



PARENT HANDBOOK

STATEMENT OF
SCHOOL POLICIES



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I. General Policies and Rights

I.A. Introduction

This document contains the policies and procedures of Montessori Stepping Stones. It is meant to serve as a reference guide. It is not meant to cover every aspect of school/childcare or every situation which might arise. Parents should feel free to contact the school administrators with questions concerning the contents of this statement.

Montessori Stepping Stones reserves the unilateral right to add, delete, or amend the policies and procedures in this statement upon 30 days written notice to parents.

This statement of school policies is the exclusive property of Montessori Stepping Stones and is intended for the use of the parents of enrolled children. This statement may not be copied or distributed to any third party without the express written permission of Montessori Stepping Stones.

I.B. Nondiscrimination Policy

Montessori Stepping Stones will maintain and conduct all practices relating to enrollment, discipline, and all other terms and benefits of childcare services provided in a manner which does not discriminate against any child, parent or family on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex or handicap.

I.C. Admission

Families may enroll their child in Montessori Stepping Stones only after a consultation and tour with the school director. When space is limited, priority is given to current students and their siblings. Children must be enrolled as Montessori students before becoming eligible to use our childcare program. The student's file must contain all completed paper work including the physical and immunization record before attending his/her first day of school.

I.D. Withdrawal by Parent(s)

The school requires a minimum two weeks notice written notice in case of withdrawal. Tuition is due during the two week notice period, whether or not the child attends school during that time. If two weeks written notice is not received, a fee equal to two weeks tuition will be due to the school.

I.E. Termination Rights

Families will be asked to withdraw a child from the school only after much serious consideration has been given to the safety and welfare of the child and his/her classmates. In this event a written notice will be provided to the family. Parents will participate in resolving these concerns by working closely with the teaching staff for a minimum of two weeks. The resolution period may be shortened if the child's continued participation in the program creates a direct threat to the safety of your child, another child in the school, or a staff member. In the event that the school requests you to withdrawal, tuition will be adjusted to match the exact days of attendance.

Inappropriate parent conduct and unpaid tuition/childcare fees are also grounds for termination. Parents must be aware that adults serve as role models for children. Additionally, Montessori Stepping Stones is responsible for protecting the children in its care, and for providing a safe workplace for staff members. Therefore, it is critical that while on school property, parents conduct themselves in a professional and rational manner at all times. The following actions are grounds for immediate dismissal (this is partial list): acts of violence (including assault and battery), harassment of or threats against the staff or any child, possession of illegal substances or firearms, verbal or physical abuse of any staff member or child, or the use of profanity.



I.F. Confidentiality

Each child has a right to confidentiality. All information pertaining to children in the program, including all reports, records, and data are confidential and used for internal purposes only. Information pertaining to children enrolled in the program will not be released to third parties without the express written permission of the parent(s), unless required by statute, court order, or licensing mandate.

II. School Grounds

II.A. Campus

Our campus includes three buildings. We own the center building located at 174 Cass Avenue that opened in September 2000. We refer to this as our **main** building. It houses our elementary students, our school library, a primary classroom, extended day kindergarten, and contains the childcare programs for students enrolled in our preschool, kindergarten, and elementary programs. It is also used for our summer program. We host our parent meetings at this location. Please use the intercom at the side door to enter this building.

We lease space in the church building for our “primary classrooms” which is the multi-age grouping of children from three to six years old. We also use the Fellowship Hall of the church building for rainy-day playtimes, elementary physical education, and our stage performances. The rear north door, located under the large awning, is our designated entrance to the church building.

Our third building is located at 178 Cass Avenue on the west side of our main building. This building houses the infant/toddler classrooms. Each room has its own entrance door located near the front parking lot.

II.B. Parking Policy

The front parking lot for Montessori Stepping Stones, at 174 Cass Ave., consists of a total of four (4) parking spaces, which must be strictly reserved due to safety issues. We require that all preschool, kindergarten, and elementary families drop off and pick up their children via the large back parking lot of the Presbyterian Church. Infant and toddler families should use the front parking lot of their building at 178 Cass Ave. or the large back parking lot of the Presbyterian Church.

II.C. Parking Lot Safety

Please assist us in providing an extremely safe environment for our students. We ask that you always park your car in the painted parking spaces. We cannot have cars pulling up to the entrance door of the church or too close to the playground gate. Cars and children can be unpredictable, so we want to keep some distance between them!

We also ask that you supervise your child carefully as you walk to and from your car and as you visit with other parents. We are teaching the children that they may never step into the parking lot without an adult. Regardless of how old and mature your child becomes, it is still necessary for an adult to walk him all the way to the childcare door, classroom door, etc. There are occasions when the room will be empty because of a special event. Please make sure you always see the teachers before leaving your child.

In addition, as part of our safety plan, children are not allowed to walk through the building without the supervision of an adult. Although it is tempting to send your child upstairs or downstairs to obtain his belongings, we must ask you to walk with him/her.



II.D. Dogs

We must ask families to leave their beloved pets in their cars while dropping off and picking up students from school. Some children are frightened by or allergic to dogs.

III. Financial Policies

III.A. Tuition and Childcare Payments

September tuition payments are due by the first day of school. This is your second of ten equal installments. All other payments are due on the first day of each month ending with May 1st. A late fee of \$20.00 will be added to payments made after the 10th day of the month. The late fee must be included along with the delinquent payment. In addition, a \$25.00 late fee will be added to any part-time childcare bill not paid within 30 days of the invoice date.

To contact us regarding your tuition or childcare charges, please call the office at (586) 465-4260 or use our school email address: office@montessoristeppingstones.com

III.B. Receipts/Statements

The school will issue a statement each month which will also serve as a receipt for each tuition and childcare payment made. Please retain these statements for your own income tax purposes. Parents who use childcare on an occasional basis will receive an invoice once a month. Childcare charges and payments will also be reflected in your monthly statement. Please do not ask the school to reissue this information as this is a very time consuming task for our administrators.

To contact us regarding your tuition or childcare charges, please call the office at (586) 465-4260 or use our school email address: office@montessoristeppingstones.com

III.C. Late Pick-Up Fees

Our school closes at 6:00 PM. It is our expectation that all students will be gone from the building by closing time. On those rare occasions when an emergency prevents you from picking your child up before 6:00 PM, you will be charged according to the following schedule. It is your responsibility to pay this fee **within five business days**, if the fee is unpaid at that point and we have to bill you, late charges may also apply. There are no exceptions to this policy.

6:01 – 6:15 PM.	\$25.00
6:16 – 6:30 PM.	\$50.00
6:31 – 6:45 PM.	\$75.00

*Please see section IV.G. Late Pick-Up Policy for more information regarding picking up children late.

III.D. Credit Card and Online Payments

You may pay your tuition or childcare invoices by credit card either over the phone by calling the office at (586) 465-4260, or online at the bill payment website: <https://www.intuitbillpay.com/montessoristeppingstones>. A 3% usage fee will be charged for all credit card/debit card payments.

IV. Security Procedures and Policies



IV.A. Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Unless your child arrives during the designated ten-minute time slots at the beginning of each class session, you will need to accompany him/her to the door of his/her classroom or the childcare room. Please do not ever send your child into the building alone regardless of how old he/she is. Make sure that one of the teachers sees your child before leaving. If you are dropping off or picking up your child from the main building (174 Cass Ave.), please use the intercom located next to the door. On the rare occasion when you need to come inside the church building to pick up your child, please tap on the classroom door to let the teacher know you are there. We ask that you wait in the hallway while your child puts his/her work away. Please remember to be respectful of your child by waiting patiently for a few minutes for him/her to join you.

IV.B. Promptness

We need to ask all families to be extremely conscientious about arriving on time for school. Every moment of class is valuable learning time. Elementary students need to develop a sense of responsibility about timeliness. Kindergarten and preschool students begin their day with presentations of the newest materials. Please help us make the most of these precious opening moments by arriving promptly every day:

8:20 – 8:30 All morning classes
12:20 – 12:30 For PM preschool classes

IV.C. Before and After Care

All students in need of care before or after their Montessori class session will go to the Daisy Room (lower level of the main building). Please use the back parking lot of the church and follow the pathway to the east side door. You will be buzzed in after speaking into the intercom located at the east side door.

Students who are not enrolled in our full-time with childcare programs are welcome to use childcare on an as needed basis at the hourly fee of \$9.50 per hour. Students who are not picked up promptly from school at the end of their class session will be charged the hourly fee.

IV.D. Security System

Our school has an exceptional safety system in place. Please help us keep your children safe and secure by always following these procedures:

For Main Building and Church Building-

- Please speak directly into the intercom by the door. Say the name of the child you are here to pick up (or your purpose). For example: “This is Nancy. I am here to pick up Samantha. And the password is ____”
- Each parent or caregiver **MUST** identify themselves before they enter the building.
- Do **NOT** hold the door open for others. Each person must be identified.

For the Infant/Toddler Building- Enter code into keypad.

Following these procedures will ensure that teachers know who is in the building at all times.

IV.E. Releasing Children

We have a very strict policy of releasing our students only to authorized persons. If you expect someone other than yourself to pick up your child from school, we ask that you list them on your child’s information card. It would be helpful to give us notice on the particular day in question. We will ask for picture identification from anyone we do not recognize, even the child’s own parents, so please remember to explain our policy to anyone picking up your child from school.



IV.F. Personal Babysitting and Transportation by Staff

Our school policy strictly prohibits any staff member from providing private babysitting services to families enrolled at Montessori Stepping Stones. This policy applies whether the babysitting is paid or unpaid. In addition, teachers may not provide rides to and from school for any enrolled child. This applies to any transportation outside of planned school field trips.

V.G. Late Pick-Up Policy

Our school closes at 6:00 PM. It is our expectation that all students will be gone from the building by closing time. On those rare occasions when an emergency prevents you from picking your child up before 6:00 PM, you will be charged according to the following schedule. It is your responsibility to pay this fee **within five business days**, if the fee is unpaid at that point and we have to bill you, late charges may also apply. There are no exceptions to this policy.

6:01 – 6:15 PM.	\$25.00
6:16 – 6:30 PM.	\$50.00
6:31 – 6:45 PM.	\$75.00

If a student has not been picked up by 6:45 PM and alternate arrangements have not been made with the school, the school will first attempt to contact the student’s parent(s). If the school is unable to contact a parent, the school will contact alternate authorized persons listed on the child’s release card. If neither a parent nor an alternate authorized person has picked up the child by 7:00 PM and alternate arrangements have not been made with the school, the school will contact the police/county protective services for the safety and protection of the child.

IV.H. Playtime Policy

With the exception of rainy weather, we play outside every day throughout the entire year, including winter. If you feel that your child is not healthy enough to go outside, please do not send him or her to school that day. We do not have staff available to remain inside with a single child during outside playtime. Please be assured that we will not take the children out to play if the weather conditions are so extreme that they pose a safety or health risk such as very icy conditions or frostbite. **We** make that judgment each day around 11:00, so we ask that you continue to send all of the winter play clothing regardless of weather reports. We are often surprised by a nice day and want to be able to take advantage of the chance to go outside. On occasions of inclement weather, we utilize Fellowship Hall for inside playtime.

If your child attends school for a full day, he or she will participate in midday playtime or physical education. Children who remain at school for aftercare will have a second outside playtime, weather permitting, at the end of the school day. If these hours fall outside of your child’s scheduled class time, you may leave him or her for either playtime by informing the staff in advance. You will be charged the hourly childcare rate for any time your child is at school outside of their schedule.

When picking up your child from the playground, please remember that only teachers may open the gate. The only adults allowed on the playground are staff members. Just as we do in our classrooms, we ask that non-staff members remain on the outside of the door/gate. This will help us maintain our Montessori environment, even outdoors. Playing in the parking lot is strictly prohibited.

IV.I. Emergency School Closings

Since we do not rely on buses, our school closes only in the most extreme weather. At the very least childcare will remain open for parents who must go to work. Please feel free to let your child be absent whenever you are concerned about road conditions. It is not necessary to notify us of your child’s absence due to weather. We must keep the phone lines open and the staff members need to remain focused on the children who are in attendance.

On the rare occasion when our school needs to close (perhaps due to loss of electricity, fire damage, etc.) our school will be listed on WDIV TV/Local 4 News and www.clickondetroit.com. There will be no adjustment of tuition



unless the school is closed for more than five consecutive business days. In this case, parents will be relieved of tuition costs for those days in excess of five business days. Parents are obligated to resume use of the school once it resumes operation. Nothing in this provision alters the contractual provision relating to the required length of notice for withdrawal of a child from the program.

V. Clothing and Personal Belongings

V.A. School Clothing

What your child wears to school can have a positive or negative influence on his day. Although belts, buckles, and suspenders look really cute, it is best to avoid them since most children struggle with them in the bathroom. We want to encourage independence and self-sufficiency since they are the roots of good self-esteem. When children have to rely on adults to do all of these basics for them, it greatly undermines their development.

Shirts with pictures of super heroes, monsters, cartoon characters, etc., promote rowdy behavior. Decorations, jewelry, and hair accessories can be serious distractions to your child's ability to concentrate. Again, it is best to avoid them. Simple, comfortable play clothing is your very best option when it comes to dressing your child for success at school. Please note that Montessori Stepping Stones assumes no responsibility for damage to a child's clothing.

V.B. Extra Clothing

All children, regardless of age, may have an occasional bathroom accident, spill food on themselves, or get wet outside. Kindergarten and preschool students should carry a change of clothing in their backpacks on a daily basis. Elementary students may choose to have a change of clothing in a plastic bag to hang on their coat-hooks instead.

V.C. Winter Clothing

If your child attends school between 11:30 and 12:00, even as an occasional visitor, he or she will need to bring the following items in preparation to play outside in the cold:

1. warm winter coat
2. snow pants – these are good for added warmth even when there is no snow on the ground
3. boots for snow – must be good, waterproof style that seals the snow out and tightens around the top
4. **shoes** for inside – we do not allow children to wear boots inside for safety reasons
5. hat or hood
6. warm **mittens** – gloves are not as warm and are too hard for young children to put on independently (**waterproof** mittens are a must for the snow)
7. backpack – to help organize and carry everything
8. labels – every article **must** be tagged with your child's name; we have many identical items every year which cannot be identified unless they are labeled

If your child comes to school without the proper snow-play clothing, he or she will have to sit on the playground bench until playtime is over. We do not have the extra staff to keep anyone inside, and we cannot let a child get wet and, therefore, possibly frostbitten.

Please **dry** everything each evening so that it will be ready to wear again the next day. It is helpful to own two pairs of mittens since they are often hard to dry.

Children do not need to wear their snow pants and boots to walk from their car to the school or from the school to your car. It is time consuming and difficult to put these items on. They are just needed for the playground.

In spite of the effort it takes on your part and ours to get the children properly dressed and outside each day, it is worth it! We have fewer illnesses, and the children have a delightful time as they roll, crawl, slide, laugh, and love the cold outside and snow.



Children who **do not** attend school between 11:30 and 12:00 will not go out to play. These children do not need to be burdened with snow pants. If you send your child to school in snow boots, he or she will need shoes for the classroom.

V.D. Clothing Donations

As you prepare your child's fall wardrobe please consider passing some outgrown clothing to us. Bathroom accidents are a common occurrence for preschool-aged children, so we like to keep a nice supply of pants, underwear, and socks to fit children from three to six years old.

V.E. School Shoes

Proper shoes greatly impact your child's school day. We are working on motor development which is the true foundation of self-discipline. Therefore, we consider it essential that you provide your child with the following:

1. Classroom Shoes – This pair of shoes is to be kept at school. We highly recommend jazz or ballet dance shoes so that they can also be used for our stage work. Very thin tennis shoes (for indoors only) or rubber soled slippers are acceptable. Flip-flops, mules, and character slippers should be avoided.
2. Playground/Outside Shoes – Be sure to send your child to school in shoes that are conducive to physical education skills. Tennis shoes that are flexible, well-fitted, and not too bulky work best. Slip-ons, thick soles, high heels, open-toed sandals, and such are a detriment to your child's physical development and safety.

*Shoes with wheels are strictly prohibited on campus, including parking lots, due to safety and liability concerns.

*Winter boots are needed for both snow and mud.

V.F. Backpacks

We ask that you assist your child in being independent and organized by sending a backpack to school with him/her on a daily basis. Newsletters, school papers, shoes, lunches, boots, and snow pants can be very difficult to manage without a good backpack. Please make sure that your child's bag is large enough for his/her particular needs rather than one of the little novelty ones. Avoid wheeled backpacks as they are too cumbersome on the stairs. Every student must take home all of his/her belongings at the end of each school day.

V.G. Name Labels

It is extremely helpful to us when you write your child's name on the outside of his/her backpack and lunchbox. It is very difficult for teachers to sort out these items, and the children cannot always identify their own belongings when there are so many sets in a classroom. Jackets, sweaters, hats, mittens, boots, and anything else that is likely to be removed during the course of the day should be labeled on the inside tag. We suggest that you use a laundry pen for this purpose.

VI. Food and Nutrition

VI.A. Nutrition Policy

Because we are far more concerned with the whole development of our students than most traditional programs, it is very common for Montessori schools everywhere to implement a nutrition policy. Good nutrition in these times has become very complicated, so we rely on you to put some genuine thought and effort into your child's lunch. This includes the beverage.



In addition, we ask that you do not include dessert items in your child's lunch. Although some desserts can certainly be considered nutritious, they still present a problem in group settings. For example, many children will quickly eat the dessert item in their lunch box first; and, then, be too full to eat the other items. If a teacher does have the chance to stop the child from eating the dessert, he/she is apt to cry and have an unhappy lunch experience. We cannot judge which desserts are okay and which are not okay, so we ask that you just eliminate desserts entirely. Obviously, the rules must be the same for all of the children at school even if your own child happens to be a hearty eater. The question of which foods are considered to be dessert often arises. We rely on your good judgement to make decisions about foods that are "border line."

The microwave ovens are just for brief warm-ups, not frozen dinners. You may cook or thaw the dinner at your house first so that we can warm it in a moment or two. We don't have time to do more. Please limit your warm-ups to once per week.

VI.B. Lunch and Snack Policy

It is very common for young children to limit themselves to a few favorite foods. Therefore, we have our students bring their lunches from home in hopes that they will actually consume a reasonable quantity of food at this meal. We ask that you put some careful thought into your child's school lunches since good nutrition is an important aspect of mental and physical well being. We offer the following suggestions in hopes that they will serve as a helpful guideline to you:

1. Your goal is to pack a nutritious lunch containing foods which your child likes and will eat.
2. Allow your child to help choose the foods for his/her lunch. Work towards a time when your child will be able to do this task independently.
3. We have a microwave in each lunchroom and are able to warm (not cook) your child's lunch.
4. Use containers with tight lids so that we can send all leftovers home. This is your best way to judge if you are packing too much food or items that your child will not eat.
5. Desserts are not necessary and not allowed in lunchboxes. They cause problems in a group setting that we prefer to avoid.
6. We strongly suggest white milk, pure fruit juice, or water as a beverage. Sugary drinks should be avoided.
7. If your child needs to be encouraged to eat, try packing very small portions. Children are often more willing to eat a sandwich when the crust has been cut off. Try cutting things into interesting shapes or even decorating some food items.
8. Offer your child a variety of dips and spreads such as salad dressing for raw vegetables and cheese spread for crackers or bread sticks. It's more fun to eat food that the child handles and prepares.
9. For variety, consider packing foods such as pizza, hardboiled eggs, soup, yogurt, fish sticks, hot dogs, cheese and crackers, cream cheese, string cheese, cottage cheese, macaroni and cheese, rice dishes, spaghetti, and last night's dinner leftovers. Whole round foods such as hot dogs and grapes should be cut to avoid choking.
10. Keep sandwiches interesting by varying the bread: white, wheat, pita, buns, bagels, and muffins.
11. Try raw carrots, celery, cucumber, green pepper, and cherry tomatoes. Include dip if you like.
12. Try fresh, canned, and dried fruits such as apples, bananas, peaches, pears, plums, oranges, melon, berries, pineapple, raisins, prunes, apricots, fruit cocktail, etc.
 - Our school is a tree nut and peanut-free environment. Please see section VI.C. Nut-Free Policy.
 - Your snack week and birthday celebration snack must also comply with the school lunch and snack policy.



VI.C. Nut-Free Policy

Our school is a tree nut and peanut-free environment. This is necessary because we have students, in every program, whose allergies to tree nut and peanut products are very serious. These children could possibly have a reaction that would cause their throats to swell, making breathing extremely difficult.

We realize that this is an inconvenience to families with children who love to bring peanut butter sandwiches for lunch. We sincerely appreciate your assistance in helping to make our school safe for all children. Soy butter and sunflower butter are acceptable, safe alternatives. Please label the sandwich as “Soy Butter” so the teachers know.

VII. Health and Illness

VII.A. Illness Policy

If your child is ill, please keep him/her at home. A sick child does not fare well at school and spreads the germs to all of us. We keep our school very clean and sanitary. The children are taught to always wash their hands thoroughly before eating and after using the bathroom. This is the primary way to prevent the spread of viruses. You can greatly assist us in the formation of these good habits by reinforcing them at home.

Fever is an indication of illness. If your child runs a fever, he/she must stay at home for a **full 24 hours** after the fever is gone to be sure that he is no longer contagious. Please help us keep a healthy school by following this policy. As a result, your own child will become ill far less often.

The school will notify you of any accidents, suspected illnesses, or other changes observed in the health of your child during the school day. We will also advise parents if their child has been exposed to a communicable disease (chicken pox, etc.) while in our care, so that you may monitor him/her for symptoms. If your child does become ill while at school, the teachers will comfortably isolate him/her in an area where they can be supervised and will immediately contact a parent, who will be required to pick up the child within one hour of notification.

Montessori Stepping Stones will take the necessary precautions to contain and prevent the spread of contagious illnesses or diseases. However, the school cannot guarantee that contagious illnesses or diseases will be completely contained or will not be spread to other children. Parents must recognize that, while in school, it is possible that their child may be exposed to a contagious illness or disease.

By entering this agreement with Montessori Stepping Stones, a parent is giving their permission for the school to call 911 in the event of a serious emergency. Any cost or charges incurred for the emergency are the sole responsibility of the parent(s).

VII.B. Calling In Absences

We do not require that you phone in absenteeism unless your child has a fever or you need to report a serious illness or a communicable disease such as chicken pox, pink eye, strep throat, lice, etc. Please make all phone calls to the office at (586) 465-4260. If the information needs to be communicated to the classroom teachers, the office staff will do so at an appropriate time.

VII.C. Fever-Free Policy

To help put a stop to the spread of viruses, we use the following guidelines:

1. If a child runs a fever at school, we must send him/her home.
2. A child must be fever-free for at least 24 hours before returning to school. Your child needs to have a normal temperature with no fever-reducing medication such as Tylenol in his/her body for a full 24 hours. Therefore, if we send a child home with a fever one day, he/she would not be able to attend school the next day.



3. If you wish to have your child return to school before 24 fever-free hours have lapsed, you will need a doctor's note stating that the child is not contagious.
4. Non-prescription medication cannot be given without the written permission of your doctor on his/her letterhead stationary. The doctor's note can be dated for an extended period of time so that you do not have repeated bills.
5. We do not ever, even with a doctor's note, administer Tylenol since it is used to control fever and could inadvertently mask a contagious virus.

VII.D. Medication Policy

If your child has passed the contagious stage of their illness, we will administer his/her medication. You must fill out an official medication form. Other written messages are not sufficient. In addition, the medication must be prescribed by a doctor and in an original prescription container. We strictly adhere to the following:

- Prescription medication will be given or applied ONLY with prior written permission from the parent.
- Prescription medication must be in the original container and have the pharmacy label indicating the physician's name, child's name, instructions, name and strength of the medication, and shall be given in accordance with those instructions.
- We are not allowed to administer the first dose of a new prescription due to the possibility of an adverse reaction.
- We are not allowed to administer any other over-the-counter medication including cough syrup, aspirin, etc. If your child needs something of this nature, please ask your doctor to prescribe it.

VII.E. Lice Head Checks

Head lice has become a common problem in our society during recent years. Many schools experience such huge epidemics that they have to occasionally close down. We need your help to **prevent** this problem in our school.

It is critical that every family do weekly head checks at home. It would take endless hours to do a truly thorough job a school, and it is likely that we would only be able to catch the most advanced cases. We need our time to teach, so please be responsible about doing the following:

1. Take your child to a licensed salon that specializes in head lice: Jamie's Lice Angels 586-323-6080, Rapunzels 586-698-2453 or Lice Doctors 800-224-2537

OR

2. Go through your child's hair very slowly and carefully in extremely bright light.
3. Look at every strand of hair from the scalp to the end.
4. The nits (eggs) of the louse are almost invisible in the early stages, so keep a magnifying glass handy to check anything suspicious.
5. The nits are as tiny as the tip of a pin and cling to the hair like a cocoon on a stem. You may only see a glimmer of light reflected off of the clear nits. It is hard to see them, so look carefully!
6. If you discover lice, please report it to us promptly so that we can try to prevent an epidemic.



7. Contact your doctor for prescription shampoo to kill the lice and nits.
8. Your child must be completely nit-free before returning to school. We cannot take a chance on letting a nit hatch during the school day which would expose others.
9. A teacher will need to check any child who is returning to school after being treated for lice. You will need to contact the school for an appointment to do this check since it cannot conflict with arrival time, etc.

VIII. Communication

VIII.A. Phone Calls

Please make all phone calls, regardless of the subject matter, to the office at (586) 465-4260. If the information needs to be communicated to the classroom teachers, the office staff will do so at an appropriate time.

We do not require that you phone in absenteeism unless your child has a fever or you need to report a serious illness or a communicable disease such as chicken pox, pink eye, strep throat, lice, etc.

VIII.B. E-mail Communication

To email a message to us regarding your tuition or childcare charges, messages or questions, please use our school email address: office@montessoristeppingstones.com.

If your message is directed to a specific teacher or staff member, please put their name in the email subject line.

VIII.C. Staff Communication

General messages – All messages or special instructions should be in writing rather than verbal. We will post your note so that all appropriate staff members are aware of the information. We keep paper and pencils handy for your use.

Email messages - We ask that you use only the school email address: office@montessoristeppingstones.com if you would like to send a message via email. If your message is for a specific person, please put their name in the subject line and the office staff will ensure that the appropriate person receives the message.

Questions regarding your child - We know that all of you are naturally curious, and sometimes even anxious, to know how your child is doing in school. Please keep in mind that every one of our students comes into contact with several different teachers throughout the day. Therefore, no single teacher can ever answer the question of how a particular child is doing without first checking with each staff member involved. We refrain from quick, casual responses. In addition to our scheduled conferences, we make a practice of informing parents of any concerns we may have. If you have a genuine need to check on your child, we ask that you write a note. We will respond as soon as everyone involved has a chance to give some thoughtful input to your question.

Along this same line, please be sensitive to the fact that the teachers are working when you drop off and pick up your child. If you engage the teacher in conversation, she will not be able to supervise and work effectively with the children.

VIII.D. Classroom Observations

Each classroom is set up with an observer's station. You are welcome to come in and sit down for as long as you wish and as often as you wish. The children know that the person sitting in the observer's chair has come to watch them do their work. The teachers of the classroom will do their best to check with you in case you have a question. It is necessary to limit observers to one at a time. If you wish to book an appointment, please call. If you want to pop in spontaneously, you may find that someone else is already using the chair; but, you are always welcome to take that chance.



VIII.E. Parent-Teacher Conferences

As a Montessori school, we make every effort to meet the needs of our individual students and their parents. The school will schedule a formal conference with each family during the month of February. If, at any time, you desire an additional conference or conferences, we ask that you take the initiative to schedule those meetings with your child's teachers.

Please be assured that you will always be contacted in the event of a problem with your child. We are genuinely committed to each student's well being, and we would never neglect to identify important issues or fail to involve you in the resolution of such. In addition, every family in our school can expect to hear from their child's teacher by phone or through a note at least once during the first semester of school.

IX. Classroom Events

IX.A. Going Out Trips (Elementary Students)

Montessori education is built upon firsthand experiences. In addition to the manipulative materials and experiential activities of the classroom, it is extremely valuable for the elementary students to "go out" into the real world in a variety of ways. As a benefit of this practice, the children also practice the skills of using a phone book, card file, note pads, camera, stationary for thank you notes, etc.

These going out trips arise somewhat spontaneously based upon a genuine need in the classroom. Other trips are planned by students who are involved in a particular study. Some examples are:

1. picking up flowers from the local florist to use for the flower arranging work in the classroom
2. selecting an animal from the pet store for the study of zoology
3. buying special supplies for a specific art lesson; perhaps charcoal for sketches
4. visiting the local bakery to observe cake decorating and report back to the class
5. purchasing a book for a special unit of study
6. doing the classroom laundry at the Laundromat

These trips involve **about three** students at a time. Whenever possible, the children should walk with a teacher or parent volunteer to their destination. We are very fortunate to be located so close to downtown Mt. Clemens since it has become a real jewel of a little city. Of course, there are times when we need to drive to a particular location.

The outing begins with a meeting of the teacher and selected students. They plan the trip together making the necessary phone calls for information and directions. The children make a list of questions and reminders, gather the correct amount of money, and pack the camera and notepads. Upon reaching their destination, the children continue to take the lead by asking questions, making a purchase, counting money, taking notes and pictures, etc. After returning to the classroom, these students might prepare a report for their classmates and write thank you notes as appropriate.

Because of the spontaneity of these going out trips, we ask that you give permission (using the going out trip permission form provided to you by your classroom teachers) for your child to walk with a teacher or volunteer parent throughout the entire school year.



You will receive a phone call or voicemail message if the trip involves the use of a vehicle. State law now requires a booster seat for all children 8 years old or younger or children under 4'9" tall. A booster seat must be left at the school on these special occasions, if required, for your child.

IX.B. Field Trips (Kindergarten and Elementary Students)

Montessori Stepping Stones will occasionally take kindergarten and elementary children on field trips to see such events as plays and art exhibits. Prior to each field trip, parents will be required to fill out a form giving their child permission to go on a specific field trip. If you do not give permission for your child to go on the field trip, your child will remain at the school under supervision (or you can make alternate arrangements during the designated time). Again, booster seats must be left at the school, if required, for your child to attend these events.

IX.C. Special In-Classroom Events

Individual classrooms may occasionally have special events such as guest speakers or presentations. We cannot make accommodations for all parents to attend; therefore, out of fairness to all students and their families, we must ask that parents do not attempt to observe or attend these special occasions.

X. Birthdays

X.A. Classroom Birthday Celebrations

We would very much like to celebrate every student's birthday here at school. Summer birthdays should be scheduled at the halfway point during the winter months. We also have to be cautious about scheduling **December** and **May** birthdays because of our music rehearsals. Please schedule an appointment well in advance so that we can plan around conflicts. It is not at all necessary to celebrate exactly on your child's birthday.

We will give you specific, written instructions regarding your visit when you schedule the appointment. You will want to make a timeline to present and prepare a nutritious snack with your child. The ceremony we use is actually a Montessori history lesson, and every child deserves to be honored as he carries the globe around the "sun" measuring the years of his life on Earth. This is also your best opportunity to observe your child's class session, so please plan to stay for approximately three hours.

Your birthday child deserves your undivided attention on their special day. Therefore, no other siblings or children, even alumni students, should attend the celebration. We have found that it is best for only parents to attend.

Would you like to purchase a book in honor of your child's birthday? Your child could inscribe the book with her name, birth date, and even add a sentiment. We would place the book in our school's growing library as a memento of the special occasion. Please ask if you need a suggestion regarding the selection of an appropriate book.

X.B. Private Birthday Parties

If you are planning a birthday party for your child and would like to invite some of the children from school, please mail the invitations to their homes. Your school directory will give you all of the necessary information. We have a very strict policy of not passing out invitations at school. We find that many misperceptions and hurt feelings can be avoided this way.

XI. Fundraisers

XI.A. Wreath Sale

Our annual sale of holiday wreaths is the *only* major fundraiser for Montessori Stepping Stones. We are very hopeful that every family will put some real effort into this worthwhile project. Please consider the following points:



1. Our only other source of income is tuition which must go toward the basic operating expenses of the school. We must rely on this fundraiser as our primary method of acquiring new materials and supplies.
2. Montessori materials are unique and wonderful, but they are very expensive. For example, one item such as a puzzle map costs over \$100.00.
3. It is very important to replace the Montessori materials as they begin to wear. Children are inspired to handle beautiful items with great care and respect, and it truly enhances the learning experience to work with fresh, new materials.
4. Every single dollar that is earned from this fundraiser will be used to pay for replacement materials and supplies or add new items to our extensive curriculum. All of the children will benefit from your fund raising efforts.
5. If you prefer not to sell the wreaths, you could make a cash donation to the fund raiser instead. We receive approximately fifty percent profit for each item that is sold.
6. Your support of our school and your work on this project is greatly valued and appreciated. More importantly, you directly impact the quality of our program by making it possible to add and replace materials as they are needed and pay for our special supplies. Our wonderful school exists, to a great degree, because of **your** continued support!

XI.B. Montessori Wells of Love

The mission of Montessori Wells of Love is to engage Montessori students worldwide to partner with Amman Imman in building permanent water sources for the people in the Azawak region of Niger.

Maria Montessori's vision that real work brings real knowledge will be actualized as students put study into action.

All of the children in our school enjoy bringing in small contributions of money to help build the wells. This ongoing project allows the children to develop empathy, concern for others, and a sense of responsibility towards those less fortunate.

XI.C. Giving Tree

You may have already noticed the paper trees located just inside the entrances to 174 and 178 Cass – our “Giving Trees.” Although our teachers appreciate the thoughtful gifts we receive from many of our students during the holidays and other special occasions such as your child's own birthday or an end of the year thank you gift, the greatest gift you can give any teacher is a contribution to her classroom. In turn, this type of gift benefits you child directly and many Montessori students for years to come.

Each of the paper leaves on the Giving Tree represents an item or supply that is desired for a particular classroom. These materials may be a new addition to the room or something that needs to be replaced after many years of use. The paper leaf contains all of the information needed to make the purchase. Most items are from our favorite teacher supply catalogs and can be shipped to your home or directly to the school. Remove the leaf from the tree so that you have all of the information you need. This also helps to avoid receiving duplicate items.

The requests cover a very wide range of prices. You may choose one or more leaves if you desire. Some of the items may be quite expensive, as Montessori materials often are. In these cases, you may want to get together with other families to purchase the gift.

If you are considering presenting your child's teacher(s) with a gift, please consider this option. We will leave items posted on the tree all year long.



XI.D. Box Tops for Education

We have decided to participate in the General Mills Box Tops for Education program. Each little logo that we collect is worth ten to fifteen cents in cash for our school. If you use these products, please save these box tops for us. Remember to ask family members, friends, and co-workers to save the logos for you!

XI.E. Paper Recycling

By collecting paper products, we can teach children the value of recycling and divert thousands of pounds of paper from the landfill. To support this effort, each classroom at Montessori Stepping Stones is collecting paper for recycling. We would like to invite you to collect your household paper products to be placed in the large green and yellow recycling bin in the parking lot behind the church.

* Please note that this is not a fundraiser for our school. It is a community service project. We will not receive any profits from the recycling.

The following materials are accepted:

- Magazines
- Shopping catalogs
- Newspaper
- Office & School Papers
- Mail
- Shredded paper

The following items are not accepted

- Books
- Cardboard
- Telephone Directories



XII. Discipline

As Montessorians we believe that children should be given lessons in how to conduct themselves just as they are given lessons in math or language. These are called the lessons of “grace and courtesy.” The teacher gives demonstrations of how to walk slowly, sit properly, carry a chair, ask permission to touch someone, and so forth. These lessons are endless and are given daily throughout the year and year after year.

The adults in the children’s environment must become exaggerated role models of the most polite, caring, patient, and controlled people. It is critical that teachers become masters of calm, quiet voices, and touch children in a gentle, nurturing manner. Young children are inclined to imitate what they see and hear, and pick up these attributes in a short amount of time.

The Montessori environment is arranged to meet the needs of the children rather than asking the children to adapt to the environment. For example, we begin each school year by removing all materials from the shelves because we know that the children could not resist touching and playing with these items. The materials are brought into the classroom a few at a time so that the children can be taught how to use and care for them before handling them. There may also be an occasion when the teacher needs to remove a material from the room for a while because children are mistreating it.

Our school has implemented a “peace curriculum” for all of our students. The lessons begin with the youngest children learning that they have kind and gentle hands. They practice asking permission before touching another person and how to touch appropriately.

We take many measures to assist our students in behaving in a positive, appropriate manner. It is always best to emphasize what a child is doing correctly and build upon those elements of his character. If much focus is placed upon negative, undesirable behaviors; they seem to intensify. On the occasion when negative behavior must be dealt with, we discuss how the child wants to resolve the problem using:

Discussion to Resolve a Problem

1. What do you think happens when _____?

Child responds:

2. How do you want to fix this _____?

Child responds:

3. Okay. So your idea is to _____.

Child responds:

4. Now we have a plan. Sounds like it will work!

* If problem occurs again with the same child, say: Uh-Oh looks like we need a new plan.

Always use a quiet, non-threatening voice when speaking to a child.



XI. Signature Page

Families who carefully follow our school policies make us feel that they support us in all ways! We sincerely thank you and believe that the children benefit tremendously from our teamwork.

Please detach and return to the school

I certify that I have received a copy of the Montessori Stepping Stones Parent Handbook: Statement of School Policies. I understand that it is my responsibility to read, and follow the policies outlined in this handbook.

Signature

Date

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Printed Name