



PARENT HANDBOOK - 2023

Village Montessori School

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"The most important period of life is not
the age of university studies, but the first one,
the period from birth to the age of six."
~ Maria Montessori

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WELCOME TO VILLAGE MONTESSORI

Dear Parents,

Welcome to Village Montessori School! We are honored you have chosen to become a part of our school. Your involvement is the first ingredient in your child's bright future.

The Montessori environment begins with the premise that young people's natural curiosity is the driving force behind learning and this force motivates their activity. Through this innate curiosity, repetition, and then mastering the lesson through teaching other students what they have learned, the lessons are cemented, and the children become ready to progress to the next level. This self-directed formula not only builds healthy self-esteem, but it is also the foundation on which Montessori programs have produced the very best preparatory results in pre-school education for decades.

Your child is about to embark on a wonderful journey of self-discovery. We encourage you to be a part of it! A solid connection between students, parents, and teachers is essential for your child's success. The first step of the journey is to take the time to read through this handbook. And as always, feel free to ask any questions that may arise.

At Village Montessori we truly consider it a high privilege and an honor to be a part of your child's learning and development. With happy, healthy, self-confident children we feel we are doing our part to make the world a better place for them and their children!

Kind regards,

Joan Rodriguez Malone

Director of School

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Village Montessori School is a full-service preschool facility for children between the ages of three months to six years. Using the Montessori Teaching Method, our experienced staff provides a caring environment that encourages the complete development of the participating child's mind, body, and self-esteem. The Montessori advantage involves a specialized curriculum, coupled with a custom-designed facility with very low teacher-student ratio. This formula is proven to provide accelerated learning, healthy activity, and improved confidence in children as they prepare to move into more traditional learning institutions. Village Montessori is also focused on communicating with parents to form a true community of learning.

OUR MISSION

We will inspire the cognitive, emotional, physical, and spiritual development of individual children in a secure environment that encourages them to freely explore, create, cooperate, and become an active part of our world.

How we implement our mission:

- We will offer a safe and supportive environment that will nurture children's unique gifts and naturally guide them to become attentive, curious, and self-directed so that they may discover the richness of the world that surrounds them.
- We will help children discover positive self-awareness and strengthen their connections with others in the environment, giving them the ability to realize their fullest potential.
- We will provide guidance and education to the community of parents So that they can more effectively support and guide their children's development.
- We will foster a love of learning with order, concentration, coordination, and independence.

MONTESSORI PHILOSOPHY

Maria Montessori was an Italian physician and educator, the first woman to receive a medical degree in Italy. Born in 1870, she developed her method of education early in the twentieth century. She devoted her life to the education of children and was honored and respected throughout the world at the time of her death in 1952.

The Montessori Method emphasizes the potential of the young child. The method cultivates the potential of every child through a prepared environment using specially trained teachers and unique teaching materials.

During the time spent in the Montessori environment, the children's consciousness is exposed to stimulation that is represented in an attractive and encouraging, orderly world. This love for order will last a lifetime. Planting deeply in our children a good sense of order will foster children's discipline and enable them to be successful in attaining their goals under any circumstances that life brings along.

The Montessori Method teaches children in objective, realistic ways, which maximize their sensorial experiences, and then explore the wonderful realm of abstract thinking and imagination as they get older. This early learning experience will enable them to learn faster, easier, and increase their own self-worth.

GROUND RULES

All children are admitted to our school on a 90-day probationary period. As a school founded on Montessori principles, we believe that every person deserves respect. As a pre-school, Village Montessori expects students to demonstrate kindness, courtesy, and respect toward the school, fellow students, parents, teachers, and staff.

The goal of a Montessori education is to establish a safe, warm, and caring environment within which we teach students positive and appropriate ways to handle situations, as opposed to assuming that misbehavior and punishment are inevitable. We seek to develop a strong sense of self-discipline, responsibility, and courtesy, and to develop an atmosphere conducive to peaceful studies.

When anyone at Village Montessori finds it difficult to follow the school's expectations about interpersonal conduct or the guidelines established in the

Parent Handbook, we will quickly bring the student, family, and staff together to work toward a solution.

Our ground rules are essentially the same at every age level of the school, although the language and emphasis changes somewhat for the older student. This is how we will explain our expectations to our students. Please review these rules with your child:

- Be kind and gentle to each other.
- Everyone has the right to privacy and concentration.
- Everyone has the right to personal belongings.
- Everyone has the right to feel safe and secure. We encourage all people to use words that do not insult or threaten someone else.
- Everyone has the right to be physically safe. Please do not do anything that might hurt or endanger anyone.
- At Village Montessori, no one is allowed to fight, push, trip, or use any other aggressive behaviors.
- Use the playground equipment as intended. For example, do not walk up the slide.
- Give everyone who wants to play the opportunity to join your game.
- Do not throw sand, mulch, sticks, or rocks.
- Please put all outdoor equipment away when you are finished with them.
- Do not use the fenced in areas after school hours.
- Montessori materials are to work.

STARTING SCHOOL

Every one, even a very young child, has a general and positive idea of what "going to school" means. However, the actual event is sometimes overwhelming for both child and adult. Village Montessori will help ease your transition to school.

On the first day of school, many young children and their parents feel a bit nervous when they leave each other and are in an unfamiliar situation. You may even expect a few tears.

Here are a few points that will help each of you establish some comfort with school:

- Try to keep the morning stress free, but on a normal schedule.
- Please arrive on time.
- Remind each other that you both have been looking forward to school.
- Remind each other that the children at school are just like you and that the adults at school love children.
- Use the teacher's name when possible.
- Remind each other how proud you both are that the "first day" is here
- If this is your child's first year at Village Montessori, we encourage you to visit the campus frequently before the school year begins to allow both of you to become familiar with the new setting. Generally, be reassuring as you talk with your child about the new school

On the first day of school, please do not linger too long in the class or react with alarm if your child is hesitant about the separation. It is very important to reassure your child about where you will be during the day, and by what time you will return for pickup in the afternoon. Some children may be sad for a little while during the first few days, but kind words and reassurance almost always alleviate their fears. The teachers are wonderful in helping children through these situations.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

The school year begins in August and concludes in May for toddlers and preprimary students. Please refer to your Village Montessori published calendar for exact dates. In the summer, we offer a summer camp program to those who wish to enjoy our school year-round.

The infant room is a full year-round program. However, the school will close on published days and holidays.

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

The school day begins for preprimary students at 8:45 a.m. Toddler students also begin at 8:45 a.m. Infants start at 8:30 a.m. Half-day student dismissal is at 11:30 a.m. for infants, 12 p.m. for toddlers and 12:15 p.m. for pre-primary. Full-day for infants ends at 2:30 p.m. preprimary student dismissal is at 3:00 p.m. and full-day toddler student dismissal is at 3:00 p.m. Before school care is offered from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. and after care runs from 3:00-6:00 p.m. daily. Routine and predictability is essential for the young child and we encourage all students to maintain consistent attendance. Coming to school daily increases your child's success.

Arriving at school promptly enables your child time transition into the school day. A child's tardiness slows the development of the child's socialization skills and impacts classroom routine. Please give your family ample time to arrive at school.

ABSENCES

If your child is unable to attend school due to illness or any other reason, please call the school office that morning at (305) 858-9199 and leave a message. Alternate number 305 858-8997.

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

Drop-off Procedure: To drop off students at Village Montessori Coral Way Campus, please drive from Coral Way east-bound and pass the school and turn right on to 14th ave, there you will make your first right into the drop off line and through the "Side Gate" Entrance located next door to the School on the west side of our building (14th Avenue) This parking lot is a one-way "horseshoe-shaped" turnabout that will lead you beside the building and then back onto Coral Way, east bound. The entry to the school grounds is a gate located within the green fence on the east side of this lot. Staff members will be waiting at the entry to greet you and escort your child from the car. To reassure younger children we recommend that you give a cheerful parting word to the child and then remind him or her that you (or another designated person) will be back to pick them up later. Please allow your child to carry his or her own backpack and lunchbox into class as this will help them to develop a healthy sense of self-sufficiency.

Pickup Procedures: Half-day pickup for Monet, Raphael and Michelangelo (Infant and toddler Rooms) is at 11:30 and parents need to pick up inside the building. (front entrance for Monet) For the Picasso and Degas children, half day dismissal will be done through the "Side Gate" drop off line from 12:00 noon to 12:15 p.m. Staff members will be waiting at the gate to greet you and escort your child to the car. Please wait behind cars that are loading.

Full time student pickup will be located at the "Side Gate" located next door to the school on the west side of our building from 2:45 p.m.-3:00 p.m. ; Staff members will be waiting at the gate to greet you and escort your child to the car. Please wait behind cars that are loading. Please be prompt. We kindly ask that during pick-up and drop-off parents please allow the staff to pay full attention to the business of supervising children. If you have questions about your child's day or other matters, please arrange to speak to the teacher at a later time.

To ensure the safety of our students, children will only be dismissed to people listed on their authorized pick up list with proper ID.

ILLNESS

Village Montessori is a community that is respectful of the health of others. Staying at home at the first sign of illness is important. Under no circumstances will parents be allowed to bring a sick child to school.

Students with infectious diseases, such as chicken pox or strep throat, must stay out of school until the contagious stage has passed. Children who have had head lice must be treated and nit free before returning to school. For the sake of other children's health, it is vital that you let the office know your child's diagnosis as soon as possible.

In the case of the common cold, the student should remain at home as long as there is: a fever present, a sore throat, eye infection, continuous and colored nasal secretions, or persistent chest cough. We determine the need to send a child home by both the symptoms listed above and by their behavior. Children who fall asleep during the morning work-cycle or who are unusually cranky or sad during the day (not their usual temperament) may be sent home. Students with signs of vomiting, diarrhea, head lice, or an undiagnosed skin rash should also remain home. Students will be sent home if any above symptoms appear while they are at school. They should remain home for at least the next 24 hours. If a fever is present, please keep your child home until they are fever free for 24 hours.

Village Montessori reserves the right to call and request that your child be picked up immediately due to illness. Your child will be kept comfortable in a designated isolation area while waiting for parent arrival.

Our illness policies will be strictly enforced, for the health, well being, and safety of all concerned.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF SUSPECTED COMMUNICABLE DISEASE

- Severe coughing, causing the child to become red or blue in the face or make a whooping sound

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- Difficult or rapid breathing
 - Stiff neck
 - Diarrhea or more than one abnormally loose stool
 - Temperature of 101 degrees Fahrenheit or higher
 - Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
 - Exposed open skin lesions
 - Unusually dark urine and/or grey or white stool
 - Yellowish skin or eyes
 - Head lice (to return to school, the child's parent needs to sign statement that treatment has occurred and be free of nits (louse eggs))

INFECTION CONTROL

Because infants are oral, (putting toys in the mouth, licking objects, putting hands in the mouth then touching items) germs are easily passed from one child to another. The staff strives to maintain a sanitary room. Montessori materials, dishes, chairs, and tables are all washed with hot soapy water and rinsed with a water/bleach solution to keep items sterile. We also ask that you take your child's sheet and blanket home every Friday to be washed. We recommend daily baths to decrease the risk of germs getting passed to family members.

MEDICATION

Except under extraordinary situations, we do not administer medications at school. Please do not send in any medication with your child, including aspirin or other over-

the-counter drugs or topical creams. Antibiotics and other medications should be scheduled so that dosages are taken when the student is at home. When children are so ill as to require frequent medication, they should remain at home. We also ask that students do not bring vitamins, flower essences, or other homeopathic remedies to school.

If your child requires the use of an EpiPen or similar allergic/asthmatic reactionary medication, please see the Director of School.

EMERGENCY CARE

In the event of any medical situation that requires immediate medical attention, we will want your child to see a doctor right away. Please remember to keep your Emergency/Medical Information form up to date in the office. **We must be able to reach you at any time during the school day.**

If your child needs immediate medical attention, and you cannot be reached, your enrollment agreement authorizes us to seek medical care in your name. We will call 911 and your child will be transported to the hospital.

All efforts will be made to contact a parent during this time.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Fire drills are held monthly. During a fire drill, all children are evacuated according to a predetermined route. We will transport infants in a portable crib. We will take attendance to have an accurate account of all children.

In the event of a county or state emergency, the school will follow the recommendations from Miami-Dade county or state agencies.

In the event of a hurricane or tornado warning, we will follow Miami-Dade County Public School procedures. Please tune into local radio or television stations for advisories. If you are instructed to pick up your child, please be prompt.

SAFETY AND SUPERVISION

Safety is the number one priority at Village Montessori. No child is ever left alone unsupervised. Our staff is constantly watching and directing children at all times and is capable of responding to emergencies at all times during the school day. This is the staff's primary responsibility. We request that you refrain from conversations with teachers while children are present. Please schedule an appointment to discuss any concerns or issues that may arise.

It is essential for the safety of the students that all parents follow the drop off and pick up procedures previously stated in this handbook. Please be safe as you enter and exit the parking lot and always buckle your child in a proper safety restraint.

INCIDENTS AND ACCIDENTS

If an incident or accident should occur on school grounds, it will be addressed immediately. If an incident report is warranted, you will be notified at pick up and asked to sign the proper documentation.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline means "to teach." At Village Montessori we use a positive discipline method. We acknowledge the things that our students are doing correctly and encourage them in that regard. Examples are: "You did it!" "Thank you for being so patient and cooperative." "Thank you for welcoming our visitor, that was so friendly." In addition, we use neutral moments to teach social skills through role plays, discussions, and skits so that the students practice appropriate language and actions before a situations arise. A large piece of our curriculum is "Grace and Courtesy" which includes control of movement and manners. If a conflict occurs, we coach students in conflict-resolution and community-meeting skills. If a pattern of misbehavior continues, then we will contact the parents to help determine the cause and find solutions.

We follow an approach based on empowerment, mutual respect, and trust. Neither corporal punishment nor physical or emotional intimidation are allowed. If anyone consciously or flagrantly violates the social contract regarding safety, kindness, and courtesy, our response is to identify the appropriate and natural consequences of these actions.

We have worked together to create a system of ground rules and discipline that is firm, fair, and consistent in order to help students maintain the school's values and character. Village Montessori expects full cooperation from students and families during school hours or whenever the student/family represents the school.

Village Montessori has the right to exclude any student from attendance, temporarily or permanently, under any circumstances deemed, in the sole and exclusive decision of the Director of School or her designee, to be interfering with health, safety, or educational development of the student, other students, faculty, or staff. If this happens, any prepaid tuition will be refunded on a pro-rated basis, less the enrollment deposit, which shall be non-refundable.

BITING POLICY

While biting is very upsetting for students and parents, it often occurs out of a child's frustration of being unable to express needs. At Village Montessori, we work with the child and parents to give alternative coping techniques. Parents need to be aware that if their child habitually bites, outside intervention may be required. The

parents of both the biter and the child who was bitten will be informed when a biting incident has taken place. Appropriate steps will be taken depending on the severity and frequency of the bite.

SCHOOL DRESS CODE

Village Montessori works very hard to create a safe physical environment and therefore asks that children wear the Village Montessori uniform including shoes that are suitable for running for outside. Open-toed or open-backed shoes, very loose fitting shoes or shoes with wheels place a child's physical safety at risk.

Village Montessori requires a school uniform daily for toddler and preprimary students. Purchase uniforms at Land's End at www.landsend.com or (800) 963-4816 or locally at Ibiley Uniforms at www.ibiley.com or 305 625-8050

Infant Students (Monet):

- Infants are not required to wear school collared polo shirts, as these shirts are often not available in small sizes.
- Infants should dress in comfortable clothing that they move about in the environment. Please do not send onesies.
- Walking infants should wear closed-toed shoes with non-slip soles for outdoors.

Toddler and Preprimary Students (Raphael, Michaelangelo, Degas & Picasso):

- Village Montessori collared polo in good repair
- Toddler and Preprimary students should wear closed shoes with non-slip soles for outdoors and socks for indoors.
- Khaki or navy blue shorts, skirts, or skorts (no jeans, no leggings)
 - Length: shorts/skirts/dresses should be suitable to the build and stature of the student and not be revealing
 - Fabric: close-weave cotton

Please label all students clothing.

All Age Levels:

- No clothing with holes or tears
- No outfits with tank tops or bare mid drifts
- If your daughter prefers to wear skirts, please have her wear shorts under them.

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- Jewelry can cause a significant distraction; therefore, we ask that students to limit jewelry. We are not responsible for any lost or broken jewelry.
 - Please keep an extra change of clothes to be kept in the backpack in case of an accident in a large Ziploc.

PERSONAL ITEMS

Montessori materials are the focus of our student's attention during the school day. We ask that all toys and items that can cause distraction be left at home or in the car. Precious items can easily get lost, misplaced or broken; therefore, we ask you to leave these items at home. Items related to the area of study, for example a bird's nest while studying birds, are welcome.

VISITING PROCEDURES

At Village Montessori we have an OPEN door policy for our parents. However, the first few months of the year our students are transitioning and we ask that you minimize your visits and use our webcams to see your children at any time

INFANT FEEDING TIME

Infants are individually fed or supervised at meal times. Meal time is a time for bonding between the teacher and the child. Each child is given proper attention and guidance throughout the meal.

Infants will be held and bottle-fed and encouraged to hold their own bottle. All breast milk or formula is handled in a sanitary manner, warmed with a bottle warmer, and then tested for proper temperature.

Older infants will sit at the table and will actively participate in their meal time. Children will be encouraged to feed themselves and drink from an open cup. Finger foods will be required for infants to eat during their meals. NO JAR Baby food or PUREE FOODS PLEASE.

LUNCH

Village Montessori toddler and preprimary students bring their lunch to school daily in a clearly labeled lunch box. Please choose a lunchbox that your child can open independently.

Village Montessori community places a great emphasis on the importance of good nutrition. Lunch is a very important part of both your child's school day and health education. We count on you to work with us to teach the students about health and nutrition.

We discourage the use of "Lunchables" and other items that contain highly processed foods and candy with excessive packaging.

With younger children, it is a good idea to prepare food in small, easy-to-handle servings, such as cutting sandwiches into quarters, slicing fresh fruit, and preparing bite-size slices of cheese. Warm food should be sent in a thermos. We don't have microwaves available to warm any food at our school.

Please do not send your child to school with sugary desserts or drinks, including soda. If you do want to send a prepared drink, please read the labels and send in milk or 100% fruit juice.

We recommend lunchboxes with built in cool packs. Please send juice or milk in a thermos or securely contained plastic container (no sippy cups please). We encourage you to place foods in a reusable or recyclable container.

Food sharing will not be allowed between students to ensure each child's safety and sanitation.

All uneaten food which can be contained will be sent home. Please monitor your child's lunchbox to determine likes or dislikes and to determine the correct amount of food to pack. We appreciate your care in preparing a healthy lunch.

LUNCH PROGRAM

Currently there is no lunch program at our school. We will be experimenting with a few options this semester to see if we can find the perfect healthy lunch program we have sought for so long.

SNACKS

Toddler and preprimary students have nutritional snacks in the morning and afternoons. The morning snack is provided through our community snack calendar. It is imperative that you bring your snack to share when you are assigned. The Department of Children & Families (DCF) requires snacks that include two of the four food groups. We have many food preparation lessons that include fruit, veggies, cheese, etc. We only serve water or 100% fruit juice.

FOOD ALLERGIES OR SPECIAL DIETARY RESRICTIONS

Some students may follow a special diet due to allergies, medical, religious, or personal reasons. Please be sure to notify the teachers if your child should avoid certain foods. This will be taken into account in planning snacks, or on days when the class prepares its own lunch. Village Montessori will accommodate unique allergies and medical conditions when possible.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

Parent Conferences: There will be two scheduled conferences throughout the school year. These conferences will occur at the beginning of the year and at the end. The child's individual teacher will send out conference notices. If at any time during the year you wish to schedule an additional conference, please contact your child's teacher to make arrangements. During school hours our staff is attending to the children, so we ask that specific questions are addressed during conference time.

Parent Seminars: Village Montessori firmly believes that Montessori is a way of life that should be lived out at home as well as in the classroom. It is imperative that the ideas your child encounters at Village Montessori be fostered at home. Village Montessori will offer parent seminars to help parents gain insight on the teachings of Maria Montessori and to acquire a better understanding of what their child is accomplishing within the unique Montessori environment. These seminars will further help parents to promote Montessori at home and in all areas of the child's life. Notices will be sent out as to the dates and times. Please make it a point to attend, as these seminars provide valuable information.

PARENT COMMUNICATIONS

Take Home Folders: Your child will have a personal take home folder sent home every day for the infants & toddlers and every Friday for preschoolers. Inside the folder is your child's work for the week, monthly snack calendar, and important correspondence from the school. The empty folders should be returned every Monday.

SCHOOL PETS

Village Montessori invites parents to bring their children to visit our school pets. You are welcome to come visit our turtle, "Donatella", or our parakeet, "Prince"

SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

Village Montessori is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination within all programs and activities on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, sex, age, disability, national origin, or marital status. In addition, sexual harassment of employees or students is specifically prohibited as a form of illegal discrimination under law.

Village Montessori adheres to a strict policy prohibiting sexual harassment which is to be defined as: unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors, and other verbal physical conduct of a sexual nature when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual's work or learning performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or school environment.

Sexual harassment as defined above, may include, but is not limited to the following: A) uninvited letters, phone calls, or materials of sexual nature; B) uninvited or deliberate touching, leaning over, cornering, pinching, or tickling; C) uninvited sexually suggestive looks or gestures; D) uninvited pressures for sexual favors; E) uninvited pressures for dates; F) uninvited sexual teasing, jokes, remarks, or questions; G) an "environment" which includes pictures or articles portraying men and women as sex objects; and H) attempt at rape or assault.

It is the commitment of Village Montessori to create a climate free of sexual harassment, and the school will take measures on a continuing basis, which can assure that, through education, information and sensitization, the staff and students of Village Montessori are aware of the unacceptable nature of sexual harassment in any forms.

Any person who believes that he or she has suffered sexual harassment shall report such to the Director of School who shall be the "complaint officer" for sexual harassment complaints. It is recognized that reports may be made by teachers, nonprofessional staff members, students, or parents who may have been informed of an incident or circumstance which could rise to the level of sexual harassment.