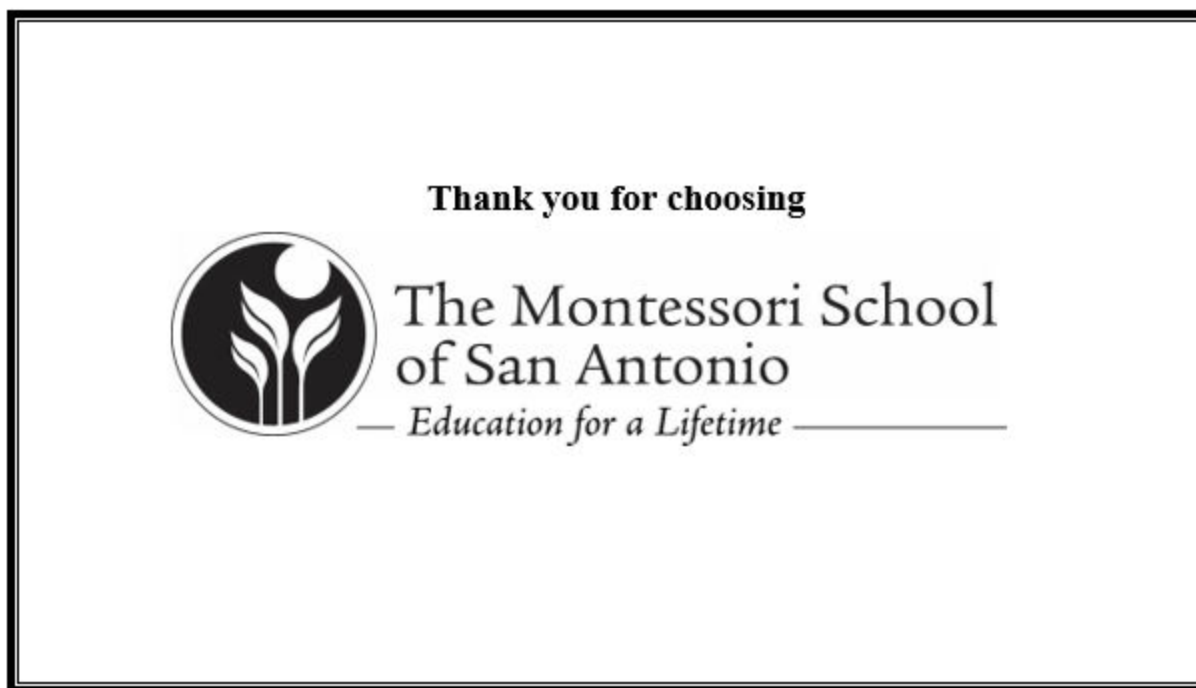




**FAMILY  
HANDBOOK  
2023-2024**



Dear Montessori School of San Antonio Families,

We ask that you please read our 2023-2024 Family Handbook to familiarize yourself with procedures and adhere to policies and guidelines as you partner with the School.

Your understanding of the systems and processes that organize and nurture life at MSSA will empower you to form a productive relationship with us in the best interest of your child. Therefore, we urge you to read the Handbook carefully and frequently refer to it throughout the school year. The Handbook is also available to reference at any time on our campus website.

Should you have questions about any of the details outlined in our Family Handbook, please do not hesitate to reach out.

We look forward to working in partnership with each of you.

The Montessori School of San Antonio



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# Guiding Concepts

## **MSSA Mission Statement**

The Montessori School of San Antonio guides children to be passionate learners, independent thinkers, and engaged citizens.

### *Our Montessori curriculum:*

- Provides limitless academic challenges
- Focuses on mastery
- Motivates children to learn through action, exploration, and discovery
- Promotes self-correction and independent problem solving
- Guides and supports each child's individual progress
- Deepens a child's engagement in the process of learning

### *Our school culture:*

- Values children for their own unique gifts and strengths
- Teaches and models grace, courtesy, and respect
- Cultivates meaningful and lasting relationships among teachers, parents, and students
- Honors diversity across ages, genders, religions, and cultural backgrounds
- Fosters collaboration and mentorship
- Encourages purposeful engagement in our school community

Through these guiding principles, children develop critical skills for academic, professional, and personal success.

*MSSA: Education for a lifetime.*

## **School Philosophy**

The Montessori School of San Antonio (MSSA) builds on the philosophical and psychological principles developed by Dr. Maria Montessori during the first half of the 20th century. Dr. Montessori's vision of education developed as a result of a lifetime of observing and working with children. Through these experiences she created and implemented a highly effective educational methodology based on the developmental needs and abilities of children at different stages of life. Fundamental to her methodology is the belief in each child's uniqueness and ability to achieve.

At MSSA we recognize that development comes through the student's own activity and that the faculty's task is to carefully guide that activity within an environment specially prepared according to the student's particular stage of development.

Montessori at MSSA is an education that is both nurturing and rigorous, respecting each student's unique pace and style of learning while continually encouraging each child to reach his/her maximum potential. It is an education that addresses the critical integration of knowledge, skills, understanding, and moral action.

### **Social and Emotional Learning**

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

MSSA SEL Vision Statement: Everyone is welcomed, accepted, and appreciated. We are committed to being an inclusive, welcoming, and peaceful community that respects diversity, demonstrates empathy and compassion, and exhibits grace and courtesy.

### **A Brief History**

Gay and Jim Judson founded The Montessori Workshop in 1974. Beginning with one primary class of 18 students, the School grew in its first eight years to 74 students and extended its program through lower elementary. In 1982, the School became a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation to expand its base of support, and changed its name to The Judson Montessori School. JMS continued to extend its program through upper elementary and middle school, serving more students every year. Through the generosity of the Rogers family and many patrons in the San Antonio area, the new campus opened at Rogers Ranch in January of 2000. The 24-acre campus is spacious, beautiful, and carefully designed to serve its outstanding, student-centered programs. In 2008, the School changed its name again to The Montessori School of San Antonio to avoid confusion with the Judson School District, and to better reflect its stature among other Montessori schools in San Antonio.

## **FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES**

### **Developmentally Based**

The entire MSSA program is organized around the developmental needs and tendencies of students at various stages of life. This organization leads to mixed-age groupings, which

provide rich peer stimulus and ample opportunities for continuity in each student's learning process. It takes into account such things as the young student's need for extended sensorial exploration and the older student's need for uninterrupted blocks of time for major academic projects.

### **Personalized Learning**

Individual differences in style and pace of learning are accommodated within the classroom. One-on-one teaching and group lessons, small and large, are a few of the many components of instruction.

### **Organization and Integration of Curriculum**

The curriculum is organized to move from the simple to the complex, with each lesson built on the previous one, thus promoting a more comprehensive understanding of ideas, concepts, and values. Though the lessons are given one at a time, each subject area crosses the curriculum, incorporating a variety of skills and academic concepts.

### **Flexible Scheduling**

The requisites for optimal learning determine the allotment of time for different learning activities. A school day at MSSA is composed primarily of long, uninterrupted work periods offering personalized attention and small group activities. Prescheduled classes, such as Spanish, music, physical education, and literature discussions are arranged to minimize interruption of the primary work period.

### **Learning Through Doing**

Learning is an active and experiential process at MSSA. Studies are typically based on each individual student's previous work performance. These activities engage a variety of skills and modes of expression rather than focusing on recitation of subject matter.

### **Freedom with Responsibility**

Students are guided to interact freely and responsibly with their learning environment, their peers, and their instructors. They are encouraged to maximize their learning opportunities within the limits of their own sense of responsibility and according to guidelines set by their teacher.

### **A Community of Learners Based in Cooperation and Mutual Respect**

The MSSA community responds to diversity, especially in matters of race, religion, ethnicity, age, and gender, through an active effort to understand differences. Cooperation sets the tone at

MSSA. All members are guided to perform at their best level, respecting and acknowledging each other's efforts and accomplishments. Respect and trust weave the social fabric of the School.

### **Evaluation and Assessment Through Exhibition of Mastery**

The primary tools for assessment at MSSA are direct exhibition of mastery through individual, performance-based activities. Essential masteries are cumulative and lasting. MSSA's goal is for each student to exhibit these masteries across the full spectrum of his or her work.

### **Teacher as Guide**

The primary role of the teacher in the classroom is to guide the student toward maximum learning through responsible choices and concentrated effort by preparing a stimulating and well-equipped learning environment, giving key lessons (lessons that open doors to independent learning), and providing the social guidance and limitations necessary for students to work independently, collectively, and responsibly.

### **Student as Learner**

The faculty at MSSA recognizes that learning takes place only when the student is engaged and committed to the learning process. The work of the student is to gain interest, involvement, concentration, and continuity of effort as an active learner. The process of learning both actively and experientially fosters a love of learning.

## **ACCREDITATION**

The Montessori School of San Antonio is accredited by and is a member of the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS). MSSA is also a member of the American Montessori Society (AMS) and the International Montessori Council.

## **STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION**

The Montessori School of San Antonio admits students of any race, color, gender, creed, or national origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the School. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender,



creed, or national origin in employment or in its administration of its educational policies, admission policies, financial aid programs, athletics, or other School-administered programs.

## **Board of Trustees**

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Board of Trustees is to ensure the institution remains financially strong for our children's children and to preserve and actively support the school in the realization of its mission.

### **About the Board**

The Board of Trustees is the governing body of MSSA and is responsible for all the affairs, property, and business of the School. The Board consists of no less than 11 and no more than 20 Trustees. Trustees serve for a term of three years. The Board conducts its business at regular or special meetings called at various times throughout the year. Meeting information may be obtained by calling the School. The Board conducts its business through several standing committees. The President of the Board may also appoint special committees from time to time.

## **Parent and Teacher Council (PTC)**

All parents and guardians of currently enrolled students, faculty, and staff are members of the PTC. No membership dues are required.

The mission of the PTC is to:

- Raise funds to enrich the curriculum and enhance the facilities and grounds;
- Promote a positive spirit and sense of service within the School and extended community;
- Support the School in the achievement of its mission and strategic initiatives.

The mission of the PTC is carried out in collaboration with the Head of School.

General meetings of the membership are held every other month during the school year.

The success of the organization hinges on support and participation from the community. Volunteer opportunities exist in areas such as building and grounds, fundraising, classroom support, and community service. More information may be obtained by contacting the School or PTC representatives.

## **Admission and Continuation**

### **Admission**

The Montessori School of San Antonio is coeducational and accepts qualified students regardless of race, color, religion, gender or ethnic origin. Admission decisions are based on the space available and an evaluation of the suitability of MSSA for each student. Generally, priority consideration for enrollment is given to applicants in the following order:

1. Qualified siblings of current MSSA students;
2. Qualified students with previous Montessori experience;
3. All other qualified applicants.

Students entering at the Primary level must be at least three years old by the first day of school or start date and completely toilet trained. They must exhibit a readiness to attend school by easily separating from their parent(s), following verbal instructions, remaining focused on a task for a period of time, and displaying a sense of independence.

Every student enrolled in The Montessori School of San Antonio must be immunized against vaccine-preventable diseases in accordance with the immunization schedule adopted by the Texas Department of State Health Services. Admission at The Montessori School of San Antonio is contingent on students being current on all required immunizations. Prior to the first day of attendance, all students must present valid written evidence from their treating physician (M.D. or D.O.), reflecting that all required immunizations have been received. See the HEALTH AND SAFETY section in this handbook for additional information.

### **Admission and Continuation Criteria**

The following criteria are considered with making admission or continuation decisions:

1. The student's learning needs – The flexibility and adaptability of the MSSA approach to differences in pace and style of learning make the program suitable for a wide range of students. However, all students at MSSA must exhibit a certain level of

independence, respect and responsibility toward work, environment, peers, and faculty.

2. The context of the entire grouping which the student is to be placed – Students with special learning needs can sometimes be accommodated at MSSA. However, the number and nature of other students already placed in a level will affect the appropriateness of a student's placement in that level. Students with special needs may be re-interviewed prior to moving to the next level.

3. The student's observed and/or reported behavior – Students must be able to attend to their own work, show respect for their peers, teachers and learning environment, and behave in a manner that does not diminish the quality of the learning environment.

## **Class Placement**

### **Peer Grouping**

MSSA wishes to maintain a strong and healthy peer group within each classroom to support independence, social cohesion, and appropriate peer interaction. The creation of peer groupings is very important; therefore, great care is taken to maintain balance within the makeup of the class. Other factors taken into consideration include academic ability, learning style, special needs, and social maturity.

### **Siblings**

To promote each student's developing sense of independence, siblings are placed in separate classes unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise. Separate class placement supports each child's process of individualization, which is, in turn, the foundation for healthy social adaptation. This separation is especially important in the younger age levels of Primary and Lower Elementary.

### **Final Approval**

The Admissions Committee chaired by the Head of School will give final approval to class placements before they are made official or released to parents.

### **Requesting Specific Teachers**

Because many factors are considered when assigning students to classrooms, parents should not make placement requests. MSSA does not accept requests from parents for placement of their children in specific classrooms or with specific teachers.

## **Accommodations**

There may be circumstances when a parent may request that the School provide an accommodation for a student's medical needs or physical, mental, or learning difference. Our policy is to provide accommodations for a student's needs in circumstances in which the administration determines, at its sole discretion, that doing so is within the reasonable ability of the School and/or its staff and will not result in an unacceptable impairment to the rights of other students or employees or a fundamental change to the educational environment of our mission.

### **Request and Documentation**

For any type of accommodation, the parent must contact the Program Director. The Program Director will advise the parent of the type of medical documentation needed, which generally will state the student's diagnosis, how the condition limits the student, the recommended accommodations, and the length of time that the accommodations will be needed.

### **Release for Communications with Medical Professional**

Sometimes the documentation may raise questions or the situation will be best served by allowing communication between the diagnosing professional and the School. For that reason, the parent may be asked to sign a Release of Information form, permitting the school to contact the medical professional when necessary. In addition, if there is any cost associated with the medical professional's cooperation, the parent must agree to bear the cost of such process.

### **Assessment of Request**

Once the parent's request and medical documentation has been received by the School, appropriate persons will meet with the parent(s) to clarify information and discuss whether the school will be able to implement the accommodation requested. The School reserves the right to deny a request for accommodation or to modify any consent to previously given accommodation requests.

### **Change in Enrollment Status**

Any change in enrollment level during the school year is initiated by the student's teacher. Parents will be asked to sign an Enrollment Contract Change Request form that is completed by the teacher and signed by the Director of Admission.

## **Re-enrollment**

Re-enrollment decisions are made by the administration and faculty based on an annual review of each student's academic progress, social and emotional development, and any special needs (if applicable). Attitudes and values expressed by the child and parents are also taken into consideration. Invitations to continue at MSSA are normally automatic yet are not guaranteed.

Re-enrollment packets are emailed to current students in early February. Submitting the completed contract online by the due date ensures a reserved space for the following school year. Parents are required to stay current with their payment installments to ensure enrollment eligibility.

Families with concerns about re-enrollment should communicate with the Admission Office as soon as possible. Every reasonable effort will be made to work with families as they consider re-enrollment.

# **Academic Integrity & Freedom of Inquiry**

## **Academic Integrity**

The MSSA community provides students with an environment built around a love of learning, independence, and self-reliance including a strong sense of academic integrity. No forms of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of work, or other acts of academic dishonesty are tolerated because honesty is fundamental to our respectful and caring community. Some acts of academic dishonesty include:

- Direct copying of another student's work
- Using and failing to properly credit another work (i.e. article, internet site, book) produced by a different author
- Providing or accepting answers to an assignment from a peer, tutor, or parent
- Using any unauthorized notes or "cheat sheet" during a test or quiz
- Talking, texting, passing notes, or looking at another student's work during a test or quiz

To help students understand academic dishonesty, teachers will provide students with age-appropriate lessons and resources related to proper group work, cheating, and plagiarism. Fundamentally, every student must take responsibility for his or her own work and action. As experienced professionals, teachers are trusted to provide an environment conducive to respect and honesty, in addition to determining if an act of academic dishonesty has occurred. Repeated or multiple instances of academic dishonesty may result in consequences for major

misbehaviors. The consequences of an act will be determined by the teachers and administration dependent on the severity of the event, but may include:

- A failing grade or zero on the related material
- Required submission of an alternate assignment for a reduced grade
- Contact and conference with the student's parents
- Impact on report card comments

## **Freedom of Inquiry**

In matters of faith and conscience, students are not beholden to any religious dogma or doctrine; rather, students are asked to behave in ways that demonstrate grace, courtesy, and respect, and to be active citizens in promoting a peaceful world. Our Montessori classrooms are prepared to allow for children's different interests, strengths, and developmental needs with a goal of nurturing each child's natural desire for knowledge, understanding, and respect. In turn, it's quite natural in classrooms to allow for and accept different perspectives and understandings. In fact, a key facet of critical thinking is the ability to see things from multiple perspectives and is welcomed at MSSA.

# **GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

To graduate from The Montessori School of San Antonio a student must meet the following requirements by the end of the eighth-grade year.

- Two years of English, mathematics, science, and history
- Two years of physical education
- Community service within the MSSA community
- Earn a final grade of 70% or above in all courses

Students with special circumstances may be eligible for graduation without meeting the above criteria upon approval from the Head of School.

# **DISCIPLINE**

## **Philosophy**

Montessori philosophy is centered on respect for others and the environment. Chronic misbehavior causes breakdowns in respect as well as a disruptive learning environment. When

the School informs students or their families of misbehavior, immediate corrective action is expected. Severe student misconduct, particularly that which endangers the physical or emotional safety of others or him/herself, may result in immediate suspension or expulsion at the discretion of the administration.

As a Montessori school, MSSA strives for students to achieve self-discipline and self-regulation without constant threat of punishment. As with academics, this philosophy accepts that students may “mess up” from time to time as part of the learning process. The school expects a child to acknowledge wrongdoing and work to remedy the harm done by his or her actions. MSSA’s approach to discipline is more *restorative* than *punitive*.

Restorative discipline is based on the idea that misbehavior is a violation of people and relationships. Violations create obligations, and justice involves persons harmed, referred students, and school community to repair that harm. The central focus of restorative justice is that the misbehaved student is accountable to the needs of the harmed person and works to repair the harm.

### **Examples of Major Misbehaviors**

- Interference to others’ rights to physical and emotional safety
- Damage, abuse, or theft of school property Possession or use of drugs, alcohol, tobacco substances, or inhalants
- Possession or use of weapons or explosives
- Truancy from school or mandatory school activities
- Use of obscene, profane, suggestive or intimidating verbal or written language
- Conduct committed off-campus or after school hours that is illegal or reflects negatively on the school
- Misuse of technology privileges
- Defiance in the face of correction

### **Available Consequences for Major Misbehaviors**

- Exclusion from classroom
- Exclusion from campus (designated as suspension on student’s record)
- Probation – official warning that expulsion will result from next major violation
- Non-renewal of enrollment contract for following year
- Expulsion

### **Bullying**

All students have the right to an educational atmosphere that is free from verbal and/or physical abuse. Bullying is defined as a pattern of physical or verbal mistreatment of a person where an imbalance of physical or psychological power is created with the bully being stronger (or perceived to be stronger) than the victim and which causes a disruption to the learning environment. Aggressive behavior or bullying is any behavior that may subject a student to

insults, taunts, or challenges whether verbal or physical in nature, which are likely to intimidate and/or provoke a violent or disorderly response from the student being treated in this matter. This also includes the encouragement or prodding of other students to engage in these types of aggressive behaviors.

These behaviors are, but are not limited to:

- Physical: hitting, kicking, grabbing, spitting
- Verbal: name calling, racist remarks, put-downs, extortion
- Indirect: spreading rumors, wearing or possessing items depicting or implying hatred or prejudice, exclusion from peer group, taking and hiding or destroying another's papers or other possessions
- Written: threatening e-mail, notes, graffiti, social media posts, text messages
- Coercion: forcing other students into acts against their wishes

### **Bullying – Key Questions for Definition**

1. Were the alleged bullying behaviors repeated and deliberate?
2. Did the alleged bullying behaviors inflict harm or suffering?
3. Is there an imbalance of real or perceived power between the alleged victim and alleged author of the behavior?

### **Bullying Complaint Procedure**

If a student feels that they are the target of bullying behavior, they should report that immediately to their teacher. Students will be asked to provide details of the bullying behavior. Anyone, student or adult, with knowledge of bullying behavior is obligated to report that behavior to the child's teacher or the Program Director. If a teacher identifies a behavior as bullying, or is not sure, they are obligated to report that activity to the Program Director. Any such complaint must be specific and should include all relevant information so that the school may conduct a thorough investigation. Parents and teachers who submit a bullying complaint will be asked to provide details of bullying events with dates, times, places, and details of what happened in writing.

### **Investigation Process**

After the School receives a written complaint, or otherwise learns of an alleged potential violation of this policy, and also receives any clarification requested, the School will determine the appropriate course of action, which may include the initiation of an investigation. If the School initiates an investigation, it will conduct the investigation as it deems appropriate, in its sole discretion. The School will make reasonable efforts to protect students' privacy and confidentiality. Information reported will be shared only on a need-to know basis, including



with school personnel with knowledge related to the information reported and with those involved in an investigation or the conducting of an investigation.

### **Disciplinary Documentation for a Bullying Complaint**

Once the Program Director has been made aware of a bullying complaint, a documentation process is initiated. This documentation will include details from the submitted written complaint including:

- Nature of incidents
- Dates and times
- Notes from conversations related to incidents
- Actions taken by the School

### **No Retaliation**

The school will not tolerate any retaliation against a student who files a complaint or participates in an investigation regarding a complaint of bullying.

### **Remedial and Disciplinary Action**

All instances of bullying may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Any violation of this policy by a parent will be considered a violation of the school's parent behavior expectations and may be grounds for dismissal of the offending parent's child(ren).

### **Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying is defined as bullying via the use of the internet, interactive and digital technologies (such as computers, tablets and/or mobile telephones.) The use of any School computer or electronic device for the purpose of cyberbullying is strictly prohibited. Cyberbullying using home-based or off-campus devices that results in a material and/or substantial disruption to the School and/or a true threat will constitute grounds for investigation as to whether the use violates applicable law or school rules. Should misuse be determined, the student may receive disciplinary consequences appropriate for the frequency and severity of the violation. Students and parents are encouraged to notify the Program Director of any incidents regarding cyberbullying immediately.

## **MYMSSA/Registration Day**

During the summer, MSSA will communicate information to families about the new school year. A MYMSSA/Registration event is held prior to the first day of the school year.

### **Primary**

New Primary students are encouraged to participate in Montessori 101, a two-day free program that introduces them to daily life at school. Montessori 101 is held during the week prior to the first day of school.

### **Lower Elementary**

New students (new to school or new to level) are encouraged to attend a half-day orientation, held on the day prior to the first full day of school. This orientation helps ensure students will start the school year successfully. More information will be emailed to each new family in early August.

## **Arrival, Dismissal, and Parking**

To facilitate our main goals of safety and efficiency during arrival and dismissal times, please follow the procedures outlined below.

### **Speed Limit**

The speed limit on the MSSA campus is 10 miles per hour. Slow down at the entry and exit points to the campus, and watch for people walking, jogging, or biking on the sidewalk along Rogers Ranch Parkway. Please watch for children while on campus.

### **Entry to Campus**

Parents are to use the front entrance ONLY (not the gymnasium doors or back gate) to enter MSSA facilities. Early Arrival is accessed through the gym. For the safety and security of all students and employees, all vehicles entering the campus must already have downloaded and set-up an account on the SchoolPass application. Parents display the school issued RFID car tag on the passenger side windshield of the car to enter the campus. Visitors must stop at the security checkpoint to receive a visitor's pass.

## **Parking and Access**

Parent and guest parking is located in front of the School and in the south parking lots. Employee parking is in the north gravel lot and the south parking lots. Park only in spaces as defined by stripes or a parking bumper. **Under no circumstances are parents to park or let children out on Rogers Ranch Parkway.** Please do not leave valuables in your vehicle, and always keep your vehicle locked and turned off when not attended.

## **Arrival**

### **Early Arrival**

Early Arrival is available starting at 7:00 AM. Parents bringing children for Early Arrival walk children to the gymnasium. All children must be accompanied by an adult to Early Arrival.

### **Regular Arrival**

Children may not enter the main building prior to 7:50 AM. The school day starts at 8:15 AM.

In the interest of safety and security for both students and school personnel walk-up arrival is not allowed. All student arrival must be via the car line.

Drivers form a single line as they enter campus and move slowly with traffic as they approach the unloading zone. Upper Elementary and Middle School students may be dropped off near the entrance to the gym. Their drivers may then use the center lane to exit, bypassing around Primary and Elementary traffic.

MSSA staff assigned to colored cones will start opening car doors at 7:50 AM and will stop promptly at 8:15 AM. Please stay in line and pull forward to the next available cone; do not bypass the car in front of you to get to an open cone.

Please make sure that children are buckled into their seats until a morning greeter opens the door for them to exit. Children should not be sitting on parent laps or standing with their heads out of sunroofs.

Morning greeters will indicate the end of arrival by picking up their cones, at which time one more group of cars will be permitted to stop at stations and unload. Students arriving after this are considered tardy and must be walked into school and signed in at the front desk.

Child car seats must be installed on the curb side (passenger side) of the vehicle. Upon entering the loading zone, please be sure that your child's car seat is unbuckled for a prompt exit.

Please help your child have their lunch box in hand, backpack ready, and if necessary, their coat on **before** reaching the loading zone. Waiting to gather items until the car door is open delays traffic flow.

If your child is not ready to get out of the car (still eating breakfast, having difficulty saying good-bye, etc.), please pull ahead to the very end of the sidewalk, out of the arrival zone, to help keep traffic moving while you tend to your child's needs.

Once your child has safely exited from your vehicle, please proceed forward to exit the campus so as not to impede traffic flow.

### **Late Arrival**

All students who arrive after 8:15 AM and after all staff have gone inside **must** be escorted inside to the front desk and signed in.

**Under no circumstances should a child be allowed to enter the building unescorted.**

### **Tips for Parents on Separation: Saying Good-Bye**

*It can be difficult for parents and young children to separate at the beginning of a school year, as they each feel a bit nervous when they leave one another in a new situation. If this is your child's first year at MSSA, we encourage you to visit the campus a few times before the start of school to allow him/her to become familiar with the new setting. In general, a short, positive good-bye is easiest for the child. A prolonged good-bye often makes the situation more difficult.*

*Please do not walk your child up the walkway or to the door or react with alarm if your child is hesitant about separation. The teachers and assistants are very experienced in helping children through these situations.*

*It is very important to reassure your child about where you will be during the day, and what time you will pick him/her up. Some children may be apprehensive for a while during the first few days, but reassurance and positive parental attitudes usually alleviate fears.*

### **Dismissal**

**In the interest of safety and security for students as well as school personnel, parents may not pick up students on foot. All students are dismissed through the car line.**

All vehicles must already have downloaded and set-up an account on the SchoolPass application. The dismissal line forms on the right side of the driveway, and loops through the large parking lot, back to the front of the main building. A school staff member will scan the

school issued RFID car tag located on the passenger side windshield BEFORE you reach the loading zone. By the time you pull into the loading zone in front of the school, your child(ren) will be waiting for you.

### **Dismissal for Primary Half-Day Program**

Students in the Primary Half-Day program will be seated in the loading zone in front of the School. Staff members will assist children getting into vehicles starting at 11:45 AM. Children not picked up by 12:00 noon will be taken to the After-School Program and the family's account will be charged accordingly. Students are not permitted to wait for their parents in the front lobby.

### **Dismissal from After-School Programs or Athletics**

Parents picking up children enrolled in after-school programs or athletics will be given instructions on where to park or pick up their children through an Active confirmation email.

### **Going Home Via a Different Method, or With a Different Driver**

Please follow the steps listed in the SchoolPass application for notifying the School your child will be picked up by a different person or is going home at a different time than usual (i.e. going home at Regular Dismissal instead of going to After-School Care.) Please inform your substitute drivers that they may be required to show a picture ID when picking up children.

### **Early Departure**

The time at the end of a school day is important for closure and a proper start to the next day. **Except in cases of genuine emergency, MSSA will not interrupt a classroom for the purposes of checking out a student after 2:30 PM (1:30 PM on Wednesdays).** Please do not schedule standing appointments such as lessons that require early or preferential dismissal.

If you must take your child out of school early, please notify the school using the SchoolPass application before 2pm.

Once you have arrived at school, please walk into the building and wait for your child in the front lobby.

If your child returns to school the same day, please escort them into the building and sign them back in at the front desk.

Please consider the attendance requirements when scheduling appointments or making plans for your child during school hours. A student who leaves school before 10:00 AM is considered

absent for the day. A student who leaves between 10:00 AM and 12:00 noon or does not arrive until 12:00 noon is considered absent for half the day.

## Attendance

Because MSSA is in the Northeast Independent School District, we follow its guidelines for attendance (*information obtained from the NEISD Student Handbook for Elementary Schools*):

- School attendance is required by law. Bringing your child to school late or removing him/her prior to the end of the school day is not advised.
- State law requires that a student may not be given credit for a class unless the student is in attendance for at least 90 percent of the time the class is offered.

Although MSSA is a private school, its curriculum still depends on consistency and continuous progress. Every time a student is absent from school for any reason, there is a period of readjustment as he tries to get back into the routine of work. Chronic absences and tardiness affect academic achievements.

Student attendance is recorded on all Student Progress Reports. Attendance and tardy records are a consideration in the admission process of most private schools. A student's attendance record may also be a factor in other academic opportunities.

### Excused absences and tardies include:

- Student illness
- Illness or death in the family
- Natural disasters, weather or road conditions making travel dangerous
- Observance of religious holy days
- Attendance at an authorized school function
- Doctor or dentist appointment
- Quarantine
- Admissions visit to another school. Visits will be approved by the Program Director.

Parents requesting an excused absence should call the school or send a note explaining the absence. Students must be present for at least 50% of the school day in order to participate in after-school activities and athletic events.

Students who visit other schools and provide documentation of the visit will be allowed to participate in after-school activities and athletic events.

Unexcused absences and tardies include:

- Absent or late with no notice of reason
- Being sent home because of violation of school rule or policy

**Excessive Absenteeism**

Students who have more than eighteen absences per year, or more than nine during a semester, for reasons other than required school commitments (e.g., athletic early dismissals), may be denied credit.

**Tardiness**

Practical life skills are an important component of the Montessori curriculum. One such essential skill is *punctuality*, and parents play a major role in teaching and modeling it.

MSSA staff assigned to colored cones will start opening car doors at 7:50 AM and will stop promptly at 8:15 AM. Morning greeters will indicate the end of arrival by picking up their cones, at which time one more group of cars will be permitted to stop at stations and unload. **Students arriving after this are considered tardy and must be walked into school and signed in at the Front Desk in the Late Arrival Log.** Do not drop your children off and allow them to enter the building unescorted.

The student day starts at 8:15 AM. Please take traffic congestion and weather conditions into consideration when planning your commute to school. Have your children at school *prior* to 8:15 so that they can be ready to start their day.

**Absence**

When children will be absent from school for any reason, please contact your child's teacher and/or the reception desk, and update this on the SchoolPass application as soon as possible. Students who have been absent must bring or email a written, signed statement explaining the reason for such absence. The statement may be from the parent/guardian or the professional office visited.

## **Appointments During the School Day**

The school's expectation is that students are on campus at all times during the school day. We view class attendance as crucial to a student's success. To minimize class absences, elective medical and dental appointments should be scheduled outside the school day whenever possible.

# **PARENT-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP**

The Montessori School of San Antonio is accredited by and is a member of the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS). MSSA is also a member of the American Montessori Society (AMS) and the International Montessori Council.

As a family in partnership with The Montessori School of San Antonio, you may expect all employees to:

- actively participate in the fulfillment of our mission statement
- provide a safe caring environment for your child
- regularly communicate about your child and the School
- extend invitations to be involved
- guide students with consistent values and fair discipline
- openly and directly communicate with students, parents, and colleagues

As an institution dedicated to meeting the academic and social needs of our students, we expect from each parent:

- agreement with and support of our mission statement
- communication with us about your child
- sharing any religious, cultural, medical, psychological, or personal information that the School may need to best serve your child and the school community
- attendance at meetings and events of the classrooms, levels, and school;
- involvement in appropriate ways
- support of our values and discipline practices;
- communication that is open and appropriately channeled;
- cooperation with and support of the School's policies and procedures;
- efforts to understand Montessori education through observation, participation in parent education classes, and reading (see the parent resource center in the MSSA Library);



- respectful communications;
- coverage of all legal, substitute, and other fees incurred by the School in matters in which MSSA employees are requested to give testimony in legal proceedings initiated by one or both parents in a family.

A positive and constructive working relationship between The Montessori School of San Antonio and the parent body is essential to the fulfillment of our educational mission. Therefore, MSSA reserves the right to dismiss or deny the privilege of reenrollment to a student if we reasonably conclude that the actions of a parent or guardian impede a positive and constructive relationship or otherwise seriously interfere with the accomplishment of our mission.

## **Parent/Guardian Roles in Supporting Positive Behavior**

### **Modeling**

Children observe and imitate the behavioral responses that are used by the significant adults in their environment, and parents are the most important teachers in a child's life. Parents who are respectful and kind are likely to see that same behavior develop in their children.

Demonstrating a variety of healthy responses to frustration and setbacks, as well as modeling effective problem-solving techniques and non-judgmental communication are especially valuable to young children who are still learning to establish their own self-control.

### **Discussion**

While children absorb a great deal by observation, discussing ways to show respect, build trust, show empathy, manage anger, and practice forgiveness can help a child build successful relationships.

### **Reinforcement**

Montessori philosophy does not advocate external rewards for desired behavior, as this tends to reduce intrinsic motivation. However, acknowledging and encouraging positive behavior is always important and will help shape a child's behavior far better than criticism.

## **Communication**

Communication is a two-way street. MSSA makes every effort to communicate openly and clearly with our families about student progress, school events, and general information throughout the school year. In return, we ask that you keep us informed about your child, keep

your contact information updated, and let us know about anything going on at home that might affect your child at school.

Parents are reminded that MSSA is a business enterprise. The school's professional staff is attending to both routine tasks and special projects that make high demands on their time. Therefore, if you wish to meet with any teacher or administrator, please call and set an appointment. This will help the employee allocate appropriate time and attention to you.

When parents are separated, divorced or not living at the same address, MSSA will keep both parents informed of all school matters as well as their child's progress. An exception may be requested by a court order from either or both parents; the request will require full consideration of the legal ramifications and other relevant matters, to the effect that dual communication is not required, desired, or to be pursued.

Unless an exception (documented by a signed court order) is granted, MSSA will adhere to the following.

- Both parents will receive copies of all mailed progress reports, announcements, and invitations at their respective addresses (if addresses are provided).
- The Weekly Dispatch will be e-mailed to all parents on Thursday who provide us with their email address(es).
- Both parents are equally welcomed at all school events.

It is the parent's responsibility to provide the School with the most recent court order to honor.

## **How to Contact Us**

### **Office Hours**

The Front Desk is staffed, and the phone is answered from 7:30 AM to 4:30 PM. The office is closed on weekends and for school holidays.

### **Voicemail System**

Each faculty and staff member at MSSA has a private voice mail box for individual messages. During the day, the receptionist will transfer calls to voicemail, or directly to the individual staff member if appropriate. After hours, callers can either dial a direct extension number, press "2" for the school directory, or press "4" to leave a general message at the Front Desk.

General messages are checked between 7:30 to 8:30 AM each school day. Faculty and staff check their voicemail messages frequently during the day.

**Calls will not be transferred directly into the classroom during the school day.** Emergency messages for students and teachers will be hand-delivered to the classroom by a staff member.

### **Email System**

Every MSSA employee has an email account. E-mail addresses are listed in the School Directory and on the MSSA website at **[www.montessoriSA.org](http://www.montessoriSA.org)**. Please allow teachers a reasonable amount of time to respond to your email before attempting to contact them through other means of communication.

### **Visiting School**

For the safety and security of all children as well as MSSA employees, all visitors must check in on the Visitor Management kiosk in the main lobby. This policy applies to everyone, including parents, board members, tutors, contractors, and anyone else who is not a student or MSSA employee. There will be no exceptions to this policy.

Parents are not permitted to go to their child's classroom without pre-scheduling an appointment, as it is disruptive to the child, the teacher, and the entire class. All communications to students during the school day will be handled through the Front Desk.

We do not encourage items to be dropped off during the school day. However, if necessary, your items will be left at the front desk and delivered to the classroom.

### **Classroom Observations**

Classroom observations may be scheduled with your child's classroom teacher and are by appointment only. Observations typically begin in the late fall, after classes have had an opportunity to reach normalization, which is the term Maria Montessori used for the process of internalizing multiple skills through coordination and organization, as children develop focus and concentration, enjoy their work, and grow their self-discipline and sociability. As we wish to keep the children's day as normal as possible, we ask that parent visitors follow these instructions:

1. Please enter and leave the classroom as quietly as possible.
2. Sit in the designated chair.
3. Do not initiate conversation with the children or attempt to attract their attention. If a child speaks to you, please answer them as briefly as possible.
4. Please do not initiate a conversation with a teacher who is working with the children.

## **Keep Us Informed**

Please update your family information (address, phone numbers, email, medical, and emergency contacts) online using the MSSA Family Demographics webform via FACTS Family Portal. In case of an emergency, this is the information we will use to contact you. For assistance with the FACTS Family Portal, call the School and ask for the Help Desk.

Information regarding your child's current interests or difficulties (divorce, death, family problems) is important to share with your child's teacher. This communication will be held in strict confidentiality. Please request a phone or in-person conference with your teacher to discuss these issues.

## **The Weekly Dispatch**

Every Thursday, important school information is sent electronically to parents in the Weekly Dispatch email. Each parent may list two email addresses to receive the Dispatch as well as all other school information. The Weekly Dispatch contains information such as lunch menus, school-sponsored events, order forms for school merchandise, reminders about deadlines, and other necessary communication.

## **Website**

The MSSA website, [www.montessorisa.org](http://www.montessorisa.org), is a prime source of information about the school.

## **Calendar**

The MSSA calendar is published annually and is available on the MSSA website. Every attempt is made to ensure its accuracy, but some changes may be unavoidable. Changes will be announced in the Weekly Dispatch. A more detailed calendar is also provided every week in the Weekly Dispatch.

## **FACTS Family Portal**

MSSA uses a secure web-based portal, FACTS Family Portal, which is accessible through [www.montessorisa.org](http://www.montessorisa.org) and allows parents to view their children's information, family financial account, order lunches, and make payments. FACTS Family Portal also provides access to school information such as calendars, events, newsletters, surveys, and more..

## **Student Directory**

The Student Directory is located online in FACTS Family Portal . The directory is offered as a service to our families and **may not be used for solicitation or as a mailing list for business or other organizations.**

## **TeamSnap**

For students enrolled in competitive athletics, TeamSnap is the primary method of communication for last-minute schedule changes, practice cancellations, or other important details related to the student's sport. TeamSnap messages are sent via text to parent's cell phones. Data charges may apply.

## **Parent Conferences**

The most effective way to communicate about your child's development is through an in-depth conference where parents and teachers discuss the physical, emotional, social and intellectual progress of the student. Two conferences per year (once in Fall and once in Spring) are recommended. However, parents are encouraged to contact their child's teacher whenever a concern arises.

## **Addressing Concerns and Conflicts**

Direct communication in person with the party or parties involved nearly always resolves conflicts or misunderstandings. Should direct communication not bring a satisfactory solution, parents may contact the Program Director or Head of School for help to resolve an issue.

If a parent feels that a decision of the Head of School conflicts with school policy, (they may submit a letter to the President of the Board of Trustees grieving the decision.

## **Telephone Use**

Students may use the telephone in the Front Office only with permission from the teacher. Use of the phone will be limited to emergencies and urgent situations.

## **Personal Electronic Devices**

Personal electronic devices, including cell phones, smartwatches, tablets, and similar items may be used on campus only with teacher or staff permission. Students may carry cell phones on campus if they are turned completely off during the school day and kept out of sight in a backpack, purse, or pocket. Devices will be confiscated if used inappropriately, and a parent must retrieve the device after meeting with an administrator to review this cell phone policy.

# Dress Code

MSSA does not require the wearing of uniforms. Instead, we have a dress code that allows students to have a sense of personal choice while reflecting a courteous and non-distracting demeanor.

In general, student dress should reflect community values, be safe, non-distracting, comfortable, and facilitate freedom of movement for indoor and outdoor activities. Clothing with vacation images, cartoon or movie characters, products or brand names disrupts the working atmosphere of the classroom.

When students are in violation of the Dress Code, parents will receive email notification of the nature of the infraction. Parents are expected to acknowledge the infraction and take corrective action.

## **Lost and Found**

To help reduce the number of items in Lost and Found at the end of each quarter, please label all your child's items with his/her first initial and last name. Lost and found items are located in the Front Office. Small, valuable items that are found are kept at the Front Desk. The School cannot be responsible for lost clothing or items, labeled or unlabeled. Unclaimed clothing and other items are periodically donated to charity.

## **Spirit Wear**

MSSA offers t-shirts, jackets, and other items imprinted with the School's logo. These items are available for sale throughout the year. All students participating in off-campus activities such as field trips are encouraged to wear a MSSA branded t-shirt.

## **Physical Education Uniforms**

Middle School students are expected to dress out for PE every day. The PE uniform consists of any MSSA t-shirt as well as MSSA PE uniform shorts. Appropriate footwear is also required.

## **Primary Level Dress Code**

Primary clothing at this level should promote independence, be safe, non-distracting and comfortable, and facilitate freedom of movement. Clothing should be neat and clean. Pants and shorts with elastic waistbands help facilitate independent restroom use. Clothing with distracting graphics, words, brand names, logos or cartoon images are discouraged. Shirts or

dresses that can expose the midriff should not be worn to school, and shorts can be worn under dresses and skirts for gross motor movement. Footwear should be athletic shoes or soft-soled closed-toe shoes that allow for physical activity and safety. Footwear that does not have a heel strap, Crocs, boots with heels, flip-flops, thongs, clogs, mules, “heely” roller shoes, and shoes with lights are not allowed. Hats should be worn outdoors. Jewelry is discouraged and tattoos, stickers, and glitter on bodies or clothing is not allowed.

All Primary students should have a complete set of under- and outer-clothing to change into when accidents occur. Please label all clothing with your child’s name, and place items in a Zip-Loc bag that is also marked with your child’s name. If your child is enrolled in After-School Care, please provide another set of clothing to be kept in the Child Care Room.

All clothing, backpacks, and lunch boxes should be labeled with the student’s name. Please consider purchasing a hooded raincoat for your child to wear on rainy days.

### **Elementary and Middle School Level Dress Code**

Students at the Elementary and Middle School levels are particularly sensitive to peer considerations. Clothing should reflect an attitude of dignity toward themselves, their work, and their peers. Clothing should be neat and clean, and fit properly in length and size. Undergarments should not be visible. Shirts or dresses that can expose the midriff should not be worn to school. Clothing with distracting graphics, words, brand names, or logos, or cartoon images are discouraged. Hats should be worn outside. Footwear should be soft-soled shoes or sandals with heel straps, and athletic shoes are required for P.E. and music. Students may not bring make-up to apply at school, and tattoos, stickers, and glitter on bodies or clothing is not allowed.

All clothing, backpacks, and lunch boxes should be labeled with the student’s name. Please consider purchasing a hooded raincoat for your child to wear on rainy days.

## **Food at School**

### **Special Dietary Restrictions**

Some students may follow a special diet for religious or medical reasons. **Please be sure to notify the teachers if your child has allergies or should avoid certain foods.** These restrictions will be considered when planning snacks or on days when the class prepares a special feast.

## **Snacks**

Primary and Lower Elementary parents are asked to contribute to the “snack co-op” by providing nutritious, nut-free snacks for the children in the class for two weeks. Parents sign up for snack duty during MYMSSA Day; each teacher maintains their snack list for the entire year. We request that you provide nutritious snacks such as fruits, vegetables, and cheese. Please speak to your child’s teacher about appropriate kinds of foods and quantities. See the MSSA *Snack Guidelines* below for more information.

## **Snack Guidelines**

### **How Much and What to Bring**

Snacks may be brought in day-by-day or at the beginning of the week for the entire week. In either case, the snacks should be delivered to the school before 8:00 AM or after 3:15 PM on the day before the snack will be needed. The security guard will allow parents who are delivering snacks in the morning to park in the Employee-Only gravel lot to unload their items. Special instructions about preparation, serving, or food combinations should be left in writing with the snacks.

### **Choices of Snack Food and Amount Required**

Each day’s snack should consist of one of (or combination of) the following per day. Remember: “Variety is the spice of life.”

### **Foods**

One of the following foods or food combinations:

1. Crackers (2 average per child/per day), or breads (1/2 slice per child/per day) with or without spreads such as spreadable cheese.
2. Fruits or vegetables with or without a dip, or with cream cheese. Half piece per child/per day, for example, 1/2 apple, 1/2 celery stick.
3. Cheese to slice or cube. Half to one oz. per child/per day.
4. Dried fruits. Quarter cup per child/per day.
5. Yogurt (not containing artificial sweetener). Half cup per child/per day.
6. Hard boiled eggs. One (in shell, unpeeled) per child/per day.
7. Popcorn. One cup per child/per day.
8. Plain tortilla chips with refried beans and cheese.

Please avoid sweet, sugary food (containing aspartame or artificial sweeteners), pre-packaged meat products, and food that is artificially brightly colored. Please do not send foods containing



nuts as some children have a severe nut allergy. “Slurpable” items such as Go-Gurt, GoGo SqueeZ, or applesauce pouches are discouraged. When in doubt, please check with the teacher.

Upper Elementary students bring their own snacks to school. We ask that these snacks be nutritious, nut-free, and in keeping with the MSSA *Snack Guidelines*.

**If your child is allergic to any food, please communicate this in writing to our staff. If it is a severe allergy, bring a supply of snacks for the teacher to keep on hand exclusively for your child.**

## **Lunch**

Students are encouraged to bring well-balanced and nutritious lunches in a reusable lunch bag. Please do not send foods that are overly processed or high in sugar. Delivering fast food or ordering food to be delivered is not allowed.

Pack quantities of food that are appropriate for your child. Uneaten food will be returned home so you can judge how much your child is eating each day. *Items such as candy, chocolate, chocolate cookies, chocolate pudding, chocolate milk, gum, soft drink or “slurpable” items such as Go-Gurt, GoGo SqueeZ, and applesauce pouches should not be packed in your child’s lunch.*

Please be sure your child can manage his/her lunch containers without assistance. Pouch-style juices such as Capri Sun are discouraged because they tend to spill easily. Microwaves are available in the Elementary classrooms for students to heat their lunches or snacks. To avoid scalds or burns, there is a one-minute limit to heating items in the microwave.

## **Lunch Program**

MSSA offers the option of ordering a nutritious catered lunch daily for students who have pre-purchased a meal. Lunch is delivered in a pre-packaged disposable carton with utensils. Monthly menus are linked in the the FACTS Family Portal, on the website, and published in the weekly Dispatch. Please note that lunches must be ordered and paid for in advance. Refunds will not be issued in the case of a student’s absence.

If a student forgets his or her lunch a prepackaged healthy snack pack will be provided. If snack packs are provided for a student more than twice, a lunch fee of \$6.00 per snack will be applied to the families FACTS account. Outside food deliveries are not permitted.

Please note additional details about the Lunch Program are shared every Thursday in the weekly dispatch.

## Field Trips

During a normal school year, field trips enhance the MSSA program by providing learning opportunities that are unique to a particular subject, or that would otherwise not be available at the MSSA campus. Written notification will be sent to parents prior to each scheduled outing, and a signed permission slip must be returned before the child will be allowed to participate. Parents may contact the teacher if they do not wish for their child to attend.

## Health and Safety

The safety and security of students and staff is the number one priority at MSSA.

### Emergency Contact Information

Your child's FACTS Family Portal record provides all emergency contact information needed to reach you or your designated alternate(s) should your child need your immediate attention. Please let those whom you have designated as your emergency contacts know that we may be contacting them if you cannot be reached. **Please review and update your child's information online via FACTS Family Portal.**

Students who need to be sent home because of illness or another medical situation must be picked up **within one hour** of the parent or emergency contact being reached. The School does not have the personnel nor facilities to care for sick children for an extended period of time. Students who are not picked up within one hour will have a \$5.50 charge per hour added to the parent's account.

### Health Records

Every student enrolled in The Montessori School of San Antonio must be immunized against vaccine-preventable diseases in accordance with the immunization schedule adopted by the Texas Department of State Health Services. Attendance at The Montessori School of San Antonio is contingent on students being current on all required immunizations. Prior to the first day of school, all students must present valid written evidence from their treating physician (M.D. or D.O.), reflecting that all required immunizations have been received.

For a list of immunizations required by Texas law, please refer to the Texas Department of State Health Services website, [www.dshs.state.tx.us](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us).

The only exception to the foregoing requirement is a notarized medical exemption signed by the student's treating physician (M.D. or D.O.). All students requesting a medical exemption must provide valid written evidence reflecting the medical basis for the requested exemption. The affidavit for health reasons is only valid for one year at a time unless otherwise stated by the treating physician.

**The Montessori School of San Antonio does not consider conscience-based exemptions.**

**Statement from the Texas Attorney General:**

*Conscientious objections or waivers, which may be permissible for attendance in public schools, do not qualify as an exemption in Private Schools. A private school that does not accept state tax funds is not required to accept for enrollment a child who has received an exemption for the immunizations required by the Texas Health and Safety Code.*

*(Atty. Gen. OP GA-0420).*

**Health Screenings**

**Hearing and Vision Screening**

The Texas Department of Health requires that all children enrolled in public or private schools or childcare facilities must be screened for possible vision and hearing problems at the following ages or grade levels:

- 4-years-old by September 1<sup>st</sup>
- Kindergarten
- 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade
- All other first-time entrants (over the age of 4) to the school.

For the convenience of our parents, MSSA provides certified screeners to perform hearing and vision screenings at the School. The screenings are conducted in September. If you do not want your child screened, please contact the School's health office.

**Visual Exam for Acanthosis Nigricans**

In compliance with state regulation, MSSA will screen children in grades 1, 3, 5, and 7 for Acanthosis Nigricans (AN). AN is characterized by darkening of the skin on a person's neck and may indicate a pre-diabetic condition. This exam will take place at the same time as hearing and vision screening. If you do not want your child screened, please contact the Health Office.

**Spinal Screening**

Texas State law requires spinal screenings for girls who are in grades 5th and 7th , and boys who are in grade 8 . Students will be screened at school by State-Certified screeners. Parents

who wish for this service to be performed by their family doctor must submit a completed Spinal Screening Form to the Health Office.

## **Illness and Communicable Disease**

### **PLEASE READ CAREFULLY TO PREVENT SCHOOL-WIDE EXPOSURE.**

Parents must keep their child home if he/she is ill. The following criteria are used to determine when a child will be sent home or not allowed to return to school due to illness.

#### **Fever**

Children with a temperature of 100 degrees F or higher must stay home. They will be readmitted when the temperature has been normal, without the influence of ibuprofen or acetaminophen, for a full 24-hour period.

#### **COVID-19**

If your child has any combination of the symptoms below coupled with a fever, the protocol is they must stay home.

- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Chills
- Muscle Pain
- Headache
- Sore Throat
- Loss of taste or smell
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Known contact with COVID-19 illness

In the event your child has tested positive or exhibits symptoms for COVID-19, in order to return to school:

- A child must be fever-free for 24 hours without fever reducing medications
- 5 calendar days must have passed since onset of illness
- Symptoms have improved (cough, breathing, etc.)
- A face mask will need to be worn for the next 5 days at school.

#### **Vomiting and/or Diarrhea**

Children must stay home if they are vomiting or have diarrhea. They will be readmitted when the symptoms have been absent for a full 24-hour period.

### **Chickenpox**

Children must stay home after the first rash eruption occurs. They may be readmitted when all vesicles have formed scabs and the temperature has been normal for a full 24-hour period.

### **Communicable Rashes and Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)**

A child with a rash or bacterial conjunctivitis must stay home. Re-admission will require either: absence of the rash or redness in the eye; a re-admission note from a physician; or proof of the administration of medication.

### **Head Lice**

Head lice do not carry disease, nor does their presence indicate poor hygiene. However, children who have head lice or nits (lice eggs) must be treated immediately to prevent further spread in school. Parents will be asked to pick up children who have lice or nits. Children will be re-admitted as soon as they have been successfully treated and all nits have been removed. Upon returning to school, children will be rechecked for satisfactory treatment. MSSA has a “no nit” policy, so children who are clear of live lice but continue to have nits in their hair will still be sent home until all nits are removed.

### **Ringworm**

Children must stay home until control measures have been instituted (e.g., covering the affected area).

### **Strep Throat**

Children must stay home until prescription antibiotics have been administered for at least 24 hours and fever is no longer present.

### **Poison Ivy**

Children whose poison ivy includes obvious and extensive weeping must stay home.

### **Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease**

Children must stay home until they are fever free for 24 hours.

**Please call the School office if your child contracts a communicable disease (e.g., COVID-19, strep, lice, pink-eye) other than the common cold.** Under Health Department rules, the School is obligated to notify families of students who are likely to have come in contact with infected persons.

A child who becomes ill at school will be sent to the Health Office to be examined and/or given a quiet place to rest. If necessary, the parent or designated alternate will be notified to pick up the child from the Health Office.

If an accident or other serious medical emergency arises, the parent or designated alternate will be notified. If immediate medical attention is indicated and no responsible, designated adult can be located, the child will be taken to an emergency room of the nearest hospital or to the physician listed on his/her Student Medical Form.

Please help your child pay close attention to personal hygiene.

### **Infectious Illnesses**

The School recognizes that infectious illness, including Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and its related conditions (both symptomatic and asymptomatic), have a tragic impact on those afflicted and involve significant and sensitive issues for students, faculty, and staff. Parents or guardians of students with an infectious illness (including AIDS) are expected to inform the Head of School of their child's medical condition so that the School can effectively implement the provisions of this policy. Accordingly, the School will take appropriate precautions to ensure that any health and safety concerns arising out of an individual's illness are managed in accordance with current medical knowledge and procedures. The School holds all information which it receives about the medical condition of an employee or student with an infectious illness in confidence.

### **Medications**

Children free of fever for at least 24 hours and clearly free of communicable disease may return to school even if taking medication. However, the State of Texas mandates specific safety guidelines for the administration of medications at school. Therefore, the School will be allowed to administer medications only under the following conditions.

### **Prescription and Non-Prescription Medications**

For a student to receive prescription and/or non-prescription medication at school, the parent must complete and sign an "Authorization for Medication" form (available at the Front Desk). **NO MEDICATION WILL BE ADMINISTERED WITHOUT THIS FORM.** All medications are kept locked in a cabinet in the Health Office and are administered by designated school personnel. Only prescription and non-prescription **UNEXPIRED** medications provided by the parent will be dispensed with the parent's authorization.

- Please send all medications to the Front Desk with the completed "Authorization for Medication" form (available at the Front Desk).
- Please make sure the medication is sent in its original container with proper instructions indicating the name of the person to receive the medicine, the required dose and

frequency, the need for refrigeration (if required), and the name of the prescribing physician (if applicable).

- Students may not carry medication to school. This includes non-prescription medication such as aspirin, Tylenol, ibuprofen, or cough drops.
- No student is allowed to self-medicate while at school unless the nurse receives a note from the child's doctor requesting self-medication.

Please have your child's physician inform the office in writing (may be faxed) of any change in dosage or discontinuance of medication.

First aid medications to be applied topically (e.g., Neosporin, Benadryl spray/lotion, hydrocortisone cream) in the event of a cut, scrape, or insect bite will be administered only with parental authorization indicated on the Student Medical Form. Likewise, cough drops will only be dispensed with parental authorization on the student medical form.

### **Special Health Considerations**

If your student has any special condition that might affect him/her while at school, please send a written, detailed description of the condition, its approximate duration, and what steps are necessary to address the student's needs.

### **Animal Safety**

For the protection of students and staff with animal allergies or with susceptibility to animal-borne diseases, MSSA does not allow students or parents to bring animals, reptiles, amphibians, or insects on campus at any time unless specifically cleared with a teacher in advance. **To eliminate the risk of biting, MSSA does not allow dogs on campus.** Certified service/therapy animals are permitted on campus.

The MSSA grounds contain undeveloped wooded areas, and deer, foxes, raccoons, owls, snakes, and other animals are occasionally seen on campus. All students and parents should avoid contact with animals, insects, snakes, lizards, etc. Feeding such animals is prohibited (except for the filling of bird feeders).

### **Sun Protection**

Because all students go outside every day, we recommend that sunscreen be applied daily before your child comes to school. We also encourage students to keep a hat at school for use during the outside period. Elementary and Middle School students who go outdoors later in the day or who wish to reapply sunscreen prior to midday recess are allowed and encouraged to do

so. At the Primary level, teachers and after-school program personnel will apply sunscreen supplied and authorized by the parent.

## **Weather**

MSSA's buildings are designed with ample classroom access to the outdoors and children go outside. Children will be asked to put on their coats when they go outside to the outdoor classrooms or playground when the weather is cold. On rainy days, children should have a raincoat with them and wear it. If there is lightning, extreme wind, or extreme cold, the children will work indoors.

## **Suspected Child Abuse**

Texas State law requires teachers, administrative personnel, and other employees of any public or private school to report all suspected incidents of child abuse to the appropriate child protective agency. Child abuse includes physical abuse, physical neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional maltreatment. The MSSA faculty and staff recognize that this subject is extremely sensitive and always requires the utmost confidentiality.

## **Role of the Counselor**

The School contracts with a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) to provide services for the School. The counselor provides short-term individual direct support to students facing challenges and helps connect them to additional resources when needed, as well as working with the staff and parents to help develop strategies to increase student well-being and refer when needed to outside mental health services. The counselor is not available to see School community members in private practice, but will give referrals for outside counselors.

## **Mental Health Challenges and Crisis**

Treatment of self-harm and suicide ideation is beyond the scope of services offered in our school setting. As treatment of mental health challenges associated with self-harm and suicidal thinking requires mental health resources, the School will assist families with mental health referrals. The School may require a parent to sign a Release of Information form, permitting the School to discuss the student's health with outside care. The School reserves the right to determine if a student can attend classes on campus if a child has demonstrated self-harm or suicide ideation.



# Holidays and Birthdays

## Birthdays

A student's birthday may be recognized at school as a "celebration of life." Please discuss the birthday "ritual" with your child's teacher in advance. In the interest of fairness to all students, party invitations to events outside of school hours should be mailed to avoid hurt feelings to those who may not be invited to an event.

If pre-authorized by your child's teacher, you may bring a healthy nutritious snack for your child to share with his/her classmates. Under no circumstances should excessively sweet snacks, such as donuts, birthday cake, cupcakes, etc., be brought for a birthday celebration. Families are allowed to video and photograph celebrations of life, but videos and photos should not be posted online.

**Under no circumstances will there be distribution of invitations at school, limousine pickups, or disruptive deliveries during school hours (balloons, flowers, etc.) In addition, the School will not email invitations to parents. Excessively sweet snacks, such as donuts, birthday cake, cupcakes, etc., are not permitted for birthday celebrations.**

## Holidays

The MSSA approach to holidays with its students is grounded in three basic principles — inclusion, origins, and authenticity.

### Concerning Inclusion

Montessori education embraces the study of mankind as a whole. Geography, history, and human culture are approached from a global perspective in keeping with the basic principle of "whole to part" that is central to Dr. Montessori's concept of "cosmic education"—the word "cosmic" deriving from the Greek *kosmos*, meaning ordered, harmonious universe.

### Concerning Origins

Holidays generally have cultural-historical roots of great significance that derive from fundamental human needs. It is from this perspective that holidays are researched, discussed, and celebrated at MSSA. It is our belief that students are both enriched culturally and enlarged in tolerance through developing an understanding and sensitivity to different cultural and religious traditions. While MSSA as an institution does not promote any single viewpoint, we do encourage and support the thoughtful and respectful expression of the different national, ethnic, and religious backgrounds and traditions represented within the school community.

### **Concerning Authenticity**

MSSA stands on the principle that children develop their unique capacities and gifts through genuine self-expression within the context of a caring and respectful community of learners. Hence, we will choose and support authentic, student-generated expressions over commercial or mass-produced products in connection to a holiday.

A practical outcome of these three principles might appear as follows for St. Valentine's Day. A Lower Elementary teacher selects some books and encourages students to research the origins of the holiday, as well as where and how it is celebrated in different parts of the world. Concurrently, specialists in music, Spanish, or the library support this inquiry. Students then share their findings with one another in a group setting where all can benefit by the various research efforts. Finally, students have the opportunity, using various materials available in the classroom, to create their own expression of affection for a family member or dear friend. If you have questions, concerns, or input regarding a holiday, please contact your child's teacher well in advance of the holiday.

### ***Halloween***

Please do not send your child to school with a costume or mask.

### ***Christmas/Hanukkah***

We ask that the children not exchange gifts with one another within the classroom environment or anywhere on campus.

### ***Valentine's Day***

Valentine's cards and candy should not be exchanged at school.

## Physical Education

All students participate in Motor Skills or Physical Education (PE) on a regular basis. Athletic shoes are required for these activities. **Please make sure your child wears or brings athletic shoes and socks every day.** If your child needs to refrain from physical activity for short- or long-term periods, please advise your child's teacher **in writing**. Unless the teacher receives **written notification**, the teacher will assume that your child is able to participate in Motor Skills/PE. Appropriate clothing for PE is addressed in the dress code. Middle School students are required to wear a MSSA PE uniform. The PE uniform consists of any MSSA t-shirt as well as MSSA PE uniform shorts, available for purchase. Appropriate footwear is also required.

## Competitive Athletics

### Athletic Philosophy

Each child shall have the opportunity to experience individual accomplishment, teamwork, self-discipline, and sportsmanship. Children are provided with high standards for personal wellness as well as venues for athletic trials and successes. These opportunities, along with the academic possibilities at MSSA, will help create well-rounded, productive individuals.

### Fees and Registration

Athletic programs are held before or after-school and therefore have fees and schedules specific to offerings. Registration is done twice a year through Active in the fall (for fall and winter sports) and spring (for Spring and end-of-year sports). The deadline to register will always be posted in the fall/spring brochure. Please note the deadline dates; some may vary. If a spot is reserved during registration, that fee is non-refundable following the registration deadline. Uniform sizes are taken from Active, if another uniform is needed, an additional uniform fee will be charged.

### Levels of Athletics

MSSA's Athletic Department has consciously developed a program to promote competitive youth sports participation beginning at the Lower Elementary Level (LE1). We encourage and support multiple sport athletes. The framework behind the athletic program is to foster sports skills, physical fitness, performance, character, teamwork, leadership development, self confidence, resilience and fun in a productive environment designed for development and progression. Competitive sport programs are led by coaches trained in youth development

techniques. Our athletic program aspires to provide our student-athletes tools that will carry on with them for a lifetime. The athletic program is committed to providing opportunities for all interested students, and as such, all players registered before the deadline for each sport are guaranteed to be rostered on a team.

### **Developmental Team (Youth teams) Discover, Learn & Play\***

Grade levels LE1-UE4 primarily fall under this category. If multiple teams are needed to provide adequate playing time, teams will be organized without consideration of performance. This level is focused on fundamental movement, basic sport skills, rules of play, physical fitness, and having fun in a safe, motivational environment. Game playing time will be distributed equally.

### **Intermediate Team (Junior Teams) Develop & Challenge\***

Grade levels UE5-UE6 primarily fall under this category. If multiple teams are needed to provide adequate game playing time, teams will be organized without consideration of performance. This level focuses on refining sport skills, enhancing physical fitness, identifying personal strengths and areas of improvement, and communication skills in a fun, structured, and safe environment. Opportunities to further develop skills are introduced (private/small group lessons, camps, etc.). Game playing time will be given to all.

### **Competitive Team (MS Teams) Train & Compete\***

Grade levels 7th-8th primarily fall under this category; however, levels as young as UE5 may be included. If registration numbers are high, groups may be organized into A and B teams, and these A and B Teams will be based on sport performance, knowledge of the game, and experience playing. All 8th graders are required by the Independent School Athletic League (ISAL) to make the A-team. This level is focused on improved sport-specific skills and training. Nutritional and sports psychology guidance is introduced. Opportunities to further develop skills are encouraged (private/small group lessons, camps, etc.). Fun and socialization are still implemented at this level. Game/tournament playing time is not guaranteed; however, an opportunity to compete will still be provided through other avenues.

*\*Stages based on the American Development Model (ADM)*

## **Team Communication**

### **Team Snap**

For students enrolled in competitive athletics, TeamSnap is the primary method of communication for last-minute schedule changes, practice cancellations, or other essential

details related to the student's sport. TeamSnap messages are sent via text to parent's cell phones and/or email provided. Data charges may apply.

## **Health and Safety**

### **Physicals**

All students wishing to participate in competitive athletics during the school year are required to have a physical examination and must submit a cleared physical form to the school health office prior to any participation (including practice) in a sport. A physical exam form is available on the FACTS Family Portal, or from the Health Office. Physicals are good for one year to date.

### **Concussion Management Protocol**

If an athlete exhibits any signs, or behaviors of a concussion, the athlete **will** be removed from play immediately, closely observed, and parents/guardians will be notified. If a concussion is suspected, the student-athlete will be kept out of play until a doctor reports the student-athlete as being symptom-free and is cleared to return to play. Once a student-athlete returns he/she will begin a 5-step return to play physical activity program.

### **Student-Athlete Guidelines and Expectations**

- Athletics is an extension of the Montessori classroom. As such, all grace and courtesy are expected with all coaching staff, with all teammates, and with all visiting opponents, coaches, spectators and referees.
- It is the responsibility of UE and Middle School student-athletes to report immediately following the dismissal from their classrooms to the meeting point for their after-school sports activity. Classroom teachers for LE students will escort student-athletes to meet-up location.
- Being on time is important! Student-athletes will be held reasonably accountable for repeated tardiness.
- Student-athletes are expected to wear sport-specific and seasonally appropriate attire and footwear in order to practice and participate in games and tournaments. Please note that student-athletes not wearing appropriate attire and footwear (jeans, sandals, etc...) and/or protective gear (as it applies) will not be allowed to practice and will be sent to after-school care; parents will be responsible for after-school care fees.
- Student-athletes are expected to care for all practice equipment.

- Any student-athlete who is absent from school or who cannot fully participate in PE, or who leaves home early due to health concerns will not be allowed to participate in after-school athletics on that day (practice/game/tournament).
- Student-athlete attendance at practice is essential for the athlete, team and coach. Unexcused absences for practices/games/tournaments will be taken into account when determining game playing time at all levels.
- If a spot is reserved during registration, that fee is non-refundable following the registration deadline, as fees are necessary to facilitate the forming of teams. If a student-athlete decides not to participate in a sport after the first practice, they forfeit any funds paid for participation.
- Student-athletes are expected to follow all league rules and regulations. Additionally, MSSA has consequences for students who are ejected from games:
  - 1st offense: Student-athlete will not be allowed to participate in next scheduled game
  - 2nd offense: Student-athlete will not be allowed to participate in the next scheduled game and practices leading up to the game.
  - 3rd offense: Student-athlete may be removed from the team.

### **Parent/Guardian Guidelines and Expectations**

- Parents are required to attend the beginning of season team meetings to meet the team coach and receive information on the upcoming season.
- Parent pick-up from practice is expected at the conclusion of practice. Athletes whose parents are late will be sent to after-school care at parents' expense.
- If an LE or UE child will be unable to attend a practice or game, or will be arriving late or leaving early, it is the parent's responsibility to be in contact with the team's coach at least 24 hours before said event. Middle School athletes can take on this responsibility.
- Parents are expected to serve only as positive spectators and supporters during all games, not as coaches. This is to avoid conflict of communication and understanding for the players and to allow the coach to perform their duties and responsibilities.
- Parents are to remain in spectator areas during all games. This is a requirement of all leagues that the school participates in and must be followed.
- Parents are responsible for transportation to all away games.

- All team communication will be done through TeamSnap. Parents are required to sign-up for this free app.
- As spectators, parents are to model sportsmanship and to demonstrate MSSA's values of grace, courtesy and respect in all correspondence with opposing coaches, players, and/or parents. Parents are to show respect toward officials and never openly dispute their decisions.
- If questions and concerns arise, the first step should be for student-athletes to speak to their team head coach. If there is a need for more clarification or resolution, parents should then contact the team head coach. If the issue does not resolve, the next step is communication between the parent and the Athletic Director.
- Next day Contact policy: Parents who have questions or issues will not be able to speak to team coaches before, during, or following "game times" or tournaments unless there is an emergency. Instead, team coaches will be available to schedule meetings on the following day.
- Parent/Guardian/family members who are ejected from a game (Home/Away) will need to leave the premises immediately. If the person(s) disregards the request to vacate, the game shall not continue and may possibly end in forfeit. Any parent who consistently violates these regulations will not be allowed to attend games until such time as determined from the Athletic Director and/or Head of School.
- It is against ISAL guidelines for parents to recruit students or families from fellow ISAL schools, this could result in expulsion from the league.

## Toys at School

Items such as toys, money, expensive or keepsake jewelry, electronic devices, or sports or hobby equipment not designated for a school purpose are not appropriate for school. They can easily get lost or broken and can cause distraction or conflict.

Children may bring items of special interest to share with their classmates with the pre-approval of their teachers. For example:

- Items from nature, such as rocks, bird nests, fossils, shells, insects, plants, or some properly housed and fed animals. All animal visitations should be prearranged with the teacher, and animals may not remain at the school overnight.
- A book, article, short story, or tape that your child especially enjoys (these should be given to the teacher to preview before presentation to the class).
- Something made by the child, a hobby construction or display, or a personal collection.

## School Services

MSSA offers Before- and After-School Care to enrolled students. Parents must indicate their intent to utilize either Early Arrival or the After-school Program by using the Activities tab in the SchoolPass application.

All students in the After-school Program will be billed a rate per day. Children will be clocked in and out electronically. Payments will be electronically processed by FACTS on or about the 10th of each month following the month of usage.

### **Early Arrival (7:00 to 7:50 AM)**

Early-Arrival begins at 7:00 AM in the gymnasium. All children must be accompanied by an adult to Early Arrival. Families will enter the right set of double doors and remain at the gym door entrance until an employee checks in the child. Parent/guardian must accompany the child inside the gym lobby. Students are dismissed from Early Arrival at 7:50 AM. Primary children are escorted to class.

### **After-School Care (11:45 AM to 6:00 PM)**

#### **Child Care**

Child Care offers an environment that closely aligns with Montessori principles and philosophy. After lunch, a rest time is provided for Primary students who need a nap. Other students are provided with opportunities for indoor and outdoor activities. Healthy, nut-free snacks are provided in the late-afternoon program.

Parents must indicate their intent to use After-School Care by completing the Intent to Use After-school Program form located on the FACTS Family Portal. Child care ends at 6:00 PM. Additional fees will be assessed after 6:00 PM. See fee schedule for details.

#### **After-School Sports/Activities**

After-School Sports/Activities will be offered on various days to class cohorts. Programs will run 30 - 60 minutes depending on level. A full schedule will be available to families once finalized. If a spot is reserved during registration, that fee is non-refundable following the registration deadline



### Late Pick-up

If a student is not picked up at school dismissal time, the student will automatically be taken to After-School Childcare and the daily rate will apply.

## **MSSA Library Resources**

### **Library Resource Center (LRC)**

The Library Resource Center's (LRC) purpose is to ensure that all students and staff have access to a wide variety of materials in different formats. The following are important LRC policies:

- The entire MSSA (faculty, staff, parents, and students) may check out materials from the library.
- Materials are checked for a two-week period.
- No overdue fines are charged, but materials should be returned on time to allow others to use them.
- A student will not be allowed to check out material if he/she has overdue material.
- If material is checked out and lost or damaged, a replacement cost will be charged.
- All materials must be returned by the end of the school year to avoid replacement cost being charged.

### **Tutoring**

- Occasionally, there may be a situation where an MSSA teacher is tutoring an MSSA student. Teachers (classroom or specialists) tutoring their own students for compensation, including summer tutoring for students known to be going into that teacher's classroom in the following term is not allowed. Teachers may tutor their former students.

## **Emergency Closures & Drills**

### **Inclement Weather**

In the event of extremely bad weather, please call the School's main number, 210-492-3553, for a recorded message. Listen for school closure announcements on the major local television stations as well as radio station WOAI 1200 AM. Notification will also be made through the official MSSA social media channels, our website, and our automated notification system.

MSSA follows the same emergency school closure dates as the North East ISD; therefore, if NEISD is closed, MSSA will also be closed.

Use your good judgment for your family's safety and avoid attempts to travel in hazardous conditions, regardless of whether the school is closed.

### **Other Emergencies**

Throughout the school year, emergency evacuation drills will be conducted. These drills vary from silent practice to full-fledged drills. In the event of a real emergency (fire, natural disaster, chemical spill, etc.), parents, guardians, or those listed for emergencies will be contacted and given specific instructions on where to pick up their children. To keep school phone lines open for emergency communications, please wait for the School to make contact.

MSSA has a complete Emergency Response plan that is available for review upon request.

### **Parent Notification System**

MSSA uses an automated notification system that places a phone call and sends a text message to each family in the case of inclement weather, school closing, emergencies, or other important school message. The notification system will contact up to five numbers per student.

## **Technology Environment**

All school computers, printers and copiers are fully integrated into MSSA's network providing a flexible arrangement that is efficiently and effectively supported.

All portable storage devices such as "flash" or "thumb" drives, memory cards, CDs/DVDs, USB drives, or any other device with built-in storage brought into the School MUST be scanned for potential viruses in the technology department prior to use in the classrooms or offices.

To maintain the integrity of the school's network, any questions or issues involving technology must be referred to the technology department. This is especially applicable where potential donations are involved.

### **Student Use of Technology**

Students are allowed access to the internet. This resource can extend students' educational experiences far beyond those currently available through other means.

Internet use at MSSA involves certain responsibilities. Though MSSA uses the latest electronic filtering tools, it is possible that your child may come across some material you might find objectionable. Even with strong classroom management, it is not possible for MSSA to guarantee that it can completely prevent such access.

Please review the Student Acceptable Use Policy with your child. While teachers and administrators will continue to emphasize proper behavior, your help in stressing the importance of the guidelines will help ensure compliance.

Students who violate the policies outlined below may be subject to having their access restricted or denied while at school.

### **Student Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)**

*Students are given access to MSSA's Network. It is the student's responsibility to follow the rules for appropriate use. MSSA's values of grace, courtesy, and respect also apply to student online activity; violations of the AUP will be handled in accordance with the school's disciplinary policies as outlined in this handbook.*

### **Safety of Self and Others**

- Students will report to their teachers, school staff, or any other appropriate personnel, any communication received that is inappropriate or makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Students will not reveal personal information about themselves or others.
- Students will not use the system to e-mail or chat with anyone.
- Students will not use the system to threaten others (cyber-bullying.)
- Students will use appropriate language for the educational environment and for the educational activity in which they are currently involved (no swearing, vulgarity, ethnic or racial slurs, or any other inflammatory or threatening language).
- Students will not transmit (send or receive) obscene pictures or messages.

### **Access and Uses**

Access to and use of the MSSA Network is considered a privilege accorded at the discretion of The Montessori School of San Antonio. MSSA maintains the right to immediately withdraw access and use of these services when there is reason to believe violations of the law or school policies have occurred. In such cases, the alleged violation will be referred to School administration for further investigation and adjudication.

- Students will only use the system for educational purposes; any school, division-level or grade-level communication, including e-mail, group chats and

video conferencing through devices, documents or drives, or texts can only be sent with the permission of the appropriate division head.

- Students will not access files and/or documents of other users without permission.
- Students will not access email, files and/or documents of MSSA employees.
- Students will not use the internet for financial gain or for political or commercial activity.
- Students will not use the system for purchasing products or services.
- Students will not deface, abuse or tamper with school technology property.

### **Copyright Laws**

- Students will be aware of copyright laws and will follow them.

### **Illegal Activities**

- Students will not use the system for illegal purposes, or any other activity prohibited by MSSA policy.

### **System Security**

- Students will not attempt to harm equipment, materials, or data.
- Students will not knowingly infect a computer or network with a virus.
- Students will not knowingly disrupt the network.
- Students will not provide passwords to other users.
- Students will always report any known violations of the MSSA Acceptable Use Policy to a teacher or administrator.

### **Respect for System Limitations**

- Students will not download large files unless they have been given permission and it is absolutely necessary.

### **Consequences of Violations**

- Consequences will be determined in cooperation with teachers, ranging from disabling an account for a few days, semester, or the remainder of the school year.
- Consequences for severe violations will also be set in cooperation with pertinent administrative staff.

## **Personal Wireless Device Usage Policy**

The MSSA Guest wireless network allows visitors with a personal wireless device (laptop, tablet, smart phone, smart watch, etc.) to access the internet at MSSA for school-related business **only**. This internet access will operate with the same school internet filter currently in use. To protect the school's system, the MSSA Guest wireless network does not allow access to

school printers, servers, or files. The MSSAWifi wireless network is available for use by school-owned devices only.

These policies are in addition to the Student Acceptable Usage Policy detailed above, are not all-inclusive, and may be modified at any time.

- Personally-owned devices/laptops cannot be physically connected (via cable) to the MSSA network at any time or location.
- Personally-owned devices/laptops can be used to access the MSSA Guest wireless network only, not the MSSA Wifi wireless network. Personal devices found to be connected to the MSSA Wifi network will be automatically removed.
- MSSA is not responsible for any support of personal laptop or wireless devices.
- Student use of personally-owned devices in the classroom setting will be at the discretion of MSSA and subject to all MSSA technology policies.
- MSSA reserves the right to inspect, at any time, any personally-owned devices while connected to MSSA Network for the purpose of verifying that it is in compliance with this policy/agreement.
- Illegal, destructive, harmful, or any other inappropriate activities, including, but not limited to computer hacking, cyber-bullying, accessing offensive/obscene materials, or engaging in illegal activity are strictly prohibited.
- Attempts to circumvent or defeat any mechanism put in place by MSSA to manage the network or filter internet access will be subject to immediate termination of network services.
- Any unauthorized attempt to access another computer (on or off campus) is prohibited. Attempts to access other computers will result in the immediate disconnection of the suspected network connection until the matter has been resolved.
- Access to managed wireless access points to connect to the internet is only allowed from within school grounds. Connection to third party access points is not permitted. MSSA services and wiring may not be modified or extended beyond the area of their intended use.
- MSSA Networks may not be used for any commercial purposes or used to provide wireless internet access to anyone outside of the school community for any purpose.
- The digital reproduction and distribution of copyrighted materials is against federal law. Anyone found distributing (sharing) such material, including copyrighted music, digitized video from copyrighted motion pictures, copyrighted software, etc.) is subject to termination of their network services.
- MSSA is not responsible for any possible damage the connection to it's Network or any electrical power source may cause. MSSA assumes NO responsibility for costs associated with loss or damage to any personal devices and associated peripheral equipment.

- MSSA will not be obligated to supply electrical power access where such access does not already exist.
- MSSA employees and parents and/or guardians of any student bringing personal technology to school agree to be responsible for and to reimburse MSSA for any damage that may arise out of and relating to the use of MSSA Networks with his/her personally-owned device.

## **Student Records**

### **Student's Permanent Record**

Each student's permanent record contains comprehensive progress reports, completed by the faculty, as well as standardized assessments when developmentally appropriate.

### **Student Progress Reports**

Written progress reports are maintained on all students. Copies of progress reports are e-mailed to each student's home four times per school year (October, January, March, June.)

Progress reports will not be issued if a student has a past-due balance on his/her account, and access to FACTS Family Portal may also be restricted. Reports will be released, and FACTS Family Portal access restored once the account has been brought up to date.

### **Standardized Testing**

Even though there seems to be an incongruity between standardized testing and the Montessori educational approach, MSSA does administer standardized tests as part of our student assessment process. The primary purpose of such testing is to provide information that can be used to improve instruction. These tests are also helpful in evaluating the content and methods of our program as they pertain to basic skill development. MSSA has chosen the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT) and the Stanford Achievement Test because they both provide age-based norm comparisons for aptitude (OLSAT) and achievement (Stanford). These tests are also chosen because they are well-respected and are the most widely used across the nation. Besides giving us another tool to review each student's aptitude and basic skill development, they also provide a widely recognized record for students to use when they transfer to more traditional schools. Because standardized tests are commonly used throughout high schools and universities, we believe it is in our student's best interest to be prepared for taking such tests.

Typically, the OLSAT is administered to students beginning in the third year of Lower Elementary, and every other year thereafter. The Stanford Achievement Tests are administered annually beginning in the third year of Lower Elementary. Test outcomes are discussed during parent conferences and become part of the student's permanent record.

### **Transcript and Recommendation Requests**

Transcript and recommendation requests must be made in writing, signed and dated by parents, and submitted to the Registrar.

Parents must supply the recipient institution's address, phone and fax information. Completed recommendation forms will be sent directly to the designated institutions and will not be released to the parents. Please allow at least two weeks for both transcript and recommendation processing. **Expedited service is not available.**

Transcripts cannot be issued if a student has a past-due balance on his/her account. Once the account is brought up to date, the transcript will be released.

## **Financial Matters**

### **Tuition and Fees**

MSSA operates on a tuition-based budget. It is important that parents be conscientious and prompt about payment of tuition and fees. Notice of payment due will be sent via email around the 25<sup>th</sup> of every month, and all payments are due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the following month. Account status may be accessed online at any time on FACTS Family Portal.

Once the enrollment contract is signed, parents are responsible for all fees and tuition for the full academic year. Payment will be made through the online FACTS system. Tuition may be paid annually, semi-annually, or over ten equal payments.

FACTS requires that every family enter a valid bank account or credit card number as a guaranteed form of payment. Checks may be sent to the school for payment but must be received at least ten (10) days prior to the payment due date in order to avoid having a charge made to the registered guaranteed form of payment. MSSA will not be responsible for overdraft fees or penalties incurred as a result of insufficient funds or invalid accounts.

MSSA may withhold records or deny student attendance as a consequence of delinquent and/or non-payment of tuition and fees.

### **Tuition Protection Plan (TPP)**

The Tuition Protection Plan (TPP) is a program that provides tuition protection in the event circumstances require a student to withdraw from MSSA prior to the end of the school year. MSSA hires teachers, purchases textbooks and materials, and makes plant and building maintenance decisions based on the number of students that register before the start of each school year. All MSSA Enrollment Contracts are for the full academic year. If a student is withdrawn before the end of the school year for any reason, the family is still obligated to fulfill the terms of the Enrollment Contract. If the family is participating in the TPP, the plan pays either 50 percent or 100 percent of the unused portion of the annual tuition, depending on the circumstances of withdrawal.

The TPP is optional, though encouraged, for parents who pay tuition on an annual basis. The TPP is mandatory for parents paying semi-annually or monthly. For further information about the plan, please contact the Business Office.

### **Financial Assistance**

MSSA supports socioeconomic diversity in its student body through the provision of financial assistance. Families requesting financial assistance may inquire in the Admission Office about the MSSA Financial Assistance Program. Online applications for financial assistance are accepted starting in January. All forms must be submitted to the appropriate office by February 15 to be considered for the following school year. After the specified deadline, late applicants will be considered only on a funds-available basis. All questions regarding Financial Assistance should be directed to the Admission Office.

## **Gifts To The School**

### **In-Kind Gifts**

MSSA is blessed with a dedicated and generous parent community. During the school year, some parents perceive a need in their child's classroom and take it upon themselves to meet this need. While the staff and administration are most grateful for such generosity, it may result in some classrooms being better equipped than others on the same level, or a teacher receiving something that will not be used. To ensure that all students have equal access to materials and



equipment, MSSA has established an In-Kind Gift Policy and asks that all MSSA parents follow its procedures when considering a material donation to the School.

1. A potential donor is directed to the Communications Department to obtain an In-Kind Gift Donation Information form.
2. The donor completes the form, providing information about the proposed gift (Who will benefit from the gift? Is professional installation needed? Does the gift meet state and local codes for a school? Is regular maintenance required?)
3. The donor returns the completed form to the Communications Department.
4. The proposed gift is evaluated by the Head of School, the Facilities Director, and other appropriate staff to determine benefit to the School, how the gift fits into the School's overall plan, and any potential problems. Research will be conducted to ensure that all city and state codes, as well as other regulations (homeowner's association, aquifer restrictions, etc.) are met. A final decision about acceptance of the gift rests with the Head of School.
5. When the gift is approved, the Communications Department will advise the donor, make necessary arrangements to receive the gift, properly record the gift in development records, and send appropriate acknowledgement of the gift in a timely manner.

## **Fundraising**

Like most private institutions, MSSA conducts targeted fundraising efforts throughout the year to provide enhancements not covered by operating resources.

### **Annual Fund**

MSSA conducts an annual giving campaign in support of the School's mission. Donations to the Annual Fund provide flexible resources to grow The Montessori School of San Antonio and to make the School stronger.

### **Other Giving Opportunities**

**Honoraria and Memorials** – any gift to MSSA may be made In Honor Of or In Memory Of an individual or event such as a birthday or anniversary.

**Designated Gifts** – once a MSSA family has contributed to the Annual Fund, other gifts may be made for specific purposes or projects, e.g., new classroom, library materials, playground equipment, etc.

The MSSA Parent and Teacher Council (PTC) conducts one major fundraising effort during the year.

MSSA reserves the right to reject any gift inconsistent with the mission and values of the School.

### **Acknowledgements and Tax Considerations**

All gifts to The Montessori School of San Antonio are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law and will be acknowledged per the wishes of the donor. The Montessori School of San Antonio is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization under the Federal Internal Revenue Code. The School's fiscal year is August 1 through July 31.

Gifts of money or other securities to MSSA from any source may not be designated to directly benefit or be received by any specific employee, independent contractor, volunteer, or consultant.

## **Recommended Reading List**

To better acquaint parents with the depth of the Montessori philosophy and methodology, we recommend reviewing the following books and websites.

### **Books**

*How to Raise an Amazing Child, The Montessori Way* — Seldin, Tim

*Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* — Dweck, Carol

*Children: The Challenge* — Driekurs, Rudolf

*Discipline Without Tears* — Driekurs, Rudolf

*How Children Learn* — Molt, John

*Why Montessori for the Elementary Years* — Jones, Sanford

*Montessori: A Modern Approach* — Lillard, Paula Polk

*From Childhood to Adolescence* — Montessori, Maria

*Spontaneous Activity in Education* — Montessori, Maria

*The Absorbent Mind* — Montessori, Maria

*The Montessori Method* — Montessori, Maria

*The Secret of Childhood* — Montessori, Maria

*What You Should Know About Your Child* — Montessori, Maria

*The Magical Child* — Pierce, Joseph Chilton

*The Montessori Revolution in Education* — Standing, E. M.

*The Plug-in Drug* — Winn, Marie

### **Websites**

[www.montessoriSA.org](http://www.montessoriSA.org)

[www.amshq.org](http://www.amshq.org)

[www.montessori-ami.org](http://www.montessori-ami.org)

*Excerpts from American Montessori Society, amshq.org*

Dr. Maria Montessori introduced many new terms and concepts to describe how children grow and learn. These terms are still widely in use today in the Montessori community. You may encounter these terms as you learn about the Montessori method of education.

**Absorbent mind** – From birth through approximately age 6, the young child experiences a period of intense mental activity that allows her to “absorb” learning from her environment quickly and easily without conscious effort.

**Concrete to abstract** – A logical, developmentally appropriate progression that allows the child to develop an abstract understanding of a concept by first encountering it in a concrete form, such as learning the mathematical concept of the decimal system by working with Golden Beads grouped into units, 10s, 100s, and 1,000s.

**Control of error** – Montessori materials are designed so that the child receives instant feedback about her progress as she works, allowing her to recognize, correct, and learn from an error without adult assistance. Putting control of the activity in the child’s hands strengthens her self-esteem and self-motivation as well as her learning.

**Coordination of movement** – Refining large- and fine-motor movements is one of the accomplishments of early childhood development, as the child learns to complete tasks independently. The Montessori classroom offers opportunities for children to refine their movements and children are drawn to these activities, especially to those which require exactitude and precision.

**Cosmic education** – Maria Montessori urged us to give children a “vision of the universe” to help them discover how all of its parts are interconnected and interdependent, and to help them understand their place in society and the world. In Montessori schools, children in Elementary programs (between the ages of 6 – 12) learn about the creation of the universe through stories that integrate the studies of astronomy, chemistry, biology, geography, and history. These lessons help children become aware of their own roles and responsibilities as humans and as members of society, and help them explore their “cosmic task”—their unique, meaningful purpose in the world.

**Didactic materials** – Didactic meaning “designed or intended to teach,” these are the specially-designed instructional materials—many invented by Maria Montessori—that are a hallmark of all Montessori classrooms.

**Freedom within limits** – Montessori classrooms are carefully and thoughtfully designed to encourage children to move about freely and choose their own work, within reasonable limits of appropriate behavior. Those limits are the classroom ground rules, and enable children to exercise their own free will while ensuring that their chosen activities are respectful of others and their environment.

**Grace and courtesy** – In Montessori schools, children are formally instructed in social skills they will use throughout their lives, for example, saying “please” and “thank you,” interrupting conversations politely, requesting rather than demanding assistance, and greeting guests warmly.

**Ground rules** – Classroom rules in the Montessori classroom are typically referred to as “ground rules” which dictate appropriate behavior in the classroom. At all age-levels, the ground rules are simple—children are free to work with any material or activity displayed in the environment as long as they use it respectfully. They may not harm the material, themselves, or others.

**Mixed-age grouping (or multi-age grouping)** – One of the hallmarks of Montessori education is that children of mixed ages work together in the same class. Age groupings are based on the Planes of Development as identified by Dr. Maria Montessori. Multi-age groupings enable younger children to learn from older children and experience new challenges through observation; older children reinforce their learning by teaching concepts they have already

mastered, develop leadership skills, and serve as role models. Because each child's work is individual, children progress at their own pace; there is cooperation rather than competition between the ages. This arrangement mirrors the real world, in which individuals work and socialize with people of all ages and dispositions. Typically, children from 2.5/3 – 6 years of age are grouped together in an Early Childhood classroom. 6 – 9 year olds share the Lower Elementary (grades 1 – 3) and the Upper Elementary is made up of 9 – 12 year olds (grades 4 – 6). At the Secondary level, groupings may be 2- or 3-years. Children from birth – age 3 may be grouped in varying multi-age configurations, and are commonly grouped from birth to 15/18 months (or when mobile) and 15/18 months to age 3.

**Montessori** – The term may refer to Dr. Maria Montessori, founder of the Montessori Method of education, or the method itself.

**Normalization** – A natural developmental process exhibited by a love of work or activity, concentration, self-discipline, and joy in accomplishment. Dr. Montessori observed that children in Montessori programs exhibit normalization through repeated periods of uninterrupted work during which time they work freely and at their own pace on their own chosen activities. A normalized child is a happy, well-adjusted child who exhibits positive social skills in the Montessori classroom.

**Planes of Development** – Four distinct periods of growth, development, and learning identified by Dr. Maria Montessori that a human being progresses through: ages 0 – 6 (the period of the “absorbent mind”); 6 – 12 (the period of reasoning and abstraction); 12 – 18 (when adolescents construct the “social self,” developing moral values and becoming emotionally independent); and 18 – 24 years (when young adults construct an understanding of the self and seek to know their place in the world).

**Practical life** – The Montessori term that encompasses “domestic” work to maintain the home and classroom environment; self-care and personal hygiene; and grace and courtesy. Practical life skills are of great interest to young children and form the basis of later abstract learning.

**Practical life activities** – Young children in Montessori classrooms learn to take care of themselves and their environment through activities such as hand washing, dusting, and mopping. These activities help toddlers and preschool-age children learn to work independently, develop concentration, and prepare for later work with reading and math; older children participate in more advanced activities such as cooking, gardening, and operating a business.

**Prepared environment** – The teacher prepares the environment of the Montessori classroom with carefully selected, aesthetically arranged materials that are presented sequentially to meet the developmental needs of the children using the space. Well-prepared Montessori

environments contain appropriately sized furniture, a full complement of Montessori materials, and enough space to allow children to work in peace, alone, or in small or large groups.

**Primary classroom** – In some Montessori schools, this is a classroom for children ages 3 – 6 years; however, the American Montessori Society uses the term ‘Early Childhood’ and defines the age range as 2.5 – 6 years.

**Sensitive period** – A critical time during human development when the child is biologically ready and receptive to acquiring a specific skill or ability—such as the use of language or a sense of order—and is therefore particularly sensitive to stimuli that promote the development of that skill. A Montessori teacher prepares the environment to meet the developmental needs of each sensitive period.

**Sensorial materials** – Work with these materials develops and refines the 5 senses—seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling—and builds a foundation for speech, writing, and math. Each scientifically designed material isolates a specific quality such as color, size, or shape. This focuses the child’s attention on this one characteristic, and teaches her to sort, classify, order, and develop vocabulary to describe objects she experiences in the world around her.

**The 3-period lesson** – A 3-step technique for presenting information to the child. In the first—the *introduction* or *naming* period—the teacher demonstrates what “this is.” (The teacher might say “This is a mountain” while pointing to it on a 3-dimensional map.) In the second—the *association* or *recognition* period—the teacher asks the child to “show” what was just identified (“Show me the mountain”). Finally, in the *recall* period, the teacher asks the child to name the object (“What is this?” she asks the child, while pointing to the mountain.) Moving from taking in new information, to passive recall, to active identification reinforces the child’s learning and demonstrates her mastery of the concept.

**Work** – Purposeful activity. Maria Montessori observed that children learn through purposeful activities of their own choosing. Montessori schools call all of the children’s activities “work.” While “work” sounds like a serious endeavor, Dr. Montessori observed that children exhibit joy and experience this purposeful activity as play.

**Work cycle** – Within the prepared environment of the Montessori classroom, children are taught to complete a work cycle which includes 1) choosing an activity; 2) completing the activity to completion (perhaps repeating the full sequence of the activity multiple times), cleaning up and returning the materials to the proper place; and 3) experiencing a sense of satisfaction to have fully completed the task.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

The Montessori School of San Antonio  
17722 Rogers Ranch Parkway  
San Antonio, TX 78258  
Phone: 210-492-3553  
Fax: 210-492-3484  
On the Web: [www.montessoriSA.org](http://www.montessoriSA.org)

## SCHOOL HOURS

Office Hours	M-F 7:30 AM to 4:30 PM
Early Arrival Care	7:00 to 7:50 AM
Arrival (car doors opened by staff)	7:50 to 8:15 AM
Classes Start	8:15 AM
Primary Half-Day Dismissal	11:45 AM
Regular Dismissal	3:15 PM
Wednesday Dismissal	2:15 PM
After-School Care	3:15 to 6:00 PM

## ADMINISTRATION

Emily Lund	Head of School
Theresa Powers	Program Director
Chris Noel	Director of Communications
Maru Galarza	Director of Admission
Michelle Felix	School Nurse
Elizabeth Holland	Bookkeeper
Brandon Petrosky	Business Manager
Cynthia Mullett	Information Technology Specialist
Leticia Obregon	Director of Athletics & After School Program
Jon Ollis	Director of Facilities
Jule Metoyer	Executive Assistant to Administration
Jen Hopkins	Receptionist
Jessica Harrison	Counselor
Tori Fine	Counselor

## Primary Level

<u>TEACHER</u>	<u>ASSISTANT</u>
Susan McGinty	Barbara Munoz
Lisa Fish	Jimena Hastings
*Angie Jones	Kathy Kapp
Sofia Garcia	Dany Salas
Gabriella Christal	Judy Korge

\*Level Representative

## Lower Elementary Level

<u>TEACHER</u>	<u>ASSISTANT</u>
Daniella Alston	Lynn Ortiz
*Sumi Chaudhuri	Julie Eakle
Pranita Patel	Casey Jansen
Lauren Talley	Angie Updike

\* Level Representative

## Upper Elementary Level

<u>TEACHER</u>	<u>ASSISTANT</u>
*John Pettit	Brynn Lott
Shannon Pettit	Piya Dasgupta
Anne Shadle	Judi Abbott
Cassandra Trevino	Reem Rashid

\*Level Representative

## Middle School

<u>TEACHER</u>
Shauna Cardenas (English)



\*Josh Duelm (History)

Kathy Darr (Science)

Karen DeMore (Math)

\*Level Representative

## Specialists

Anabell Rosales	Spanish
Pilar Camelo	Spanish
Margo McCarthy	Art
Lisa Christal	Library
*Becca Morgan	Music
Michelle Taylor	Music
Leticia Obregon	Physical Education/ Motor Skills
Louis Alvarado	Physical Education/Motor Skills
Brenda Estrada	Physical Education/Motor Skills
Bristol Olomua	Coordinator of Athletics & Club Sports
Teresa Treat	Substitute

\*Level Representative

## Child Care

Patty Escobedo	Coordinator of Child Care & After-school Activities
Sandra Alvarado	Child Care Instructor
Sylvia Flores	Child Care Instructor
Angela Streed	Child Care Instructor
Dany Salas	Child Care Instructor
Nancy Alvarado	Child Care Instructor
Judy Korge	Early Arrival Instructor
Kathy Kapp	Early Arrival Instructor