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General Policies and Rights

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.

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.

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, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, age, or disability.

Admission

Families may enroll their child in Montessori Stepping Stones only after a consultation and tour. 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 before attending his/her first day of school.

Withdrawal by Parents

The school requires a minimum two weeks notice written notice in case of withdrawal. Tuition is due during the two weeks 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.

Termination Rights

Rarely, and only after much serious consideration has been given to the safety and welfare of a child and his/her classmates, a family may be asked to withdraw a child from the school. Parents will first work to resolve these concerns by working closely with the teaching staff. In the event that the school requests you to withdraw, tuition will be adjusted to match the exact days of attendance.

Inappropriate parent conduct and unpaid tuition/childcare fees are also grounds for withdrawal. 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 always conduct themselves in a professional and rational manner. The following are examples of actions that are grounds for immediate dismissal: 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.



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 parents, unless required by statute, court order, or licensing mandate.

School Grounds

Campus

Our campus includes four buildings. The first building is located at 174 Cass Avenue. We refer to this as our main building. It houses our lower elementary students, our school library, a primary classroom, extended day kindergarten, and contains the childcare programs for students enrolled in our preschool and kindergarten programs. It is also used for our primary summer program. Please use the intercom at the east side door to enter this building.

Our second location is the leased space at 168 Cass Avenue in the First Presbyterian Church building for our other 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 east side door 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.

Our fourth building is located at 67 Union Street. This building, called Next Step, houses our upper school (upper elementary and middle school). It is also used for the childcare and summer programs for all elementary and middle school students. It is located on Union Street on the north west corner of the church parking lot. Please use the south door facing the church parking lot.

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.

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. There are occasions when your child's room will be empty because of a special event. Please make sure you always see the teachers before leaving your child.

Dogs/Animals

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.



Financial Policies

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 \$25.00 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@montessoristepingstones.com

Receipts/Statements

The school will issue a statement via email 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.

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

Credit Card and Online Payments

You may pay your tuition or childcare invoices by credit card over the phone by calling the office at (586) 465-4260. A 3% usage fee will be charged for all credit card/debit card payments.

Security Procedures and Policies

Security Policy

Montessori Stepping Stones is committed to providing a safe and secure environment to all our students, staff, and anyone else who comes to visit the school. Recognizing that school safety and security is a shared responsibility between staff, law enforcement, students, and parents, it is essential that everyone is vigilant and does their part to ensure that our school is safe.

We have an excellent working relationship with Macomb County Sheriff's Department. We will immediately involve them any time there is reasonable suspicion that our school is in harm's way.

The following are some of the safety and security measures to which everyone must adhere:

1. All school doors are continuously locked during the school day. All visitors must identify themselves and be buzzed into the school. The school reserves the right to deny entrance if there is any concern about the propriety of that person's presence on campus.
2. Unknown visitors are expected to enter the school through the main entrance where they will meet with staff. These visitors must immediately sign the visitor registry, produce identification, and receive a visitor's badge. This does not apply to our current families.
3. All entry and exit to the building shall be through the main entrance. Except in emergencies, it is a violation of this policy to open any side or rear doorways even if you recognize the person with the exception of staff.
4. It is a violation of this policy to hold the door open or to open the door for somebody else, even if that person is familiar to you.
5. Office staff have been trained to handle threatening phone calls. In the event of such a call, law enforcement will be immediately notified. Staff will take further direction from law enforcement.



6. If a staff member, student, or anyone else sees anything suspicious inside or outside the school, such as an unmarked package, bag, vehicle, or person, it should be reported to the main office. The office will then contact law enforcement.
7. Students will not participate in any emergency drills where they are dealing with an intruder with a weapon. These drills are very frightening and could damage the emotional well-being of our students. Instead, teachers are trained to take cover according to their classroom location and the developmental stage of the children in that classroom.

In this school community, we are all part of a team. When we work together to implement these safety measures, we all create a safer school environment.

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 classroom or the childcare room. Make sure that one of the teachers sees your child before leaving. When dropping off or picking up your child, please use the intercom located next to the arrival door. When picking up your child, please remember to be respectful of your child by waiting patiently outside the classroom door for a few minutes for him/her to join you.

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:

8:20 – 8:30 All morning classes

Before and After Care

All primary 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 parking lot in the back 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.

All lower elementary and upper school students in need of care before or after their Montessori class session will go to the Upper School building. Please use the intercom at the south 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 \$10.00 per hour. Students who are not picked up promptly from school at the end of their class session will be charged the hourly fee.

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.

Please help us keep your children safe and secure by always following these procedures:

For Main Building, Upper School 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. Do not hold the door open for others.

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

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.

Late Pick-Up Policy & Fee's

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 closing time, 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 must bill you, late charges may also apply. There are no exceptions to this policy.

1 – 15 minutes late	\$25.00
16 – 30 minutes late	\$50.00
31 – 45 minutes late	\$75.00

If a student has not been picked up within 10 minutes of closing time 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 an hour after closing time 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.

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.



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.

On the rare occasion when our school needs to close (perhaps due to loss of electricity, fire damage, etc.) our school will send out a *Remind* message. 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.

Clothing and Personal Belongings

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 on small children since most 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.

Please avoid character clothing, as well as jewelry and other accessories, as they can be very distracting. 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 and accessories.

Extra Clothing

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

Winter Clothing

If your child attends school during playtime, 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 – big enough 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.

Unfortunately, if your child comes to school without the proper snow-play clothing, he or she may 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. Kindergarten and preschool students must take home their winter gear daily. Elementary students may choose to keep their winter gear in a bag to hang on their coat-hooks during the week and take home their gear only on the weekends instead.

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 and snow outside.

Children who **do not** attend school during play time 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.

Clothing Donations

As you prepare your child's fall wardrobe, please consider passing some outgrown clothing to us. We like to keep a nice supply of pants, underwear, shoes and socks to fit children of all ages.

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 in their backpack. We highly recommend flexible-soled tennis shoes (for indoors only). Flip-flops, mules, and 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.

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.

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.



Food and Nutrition

Nutrition Policy

The Montessori Method of learning is holistic taking into account all aspects of the child. Providing a healthy environment, both physically and emotionally, is essential. The link between healthy eating, physical activity, and learning has been well established in the scientific research community. We need your help in creating and maintaining this healthy atmosphere with the food that is provided and brought into the school.

Highly processed foods, as well as foods and beverages with lots of sugar, provide empty calories and little nutrition. Meals and snacks that focus heavily on fresh fruits and vegetables and other whole foods are ideal. Please send only healthy, low or unprocessed foods with your child for lunch. On a daily basis we encourage you to send a clean, reusable water bottle (filled with water only) to school with your child which may be refilled throughout the day to encourage adequate hydration.

Benefits to a school-wide healthy nutrition policy:

- Better learning and memory
- Improved concentration
- Better sleep
- Improved mood and behavior
- Better ability to handle stress and emotions
- Better overall health, including fewer sick days and less risk for future chronic disease
- Teaches students about balanced nutrition
- Establishes good habits for the future

Essential tasks for parents (and students):

1. Send only low or unprocessed whole foods in your child's lunch
 - a. Involve children in the process of making lunch so that they can make choices to encourage a more successful mealtime. Many students as young as four pack their own lunches.
 - b. Provide a large variety of foods in small quantities for greater mealtime success
2. Do not include dessert items in your child's lunch
3. Send a clean, reusable water bottle with water only for all snacks and meals

Helpful links:

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/healthy-eating-plate>

<https://www.heartandstroke.ca/articles/22-quick-and-healthy-snacks>

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 sincerely appreciate your assistance in helping to make our school safe for all children. For those who love peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, soy butter and sunflower butter are acceptable, safe alternatives. Please label the sandwich as "Soy Butter" so the teachers know.

Health and Illness

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 of 100.4° or higher, he/she must stay at home for a **full 24 hours** after the fever is gone to be sure that he/she 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 notify you if your child has been exposed to a communicable disease (chicken pox, etc.) so that you may monitor him/her for symptoms. If your child presents with a fever, or other symptoms of Covid while at school, a teacher will administer a Covid test according to the permission slip signed by the parent. For children who test positive for Covid and/or have a fever and/or multiple symptoms of illness, teachers will comfortably isolate him/her in an area where they can be supervised. We will immediately contact a parent, who will be required to pick up the child as soon as possible, within one hour of notification. Contact the office for the most current Covid positive requirements.

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 parents.

Calling In Absences

Please let us know when your child will be absent for any reason. We want to be sure to track all absences and alert our school community when there has been an exposure to communicable illness.. 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. You may also report absences via *Remind* to MSS_Office.

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 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.
5. We do not administer fever-reducing medication since it is used to control fever and could inadvertently mask a contagious virus. The only exception is in the case of febrile seizures. In this case we will administer the medication, however, the child will need to be picked up immediately.

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:



1. Prescription medication will be given or applied ONLY with prior written permission from the parent.
2. 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.
3. We are not allowed to administer the first dose of a new prescription due to the possibility of an adverse reaction.
4. 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.

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.

1. If you suspect your child may have head lice, please do a thorough head check and/or take your child to a licensed salon that specializes in head lice.
2. If you discover lice, please report it to us promptly so that we can try to prevent an epidemic.
3. Contact your doctor for prescription shampoo to kill the lice and nits and/or take your child to a licensed salon that specializes in head lice.

Communication

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.

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.

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.

Remind messages – We use the *Remind* app regularly to communicate with all families. In addition, the lead teachers of each classroom can use *Remind* to send updates, messages, and pictures to families. Families may also contact the lead teacher of their child's classroom in this manner.



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 do so in writing and/or schedule a conference.

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.

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.

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.

Classroom Events

Going Out Trips (Elementary and Middle School 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 going out, the children practice engaging with the greater world and practice the skills they have gained in their preparation of going out.

Many going out trips arise somewhat spontaneously based upon a genuine need and/or desire in the classroom. Some examples are:

1. buying special supplies
2. visiting the library for a book for a special unit of study or for pleasure
3. visiting the park on a beautiful day to get some extra time outdoors

These trips usually involve **about three** students at a time but may include more if the outing is something like a visit to the park. Whenever possible, the children will walk with a teacher to their destination. Occasionally, there may be times when driving is necessary.



Because of the spontaneity of these going out trips, we ask that you give permission for your child to walk and/or drive with a teacher throughout the entire school year. You will receive a *Remind* message if the trip involves the use of a vehicle.

Field Trips (Kindergarten, Elementary and Upper School Students)

Montessori Stepping Stones will occasionally take kindergarten, elementary and upper school 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.

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.

Birthdays

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 must 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. 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.

Birthday celebrations do not occur in the middle school classroom or in the infant and toddler classrooms.

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 contact the other children's parent through the *Remind* app. 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.

Fundraisers

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 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.

Classroom Wish Lists

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 your child directly and many Montessori students for years to come.

Each classroom has created an Amazon Wish List. The items on each list cover a very wide range of prices. 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. There are links to these lists on montessoristepstones.com. Look under the heading, "Giving Tree."

If you are considering presenting your child's teacher with a gift, please consider this option.

Discipline Policy

At Montessori Stepping Stones, we believe that every child is a unique individual who is capable of sharing their talents with the world and who deserves dignity and respect. As a result, we utilize techniques expressed in the *Positive Discipline* books and training (authored by Dr. Jane Nelsen).

These techniques, based on Adlerian psychology, are collaborative and problem-solving in nature. They are also based on the idea that behavior is goal oriented. In other words, children use behavior to communicate and to get their needs met. It is necessary for adults to engage with children from a calm space, while being warm and non-judgmental.

Teachers work to make connections with students to enhance the collaborative nature of encouraging desired behavior. Other techniques include reflective listening, modeling, and the use of mistakes as opportunities to learn. *Positive Discipline* compliments Montessori philosophy very well. They are both methods that value teaching children life skills in addition to academics. In Montessori, this is called practical life work and grace and courtesy work.

We encourage parents to use the same methods at home. You can find many resources and books at the *Positive Discipline* website:

<https://www.positivediscipline.com/>



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 reviewed 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