



the
garden
MONTESSORI & ARTS LEARNING CENTER

Community Handbook

The final page of this handbook MUST be signed by all legal parents and guardians in order to be considered for enrollment. The policies, philosophy, terms and conditions set forth in this handbook apply to all members of The Garden community.

Montessori Philosophy

The Montessori Method of education was developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, Italy's first female physician. She opened her first "school" (Casa dei Bambini) in 1907. Today, Montessori schools flourish all over the world. Fundamental to all of Dr. Montessori's ideas is a deep respect for a child's ability to learn. She recognized that children go through certain phases during which they learn more easily than at any other time in their lives. This innate potential to learn is dependent upon a loving environment that encourages the active pursuit of knowledge.

Dr. Montessori's developmentally-appropriate approach to learning is designed to fit each child instead of making each child fit into a preset program. She believed that learning should take place in multi-aged classrooms where children who are at various stages of development can learn from and with each other. This learning should take place in a noncompetitive atmosphere in order for each child to develop at his/her own speed.

Dr. Montessori observed that the best way for young children to learn is by active, hands-on experiences. She developed the idea of the prepared environment, where the classroom contains a wide variety of cognitive materials that foster learning in numerous areas. The purpose of the materials is not just to impart knowledge to children, but rather to provide them with stimuli that capture their attention and initiate a process of concentration.

Mission Statement

The Garden follows the Montessori educational principles of providing child-directed, individualized, hands-on learning within a prepared environment. The school seeks to educate the social, physical, intellectual, and emotional needs of each child through developmentally appropriate materials and activities; to generate a sense of community among children, teachers, and families; to promote a culture of peace and unity not just within our own school, but within the world.

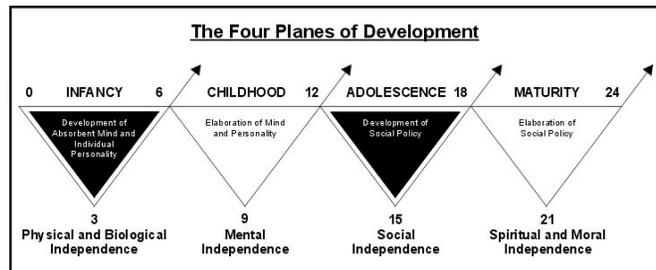
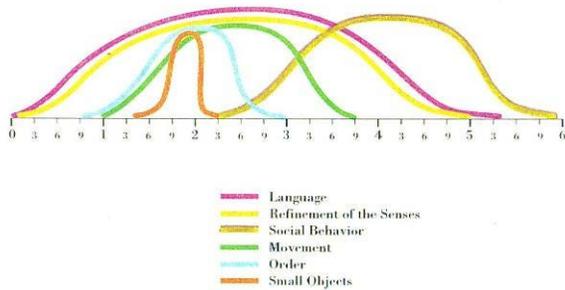
Moore Montessori Community School is a vibrant learning community, where diverse students build strong academic foundations, executive function skills, and trust in their abilities, in preparation for lives of joy and purpose in the 21st century.

School Objectives

- To provide a prepared environment in which the stated purpose can be achieved, in keeping with Montessori principles.
- To provide an instructional program that follows a curriculum based on Montessori concepts and materials.
- To support early childhood development for children ages 18 months through 5 years.
- To follow the child's interest in learning and to use a completely child-led approach to education with regards to both academic and life skills.
- To provide support and education for the whole family.

An Introduction to the Classrooms

The Montessori classroom is a beautifully prepared, enriched environment, with child-sized furnishings and materials within reach of even the smallest student. The diversity of ages among the students necessitates a broad range of activities, and allows each child, regardless of age, the opportunity to find work suitable for his or her stage of development. All children can develop at their own pace, and find work suitable for his or her stage of development (according to their own capacities) in a non-competitive and supportive atmosphere. Montessori classrooms and curriculum are prepared based on identified Sensitive Periods (see chart below) and the four planes of development.



The work in the early childhood classrooms falls into four main categories:

1. **Practical Life:** Of prime importance, this area includes activities such as sweeping, scrubbing, polishing, and other everyday tasks the child has observed in his or her own home environment. These activities allow the child to order his or her physical environment to perfection, and in turn, to order his or her own mind. They are also familiar, and serve as a link between home and school. We believe that it is most important to focus on Practical Life skills such as self-care, care of the environment, food preparation, grace and courtesy, etc. and let the children gently and naturally find their way to learning more complex concepts by way of games and hands-on activities using specifically designed materials rather than using worksheets or memorization techniques.

2. **Sensorial:** Sensorial means using the senses. Special materials in this area are designed to help the child isolate and classify the perceptions of sound, texture, color, shape and size. The child moves, touches and explores actual materials that teach concepts by using all of their senses.

3. **Language:** Montessori observed that young children have a sensitive period during which learning names are of interest and relatively easy. Thus, basic nomenclature from geography, history, botany, ecology, astronomy, history, zoology and cultural studies is presented as children begin to show interest. Grammatical concepts are also gradually introduced to children around age 4. Once a child enters the Children's House and they begin to show readiness, s/he builds from learning sounds to writing words then from writing words to reading words then from reading words to reading sentences. Again, all learning is child-led and we strongly believe in following the child's cues and using our observations and general knowledge of sensitive periods for learning and age-appropriate activities to present certain materials and encourage academic challenges. We believe that children learn these skills in their own time when they are not pressured or forced into doing so based on their age or classroom placement. When they begin to show a genuine interest, we support and encourage this interest through the prepared environment along with guided instruction when needed.

4. **Mathematics:** The young child, in his or her need for order, seeks out mathematical concepts as a means of development. Montessori math materials present abstract math operations in a concrete manner, a presentation that children this age can understand. The sensorial materials also provide the children with a sensorial base for future abstractions when they reach Lower Elementary. Those in the Children's House learn through guided support, and self-directed exploration as well as observation of and guidance from older peers in a mixed-age environment.

Beyond the four main categories, are the cultural studies. These areas may include (but are not limited to) art, botany, zoology, geology, music, nature study, history and geography. These topics are not taught as subjects in isolation but are intertwined naturally within the studies taking place in the work of the class. Connections are shown and the focus follows the interests of the children.

Family Role

The strongest foundation that can be provided for the education of the children is the support and care of families. The Garden Montessori and Moore Montessori Community School are both committed to partnering with families to nurture and protect the children. Parents and Guardians are welcome to participate in our school in various ways.

1. **Family Education Meetings.** Families will have the opportunity to come together with faculty to discuss the Montessori theory and learn about the work the children are doing in the classroom. These are also times to meet and get to know other parents and guardians.
2. **Parent and Teacher Conferences.** At any time within the year parents and guardians are welcome to ask for a conference with their child's teacher and the teacher may do the same. Teachers will hold regularly (twice yearly) scheduled formal conferences with the parents or guardians for each child. At that time the child's progress will be discussed in all areas of development.
3. **Volunteerism.** We welcome those who can offer their energies and expertise in support of the school. Throughout your child's time with us families will be informed of various opportunities to become a part of the culture of the school and model volunteerism for their children.
4. **Classroom Observations.** Family members are welcome to and strongly encouraged to observe their child in the classroom setting. You may contact your child's teacher to set up an appointment. It takes a few weeks at the start of the school year for the children to be confident with the routines in the classroom and become what Montessori termed "Normalized" so if possible we ask that families give the children that time to adjust before observing.

Fees and Payment Policy

The Garden will handle all administrative functions for MMCS Pre-K students, so all fees, payments and inquiries for all students will be made directly to The Garden. Fees and payment policies are subject to change for future years, tuition and fees will be finalized and announced by January 15th of each year. The Garden will provide sufficient notice of any changes occurring after your official registration has been submitted and allowances will be made for withdrawals based on these changes.

All Families enrolling at The Garden are required to commit to a full academic school year by way of the Tuition Agreement or payment in full for the school year. All payments are required to be made through our online tuition management system at www.tads.com. Multiple payment types and options are available through this system. A 10% deposit plus all required fees are due at time of enrollment in order to reserve your child's spot. All fees are outlined separately in our tuition & fees sheet.

Tuition is payable in full or in 10 or 12 monthly installments. Monthly payment plans are offered as a convenience for families, but all families enrolling using the monthly payment plan must submit a Tuition Agreement stating their commitment to full payment of the yearly tuition amount. A 10% tuition deposit is required along with fees at time of enrollment.

A sibling discount of 5% will be applied to the 2nd child's tuition for families enrolling multiple children. Discount is applicable for school year & summer enrollment. A 15% late fee is applied to unpaid invoices on the 2nd of each month. Additional TADS late fees may apply. Families with past due accounts are subject to dismissal.

The salaries, supplies and administrative expenses of The Garden are supported entirely by fees. Tuition payments are due the first of each month according to your tuition agreement, irrespective of the actual number of days and hours the child attends. The child's spot will not be reserved until all required enrollment forms, fees and any other requested information is complete and submitted. Any deadlines set forth regarding submitting these fees and forms are firm and no exceptions will be made. The parent/ guardian/custodian will be responsible for payment of fees, deposit and monthly tuition payments in order to reserve the enrollment spot. A grace period is not offered, all payments must be submitted by the 1st of the month in order to avoid the 15% late fee which will be applied on the 2nd of the month to any remaining balances. If payment is not received by the 10th of the month, students may be discharged for non-payment.

Eligibility & Student Placement

Students eligible for the Pre-K at MMCS are 3 or 4 years of age by August 31st of the academic year and using the toilet independently. Students eligible for the Toddler Community are confidently walking and between the ages of 15 and 36 months by August 31st of the academic year.

*Please Note**

The Montessori Primary Classroom at MMCS will consist of children within a three-year age span. This is an important aspect of the Montessori philosophy. The 3 & 4 year olds enrolled through The Garden who attend ½ days will be in class with the Kindergarten children who are enrolled through Moore Montessori Community School and attend full days.

Non-discrimination policy

The Garden and MMCS encourage children of all backgrounds to attend. The schools do not discriminate based on gender, race, color, creed, national origin, ethnic background, or ability.

Openings

Openings are limited and determined by a student/teacher ratio dependent upon age as well as classroom size and balance of ages in the classroom. Enrollment is determined by the following conditions:

- Children of staff members have first priority placement for spots in their desired program for the length of the staff contract.
- Students currently enrolled in pre-K at MMCS are guaranteed placement in pre-K at MMCS for successive enrollment (assuming all enrollment requirements are met).
- Students currently enrolled in the toddler community have priority for successive enrollment in the program of their choice.
- Enrollment for any openings is performed on a first-come, first-served basis depending on the date of completion of the re-enrollment form, and consecutively, the TADS agreement & submission of deposit, fees and required forms.
- Siblings of enrolled students have second priority for enrollment in the program of their choice.
- Children with a submitted application and paid application fee (on the waiting list) have third priority and will be admitted according to the date of application with the following factors taken into consideration:
 - Age
 - Previous Montessori Experience
 - Parent have attended an information session and/or met with administrators
 - Enrollment in Wild Hearts or other programming offered at The Garden

Exceptions to the above policies may be made by administration under consideration of beneficial classroom dynamics. The schools may refuse re-enrollment to current students if circumstances arise in which administrators and/or teachers determine that it is not in the best interest of the student, their family, their classmates, the school or any other members of the school community.

**Please note that ultimately, parents are responsible for ensuring children are ready to join their classroom when school begins. Toddlers enrolled in our Toddler Community receive support from their teachers and also require consistency in approach to toileting at home in order to ensure success. If I child is not using the toilet independently (for Pre-K classrooms) or confidently walking (for toddler classrooms), or is unprepared in any other notable way, by the first day of school, the child's start date will be delayed until s/he meets the requirements for enrollment. Tuition will not be prorated or refunded in these cases, parents will continue to be responsible for paying tuition in order to hold the child's spot until s/he is ready to join his/her classroom.*

Enrollment Forms

The Garden will handle all administrative functions for MMCS, so all forms and inquiries will be made directly to Garden. Copies of all forms will be shared and on file at MMCS. Parents must have all enrollment forms completed and returned to The Garden via email to info@thegardenmontessori.org (preferred), in person at the Linden Rd campus, or mailed to *PO Box 1105 West End, NC 27376* before the child's spot is reserved. Enrollment forms MUST be received by the assigned deadline to maintain the child's spot. The Garden has a limited number of openings and a substantial waiting list; it is not possible for the administration to hold spots for those who have not submitted ALL paperwork on time. Enrollment forms include the following:

- **Application Form:** Submitted at time of application, parents are responsible for keeping all information current.
- **Tuition Agreement:** By way of TADS electronic signature upon enrollment.
- **Handbook Acknowledgment:** Final page of this document must be signed by all legal parents/guardians.
- **Release Form: Picture/Video:** Parents may opt out of the release by checking "no", but form must be submitted for all children.
- **Record of Immunizations:** We reserve the right to refuse admission to any student who fails to submit a current immunization record (alternate submissions, including waivers are subject to review by the MMCS school board and The Garden Administrators and require approval by both parties prior to completion of enrollment).
- **Medical Report/ Additional Forms:** A medical report signed by a doctor is required for all children. Children with specific illnesses or allergies must submit additional forms. It is the parent's responsibility to make the school aware of a child's allergy or condition and to obtain the necessary forms prior to the deadline and within enough time to get an allergy form signed by the child's medical provider.
- **Emergency Medical Authorization:** This form gives The Garden and MMCS permission to act on your behalf in an emergency medical situation and allows us to give EMTs permission to transport your child to a hospital should they need to be transported. EMTs MUST view this form before they will transport a child, so it is VERY important that this form is filled out correctly and submitted in time.
- **Discipline Policy Acknowledgment:** Relative to the program in which your child is enrolled.

Withdrawal from the Program

Parents wishing to withdraw their child must provide a statement in writing to The Garden at least 30 days prior to the discontinuation of service. Parents are responsible for all fees for the remainder of the school year as noted in the tuition agreement. Tuition and fees are non-refundable and non-transferable regardless of time of withdrawal. The Garden does retain the right to report outstanding fees to credit reporting agencies. Exemptions to this policy will be made for families providing military orders for relocation mid-year.

Hours of Operation - 2019-20 School Year

Pre-K at MMCS : Monday through Friday 8:00am-12:00pm

Toddler Community: Monday through Friday 8:30-12:30pm

Please note, drop-off and pick-up windows are 15 minutes at the beginning and end of each day.

Parents' Rights and Responsibilities

Parents have the right:

- To know that their child is cared for in a safe, supportive environment;
- To confer with the Teacher(s) and administrators regarding concerns related to their child or the program;
- To be told about serious behavior concerns on the part of their child, and to visit with the teacher(s) and administrators in order to bring about improvement in the situation;
- To be regularly informed by the teacher or administrators about school activities.
- To have access to their child at any time (all parents must sign-in on the Visitor's Log for safety purposes)
- To privacy in regard to their child, themselves or their families and any issues concerning the above-mentioned items.

Parents have the responsibility:

- To pay fees to The Garden on time (including, but not limited to the registration fees, tuition fees, deposit and TADS fees)
- To keep their child's records up-to-date as explained in the Enrollment Forms section;
- To drop-off and pick-up their child on time as explained in Hours of Operation

PLEASE NOTE: THE SCHOOL IS NOT LICENSED FOR FULL-TIME CHILD CARE AND IT IS ILLEGAL FOR CHILDREN TO REMAIN IN OUR CARE FOR MORE THAN 4 HOURS PER DAY. PARENTS SHOULD ARRIVE ON TIME TO ENSURE THEIR CHILD IS PICKED UP WITHIN 4 HOURS OF ARRIVING. A VERBAL WARNING WILL BE GIVEN THE FIRST TIME A PARENT IS LATE PICKING UP THEIR CHILD. AFTER THAT, PARENTS WILL BE CHARGED A FEE (AS EXPLAINED BELOW) FOR LATE PICKUP.

- To follow health and safety policies;
- To let the administrators and teachers know if their child will not be attending on a regularly scheduled day;
- To take note of any communications from the teacher(s)/ administrators regarding their child's behavior, and to cooperate in any efforts to bring about improvement in the situation;
- To attend parent meetings scheduled by the school
- To attend parent/teacher conferences as scheduled
- To schedule meetings with the teacher(s)/administrators if any concerns arise during the school year and to maintain open communication with the teacher(s)/administrators about any concerns or issues pertaining to the child and their school performance.
- To maintain privacy in regard to other children in this setting.
- To maintain a positive, mature attitude and to exhibit grace and courtesy within our school community.
- To discuss any concerns or issues with staff and administration immediately and directly, in a mature and open manner;

To share with both The Garden and MMCS administrators any custody agreements in cases of joint custody and to abide by the rules of this custody agreement regarding pickup/drop-off of the child as well as time spent at school observing or volunteering. The Garden/ MMCS will not be involved in any mediation between parents and is not responsible for ensuring communication between parents. The Garden and MMCS staff will not participate in any custody hearings unless required by law. Parents are responsible for any and all legal fees, expenses and time spent (based on an hourly rate determined by administrator salary) by any and all staff members that is required in order to participate in or assist with any and all custody-related issues. In some cases, the Garden/MMCS may require a separate agreement specific to school that is signed by both parents/legal guardians stating when each has permission to be on site with the child and when each is allowed to pick the child up.

- To refrain from the following behaviors which may contribute to a toxic school community: Gossip (by word of mouth, social media or phone/text etc.) regarding staff, children, parents, volunteers or any other member of the school community. This includes discussion of other children's behavior in the school or outside of school, opinions of other community parents, concerns with staff members or administration, concerns regarding school policies/practices/philosophies, arguments between parents or any other negative discussion of the school community or its members.
- To remove oneself and one's family from the community when s/he no longer sees it as a good fit.
- To educate themselves on age-appropriate behaviors/ child development in order to understand classroom and dynamics in a group care setting.
- To refrain from hiring any employed member of The Garden or MMCS for personal services, including babysitting, house sitting, pet-sitting or any other service not mentioned here.
- To enroll online in The Garden's tuition management system through www.tads.com and to submit all payments on time through this system.

School policy requires parents to address any concerns openly and directly with school administrators. The Garden/MMCS maintains a positive environment that reflects our practices of grace and courtesy. If parents are unable to communicate their concerns or needs with administration and the relationship is not working for either or both sides, and it is found to affect the classroom dynamics or school community function, families will be asked to leave the school without notice required or tuition refund. Parents who do not adhere to this policy or who choose to leave on their own accord, regardless of reason or claim, will be responsible for paying all remaining tuition fees regardless of removal.

Children's Rights and Responsibilities

Children have the right:

- To have a safe, supportive, and consistent environment;
- To use all the program equipment, materials, and facilities on an equal basis;
- To have respectful treatment;
- To have discipline that is fair and non-punitive;
- To receive nurturing care from staff members who are actively involved with them;
- To a challenging and age-appropriate education

Children have the responsibility:

- To be accountable for their actions, considering the child's age and developmental stage;
- To respect the school rules that guide them while at school;
- To remain with the group and staff at all times;
- To care for materials and equipment properly.

Healthy Eating

Children should eat breakfast prior to attending school. Primary students at MMCS will not eat lunch at school. All enrolled students will be provided with a healthy snack for choosing during the morning session, according to a rotating snack schedule that will be supplied to all parents. Toddler students should pack a lunch each day. All toddler students should also bring a water bottle to school each day, which can be refilled as needed. We do have children with allergies enrolled and parents are responsible for taking allergies into consideration when packing lunches. A list of non-safe foods will be provided and parents should avoid packing foods containing any of those ingredients. Parents/Guardians should notify administrators of any food allergies and submit accompanying forms.

Health and Safety Policy

In order to have a safe and healthy environment, the schools have guidelines for all parents/guardians to follow. Every effort is taken to reduce the spread of illness by encouraging hand washing and other sanitary processes. If a child has a known medical condition (asthma, diabetes, seizure disorder, etc.), it is the parents' responsibility to inform the administrators of the steps to be taken if a problem occurs during school hours using the Medical Action Plan form. Parents should make sure that any necessary medication is available, the Medication Permission Form for its use has been completed, and demonstrate to staff how to use the medication (if needed).

If a child has any one of the following conditions, the parent should not send the child to school. If these conditions arise while the child is at school, the parent will be notified to pick up the child immediately:

- Contagious diseases. This includes but is not limited to: the flu, strep throat, chicken pox, measles, conjunctivitis (pink eye), ringworm, scabies, or lice.
 - Fever. Fever is defined as having a temperature of 100°F or higher taken under the arm, 101°F taken orally, or 102°F taken rectally. A child needs to be fever free for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to our care, that means the child is fever free without the aid of Tylenol®, or any other fever reducing substance. If your child's fever is due to teething and you feel that they are able to attend the program without trouble, it is not required that your child stay home for a fever due to teething.
 - Vomiting or diarrhea (including runny, watery or bloody stool) within the past 24 hours.
- Breathing trouble, sore throat, swollen glands, loss of voice, hacking or continuous coughing.
- Runny nose (other than clear), draining ears or eyes.
- A rash, until diagnosed and determined to be non-contagious.
- Draining sores or burns.
 - Child is irritable, continuously crying (unable to be soothed), or requires more attention than we can provide without hurting the health, safety or well-being of the other children in our care.

If a child exhibiting one or more of the above symptoms has a doctor's note stating that s/he is not contagious, the child may return to school in accordance with date on the doctor's note. If your child is not feeling well in the morning, do not send him or her to school, particularly if he or she has a fever of 100 degrees or above. The child should not return to school within 24 hours of vomiting/diarrhea, running a fever of 100 degrees or higher, or being sent home for an above mentioned illness (without a doctor's note). Students should not return to school until 24 – 36 hours have elapsed after beginning the course of antibiotics. Parents must arrive to pickup their sick child within 30 minutes of a call being made. In case of accident or illness, parents of the child will be called immediately. Teachers will administer minor first aid, i.e., cleansing, bandages, ice packs, etc. The child will be moved to a quiet spot until the parent/guardian arrives. Incident reports will be sent home in duplicate explaining what happened and what treatment was administered. Parents should sign one copy and return it to the school while keeping the second for their records. In serious cases, the child will be taken to one of the local hospitals by emergency vehicle for treatment and the parents will be called as

Distribution of Medications

Children should be given medicine or have topical creams (including sunscreen) applied prior to attending school. Emergency medicines will be stored per doctor's instructions and given only in an emergency and according to the Medical Action Plan. If a child must be given any medication (including over-the-counter medicine), the parents must complete the Medication Permission Form. This procedure must be followed every day that the child is to receive medication. Teachers are not permitted by law to administer any medication unless this form is complete and up to date. Parents should hand the medication directly to a staff person so it can be stored appropriately out of reach of children. Parents should request a Medical Permission form, fill it out, give the form and the medication to the administrators, and indicate if the medication needs to be refrigerated. Medication should be in its original or duplicate container, or a container accompanied by the doctor's directions. If medication is to be kept at the school for treatment of a chronic condition, no more than a one-month supply should remain at the school at any time. Medicine brought to the school must be kept in a container in the classroom emergency storage. Staff members must complete their portion of the form, and initial it where necessary. One staff person will be authorized to dispense medication. Sunscreens must be stored separately from oral medicine and any food or food service items. Any unused medicine must be disposed of properly or returned directly to the parents. Children may never bring in the medication themselves.

Discipline and Discharge Policy

The Garden and MMCS believe in a positive approach to child guidance in order to provide a safe environment both emotionally, socially and physically where children can learn and grow to their maximum abilities. Children are entitled to a pleasant and harmonious environment at school. We use exercises in Grace and Courtesy as well as positive guidance techniques that with repetition lead the children to calmly make wise choices in behavior and in work. Our goal is to create a caring, cooperative, supportive, and respectful community of learners. We hope to partner with parents/guardians to provide consistent guidance approaches with the children. Children are taught that their school is a peaceful community where there are certain expectations of behavior. Students are pro actively offered techniques for self control and appropriate manners to provide them with the high expectations. Mistaken behaviors are approached with respect and in a private manner to reinforce appropriate conduct. The full discipline policy including specific techniques used and resulting consequences will be described further in a separate document.

In the event that a child exhibits behavior that is continually disruptive and/or harmful to the other children and their progress, and teachers and administrators feel that we have made every effort to improve the situation and have been unsuccessful, the child may be removed from the program.

Other Policies

MMCS will notify enrolled families in writing of other policies unique to the school and which are not included in The Garden Community Handbook. Such policies include but are not limited to:

- Specific Channels of Communication
- School attire and extra clothing
- Arrival and dismissal procedures
- Attendance expectations and procedures
- School closing policies
- Emergency contingency plans (drills, procedures, safety)
- Celebrations and Birthdays
- Specific communication procedures
- Field Trip Policy

Families with Pre-K students attending MMCS will also be required to submit an MMCS Handbook acknowledgment separately to account for the varying information.

Toddler Community Specific Policies and Procedures

- School Bags:

Every child should bring a "school bag," with them each day. This should be a conveniently-sized bag large enough for an 8x10 folder, show and tell items, a change of clothes, diapers, sunscreen, etc. but small enough to fit on the provided storage hooks. We have limited space to accommodate all of our children's bags, so it is important that your child's bag not be larger than the space allotted (an individual storage hook). If needed, we will provide bags that your child can access on his/her own to accommodate this independence.

- Child's Personal Property:

Although the school attempts to help children stay organized, the school cannot be responsible for lost personal property. Items found at school after hours will be collected and stored in a lost & found box located at the lending bookshelf (near the restrooms). Please check the lost & found box regularly for missing items. Children should not bring money, toys, food, or other items unnecessary for school activities to school for any reason. If a personal item is brought to school, it will remain in the child's bag and asked to be returned home. If a child takes any school equipment home, it should be returned promptly.

- School Attire:

Children should wear washable, comfortable play clothes. An extra set of clothing must be kept at school in case clothes become soiled, wet or muddy. **All items should be marked with the child's name.** Outdoor activities are planned daily, but outdoor play will not be allowed in storms or extreme temperatures. Every child should be properly dressed for the weather. In the winter, this includes snow pants, a hat that covers the ears, mittens and boots. Children should wear "indoor shoes" or slippers/socks with rubber soles, leaving outdoor shoes on the shoe rack upon arriving. This will help us to keep the premises clean and, since children spend a lot of time working on the floor on their mats, this will protect their fingers and help keep floors clean for workspace. Staff/child ratios do not permit the school to keep one or two children inside during outdoor activities, so proper outdoor attire is mandatory as well, including rain gear if needed for wet or rainy days and layers including mittens and hats for cold days.

- * Rest Time:

All children's need for rest will be respected; however, we do not provide a cot or blanket or dedicated time for children to sleep. If you think your child may have trouble adjusting to a new schedule, please feel free to pack a blanket or comfort item in his/her bag and we will make your child comfortable in case s/he gets sleepy and needs to rest in the padded quiet area until you arrive. You may also arrange to pick your child up early as s/he adjusts to the schedule.

- * Celebrations, Birthdays, and Holidays:

Planned special occasions may include: Halloween, Thanksgiving, December Holidays, and students' birthdays. The school is sensitive to the multicultural nature of our community and therefore includes cultural diversity in celebrations whenever possible. Parents are encouraged to share their family's traditions with the children at school. Please let us know if you would like to volunteer to speak to the children about your family's cultural celebrations or traditions.

- * Parent Orientation/ Education/Conferences

Before school begins for the fall term, parents of enrolled students are required to attend a school tour, observation and meeting with the administration. Parents and children will also be required to attend the Open House/Parent Orientation. Child care is provided for Parent Orientation. Students beginning mid-year will also be required to spend time in the classrooms with the potential teachers before enrollment. During the year, one parent/teacher conference will be scheduled per semester. Parent Education meetings are regularly scheduled and parents are strongly encouraged to attend. We have a lending library with reading materials to help parents familiarize themselves with the Montessori Method and we will attempt to have regular parent education meetings throughout the year (attendance is strongly encouraged and child care is provided).

- * Visitors and Observations

Parents and community members are welcome to observe at the school. A scheduled visit would be appreciated to limit disruption to the classrooms, but parents have unlimited and immediate access to their children. As noted earlier, for emergency preparedness reasons, all visitors to the building (including parents) must sign the visitor sign-in sheet prior to entering the building each day. For liability and supervisory reasons, it is not possible for children who visit the program to take part in activities (including non-enrolled siblings). A liability release is required for all children visiting the program. Observations guidelines are available from the child's teacher. We require non-relative volunteers/observers for our program to obtain a full criminal background check prior to their visit.

- * Channels of Communication:

Throughout the year, if a parent has any questions about their child's progress or any concerns or questions, they can contact the teacher in person or by email. Teachers may distribute their personal phone numbers at their discretion, but the school does not provide teachers' personal phone numbers. Parents can contact the school directly to be connected to teachers as needed. Written and electronic messages from school will be sent periodically to keep parents informed of school happenings and student progress. A weekly email update for each class will list important upcoming events to assist parents in keeping current with activities. Parents should check their email regularly, and should sign up for the Remind App (see Parent Portal for the code to sign in), which will be used in the event of an emergency to contact all parents simultaneously. Notices regarding school events, weather-related school closings and other relevant parent information can be found on the Parent Portal, time sensitive information is relayed by email and via the school facebook page. Parents can request a parent/teacher conference at anytime during the school year and we will do our best to accommodate this request within a reasonable time period.

Please note:

Daily operations-related issues for Pre-K Primary students should be communicated through MMCS staff and Operations Director, Christy Mickle and/or Head of School, Katie Rucker.

Daily operations related issues for Toddler students should be communicated through The Garden staff and The Garden Operations Director, Kathryn Hall.

All admissions, clerical and billing related issues should be communicated through Ellen Graham.

Contact information for all administrators is listed on our website.

* Hand Washing & Universal Precautions

Hand washing is the most critical element in reducing the spread of germs. Hands should always be washed upon arrival at the school, whenever contact is made with bodily discharges, immediately before and after eating, upon returning inside from outdoor play, after using the restroom, and upon leaving the school. Gloves shall be worn by Staff when diapering, when in contact with blood or other body fluids is possible and when cleaning contaminated surfaces. Spills of urine, feces, vomit or blood shall be cleaned from the surfaces first with soap and water and then disinfected with a solution of household bleach and water. Any contaminated material shall be disposed of in a double layer plastic bag with a secure tie.

* Tornado Plan:

Tornado escape plans will be posted at each exit door. Class attendance record, emergency information book, cell phone and first aid kit will be taken to the interior hallway/bathroom. All children will be accounted for using the class attendance records so it is imperative that your child is appropriately signed in and out each day. Staff cell phones will be used in the notification of parents and emergency vehicles. Children will get down on the floor and cover their heads. Tornado drills will be practiced to prepare children. Teachers will lead the children to the safe place with the class attendance records, emergency records, and first aid kit. Another teacher will be responsible to get the cell phones and help any immobile child.

* Emergency Preparedness

Action will be taken if a person enters the center that is not authorized to pick up a child and/or appears to be intoxicated. Staff should not attempt to physically restrain the individual. Staff cannot refuse access to a legal parent or guardian but every attempt will be made to discourage the person from leaving with the child. Proper authorities will be immediately notified if the child is taken under these circumstances. Description of the vehicle, license number, and description of the state of the individual will be reported to the authorities. If a child is abducted or missing, the center will notify the parents and authorities immediately. Description of any suspicious persons or vehicles will be reported to the police. In the case of a power failure, children will remain at the center until parents are notified. In the case of a bomb threat, children will be escorted to Elliot's on Linden and proper authorities will be notified immediately. Parents will be notified as to where to pick up their child once authorities provide permission for this to occur. Emergency information, child's forms and records, and cell phones will be taken. A First Aid Kit will be maintained and kept in a location not accessible to the children within the program space and will be carried outdoors whenever children and staff leave the building for any reason. First Aid Kits will be taken on any field trips. Fire escape plans will be posted at each exit door. Class attendance record, emergency information book, cell phone and first aid kit will be taken outside to the playground. All children will be accounted for using the class attendance records for that day. Staff cell phones will be used in the notification of parents and emergency vehicles. Children will be taken to the playground until parents can pick them up. Fire drills will be practiced to prepare children. One teacher will activate the fire alarm. Another teacher will lead the children to the playground with the class attendance record, emergency records, first aid kit and cell phone. The school is handicap accessible and has a handicapped accessible bathroom. Any further accommodations will be handled on individual basis. All employees are required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse. Employees are required to make an oral and a written report. See the Director (s) for more information regarding the procedure and the information required to be included in such a report. Per the Code, any Mandatory Reporter, who makes a report of child abuse or participates in an investigation of child abuse in good faith, has immunity from any criminal or civil liability.

* Staff Qualifications and Development:

All staff will obtain and maintain current First Aid certification, and a CPR certificate (Adult, Child, and Infant).and will go through initial orientation to the school's policies and staff requirements. Included in this training will be instruction regarding the school's emergency procedures and policies on universal precautions and infectious disease control. Beyond the initial orientation, staff will undergo ongoing training on these policies. Lead toddler classroom teachers will be required to have previous early childhood education experience, a minimum of an Associate's Degree in a related field and/or will possess or be working towards the North Carolina Early Childhood Credentials I & II AND/or a bachelor's degree in a related field, AND will possess or be working towards the "Montessori Beginnings" Infant-Toddler teacher training for through the *Center for Guided Montessori Studies*.

Lead Primary classroom teachers will be hired by the Board of Directors at Moore Montessori Community School and will be required to have a Bachelor's Degree; AMI or AMS diploma for 3-6 years; NC teaching license or enrollment in lateral entry program.

Assistant/Associate Teachers will be required to have previous early childhood experience and will undergo specific Professional Development related to Montessori for their classroom age group. All toddler teaching staff members must complete a classroom observation, orientation and training at The Garden; will complete a minimum of 12 continuing education hours per school year; and a list of Montessori-specific required reading materials.

* Arrival and Dismissals:

Our schools are NOT licensed day care facilities, which means we are required by the state of NC to operate services for children under Kindergarten age for no more than 4 hours per day. Sign in and sign out sheets are provided and must be recorded truthfully upon arrival and dismissal daily. Late arrivals are disruptive to both class and the child. Children should arrive during the allotted drop-off window (Pre-K: 7:45-8:00; Toddler (8:30-8:45) and parents should pick-up their child(ren) during the allotted pick-up window (Pre-K: 11:45-12:00; Toddler 12:15-12:30). Please arrange for someone else to pick up for your child if you cannot make it on time. One verbal warning will be given if a child is picked up late, and after that, late fee policy applies. Parents who are consistently late (3 or more times) picking up their child from school will forfeit their child's spot. It is the parents' responsibility to pick their child up/sign them out at the end of each day.

Please review drop-off and pick-up procedures information, which is distributed at the beginning of each school year, and follow instructions regarding locations of pick-up and drop-off. Parents must sign the sign-out sheet prior to leaving campus. The school cannot be held officially responsible for any child until parent/teacher contact is made. A child may be checked upon arrival for any communicable diseases, e.g. conjunctivitis or fever.

* Late Policy:

We will follow a three-step policy for chronic late pickup.

Step 1. Verbal warning

Step 2. \$10 per 10 minutes billed to TADS account

Step 3. Withdrawal of child from the program

*Scheduled and Unscheduled School Closings:

The Garden will be closed according to the school calendar posted on the Parent Portal. There will also be no school on days when the Moore County Public Schools are canceled due to bad weather. When Moore County Public Schools are delayed or dismissed early due to bad weather, school hours will be determined on a case-by-case basis. **While we understand that unscheduled changes can be an inconvenience for parents, please understand that liability concerns were taken into account when creating this policy; we must consider our staff's safety and ability to get to school, in addition to the safety of all of our students and families.** Some of our staff may also have children enrolled in public schools, leaving them without childcare for days when school is closed. **Make-up days, refunds or prorated tuition are not provided for missed days due to inclement weather, or scheduled holidays or school cancellations.** School closings and delays for The Garden Toddler Community will follow those of the Moore County Public Schools without exception. MMCS may be able to determine openings on a case-by-case basis, but The Garden is unable to make any exceptions to this policy. To determine if the Moore County Public Schools are closed or delayed, check the news or internet or call them for direct inquiries. There may or may not be a separate announcement for The Garden.

* Biting Policy:

In compliance with NAEYC confidentiality guidelines, staff will maintain complete confidentiality of all children involved when notifying parents that their child has been bitten or bit another child. Biting is a very common behavior among children birth to three years of age. At the Garden, we believe that by understanding the developmental stages of the children in our care and their individual needs, we can prevent many biting behaviors by adapting the environment (this could mean adding or replacing toys and materials, rearranging furniture, adjusting the schedule or routine, adjusting the teacher's approach, providing new and different opportunities, etc). We do not assign punishments and/or shame children exhibiting biting behavior. We also know that even with all of our knowledge of child development, that many things can contribute to this behavior and that we may not be able to prevent all occurrences. We understand that children biting other children, is one of the most common and most difficult behaviors to deal within group child care settings because of its effect on everyone involved, which is magnified due to the severity of the injury that can occur. It can occur without warning, can be difficult to defend against, and, understandably so, provokes strong emotional responses in the biter, the victim, the families, and the caregivers involved. For many toddlers, the biting stage is just a passing phase. Toddlers may try it out as a form of communication. They are in the process of learning appropriate social behavior. For other children, biting is a persistent and chronic problem. This and other challenging behaviors may occur for a variety of reasons: teething, frustration, boredom, developing language skills, stress or change in the environment, a need for emotional release, feeling threatened, or to feel a sense of power. In order to alleviate some of triggers for biting, our staff maintains the following practices that research has shown to help prevent incidences of biting.

- Quality relationships: Staff develops nurturing relationships with the children and gets to know each child individually. Staff is given many opportunities for professional development to help s/he learn ways to build quality relationships with the children.
- Environmental influences on child's behaviors: Children are given opportunities to work individually and in both small and large groups; there is a variety of engaging work available, appropriate behaviors are modeled by the teachers, who maintain an environment that is quiet and productive which can be very calming to a struggling child; and staff are trained to be very aware of and willing to help a child that is feeling overwhelmed.
- Targeted social-emotional supports: Children have a daily routine that they follow which allows for freedom and the opportunity to meet their individual needs. Children learn early how to navigate classroom transitions in a way that helps them build confidence and alleviate stress. Adults discuss emotions/feelings through books and other work and teach strategies such as yoga to help children learn to calm themselves.

At The Garden, we use the following steps in order to prevent biting and other aggressive behavior and to keep all of the children in the classroom safe and ensure that everyone's needs are met consistently.

1. Action Plan Before biting occurs:

* Create an environment which meets the developmental needs of the children. Monitor and supervise all children while working and/or playing. Observe and take thoughtful notes regarding the behavior and development of all children in our care.

* Redirect in situations where any physically aggressive incident may occur. Closely observe the children in question and determine possible causes, make changes in response.

* Maintain an environment that elicits calm, thoughtful behavior.

2. If a child is bitten:

* The biter is calmly removed from the area, using simple words such as "biting hurts," and taken under direct supervision by a staff member for the remainder of the day.

* A second staff member immediately attends to the child who was bitten comforting him/her and applying first aid as needed. The parents of both children are notified and an incident report is filled out for the child who was bitten, a behavior report for the child who bit and each parent should sign off on these reports at pickup that day.

* We will avoid any immediate response that reinforces the biting. Caring attention will be focused on the child who was bitten.

* The biter will then be shadowed by a staff member and any other attempts at biting or any other harmful behavior will be stopped as they occur. The child will be talked to on a level which s/he can understand. "I can see that you want that truck, but I can't let you hurt him. Biting hurts." The child will be redirected to other work/play and staff will closely monitor, supervise and observe this child to determine possible causes of the behavior. Notes will be taken and filed in the behavior log.

* Classroom staff will report all incidents to the Head of School on the day of the incident to review the context of the biting incident, whether adequate supervision was present and whether the environment contributed to the biting incident. Classroom staff will meet with administration to determine the cause and discuss preventative measures to be implemented immediately.

3. If biting continues:

* Classroom staff will meet with administrators on a routine basis for advice, support and strategy planning.

* A teacher conference will be held with the parent(s) of the child who is biting and with the parents on the child(ren) being bitten in order to discuss the situation in detail. Outcomes of these conference will be discussed and any changes will be made at home and in the classroom. A written plan of action on the Behavior Intervention Plan form should be produced and carried out, signed by all adults providing care for the children involved (this may include babysitters, nannies, substitute teachers, etc). This will ensure that all adults are on the same page and that the children are receiving consistent responses to their behaviors.

* Staff will note and chart every occurrence, including attempted bites, and indicate location, time, other children involved and their behaviors, staff present, and circumstances in the behavior log.

* Staff will shadow children who indicate a tendency to bite in order to head off biting situations before they occur, teach non-biting responses to situations and reinforce appropriate behavior.

* Administrators and teachers will work together to adapt the program to better fit the needs of all of the children in the classroom.

* If teachers, parents and administrators are working cooperatively together and providing consistent attention to the matter, and they still agree that the children need more support, The Garden will hire an extra staff member (a substitute teacher) for the classroom for maximum period of 1 month in order to provide shadowing support for a child who struggles with consistent biting (parents will be billed at a per hour rate for this additional employee). If the child is still showing biting behavior after that time period, we may implement the following steps if appropriate to the situation:

-the parent joins the child become the child's shadow support

-a classroom placement change is made for either the child who is exhibiting biting behavior or the child(ren) who are being bitten (an early transition and change in environment for children stuck in a behavior pattern, can be helpful if the children are showing other signs of readiness including mastering toilet learning, completing classroom works, showing independence in self-care and communication skills)

-other classroom parents of children not involved are notified of the challenges and the schools efforts and reminded of our policy to continue to work with the children involved.

* Staff will work together as partners with the parents of both biting children and children who have been bit to keep all informed and develop a joint strategy for change.

* In cases where staff or parents feel any child has a special need or is exhibiting behavior beyond normal development, the child will be recommended for a developmental evaluation by a trained therapist. Moore County Schools offers free evaluations for speech or other developmental concerns, or the parent may choose to speak with their pediatrician and obtain a referral for a private evaluation. Parents should provide documentation of the evaluation to the school and follow up with recommendations from the therapist as needed. Biting behavior is very typical and common in all children under the age of 3, but can sometimes be a symptom of a separate condition. If a child is diagnosed with a special need, The Garden may require a parent hire a therapist or aide to attend school with the child in order to ensure the safety and progress of all of the children in the classroom.

* Expulsion/withdrawal of a child from our program will only take place if it is deemed in the best interest of the child exhibiting the behavior, the integrity of the school, and the other children enrolled. If the teachers have exhausted all efforts, if a parent is uncooperative with the action plan or shows a lack of support or effort for their child or the school's efforts, The Garden maintains the right to withdraw the child from the program. If the behavior is consistent and all parties are unable to come up with the needed support and solution for the problem, the child may be withdrawn from the program without a right to refund or exemption from the tuition agreement.

Toilet Learning & The Montessori Approach

All parents will be provided with a copy of the article "On the Topic of Toileting" by Catherine MacTamane and a copy of Toilet Awareness, a book by Sarah Moudry, upon request, which reflects our approach to toileting in the Montessori classroom. It is important for the child's sake that parents are consistent with the classroom approach to toileting so that children are able to be successful and ready to "graduate" to the next classroom on time. We ask that parents send children to school in thick cotton training pants (rather than pull-ups) until they are independently using the toilet. Consistent communication with teachers during this time is critical.

Please sign the portion below and return it with your enrollment packet to verify that you have read and agree to all terms, policies, practices and other items listed here.

Please note that this Handbook is a living document and policies are subject to change. All policies listed here are subject to annual approval by the MMCS Board of Directors, changes will be presented as they are made and parents will be notified of any changes made and asked to sign stating that they have read and agree to any changes. Should you have any questions, requests for additions or edits of this document prior to signing, please contact us.

I, _____, and _____ parent(s) of my (our) child, , have read this handbook thoroughly and do hereby agree to abide by all policies and procedures, terms and agreements listed here. I understand fully the philosophies, practices, costs, procedures and any other information provided to me here in the handbook, as well as on all required enrollment forms and acknowledge them fully.

By signing below, I agree to the above statement.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

All legal parents and guardians of any enrolled student must sign this agreement in order to proceed with enrollment.