms.

Children grow academically in the Montessori environment. They discover an ability to complete complex math problems, name the continents, identify geometric shapes, write beautifully and talk about scientific concepts.

However, the most important aspect of our educational mission does not concern academics. Rather, our primary goal is to foster and enhance each child's natural sense of joy and wonder. We feel that children should delight in childhood, that the school day should include laughter and the buzz of creativity. We want students to love school and the process of learning. Maria Montessori's idea “that education is not a chore, but a joyous exploration of life's mysteries” is the most important lesson that we hope to teach our children.

Encourage. The *Reggio Emilia* approach is a growing, unique form of Early Childhood Education. This philosophy was developed after World War II by Loris Mallaguzzi, a psychologist, and by parents in the villages around Reggio Emilia, Italy. This approach

was founded on the beliefs that children are strong, capable and resilient; rich with wonder and knowledge. Every child brings with them deep curiosity and potential. This innate curiosity drives their interest to understand their world and their place within it.

Mallaguzzi believed that children use many ways to show their understanding and express their thoughts and creativity -- a hundred different ways of thinking, of discovering, of learning. Through drawing and sculpting, through dance and movement, through painting and pretend play, through modeling and music – Mallaguzzi felt that each one of these *Hundred Languages* must be encouraged and nurtured. These *languages*, or ways of learning, are all part of the child. Learning and play are not separated.

Our *Reggio-inspired* approach emphasizes hands-on discovery learning that allows the child to use all their senses and all their *languages* to learn and to construct their understanding of the world.

Virginia State Department of Licensing

Villa Montessori is a licensed center through the Virginia State Department of Child Care Licensing. These regulations include Administration, Staff Qualifications, Physical Plant, Staffing and Supervision, Programs, Special Care Provisions and Emergencies, and Special Services.

American Montessori Society (AMS) Accreditation

Villa Montessori strives to achieve principles approved by the American Montessori Society and is working toward meeting and exceeding AMS standards and criteria. AMS specifications define and recognize quality Montessori programs through the accreditation process.

These standards include criteria requiring a developmentally appropriate program, having a well-qualified and trained faculty, appropriate staff-child ratios and group sizes. A consistent curriculum must be followed, stringent health and safety standards must be in place, and the program must provide meaningful opportunities for family involvement.

General Policies and Procedures

Admission Procedures

Before your child's first day, we ask that you complete and return the enrollment forms and the Virginia Health Entrance form. These forms assist in providing the highest quality care for your family, and they must be received before your child may be enrolled in our program. The information you provide is strictly confidential and will not be released without your consent. You may have access to the information in your child's file at any time. Please notify us in writing when there are changes to any of the following: address, phone number(s), allergies, health records, etc.

Prior to enrollment, parents are invited to visit our school to meet our staff and to observe our teachers and students in the classroom during our scheduled viewing hours. In order to minimize the number of interruptions to the classroom, tours and observations are scheduled in advance. Observations are limited to 15 minutes.

Orientation

The adjustment to any program is different for every child. We encourage you and your child to prepare for the transition to our school. We believe this transition period allows for the opportunity to gain trust in our staff and become familiar with the surroundings. Tears are normal the first few days. A quick goodbye generally works best and helps to quickly relieve insecure feelings. We encourage our parents to call the school with any concerns, and we are open to suggestions in making this a positive experience.

Parking

In order to minimize traffic during peak drop-off and pick-up times, please drop-off between the hours of 7:00am - 8:30am and pick-up between 4:00pm - 6:00pm. Please utilize the parking garage when escorting your child into the classroom.

When pressed for time, please utilize the drop-off spots and walk your child inside ***Please note there is a 5-minute parking maximum for the drop-off spots.***

Arrival and Departure

The protection and welfare of your child is our primary concern. Please observe the following procedures to help us maintain a safe environment:

Being on time for school every day is an integral part of a child's success in the Montessori environment. It also is important to know who is going to be in attendance for the day to accomplish various school and building tasks. For example, classroom numbers help to determine how much snack gets prepared, when teachers take their lunch breaks, and where we need additional floating teachers for support.

If you know that your child will be arriving later than 10am for the day due to an appointment or another extenuating circumstance, you must notify the school no later than 9:00 that day so we can notify the classrooms and prepare accordingly. If the school is not notified of this tardiness and a child is not in attendance by 10am your child may not attend school for the day.

Arrival

1. Make staff aware of your child's arrival.
2. All children should arrive prior to the beginning of work cycle which starts at 8:45 AM.

Departure

1. Pick up younger children first.
2. Notify your child's teacher you are picking them up.
3. Gather all belongings to go home i.e. lunch bag, bottles, bedlinens (Fridays).

Reminder: Walk your child to and from the classroom. Please do not allow children to be in hallways, empty classrooms, kitchen, offices, sidewalks, or the parking lot unattended. Safety is always our main concern.

Pick Up Authorization

Send a written statement if you wish the school to release your child to someone other than the persons designated on the application form (this person needs identification). We cannot accept consent over the phone. You may email a signed notice of a new authorized person for pick up to our office. Please note we cannot release a child to anyone less than 16 years of age. Note: Our policies do not deny a parent access to his/her child unless there is a copy of a court order, which restrains a parent from the child.

Hours of Operation

Villa Montessori Schools are open year-round, Monday through Friday. The daily center hours are from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm.

Holidays/Center Closings

Please refer to the school's calendar for specifics.

Villa Montessori is closed on the following holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Presidents Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Thanksgiving Day and the day after, and Christmas Day. Villa Montessori will monitor the anticipated attendance and may opt to alter the hours of operation directly preceding or following a holiday.

VM may operate on a reduced schedule or close when deemed necessary due to inclement weather. When making the decision to alter the operating hours or to close; the school will consider Loudoun County Public School System, current and projected weather and road conditions, as well as the ability for students and staff to safely navigate to and from the school. Detailed information will be posted on our Facebook page.

Emergency Closures

There may be rare occasions during which the center may need to close due to emergency circumstances beyond our control, such as extended loss of electrical power, water, etc. If the center is unable to open or the center must close mid-day due to such an emergency, parents will be notified as soon as possible. If the center closes early due to an emergency you will be asked to pick up your child early or to make arrangements for an authorized designee, listed on the emergency form, to pick up your child.

Parent Communication

At Villa Montessori, we are cognizant of the fact that communication between parents and staff is of the utmost importance for the health and well-being of your child. Our goal is to communicate with you on an ongoing basis, primarily through Montessori Compass, and satisfactorily resolve any concerns you may have.

Confidentiality Policy

Villa Montessori understands the importance of each child and families' privacy. We will maintain your child's records confidential in a locked cabinet. Access to these records is only granted to the administration, teaching staff, parent or guardians and regulatory agencies by request.

Additionally, we will not share student or family information with other families, schools or non-related personnel without the written consent of the parent or guardian.

Student Clothing

Children are required to wear closed toed shoes each day to ensure their safety. Tennis shoes are preferred.

We request that a full change of weather appropriate clothes, to include shoes be placed in his/her cubby in case of spills, accidents or emergencies. Please ensure each item is labeled with your child's first and last name. Any soiled items will be sent home to be cleaned.

Photos

Children will be routinely photographed as they participate in VM activities. These photographs will primarily be used to document a child's progress and will be displayed throughout the center. On occasion children will be photographed for marketing materials. Parents are asked to sign our Photo Release Form and indicate if they do or do not consent to the use of the photos.

Fee Schedule

Tuition Rates

The tuition fees are based on the operational costs of the center. Classroom tuition rates are based on class size and teacher-to-child ratios. Tuition rates are reviewed annually and will be adjusted to meet operational costs as needed. Parents will be given a 30-day notice should there be a tuition increase.

Tuition Payments

Tuition is collected monthly in advance, tuition billed will be the rate in effect on the child's first day. Tuition is due on the 1st day of each month. A \$25.00 late charge will be applied for any accounts with outstanding balances on the 2nd of each month. * After 3 occurrences of bank returns it will be required that your autopay method be moved to a credit card option.

NOTE: It is the parent's responsibility to update accounts when credit cards expire or are lost or stolen.

Annual Re-Enrollment/Materials Fee

An annual registration fee of \$150 per child is applied to each September's tuition.

Deposit

To secure your child's enrollment in our school, a deposit of \$500.00 is required in advance. The amount collected will be held in your account and will be applied to your last month's payment. The tuition deposit and other fees (if applicable) are non-refundable.

Late Pick Up Fees

Our center closes promptly at 6:00 p.m. Children need to be picked up and off the premises at 6:00 p.m. A late charge of \$40.00 (per child) for the first fifteen minutes or fraction thereof that a child remains in the building after 6:00, and a \$20.00 charge per 5 minutes thereafter, will be charged. Late fees apply also for those with set schedules prior to close.

Please call and let us know if you are running late. If your child is not picked up at his/her dismissal time, and we do not hear from you, we will contact the person on your emergency contact list. Repeated tardiness may require a child's space to be forfeited.

Late Payments

A \$25.00 late charge will be applied for any accounts with outstanding balances on the 16th of each month. Unpaid tuition will lead to suspension of childcare services beginning the 1st of each month. If repetitive incidents occur Villa Montessori by BrightPath holds the right to terminate childcare services.

Discounts

A sibling discount of 10% will be applied to the eldest siblings' tuition while more than one child is enrolled in the center.

With the exception of the Referral Program, promotions, discounts, and specials cannot be combined. Each family can take advantage of the promotion that is most financially advantageous to them.

Parent Referral Program

VM welcomes new families to our schools each week. If you know of a family that would benefit from an outstanding Montessori program, please be sure to tell them about us!

When a new family enrolls as the result of a parent referral, the referring parent will receive a \$350.00 credit to their existing tuition when the new family begins care. There is no limit to the number of referral credits a family can earn!

Absences

Reporting

We look forward to seeing your child every day and plan for their participation in our program. Should he/she be absent or tardy, please notify your child's teacher in advance whenever possible. Should an unexpected absence or tardiness occur, please notify the school via telephone or email, prior to the morning work cycle of 8:45.

Extended Absence/Vacation

Payment is required 12 months per year. No credit on tuition is given for vacations, absences, scheduled center holidays, or emergency closings.

Withdrawal/Dis-Enrollment & Schedule Changes

One full calendar month's advance written notice is required to withdraw your child from the school and/or to change his/her schedule. Tuition payments are required during this period. Notice of withdrawals should be submitted in writing to the School Director for withdrawal the following month.

Please note: If you give notification of withdrawal anytime during the month, the following month's tuition will be due.

The tuition deposit and other fees (if applicable) are non-refundable.

The following conditions may cause services to be terminated:

- Continual late drop-off or pick-up (more than three within a one-month period).
- Inability of a child to adjust to the classroom environment.
- Child behavioral problems deterring successful school experiences.
- Disrespect towards the school, administration, other children, policies and/or staff.
- Unresolved issues or conflict relating to core mission or philosophy of school.
- A child that continually bites another child (3 times).

VM retains the right to dis-enroll any student or family at any time without refund of any fees.

Health and Safety

Immunization/Physicals

Your child's medical exam records must be submitted to VM along with his/her immunization record prior to your child's first day of enrollment, signed by your child's physician. As your child receives additional vaccinations please provide documentation so we may update records.

Allergies

Information regarding children's allergies will be posted in each classroom to ensure that all staff are made aware of the allergies. The name of the child and the allergy will be included. In the event a doctor diagnoses your child with an allergy please inform staff. If an epi-pen is to be kept at school for your child, we ask that you provide center management with an allergy care plan signed off by your child's physician.

Illness Policy

VM is a place for healthy children. We ask that you **do not** bring your child if he/she is exhibiting any of the following symptoms:

- A temperature of 100 degrees or higher
- 2 Diarrhea or watery stool episodes
- 2 Vomiting episodes
- Pink eye or discoloration or thick discharge from the eye
- Scabies or lice - must be nit free to return to the school.
- Cannot participate in classroom or outdoor activities as planned
- Uncontrollable severe coughing
- Skin sores, rash, or ringworm that cannot be covered
- Signs/symptoms of a contagious illness

If these occur while your child is at school, you will be contacted by the Administration office or your child's teacher. If your child has a contagious disease such as chicken pox, mumps, strep throat, pink eye, flu, impetigo, etc., please keep your child at home as your physician recommends.

You may be asked to provide a doctor's note before your child returns and your child must be symptom-free for 24 hours before returning. If your child had a fever, he/she must be without fever for a full 24 hours from the last dosage of a fever reducing medication before returning to school.

Please notify VM of any contagious illness so the other parents may be informed. You will be contacted to pick up your child within one hour if he/she becomes ill during the day. If we are unable to contact you within 30 minutes of our initial call, we will begin calling your emergency contacts.

Daily Health Assessments

Upon arrival, our staff will conduct a brief daily Health Assessment (as required by the State) to ensure your child is well enough to participate in the day's activities. The staff

will look for signs of a fever, rash, dehydration, injuries or fatigue. Please be sure to inform the staff of any changes such as loss of appetite, lack of sleep or medication taken.

Reporting Communicable Diseases

Should your child or any member of your household be diagnosed with a communicable disease, we ask that you notify the school immediately so proper precautions and notifications are made. Our staff will not disclose the name of the person with the illness, but will disclose the classroom which may have been exposed.

Injury Notification

We take your child's safety seriously and have created an environment that is safe for your child to explore and thrive. We do however recognize that children tend to have accidents that may result in an injury. Our staff is trained and certified to handle such injuries. When we become aware of an injury, our first priority is to comfort the child, then administer any aide required. Once the child is comfortable, an "Injury Report" will be completed and the administration will be notified. For more serious injuries, parent will be notified via phone and emergency personnel will be contacted when needed.

On occasion, a child may receive a minor injury that was not reported to the teacher or that did not result in a visible injury at the time. If you notice an unusual injury, please speak with your child's teacher as soon as possible in an attempt to determine the cause.

Authorization to act in case of an emergency

At time of admission, parents shall be requested to give VM written authorization to act according to the best judgment if immediate action is necessary in case of illness or accident when parents cannot be reached immediately. The emergency information also gives permission to transport your child by an ambulance or car to an emergency center for treatment. This also gives consent to any medical, surgical, and hospital care treatment and procedures performed by a licensed physician or hospital when deemed immediately necessary.

Medication Administration

This policy is intended to prevent errors in medication administration. VM will only be able to administer emergency medications such as; albuterol, epi-pen, insulin, seizure treatment or other emergency medications deemed required for the safety of a child in an emergency. This medication must be in the original prescription packaging with the child's name, medication name, and amount and time to be taken. The medication must also be accompanied with a physician signed "action plan" approved by the Center Director. This emergency medication will be kept in the classroom emergency bag (out of reach of children) and will accompany the child at all times.

Sunscreen/Insect Repellant

Sunscreen and or insect repellant may be applied during the summer months with the written permission from the parents. We ask the sunscreen or repellant be provided by the parent, in the original container with the child's first and last name, and that the first application be applied by the parent prior to coming to school.

Outdoor Play

All children will be provided an opportunity to go outside at least twice a day, weather permitting, in accordance to Virginia Licensing Standards. We provide a sunny and shaded area, and an individual scheduled time for each classroom. We expect all children to participate in outdoor time and are unable to accommodate children who are deemed "not well enough" to participate.

Reporting Abuse and Neglect

Any staff member in a child care facility who has reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect or has observed the child being subjected to circumstances that would reasonably result in neglect or abuse, shall report the matter immediately to the local department of the county or city wherein the child resides or wherein the abuse or neglect is believed to have occurred or to the Department's toll-free child abuse and neglect hotline: 1-800-4ACHILD.

Behavior Plan

The plan for behavior has been developed based on health and safety requirements. Young children need to be reassured that people who love them will guide, protect, and set limits that will keep them safe. The School Director will contact the parent in the event a child's behavior becomes a threat to himself, other classmates, or VM staff. If a child poses a continued threat to themselves, other classmates, or VM staff, documentation will be made for further dialogue and a plan of action made with the parents. It is our goal that a solution can be reached between VM and the parent. If a successful outcome is not possible, the child will be disenrolled from the school for the safety of all.

The first step in guiding young children's behavior is to anticipate and eliminate opportunities for misbehavior. We use creative ways to manage and redirect children who are not following rules.

At Villa Montessori we find that a child is most successful when teachers, administration and parents are all on the same team working toward a common goal. As Early Childhood professionals, if a behavioral plan is needed, we strive to work with you, the family, to implement the best tools and practices to help the child and the classroom succeed. However, in some situations outside interventions are needed. These interventions include, but are not limited to, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and behavioral evaluations. When outside interventions are requested from Villa Montessori, it is because we feel the medical and health professionals will provide us with necessary information and additional supports. If these suggestions are made from the administrative team here at Villa Montessori it is required that you, the family, seek the help we are requesting. Failure to do that alters our ability to work as a team and find success for the children. Villa Montessori reserves the right to suspend or terminate a child's enrollment with us if the family does not participate in receiving the additional help that we request if our initial behavioral plan needs more support.

Discipline Policy

Praise and positive reinforcement are effective methods in the behavior management of children. When children receive positive, non-violent, interactions from adults and others, they develop positive self-concepts, problem solving abilities, and self-discipline. Based on this belief and the philosophies of Dr. Maria Montessori and how children learn values, VM does not incorporate "time-out" periods.

In place of this practice, VM institutes the following:

1. We will praise, reward, and encourage the children.
2. We will re-direct their attention to modify behavior.
3. We will reason with and set limits for the children.
4. We will model appropriate behavior for the children.
5. Provide a quiet, soft area for a child to "cool down" to be used at the child's discretion.

Biting Policy

Incidents of biting do occur and are stressful for both the students, staff, and parents involved. In the event of biting, the parents of both the biter and the bitten will be notified. The staff will complete an incident/accident report will be written with a signature required by the parent and Director. The bite area will be washed with soap and water, ice applied, and TLC given.

In the event that continued biting incidents occur, the administration will evaluate the situation, create a plan for prevention and may recommend that the child be removed from the program until the undesirable behavior has stopped.

Meals

Our school is NUT FREE. Please do not send peanut butter or any food item containing nuts. (Sunflower seed butter is a peanut butter substitute.)

Parents have the option of providing a **packed lunch and two snacks** each day or participating in our Catered Meal Program. We ask that children have a nutritious breakfast prior to arriving at school.

All food items brought into the school must be cooked / prepared at home and ready to eat. Any hot items must be sent in a thermos as VM will not be able to heat student's food. All cold items must be accompanied with a freezer pack as VM does not have the capacity to keep student's lunches refrigerated. Please do not pack more than your child will eat.

All food items must be labeled with your child's name and date (a small sticker works best for this.

A healthy lunch includes the following:

1. A protein rich food
2. 2 fruits; **or** 2 vegetables; **or** 1 fruit **and** 1 vegetable
3. Milk or milk alternate
4. A grain or grain alternate
5. A special treat (low-or sugar-free)

Healthy snacks would be low or sugar-free, preferably a fresh fruit or veggie, yogurt, smoothie, etc.

If your child is allergic to any items, please note on the application and medical forms, **and make the staff aware**. Refer to Allergy Policy for more information.

Snacks for Special Occasions

For your child's birthday, or for other special occasions, you may wish to send a snack for your child's class (as well as any necessary cups, plates, utensils, and napkins). **Please send healthier items such as mini muffins, fresh cut fruit and/or vegetables, yogurt, or cheese and crackers. High sugar treats such as candy, cupcakes, doughnuts, cookies, sheet cakes, soda, and gum are not allowed at school. As a reminder, our school is a nut-free zone.**

Please check with your child's teacher to coordinate a day that will work for the class and to confirm any allergies in your child's classroom.

Smoking

The use of nicotine products such cigarettes, pipes, and vapor devices are not permitted on or within sight of the school property.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The Montessori Method

Montessori is based on years of observation and study of children by Dr. Maria Montessori, a medical doctor and student of psychology. She worked out her methods and developed teaching materials by letting the children show what did and did not work. The Montessori Method develops the whole personality of the child: their powers of deliberation, initiative, and independent choice, with their emotional complements. The child is trained in those fundamental social qualities which forms the basis of good citizenship.

Montessori enables the teacher to guide the child individually in each subject according to their individual requirements. Each child works at their own pace and is allowed a large measure of freedom of choice.

Social Graces and Courtesy is the foundation of the Montessori Philosophy. The children are taught to respect themselves, their classmates, teachers, the classroom materials, and the world they live in.

Montessori Compass

At VM, we use a web-based record keeping system to track and communicate each child's growth and development. With this system, teachers are able to upload photos, observations, and data to each child's individual record. Allowing them to easily share this information with the parents. You will be sent an invitation via email to Montessori Compass and will have access to your child's account.

Reggio

Our Reggio Emilia inspired arts and science programs are designed to enhance the Montessori Experience. The program is based on the principals of respect, responsibility, and community through the exploration and discovery in a supportive and enriching environment. Children are believed to be "knowledge bearers" and are encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas about their experiences through their self-guided curriculum.

The Reggio Emilia philosophy is based upon the following set of principles:

- Children must have some control over the direction of their learning;
- Children must be able to learn through the experiences of touching, moving, listening and observing;
- Children have a relationship with other children and with material items in the world that children must be allowed to explore;
- Children must have endless ways and opportunities to express themselves.

S.T.E.A.M – Science + Technology + Engineering + Art + Math

At VM, we know that parents today are well educated and are looking for advanced programs such as STEAM. By adding a Reggio inspired Art and Science program we are cutting edge, offering the most diverse, well rounded education to our students.

Science: We explore science through are Reggio Inspired Programs

Technology: The light tables offer an unobtrusive link to technology to help improve our science and art studies.

Engineering: The Sensorial Materials address early engineering through the Stereognostic manipulation of objects.

Art: Our Reggio inspired art programs extends the Montessori method of teaching the works of famous artists into creating our own masterpieces.

Math: Math is the fundamental link to Montessori's methods. The math program is tried and true, and famous throughout the world.

Enrichment Programs

Learning in our Montessori environment extends far beyond language development and building foundational mathematics skills. Extending beyond the traditional elements of the Montessori classroom, we offer students a wide range of enrichment activities. Some of these are incorporated into daily classroom materials, while others are more specialized and introduced to the children outside of the typical classroom experience.

At our school, we offer:

- Gardening
- Music and Movement
- Foreign Language
- Yoga
- Public Speaking

Parent Teacher Conferences

Parent/Teacher conferences are held at least twice per year or as requested by parents. During conferences, teachers share their assessments and the child's portfolio with the child's parent/guardian. We encourage open communication between parents and teachers throughout the year, not just during parent/teacher conferences. This allows for parents to provide information to teachers about observations they have made about their child at home to better inform a more complete assessment, and so teachers can generate activities to support and challenge a child's development.

Classroom Placement

Children are placed in classrooms based upon a combination of their chronological age and developmental level. This helps create an environment that best encourages your child's development and learning.

Transitions

We strive for children to transition so they are with their appropriate age group as close to their birthday as possible. The date that a child transitions to another classroom is determined in partnership between the parent, teacher and Director.

Special Events - Birthdays

Parents of children in the Toddler and older programs are invited to join a special celebration of their child's birthday at school. Your child's teacher will coordinate with you a mutually convenient time for a special ceremony we call "Celebration of Life"/"Walk Around the Sun". You will be invited to bring in **one** picture of your child for every year starting from birth. These pictures will be shared with the class as your child "walks around the sun" to celebrate each year of his or her life. Please see "Snacks for Special Occasions" above for details regarding birthday snacks.

The Birthday Book Club

The Birthday Book Club is a voluntary program that celebrates children's birthdays, enables their peers to share their special day, and contributes to the classroom's library of story-time books.

We offer parents the option to donate an age-appropriate book to honor your child's birthday. The school will prepare and include a book plate on the inside cover citing your child's name and birthdate to acknowledge the donation. The book is then placed in the classroom library. Every time the book is read during circle time, the citation is read before beginning the story as recognition of your child's contribution.

It has been our experience that the Birthday Book Club encourages children's interest in books and stories while promoting pride and self-esteem.

In keeping with the Montessori philosophy, the book's illustrations should depict realistic themes. Please avoid cartoon, TV, and super-hero characters.

Invitations/Parties/Playdates

The social aspect of school is very important to children even at this young age. It can be devastating to a child who feels excluded from their peer group. We ask that when you are organizing birthday parties or other out-of-school social events or when you are facilitating friendships, please be sensitive. If many students in a classroom are being invited, we suggest inviting the entire group. For invitations to a few children, please do not hand out in your child's classroom.

Rest/Naptime

A designated rest or naptime is scheduled for each classroom, toddlers and older, each day to allow children to take a break from activities and sleep, should they require it. This is a two-hour time frame that follows lunch each day. Each child will be assigned a designated cot and parents are required to provide a crib size sheet and thin blanket. Children over two years may prefer a soft sleep toy or small pillow to accompany them. These items will be sent home each Friday or when soiled. It is important that these items return the following school day so your child can rest comfortably and are required by licensing. Children who are not asleep after the initial thirty-minute rest period, will be provided with quiet activities to keep them occupied.

Field Trips

All of our activities will take place either in the building or on the designated playground. Should we plan an activity that would take us away from the property, VM will notify parents in advance and request permission for your child to participate. Please note that VM staff and parents will not provide transportation services and any additional activities will take place within a reasonable walking distance.

About Our Staff

Roles and Responsibility

We understand that our Lead and Assistant Teachers are partners with the parents in the education of our students. Our staff is responsible for the supervision, education, and nurturing of our students through the use of our Montessori and Reggio programs, while adhering to VM and state licensing guidelines.

Background Checks

Each of our staff members receive a background check through the Department of Social Services' Central Registry and the Virginia State Police. Each member must be free of any charges, pending charges or convictions of a "barrier" crime, drug related crime or other crimes that conflict with the values of VM.

Code of Conduct

At VM, we expect our staff to be positive role models both in and out of the school. We encourage teachers to have an open but professional relationship with parents and families of their students. We expect staff to:

- Initiate individual conversations with families, fellow staff members, or appropriate supervisors or administrators to encourage open dialogue.
- Provide opportunities for parents/guardians to ask questions, address issues, or raise concerns in a way that encourages constructive feedback.
- Provide regular written communication that details individual child information, classroom happenings, and school events through Montessori Compass.
- Discuss all confidential matters in non-public areas of the school and with the appropriate parties.
- Refrain from social media relationships with parents and family members of students.
- Refrain from taking photos of students on personal devices.

Babysitting

Our liability insurance policy prohibits our staff to provide services to families outside of the school; this includes babysitting or driving children, tutoring, coaching, etc.

Code of Conduct for Parents

All adults, while at the center or attending center-related meetings, should behave in a manner that models appropriate behavior for children.

Parent Participation

VM has an open-door policy, and we encourage you to drop in whenever you wish. Communication is the key for a happy, positive relationship between you, your child, and our school.

Your comments and suggestions are always welcome.

Parent Resources

1. Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work by E. M. Standing.
2. The Absorbent Mind by Dr. Maria Montessori.
3. The Secret of Childhood by Dr. Maria Montessori.
4. The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Experience in Transformation, 3rd Edition by Carolyn Edwards (Editor), Lella Gandini (Editor), George Forman (Editor)



I have received and accept the school policies listed in Villa Montessori Parent Handbook.

1. Admissions
2. Safe Arrival and Departure
3. Hours, Holidays and Inclement Weather
4. Tuition / Due Dates / Annual Registration / No Refund Policy
5. Late Pick-up
6. No Vacation Credits
7. Withdrawal / Absences / Change of Schedule
8. Menus/ Food
9. Emergencies
10. Emergencies / Immunizations/ Health Records / Medication / Allergies
11. Outdoor Activities
12. Behavior Plan & Discipline / Biting
13. Photos
14. Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect
15. Chain of Command

I have received a copy of the Parent Handbook, understand and agree with the policies, including those listed above.

Child's Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

Administrator: _____

Date: _____